Marquess Hastings’s Response in Calcutta: Orientalist Renaissance as a Popular Culture Ideal

When Lord Moira (later Marquess Hastings) succeeded Minto as governor-general on October 4, 1813, there was little to suggest that this rather obscure man of sixty would not only carry on the work of Warren Hastings and Wellesley but actually go beyond either in implementing the Orientalist credo by means of far-reaching programs of social action.¹ Much of the historical literature of British India does not mention the reform policies of Marquess Hastings and the intellectual ferment they generated in Bengal.² Instead, the governor-general’s nine years in India are

¹ Indeed, as R. C. Majumdar has aptly documented, Hastings arrived in India with an attitude toward Hindus as hostile as the most fanatic Clapham sectarian. See R. C. Majumdar, ed., British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part II (History and Culture of the Indian People Series; Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyā Bhavan, 1965), pp. 337–338.

² This is an example of the discrepancy between contemporary sources during the Orientalist period, which contain elaborate accounts of the Hastings reform measures, and the later histories of the period, which ignore them. Many Bengali scholars, interested in celebrating the events of their renaissance but unwilling to attribute its initial impetus to Hastings and his cultural policy, continually refer to the founding of Hindu College, to the Calcutta School and School Book Societies, and to a Bengali press, in a manner suggesting spontaneous inspiration in an atmosphere free of official encouragement. It is seldom noted, for example, that Bengali journalism owes its existence to Hastings, who not only advocated a free press but was the first governor-general to lift the rigorous censorship measures imposed by Wellesley in 1799.
treated as a long series of military encounters from which Hastings emerged triumphant over the Pindari menace and the last stand of Maratha power. If his cultural policy is mentioned at all, it is most often to inform the reader that “Lord Hastings refused to abolish suttee.”

Marquess Hastings certainly deserves far more scholarly attention than he has received. Little is known of his early British background. We know only that he arrived in Calcutta with a distaste for the classical heritage of Europe. And instead of responding passively to the 1813 Charter Act, Hastings reinterpreted both the Evangelical victory and the Court instructions in his own way and boldly set out on a course of social action unprecedented in British colonial history.

Until the administration of Marquess Hastings, Orientalists had been encouraged to pursue high-culture scholarly interests and were urged to adopt the classical Sanskritic culture as the model for Hindu regeneration. As previously mentioned, the notion of projecting the “golden age” of the Hindus into the future by rehabilitating their existing institutions was a favorite literary theme for students and professors at the College of Fort William. The impetus for this thought came from the evolving Orientalist view of Hindu-

8 Garrett and Thompson, p. 287. It seems evident that the poor treatment accorded Hastings since Victorian times is due to the fact that sati has become the great symbol of reform, and its abolition by Bentinck took place conveniently at about the time of England’s first wave of political reforms in 1832. It is apparently inconceivable to the W. W. Hunters, the Morelands, the Dodwells and others that genuine reform measures could have been initiated in India before they were enacted in England by a liberal ministry.

4 Unlike Warren Hastings, Cornwallis, and Wellesley, Marquess Hastings has not, apparently, been the subject of a single scholarly biography. There is a highly dubious account of Hastings produced during the imperialist period by a member of Britain’s military elite. See George, The Marquess of Hastings.

5 Born into an old aristocratic family, Hastings, like Cornwallis, served in the American Revolutionary War. Some elements of his background may help to explain his later policies in Calcutta. He was sympathetic to the plight of the Irish, supported Catholic emancipation, and opposed the “Union on the ground that it was not acceptable to the people.” See ibid., p. 32.

6 A possible explanation for Hastings’s befriending of the Serampore Baptists was that as a youth he had acquired, thanks to his mother, a considerable tolerance for non-Anglican, revivalist religious sects. The Methodist reformers, in particular, were supported by members on his mother’s side of the family. See ibid., p. 13.
ism in which the decadence of contemporary Hindu culture had to be reconciled with the new discoveries of a glorious past civilization. The Indian government encouraged the students at Fort William to speculate freely on the problem of renaissance among the Hindus. Such intellectual awareness contributed to cultural responsiveness and produced better civil servants.

Although, in theory, Governor-general Wellesley committed himself to a direct policy of cultural change aimed at restoring the golden age of the Hindus, in practice official policy was directed at salvaging the literary remnants of the indigenous culture by generously supporting any attempt at intellectually reconstructing its content. On March 3, 1806, after Wellesley’s departure, Governor-general George Barlow told the students and faculty that “the greatest advantages may be expected to stimulate the interests of Eastern Literature from this cooperation of the Asiatic Society with the College of Fort William in facilitating the acquisition of Oriental knowledge and science.”

After 1807, when Fort William was reduced in size as a collegiate establishment and its operations were reduced to the training of civil servants expected to serve in Bengal, the institution gradually became more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Hindu elite in Calcutta. William Carey’s role in promoting Bengali language and literature with the assistance of the regional Brahman pundits at the college became increasingly important.

In February, 1808, Lord Minto’s disputation speech was already explicit about the possibilities of a more direct and purposeful policy of cultural revitalization within the institutional framework of the college:

A printing press has been established by learned Hindoos. [Baboo Ram] has been furnished with complete founts of improved Nagree types of different sizes for printing books in the Sanscrit language. This press has been encouraged by the College to undertake an edition of the best Sanscrit Dictionaries and Grammars. . . . It may be hoped that the introduction of the art of printing among the Hindoos, which has been thus begun by the institution of a Sanscrit Press, will promote the general diffusion of knowledge among this numerous and very ancient people at the same time that it becomes the means of preserving the classic remains of their literature and sciences.

---

7 Roebuck, p. 144.
On March 6, 1811, Lord Minto signed his name to a minute on education which was written, most probably, by Henry Colebrooke\(^9\) and contained the first officially supported Orientalist program for the "improvement" of Hindu culture.\(^{10}\) The minute began with the commonplace observation that among the Hindus "science and literature are in a progressive state of decay."\(^{11}\) "The number of the learned is not only diminished," wrote Colebrooke, "but the circle of learning, even among those who still devote themselves to it, appears to be considerably contracted."\(^{12}\) Even more disastrous in Colebrooke's eyes was the decadence of the Hindu secular achievements, which he felt were "abandoned . . . and neglected," with "no branch of learning [being] cultivated but what is connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people."\(^{13}\) Colebrooke recommended that the government resume giving financial aid to all indigenous institutions,\(^{14}\) reform the Hindu College at Benares,\(^{15}\) and establish "two new Hindu Colleges, one at Nuddea and the other in Tirhroot. . . ."\(^{16}\)

The Minto Minute was the first of many educational plans submitted to the governor-general through the College of Fort William between 1811 and 1814. Each one was basically designed to rehabilitate Hinduism from within its own civilization structure. The evidence suggests that the impulse for cultural revival came from within India as well as from without, and that it was implemented at the College of Fort William. While the Charter Act of 1813 did much to assuage the moral indignation of Wilberforce and demonstrated the effectiveness of organized public opinion in English politics, its immediate impact on India was far less than has been imagined.\(^{17}\)

By the time the text of the Act reached Calcutta, toward the end of 1814, three education plans were being considered seriously by

---

\(^{9}\) Adam, p. 419.

\(^{10}\) *Minute of Governor General in Council*, March 6, 1811, quoted *ibid*.

\(^{11}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{12}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{13}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{14}\) *Ibid*, p. 421.

\(^{15}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{16}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{17}\) No official committee to organize and supervise educational affairs was established until 1823. See discussion of the early "failure" in *Selections from Educational Records, 1781–1839*, comp. H. Sharp (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920), p. 50.
the Fort William College Council on behalf of the governor-general. These proposals and the consultation with various Calcutta pundits in 1812 on the social problems of sati indicated a deliberate, though cautious, alteration of governmental policy on cultural change. There is no evidence of a single educational plan that was entirely Evangelical or Anglicist in sympathy. However, the deeper theoretical justification that lay behind each educational proposal soon revealed an irreparable split among the Orientalists. The "classical" group favored an elitist, Sanskritic high-culture program whereas the "vernacularists" preferred a scheme that would reach the masses chiefly through the indigenous languages.

On September 20, 1813, Lord Minto, in his last speech before the College of Fort William, vigorously defended the rehabilitation program of the classical Orientalists. He believed that the Hindu elite must be reintroduced to that "impenetrable mystery" of its ancient lore. The Sanskritic tradition theretofore "locked up" must be "thrown open" and the "treasures of science, philosophy and literature . . . made available in its pristine form."

At this time William Carey was the only European faculty member of the college who openly advocated a "vernacularist" position on cultural revitalization. His "plan for instructing Native Inhabitants of India in European Sciences" (June, 1814) is an interesting document not only because of its disclosure of a fragmentary educational philosophy but also because it was the first program for mass education in modern India. Carey drew up a comprehensive scheme, including primary and higher education, along with the practical financial means for realizing it. Interestingly enough, in the intended curriculum for training the future teachers of India, Carey emphasized "science" far more than he did any other subject—including religion.

Carey actually proposed two plans. The first was designed to

18 The original proposals in manuscript form are now with the records of the General Committee on Public Instruction, 1823–1841, at the West Bengal Record Office, Calcutta.


20 Ibid., p. 22.

21 Ibid., p. 23.

22 West Bengal Record Office, Calcutta, "Dr. Carey’s Plan for Instructing Native Inhabitants of India in European Sciences," June, 1814, found in the Minutes, Proceedings and Correspondence of the General Committee on
educate all the inhabitants of British India, through their own lan-
guages.\textsuperscript{23} The government had a “benevolent” responsibility in this
matter even though the expense for such a system would be pro-
hibitive.\textsuperscript{24} He urged a system of mass education on a national level,
modeled on the Serampore scheme soon to be spelled out in a book
by his colleague, Joshua Marshman.\textsuperscript{25}

If the government should feel that mass education was premature
or too expensive,\textsuperscript{26} he offered a second plan closer to the elitist symp-
tathies of the majority of Orientalists. Carey suggested that the
College of Fort William be expanded with government funds\textsuperscript{27} to
accommodate and instruct natives who might then return to their
indigenous institutions and carry the “new scientific knowledge” to
the people.\textsuperscript{28} This scientific knowledge would include mathematics
and biology, mechanical philosophy (physics), and the other
natural sciences.\textsuperscript{29} Indeed, modern science was to be stressed above
all other fields. Carey visualized 100 students on the “native campus”
of Fort William being instructed by three European professors
assisted by a native faculty of six.\textsuperscript{30}

In the same year, 1813, a third plan was submitted to the govern-
ment by J. H. Harington, then a judge of the Sudder Dewani Ada-
lut. Harington offered a compromise between the classical and the
vernacular Orientalists. To please the classical Orientalists, such as
Colebrooke, Harington urged rehabilitating the better Indian institu-
tions of higher learning—especially those in Benares, Bihar, and
Bengal.\textsuperscript{31} In response to Lord Minto’s appeal of 1813, Harington
proposed that new libraries be attached to these institutions in order
that the fruits of the latest “cultural” discoveries of hitherto “locked-

__

Public Instruction, 1823–1841. Cited hereafter as Carey’s Plan and GCPI
MPC, both of which are unpaginated.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} Infra, p. 158.

\textsuperscript{26} Carey estimated that the mass educational scheme he envisaged would
cost 97,000 rupees. See Carey’s Plan, June, 1814.

\textsuperscript{27} Carey claimed that the new buildings would cost the government 50,000
rupees. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} J. H. Harington, “Observations for the Promotion of Science and Litera-
ture amongst the Inhabitants in India,” n.d. GCPI MPC.
up treasures” be accessible to Indian scholars. In order that intellectuals generally might benefit from the re-discovered knowledge, these libraries were to be public.

Like Carey, Harrington saw the need to introduce European knowledge to the natives of India, for he held that indigenous knowledge alone was not sufficient to rehabilitate a decadent “Oriental” culture. Harrington therefore advocated a dual educational system on all levels in which European knowledge would be taught in English as well as in the classical Indian languages and “dialects.” Harrington thus anticipated by a decade the flexible Orientalism of H. H. Wilson and the General Committee of Public Instruction, to be discussed later, and helped popularize what may be called the engrafting theory of “Westernization.” Instead of imposing an alien language, the Orientalists advocated gradual assimilation of alien knowledge by engrafting the English system upon the indigenous one.

On June 3, 1814, the Court of Directors dispatched a set of instructions on education to Marquess Hastings containing “our sentiments as to the mode in which it will be advisable you should proceed, and the measures you should adopt. . . .” Despite the Evangelical triumph of 1813, the Court of 1814 employed a classically Orientalist approach:

We have kept in view those peculiar circumstances of our political relation with India which, having necessarily transferred all power and pre-eminence from native to European agency, have rendered it incumbent upon us, from motives of policy as well as from a principle of justice, to consult the feelings, and even to yield to the prejudices of the natives. . . .

As the Court viewed it, there were “two distinct propositions” involved in the program of educational reform provided for in the 1813 Charter Act: “First, the encouragement of the learned natives

---

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 This idea was actually utilized by H. H. Wilson at Government Sanskrit College. *Infra*, pp. 179–184.
37 Harrington, GCPI MPC.
38 Extract from a letter in the Public Department from the Court of Directors to the Governor-General-in-Council of Bengal, June 3, 1814, quoted in B. D. Basu, p. 8.
39 Ibid.
of India, and the revival and improvement of literature; secondly, the promotion of a knowledge of the sciences amongst the inhabitants of that country.\textsuperscript{40} The Court opposed any move to promote these ends through the establishment of "public colleges" because "natives by caste and of reputation will not submit to the subordination and discipline of a college. . . ."\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, they recommended instruction in private homes, encouraged "in some instances by grants of pecuniary assistance."\textsuperscript{42} Whatever plan might be adopted, it should "be conducted with due attention to the usages and habits of the natives."\textsuperscript{43}

The Court looked to Benares as the most likely center for any all-India revival scheme, since the Hindus "regarded it as the central point of their religious worship, and as the great repository of their learning."\textsuperscript{44} They recommended that Hastings visit the holy city and investigate "establishments still existing for the diffusion of knowledge in that city . . . and in what way these present establishments might be improved to most advantage."\textsuperscript{45}

The cultural position taken by the Court of Directors was not dissimilar to that of the high-culture Orientalists. The Court not only supported the existing Hindu elite but aimed at restoring the "best" elements of the Sanskritic tradition. Considering the influence of Charles Grant, the dispatch was strangely devoid of Evangelical sentiments:

We are informed that there are in the Sanskrit language many excellent systems of Ethics, with codes of laws and compendiums of the duties relating to every class of people, the study of which might be useful to those natives who may be destined for the Judicial Department of Government. There are also many tracts of merit, we are told, on the virtue of plants and drugs, and on the application of them in medicine, the knowledge of which might prove desirable to the European practitioner, and there are treatises on Astronomy and Algebra, which, though they may not add new light to European science, might be made to form links of communication between the natives and the gentlemen in our service, which are attached to the Observatory and to the depart-
ment of engineers, and by such intercourse the natives might gradually be led to adopt the modern improvements in those and other sciences.48

Marquess Hastings apparently studied all these plans in some detail, but he seems to have been a man of pronounced individuality who proceeded according to his own inclinations. He strongly favored the cultivation of the vernacular languages. In June, 1814, he told the graduating class of the College of Fort William, "I even think that we have erred with regard to our Greek and Latin. Our sense of the inestimable benefit we have reaped from the treasures of taste and science, which they have handed down to us have led us to an extravagance of reverence for them."47

Hastings visited Benares as the Court had requested, but his reaction to the experience was not quite what they had expected. Hastings was so dismayed by the decadence he found there that "any bounty to the existing colleges appears to me a project altogether delusive."48 He found that "the students only got by heart certain formularies unexplained to them by professors incapable of expounding the spirit of the lessons."49 He concluded:

The revival of the liberal sciences among the natives can only be affected by the previous education (beginning with the rudiments) which shall gradually give to individuals the power of observing the relations of different branches of learning with each other, of comprehending the right use of science in the business of life, and of directing their enlargement of thought to the promotion of those moral observances in which rests the temporal conscience of society as well as the sublimer duty of man. Then, but not till then, such records or traces of ancient lore as remain in the universities may be useful. Consequently to this opinion, I must think that the sum set apart by the Hon'ble Court for the advancement of science among the natives would be much more expediently applied in the improvement of schools, than in gifts to seminaries of higher degree.50

To understand the early stages of Bengal's cultural renaissance, it is extremely important to take into account both Hastings's dismay at the situation in Benares and his strong vernacularist leanings

48 Ibid., p. 11.
47 Public Disputations (1814), p. 5.
48 Adam, p. 422.
49 Ibid., p. 423.
50 Ibid.
on behalf of popular culture improvement. Utilizing the institutional mechanism of the College of Fort William, while evidencing much interest in the Serampore Mission’s philosophy of cultural change, Hastings made Calcutta—not Benares—the center of the new education. On October 11, 1815, he declared that he was ready to act “on a remedy to the evils which afflict the country,” and added:

The moral duties require encouragement. The arts which adorn and embellish life will follow in ordinary course. It is for the credit of the British name that this beneficial alteration should arise under British sway. To be the source of blessings to the immense population of India is an ambition worthy of our country. In proportion as we have found intellect sterile here, the obligation is stronger on us to cultivate it. The field is noble; may we till it worthily.  

Hastings seems to have inspired those around him with his vision of revitalization. He actually campaigned among groups of official and nonofficial Europeans in an effort to enlist the support of like-minded individuals dedicated to change. Hastings became the first governor-general to visit Serampore Mission and to identify his own convictions on vernacular mass education with those of the Baptists. He won the active backing of Wellesley’s bright young men and their successors who administered the affairs of state when he was in the field. These men assisted in the organization and administration of the new societies and institutions that emerged from 1816 onwards as agencies for the Hastings program of reform. The young men who, more than a decade earlier, had written essays at the College of Fort William expounding glib theories of Hindu renaissance now had the opportunity to realize their youthful dreams. Indeed, some of these men were among the finest and most culturally sympathetic civil servants that ever represented Britain in India. Behind the formation of Hindu College (1816), the Calcutta School Book Society (1817), and the Calcutta School Society (1818) were the Fort William elite of W. B. Bayley, Hold Mac-

---

51 Minute of the Governor-General-in-Council on the Administration of Justice in Bengal, October 11, 1815, quoted in J. C. Marshman, II, 117.
52 Ibid., p. 118.
53 These men included those in the judiciary as well as Hyde East and J. H. Harington.
54 J. C. Marshman, II, 112.
kenzie, W. H. Macnaughten, George Swinton, Thomas Fortesque, and H. T. Prinsep.

Although it was the service elite under Hastings who proved instrumental in carrying out the new programs aimed at modernizing the Indian traditions, the earliest impetus for popular cultural revitalization came from the missionaries at Serampore. For years they had actively seconded the Asiatic Society in reconstructing a Sanskritic Golden Age, but they shared little of the enthusiasm of their colleagues for the basic values of the Hindu high culture. The anticlassical bias of Hastings afforded them the opportunity of popularizing their own vision of a new India reshaped to conform with their image of Europe since the Reformation.

Notwithstanding the fact that these missionaries were the religious counterparts to the Orientalists in their zeal to accommodate Protestant Christianity to Indian culture rather than the reverse, the great social distance between themselves and the upper-class civil servants made high-culture classicism intellectually unattractive to them. The Serampore missionaries were self-made men of humble origin who acquired their Greek and Latin not at Oxford, as did William Jones, but in random moments of leisure from menial jobs in field and factory.

The Charter Renewal Act of 1813, with its educational provision and the new spirit of popular social reform under Marquess Hastings, gave the Serampore missionaries their opportunity to utilize printing and educational facilities for transmitting their idea of a renascent India. In 1816 Joshua Marshman published his *Hints Relative to Native Schools*, which contained both a Serampore manifesto for public education in India and a theory of European renaissance that he held out as a radiant model for Indian regeneration.

Marshman’s view of renaissance in the *Hints* was but a preliminary sketch of an idea that would be developed and reiterated again and again in Serampore newspapers, periodicals, and tracts for at least a generation. On the surface, Marshman’s opening attack on the notion of a Hindu golden age may seem very similar in spirit to the Evangelical position of Charles Grant and William Wilberforce. Marshman, no less than the Evangelicals, condemned the religious aspect of Hindu civilization as the true source of darkness and ignorance in India. But on a deeper level of analysis, Marshman’s Christian bias was considerably less significant than his anti-
classical bias against the religious heritage of the Brahmans. It was the false religion propagated by this elitist class of Brahmans that stood between the common people of India and their intellectual, spiritual, and moral regeneration.\textsuperscript{55}

The basic sociological differences between Evangelicals like Grant, whose environment was the aristocratic elegance of Clapham, and Marshman, who lived in the Baptist-styled communal settlement at Serampore, were reflected in their different approaches to cultural change in India. In fact, Marshman no less than Carey repudiated the basic Evangelical-Anglicist objective of completely supplanting indigenous learning with British scholarship imparted through the English language. "For ideas to be acquired in a foreign language," Marshman wrote, "opportunity, leisure, inclination, and ability must combine in the case of each individual."\textsuperscript{56} An Anglicist program, therefore, would effectively reach only the elite, and the peasants would remain untouched by the efforts of the reformer.\textsuperscript{57}

Marshman viewed contemporary Bengal as entering a new age reminiscent of Europe at the time of her renaissance.\textsuperscript{58} The renaissance Marshman had in mind, however, was clearly not that of the classical humanist tradition in Italy. The key to European revitalization was not the revival of Latin or Greek but the integration of useful knowledge into the vernacular so that common people learned to express "the new learning in their colloquial social intercourse."\textsuperscript{59} Peasants, whether in Europe or India, had to be made conscious of the practical value of the new knowledge, especially in the natural sciences. Such consciousness would prompt them to put that knowledge to use in an effort to improve their surroundings.\textsuperscript{60}

In April, 1818, Serampore published the \textit{Dig darśan}, with the English title of \textit{Magazine for Indian Youth}. Besides its importance as the earliest periodical in Bengali, it was the first journal disseminating bits and pieces of Western knowledge to students at Hindu College and the \textit{pathśālās} of the Calcutta School Society. The \textit{Dig}

\textsuperscript{55} Description of \textit{Hints Relative to Native Schools}, quoted in J. C. Marshman, \textit{II}, 122.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{58} See an excellent analysis of this in M. A. Laird, "William Carey and the Education of India," \textit{Indian Journal of Theology} (July–September, 1961), 79.
\textsuperscript{59} Quoted in J. C. Marshman, \textit{II}, 122.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 123.
darśan was distributed without charge, and it is likely that from its pages Calcutta youth first learned of Western history, literature, and science.\textsuperscript{61}

In a series of articles published by \textsl{Dig darśan} from May to October, 1818, the Serampore missionaries fully developed and popularized their historical interpretation of the European renaissance. The strongly optimistic tone of these articles may be explained by the general atmosphere of excitement in Calcutta during Marquess Hastings's officially sponsored programs of social action. When the articles appeared, Hindu College was one year old and the missionaries themselves were just establishing their own college at Serampore. The Calcutta School Society and School Book Society were being launched by the younger civil-service elite, who utilized the resources of the College of Fort William. Also, at the very time that \textsl{Dig darśan} appeared, Serampore printed the first issue of the \textsl{Samāckār darpan} (Mirror of the News) in Bengali, the earliest modern commercial newspaper in a popular Indian language.

In an article of August, 1818, the \textsl{Dig darśan} introduced a series on the history of Europe into the schools of India. Characteristically, the missionaries approached the subject in the form of questions. How did Europe, which "holds most of the world under its influence,"\textsuperscript{62} attain "its present superiority both in power and knowledge?" In ancient times, the missionaries wrote: "Europe was in a state of barbarism and the center of universal power was in Asia. The seat of empire has now transferred to Europe where the arts and sciences have attained their highest perfection and from where by a singular revolution in human affairs, they are now flowing back in those countries, in which they have been almost extinguished."\textsuperscript{63}

To the missionaries, modern Europe began with the Renaissance. In that period, "desire gradually arose for genuine learning and knowledge, and the dark clouds of ignorance which had for so long a time over shadowed the whole of Europe began to disperse. . . ."\textsuperscript{64} The greatest achievement of the Renaissance was not its classical revival but the development of the popular languages of Europe, "which underwent a gradual improvement and obtained

\textsuperscript{61} The \textsl{Dig darśan} was sold publicly at slightly less than one rupee per copy. See "Dig Durshan," \textsl{Friend of India}, I (May, 1818), 26.

\textsuperscript{62} "Progress of Events in Europe," \textsl{Dig darśan}, V (August, 1818), 170.

\textsuperscript{63} \textsl{Ibid.}, p. 172.

\textsuperscript{64} \textsl{Ibid.}, p. 204.
a firm foundation . . . through which the nations of Europe have since been impelled forever in a course of steady improvement."\(^{65}\)

In the wake of the early Renaissance period came one of the most significant events of all time: the development of the printing press. Printing immediately reduced the price of books and "placed the means of acquiring knowledge within the reach of the great bulk of the people."\(^{66}\) Consequently, "the qualities of the mind were aroused and such an impulse given to them that there is now no fear that mankind will ever relapse into barbarism."\(^{67}\)

The missionaries predicted that printing would have a similar impact on India. "Wherever printing had been fully introduced," they wrote, "learning and knowledge have immediately spread."\(^{68}\) It would demolish the power of Brahmanism as it had that of popery during the Reformation. Printing was indeed God's gift, the perfect medium to transmit the light of truth to the masses of India: "Before its invention, the progress made in knowledge during a thousand years, was scarcely equal to that made in a hundred years since. Europe has now sent this invaluable art, by which the knowledge now spreading in the East will continually remain and gradually acquire new splendor till every city in Hindoostan shall be filled with light."\(^{69}\)

In the *Hints Relative to Native Schools*, Marshman linked the new idea of renaissance with what may have been the earliest detailed proposal for public education in India. This document is remarkable also in that it contained the seeds for a national program of compulsory education.\(^{70}\)

On the most elementary level of education, Marshman recommended teaching peasant boys orthography, grammar, a useful vocabulary of 4,000 words, and some simple arithmetical rules. On the next level, he would acquaint the pupil with astronomy, geography, natural philosophy, minerology, and chemistry. "Such knowledge," Marshman believed, "would be invaluable to the Hindoos; and [would] rectify and enlarge their ideas of the various

\(^{65}\) Ibid.


\(^{67}\) Ibid.


aspects of nature around them."\(^71\) History, ethics and morality were subjects to be taught on the highest level. In an age when it was fashionable in some circles to depict Bengalis as dishonest, corrupt, and cowardly,\(^72\) Marshman's emphasis on moral training was significant. He wrote that morality was "intended to impart to them that knowledge relative to themselves, their responsibility for their actions, their state both here and hereafter, and the grand principles of piety, justice and humanity, which might leaven their minds from their earliest youth."\(^73\)

Marshman's hints on the practical means for establishing a system of instruction were also extremely opposite. He proposed the Lancastrian system then in vogue among the English,\(^74\) because it was cheap, somewhat similar to the indigenous mode,\(^75\) and well-adapted to teach large numbers without the need of bilingual instructors (who were virtually nonexistent in India in 1816). The plan was basically monitorial in that each boy was expected to learn his daily lesson by dictation and repetition of facts and "truths which would not fail to remain deeply impressed on the memory."\(^76\) Marshman estimated that it would cost 825 rupees a month to operate fifty such schools.\(^77\)

It is ironic that Marshman's program, designed as it was to aid the rural masses of Bengal, succeeded best among the children of the Hindu elite in the metropolis of Calcutta. In the countryside, unfortunately, the missionary programs launched from centers such as Serampore and Chinsura\(^78\) failed as mass educational experiments

\(^{71}\) Quoted in J. C. Marshman, II, 123.


\(^{73}\) Quoted in J. C. Marshman, II, 123.

\(^{74}\) Lancaster was a Quaker who helped spread this type of education early in the nineteenth century. By 1818, 600,000 children (out of 2,000,000) were attending such schools in England.

\(^{75}\) Some writers have argued that Lancaster's colleague, Andrew Bell, originally got the idea for the system of mutual tuition from India, where it had been practiced from "time immemorial." B. D. Basu, p. 13.

\(^{76}\) Quoted in J. C. Marshman, II, 125.


\(^{78}\) Robert May, one of the first missionary educators to come to India after the enactment of the Charter Act of 1813, had established an ambitious educational system in Chinsura by the end of 1814. In 1818, when he died, thirty-six schools under his superintendence were operating on the Lancastrian system. Adam, pp. 59–61.
and remained merely as isolated pockets with no appreciable impact. As Kenneth Ingham has pointed out, the main causes for the failure were beyond the control of the missionaries. Poverty forced parents to remove their children from school in order to work during planting and harvest time. Pupils were obliged to attend innumerable religious festivals. Monsoons hindered attendance, and periodic epidemics not only decimated the local population but compelled it to move elsewhere.\textsuperscript{79}

Whereas in rural Bengal the missionaries provided the impetus for educational reform, in Calcutta the government assumed the initiative for new experiments in popular education. The Calcutta School Society, founded in September of 1818 by the same people who established its sister organization, the School Book Society, proved to be one of the more interesting educational experiments of the Orientalists. The purpose of this institution was to improve existing schools “with the view to the more general diffusion of useful knowledge amongst the inhabitants of India.”\textsuperscript{80} The Society’s task was to appoint a committee of Bengalis and Europeans to investigate the condition of Calcutta schools and to submit its findings to the first general meeting.\textsuperscript{81} According to these findings, which were made public in 1819, there were in Calcutta “190 Bengalee Pathshallas [elementary schools] averaging 22 pupils or aggregating 4,180 children under instruction.”\textsuperscript{82} The state of education in these schools was found to be deplorable. The report characterized the curriculum as being entirely confined to the writing of the alphabet and figures and a very imperfect knowledge of arithmetic. Reading is not practiced, for although in a very few schools two or three of the most advanced boys wrote small portions of the most popular practical compositions, the manuscript copy is so inaccurate that they only became confirmed in a most vitiated manner of spelling, while as regards knowledge of the sciences or their relative or moral duties, they are entirely without foundation.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 9–10.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid.}
From the Society’s report it was evident that a concerted effort was being made to reform Calcutta schools. A respectable Bengali named Radhakant Deb had personally introduced changes in "57 schools and 3,000 boys are now under the influence of the Society." A retired Scottish businessman, David Hare, had built a school for the Society and was supporting it entirely from his own financial resources. The Society was soon able to boast that its schools were stepping stones to Hindu College and that fifty of their students had been accepted there for higher education.

Throughout the 1820’s, the Society, with the support of the Calcutta intelligentsia and elite, continually expanded its operations and almost completely altered the existing system of lower education in Calcutta. Though overshadowed by the dazzling achievements of Hindu College, the Society schools probably did the real formative work of training many of the students who later won distinction as Derozio’s disciples. Under Orientalist administration, and guided by manuals such as Marshman’s valuable Hints, Calcutta schools had by 1835 undergone the following changes:

Printed instead of manuscript school-books are now in common use. The branches formerly taught are now taught more thoroughly, and instruction is extended to subjects formerly neglected, viz., the orthography of the Bengalee language, geography, and moral truths and obligations. The mode of instruction has been improved. . . . The system of teaching with the assistance of monitors, and or arranging the boys in classes, formed with reference to similarity of ability or proficiency, has been adopted. . . . A system of superintendence has been organized . . . examinations, both public and private, yearly and half-yearly, or quarterly . . . have been held in the presence of European and Native gentlemen, when gratuities were given to deserving teachers, and prizebooks to the best scholars. . . .

In the Society’s fourth report (1825), Radhakant Deb had expressed pleasure concerning the progress made since 1818, when

---

84 Ibid., p. 16.
85 P. C. Mitra, Biographical Sketch of David Hare, p. 52.
86 Ibid.
87 Two of the leading Derozians who definitely received their primary education in these schools were Rasik Krishna Mullick (born 1810) and Krishna Mohun Bannerji (born 1813). Quite possibly Shib Chandra Das (born 1811) and Radhanath Sikdar (born 1813) attended Hare’s school before going on to Hindu College.
88 Adam, pp. 9–10.
the Calcutta schoolmasters at first refused “to come under the control of the Society.”  

Now the Society managed 166 schools.  

As in the case of the School Book Society, the School Society seems to have lost local support and vitality as an organization during the Bentinck administration (1828–1835). By the time that the fifth report (1829) was made public, the number of schools under Society jurisdiction had rapidly dwindled to eighty-one, and “since that date,” wrote William Adam in 1835, “there has been no account given to the public of the Society’s operations.”  

In 1833, the supervised examination system, so crucial to the Society reform program, was discontinued.

One far-reaching result of selecting Calcutta as urban setting for the Hastings-inspired popular renaissance was that it contributed directly to Bengali regionalism. Though Hastings visualized an “Indian” renaissance, in actual fact the new programs were largely confined to the Bengali metropolis and those who benefited most were the local Hindu intelligentsia and elite.

For over a decade (1801–12), William Carey, representing Sanskrit and Bengali at the college, had found himself constantly threatened by the favored Persian group on the one hand and the Hindustani group on the other. This struggle may be viewed as the beginnings of Hindu-Muslim rivalry in microcosm but without Hindu and Muslim participants. In a deeper sense, William Carey’s ambivalent defense of Hinduism and of Bengali culture or the Gilchrist-Hunter defense of Islam and the “Hindustani” culture provided a prototypical dialectic for the later Hindu-Muslim struggle.

After Hunter’s death in Java in 1812, the Muslim side of this rivalry within the college was carried on by Thomas Roebuck, the fourth consecutive Scotsman to join Fort William’s Urdu department. Roebuck, son of an iron-works manufacturer in Scot-
land, came to India at the age of twenty in 1801.96 As a bright young military cadet in the Madras establishment, he demonstrated an unusual ability to learn Indian languages and was called upon to serve with Governor-general Wellesley in the latter’s 1803 campaign against Sindhis.96 Two years later, bad health forced Roebuck to return to England, where he met the famed John Gilchrist. Gilchrist had himself recently returned from India97 and was tutoring candidates in Urdu for the Indian civil and military service.98 Roebuck soon became Gilchrist’s disciple and assisted him in completing a 700 page English-Hindustani Dictionary in which every Urdu word was transliterated into its equivalent in the Roman alphabet.99

Roebuck returned to India in 1810, but instead of going back to Madras he was brought by Governor-general Minto to Calcutta in order to utilize his abilities at the College of Fort William. In 1811, Roebuck published a revised edition of Gilchrist’s 1803 collection of Persian tales in Urdu entitled Bagh-o-Bohar. According to H. H. Wilson, Roebuck’s edition of this work for Fort William students was “the best guide to the idiom of the high Hindustani language that has yet been published.”100

In 1814, after the regular Urdu professor, J. W. Taylor, complained that he could not handle both the Urdu and Hindi programs, Roebuck was called upon to take over the Urdu classes.101 Soon afterwards Roebuck won pecuniary support for an Urdu adaptation of Abul Fazl’s classic Khirud Ufraz, which was intended to give the student an introduction to the civilization of Moghul India. In sixteen chapters, extending to 805 pages, Roebuck re-created Fazl’s ideas on “philosophy, Machiavellian tactics, accomplishments of great physicians, punishment, foreign policy, ethics,” and so forth, all “expressed in beautiful tales.”102 Roebuck was proud that the government had chosen to sponsor a vernacu-

96 Ibid., p. viii.
97 Supra, p. 84.
99 Ibid., p. xiii.
100 Ibid., p. xviii.
101 PFW, DLXII (October 30, 1813), 557.
102 Ibid., DLXIII (August 10, 1814), 190.
larized version of "this classic achievement" of Indian Islam. To
commemorate the occasion, "a new type had been cut under the
direction of Dr. Charles Wilkins in England . . . and 500 copies
would be printed on the best Patna paper."\textsuperscript{103} Roebuck added, "This
type . . . is more superior than anything yet used in the country . . .
having all the words of a sentence apart from each other, while
the letters of each word are brought as near as possible. . . . We
are also inserting marks of interrogation. Students will now read
the language with greater facility."\textsuperscript{104}

Between 1815 and 1818, Roebuck became Carey's chief com-
petitor not only in the struggle between Islamic and Hindu studies
but in the greater conflict over the college priority of the Indian
vernaculars. Unfortunately for Roebuck, none of the Urdu lin-
guistic innovations seemed to go beyond the walls of the college
building. Carey, on the other hand, was from 1817 onward beset
by Bengalis outside the operational sphere of Fort William with
requests for college support for their literary undertakings. The
Muslim community of Calcutta, presumably undergoing no ap-
preciable sociocultural change, somehow failed to produce a Ram-
mohun Roy or Ram Camul Sen, two among many English-
acculturated Hindu intellectuals of Calcutta who appealed to Carey
for college patronage.\textsuperscript{105}

From the Carey correspondence in the College of Fort William
records, it is evident that he had fought a long, desperate battle to
give Sanskrit and Bengali equal status with Persian and Urdu.\textsuperscript{106}
When the first volume of his long-awaited Bengali Dictionary ap-
peared in 1818, Carey reviewed the years of struggle on behalf of
Bengali:

\begin{quote}
Till of late, the Bengalee language was almost wholly neglected
by Europeans, under the idea of its being a mere jargon, only used
by the lower orders of people. Most of the Vernacular languages
of India still lie under the same neglect, from a supposition that the
Hindoosthanee (Ordoo) is the language universally prevailing. . . .

The mistaken idea that the Mossulman dialect of the Hindoo-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Ram Camul Sen asked support for a Bengali–English dictionary on
February 22, 1817. PCFW, DLXIV (February 22, 1817), 343–345. Rammohun
Roy's request was for the publication of the Vedanta Darshan on September
29, 1818. Ibid., DLXV (September 29, 1818), 155–156.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., DLXI (April 11, 1811), 505–506.
sthanee was the most prevalent language in India was probably the cause that formerly induced the greater number of those Europeans who came thither, to study it in preference to all others. . . .

The imperfect knowledge of the Ordo dialect being deemed sufficient for all ordinary purposes, the great body of Europeans were thereby led to despise the vernacular languages of the country, and in consequence remain ignorant of them.

Since the institution of the College of Fort William, this prejudice has been gradually giving way. The Bengalee language has become an object of study, a good number of the Civil Servants of the Honourable Company, and many other persons resident in India, have made it the object of their attention and not a few may be ranked among the number of good Bengalee Scholars. . . .

Until 1815 Carey had been entrusted with all the Hindu vernaculars. In that year, a Hindi class was seriously taught for the first time. The class was primarily for military students who found greater need for Hindi as the British war machine moved westward. In the wake of Hastings's phenomenal successes on the battlefield between 1816 and 1819, during which time the Pindaris were crushed, the Marathas defeated, and the Rajput states brought within the pale of British "protection," Hindi underwent a sudden metamorphosis from an inconsequential dialect to a paramount vernacular at the College of Fort William. In September, 1818, Thomas Roebuck—by then, secretary of the college and chairman of the Urdu Department—requested official support for a full-scale program in Hindi. The report embodying his request has great significance in the light of present-day attempts by the Government of India to promote Hindi as the national language. While representing Hindi, rather than Bengali, to be the true Indian lingua franca, but at the same time continuing to support Urdu as the common language of the Indian Muslims, Roebuck informed the governor-general's office:

With reference to the above circumstances and that the Bengali language is not spoken or understood above Rajmuhul; and that from thence upwards to the extremity of the Honourable Company's Possessions, that either the Hindoostanee, or those dialects of it, termed Bruj Bhoshu and Porubee Bhoshu [Hindi] are universally spoken and where the majority of the Honourable Com-

107 Quoted in Dās, pp. 158-160.
108 See Roebuck's report in PCFW, DLXV (September, 1818), 209.
109 Ibid., pp. 203-211.
pany's Civil and Military Servants are employed: I respectfully beg leave to suggest that measures be taken in future both at the College of Hertford and Fort William, to secure not only a more general cultivation of the Hindoostanee, but also of those dialects, which the last above is spoken over a much greater extent of Country than the whole of the Province of Bengal itself. . . . 110

In spite of the recognized need for more extensive Hindi training and systematization, Roebuck's program remained unimplemented for decades at the college. In the first place, its proponents were primarily interested in Urdu, and secondly, Hindi had neither an urbanized intelligentsia to stress the need to develop it nor a public in a modern sense able or willing to support it as a medium of sophisticated expression. Bengali, on the other hand, nourished itself on the fruits of metropolitan Calcutta and became the vital language of an urban and articulate elite.

110 Ibid., p. 209.
The New Frontiers of Orientalist Scholarship under H. H. Wilson

In 1812, the College Council, in dire need of a useful Sanskrit dictionary, finally agreed to support H. H. Wilson, an unknown enthusiast of Sanskrit language and literature who then worked in the Calcutta Mint and managed the Hindoostanee Press. On April 22, 1812, Wilson had requested 100 rupees per month “to defray expenses” in this worthy project to promote Sanskrit. The Council, however, apparently needed evidence of his competence, for it had delayed granting his request.

On June 7, 1813, Wilson appealed to the Council for “assistance in translating the Megha Dutt, a Sanscrit poem which will throw light on the customs and notions of the Hindus.” In the preface to a later edition (1843), Wilson admitted that he published the work in order to gain recognition as a Sanskritist. Looking back, he saw the 1813 Hindoostanee Press edition as a “juvenile work” in which “the translator has... sometimes not only departed from his original...

1 Wilson was born in about 1786, studied at St. Thomas Hospital in London and, like so many other excellent linguists, came to India as a surgeon for the Company in 1808. “Horace Hyman Wilson,” Concise Dictionary of National Biography, p. 119.
2 PCFW, DLXII (April 22, 1812), 162.
3 Ibid. (June 7, 1813), p. 450.
5 H. H. Wilson, Megha Dutt (Calcutta: Hindoostanee Press, 1813).
further than was necessary, but further than was justifiable. . . .”

However, his version of Kalidasa’s poems so impressed Carey and Colebrooke that Wilson’s career as an eminent Orientalist was assured.

In 1816, the Court of Directors wrote an urgent letter to the College Council expressing the need for a good Sanskrit dictionary to be used both at Haileybury and Fort William. “Must we still rely on the Cosha by Colebrooke,” the Court asked, “which he said in his preface was only intended to supply the want until a larger compilation were undertaken?” Wilson, who had by now established himself as Colebrooke’s successor at the Asiatic Society, and was employed by the College of Fort William, immediately took charge of the project. On June 22, 1816, he was advanced 3,750 rupees.

On October 28, 1819, the Government Gazette reported in boldface type that “on this day was published a Sanscrit and English Dictionary by Horace Hyman Wilson in one Large Volume.” The work was considered an improvement in the process of rationalizing Sanskrit lexicography. Wilson looked upon his efforts as “the first labours of the pioneer,” which “must be necessarily rough and incomplete.” However, “the path had been laid open, and it remained for succeeding generations to smooth, to level, and to embellish it.”

In this manner, H. H. Wilson, known to some for his corrective footnotes to James Mill’s History of India (1840) and to others as the first professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, slowly established himself as the successor of H. T. Colebrooke as leading Orientalist in India. With Wilson, the older Orientalist preoccupation with

---

7 PCFW, DLXIII (January 4, 1816), 474.
8 Ibid.
9 Wilson had been secretary of the Asiatic Society since 1811, but Colebrooke overshadowed him as a Sanskritist until 1815.
10 One of Wilson’s chief duties at the college was to examine students in Sanskrit and Hindu law. His appointment there occurred on May 21, 1816.
PCFW, DLXIV (May 21, 1816), 125.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
Vedic India came to an end and a new era of scholarly interest in "medieval" India began.\textsuperscript{16} If Colebrooke was identified primarily with the Vedas, Wilson did his best work in translating, describing, and analyzing the Puranas.\textsuperscript{17} Wilson's broad interests in the whole range of post-Vedantic Indian history not only encouraged regional middle-period studies but paved the way for the discoveries of Maurya and Gupta India.\textsuperscript{18}

In 1813, a professor of Oriental language and literature at Haileybury published the History of Bengal, which was not only the earliest "regional" work of its kind but also a very important textbook in the schools of Calcutta for at least half a century.\textsuperscript{19} The historian, Charles Stewart, had begun his scholarly career at the College of Fort William as second assistant professor in the Persian department in 1803.\textsuperscript{20} Two years later, the college had sent him to

\textsuperscript{16} The question may be raised about the relationship between the new "medieval" interest in India and the comparable "medieval" interest during the same period in European nations. Many European historians view this new interest as having been an attribute of Romanticism and a useful tool in the service of nationalism. In the opinion of the author, the new interest in India as expressed in the scholarship of H. H. Wilson and his generation of Orientalists was still very much in the cosmopolitan tradition of the Enlightenment. However, these medieval models seem to have proved far more effective for Indian nationalists than the Vedantic ones.

\textsuperscript{17} Wilson was assisted in his early translations by several Bengali intellectuals—notably Tarachand Chakrabarti and Ram Comul Sen. For Wilson's pioneering work, see H. H. Wilson, "Analysis of the Puranas," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, I (1832), 81–86; 217–237;—"Analysis of the Vishnu-purāṇa," JASB, I (1832), 431–442;—"Analysis of the Vāyu-purāṇa," JASB, I (1832), 535–543.

\textsuperscript{18} The rediscovery of Mauryan India was dramatically announced to the world in 1837 by Wilson's successor in Calcutta, James Prinsep. The ability to read the Brāhmi script culminated several years of intensive work by Orientalists in Ceylon and Nepal on the history of Buddhism in South Asia. For excellent background material on the scholarly events leading up to the discovery, see R. L. Mitra, Centenary Review, pp. 7, 8, 33, 53, 54, 59, 104–118. The work on the Gupta era (3rd–6th centuries A.D.)—for many, the true classical age of India—started also in the 1830's from research in coins and inscriptions.


\textsuperscript{20} Supra, p. 85.
Mysore to catalogue Tipu Sultan's famous library and paid him handsomely for his work. 21 His Descriptive Catalogue of the Library of Tipu Sultan appeared in 1809, and many of the newly discovered manuscripts were subsequently published for the first time.

Significantly, Stewart's History of Bengal began with the Muslim period because "although the Hindoos of Bengal have an equal claim to antiquity and early civilization with the other nations of India, yet we have not any authentic information respecting them during the early ages of their progress; nor is there any other positive evidence of the ancient existence of Bengal, as a separate kingdom, for any considerable period than its distinct language and peculiar written character." 22 Stewart was hopeful of discovering evidence of the pre-Muslim period, since considerable historical research was being carried on in Calcutta: "I am credibly informed that materials have been and are still collecting for furnishing an authentic account of the Hindoo governments. . . . I hope that we shall one day be favored with a history of Bengal from the pure mine of Sanskrit literature." 23

Significantly, at this juncture, Wilson sought to establish himself as an Orientalist. One way to leave his imprint was by illuminating those "perplexing labyrinths, dark passages and cumbrous obstructions" 24 that constituted the history of India between the Vedas and the rise of the Muslims. Before the serious utilization of archeology in the Prinsep era of the 1830's, texts were studied carefully by scholars convinced that philological competence was the key to the Hindu past. For this reason the College of Fort William, with its superb library of manuscripts and its emphasis on philology, played an important role in the early historical discoveries. 25 For the same reason also some of the finest examples of Wilson's historical analysis are found in the introductions and prefaces to his philological and literary work.

In the preface to his 1813 edition of the Megha Dutt, H. H. Wilson reviewed the progress made from the time of William Jones to

21 Stewart received 3,000 rupees as a grant for the project and 50 rupees each month for living and other expenses. PCFW, DLIX (August 7, 1805), 430.
23 Ibid., p. xl.
25 Infra, p. 188.
that date in discovering the history of the “Hindu nation.” The major contribution of Jones was his identification through Greek sources of Patibothra as Pataliputra and Sandracottus as Chandragupta. Since this discovery in 1793, scholars had not, Wilson felt, investigated Hindu history for its own sake but seemed more concerned with classical grammar, mythology, philosophy, and astronomy. Wilson was convinced that the Hindus did have a history that would ultimately come to light through literature and inscriptions.

In 1818, Hastings, as President of the Asiatic Society, supported Wilson, its Secretary, in new measures to enhance the effectiveness of the institution as an agency for historical scholarship. Meetings were now to be held twice a month on Wednesday instead of scheduling one meeting every three months. The ever-growing coin collection was now assembled and provided for in a museum. The primary function of the Society as historical and archaeological repository and headquarters for all of India really began with the Hastings-Wilson reforms of 1818. H. H. Wilson’s close Bengali friend, Ram Camul Sen, was hired to co-ordinate these activities.

One of Wilson’s most formidable tasks was to demythologize the legendary heroes of the Hindus. Wilson, as a leading Indologist working in Calcutta, constantly reviewed the most recently acquired historical data and the various interpretations of those data. In the preface to his Sanscrit Dictionary of 1819, for example, he praised those who had “rescued” Sankara from mythology and had transformed him into an historical figure. Wilson had already performed this difficult feat with Kalidasa in 1813 and, after doing the same for Sankara, he hoped to demythologize and give historical substance to the sacred figure of Buddha.

---

28 William Jones announced these first discoveries of “Hindu history” in his tenth annual discourse (1793), entitled “Asiatic History, Civil and Natural,” in Asiatic Researches, IV (1795), 6.
27 Wilson, Megha Dutt (1813), p. iv.
28 Ibid., p. vi.
29 LASB-MP, III (April 1, 1818), 35.
31 LASB-MP, III (August 10, 1818), 40.
32 In 1821, Sen’s monthly salary for this extra duty increased from 12 to 70 rupees. Ibid. (April 13, 1821), p. 105.
34 Wilson, Megha Dutt, p. vi.
35 Wilson, A Dictionary, p. xv.
Demythologizing for Wilson’s generation of Orientalists was always dependent upon the discovery of a plausible chronological scheme. The legendary Sankara about whom Brahmans had concocted “absurd views of his life” was to Wilson entirely devoid of any reasonable historical dimension. Wilson’s first step in establishing Sankara’s historicity came as a result of reading a manuscript of the Vaishnava Brahmans of Madura (in the Colin Mackenzie Collection) which reported that Sankara lived in the ninth century of the Christian era. Colebrooke’s subsequent research indicated A.D. 1000. A noted Bengali intellectual, also an acquaintance of Wilson’s, concurred with Colebrooke. "This is the age," wrote Wilson, "which my friend Rammohan Roy, a diligent student of Sancara’s works, and philosophical teacher of his doctrines, is disposed to concur in. . . ." Wilson’s own opinion was that, "from a calculation of the spiritual generations of the followers of Sancar Swami from his time up to this date, he seems to have lived between the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era. This distance of time agrees with the statements made by Dr. Buchanan in his journey through Sancar’s native country, Malabar." On July 4, 1821, Wilson read a paper before the members of the Asiatic Society on "the only Hindoo composition yet discovered to which the title of History can be applied with any propriety." He referred to his recent translation of a manuscript on the history of Kashmir. This manuscript, the Raja Taringini, "turned out to be a series of compositions by different authors in different periods . . . which start with the legendary history of the province and terminate with the reign of Sangrana Deva in 1027 . . . ." Wilson published his edition of the Raja Taringini in 1825.

In the 1820’s, under Wilson’s leadership and using the research facilities of the Asiatic Society and the College of Fort William, the younger generation of British Orientalists began a serious study of

---

38 Ibid., p. xvi.
37 Infra, p. 188.
38 Wilson, A Dictionary, p. xvi.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
non-Aryan, non-Vedantic cultures in South Asia. Wilson encouraged them to pursue two objectives—the cultivation of Buddhist studies and the reconstruction of Hindu (middle-period regional) histories.

In 1822, Wilson announced his determination to separate the legendary figure of Buddha from the historical one and to end the mystery surrounding Buddhism in ancient Indian history. At about the same time, Benjamin Clough started his detailed analysis of the sacred language of Buddhism—the results of which he would publish in 1824 as a *Compendius Pali Grammar*. In that same year, Brian Hodgson, then British resident in Nepal, won financial support from the College of Fort William (through the recommendation of Wilson and William Carey), to begin gathering manuscripts on Buddhism in the Himalayan region. Hodgson's finds, which he regularly dispatched to the libraries of the College of Fort William, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and the newly-formed Asiatic societies in Europe, became the single most important source for reconstructing the history of early Buddhism. Hodgson's articles on Indian Buddhism, which began to appear in the late 1820's, were themselves immensely important pioneering

---

46 H. H. Wilson, "Extent of Boodhism in India," *Friend of India*, V (September, 1822), 245.

48 On April 12, 1822, before members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Clough could still speculate on "whether the Pali or Sanskrit be the more ancient language of India." *Asiatic Society*, *Calcutta Journal*, V (April 19, 1822), 545.

49 *Centenary Review*, Part 11, 158.


51 Some of the more significant articles by Hodgson are: "Notices of the Languages, Literature, and Religion of the Baudhas of Nepal and Bhot," *Asiatick Researches* (1825), XVI, 409–478; "European Speculations on Buddhism," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, III (1834), 382–388; "Remarks on M. Remusat's Review of Buddhism," *JASB*, III (1834), 499–
contributions.\textsuperscript{53} Indeed, such research in the 1820's paved the way for the significant developments of the 1830's which led directly to James Prinsep's rediscovery of the Buddhist emperor Asoka.\textsuperscript{58}

In 1823, while continuing to compile evidence for his book on Hindu dramas, Wilson brought out the first systematic history of Hindu medicine.\textsuperscript{54} A year later, he published a little known but extremely interesting polemical essay on \textit{Hindoo Law as it is Current in Bengal},\textsuperscript{55} which could well be interpreted as a defense of Bengali regionalism. In the essay, Wilson sought to refute Chief Justice Francis Macnaughten's charge that Bengali law was a confusing and pejorative form of the classical code.\textsuperscript{56} Wilson, citing Colebrooke,\textsuperscript{57} argued that the source of confusion lay not in the faulty Bengali interpretation of the great tradition but in Macnaughten's unreasonable expectation that contemporary legal practice would follow a model as remote and historically obscure as a classic Sanskritic Code.\textsuperscript{58} In Wilson's opinion, one had to accept the fact that Hindu legal customs vary from region to region.\textsuperscript{59} Moreover, contemporary Hindu learning and culture was in a state of decadence.\textsuperscript{60} Therefore, instead of continuing to study one classical model, scholars should do intensive historical work on the diverse legal authorities, giving "probable dates of their existence," exploring the "conditions of Hindu Society to which their institutes applied," and depicting "the local character of their influence."\textsuperscript{61}

In 1825, a bright young Orientalist named Andrew Stirling\textsuperscript{62}


\textsuperscript{54} It is not without significance that Hodgson wrote 122 articles on different aspects of Himalayan life and culture between 1825 and 1858. \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Infra}, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{56} H. H. Wilson, "On the Medical and Surgical Sciences of the Hindus," \textit{Oriental Magazine}, I (February, 1823), 207–212.

\textsuperscript{57} H. H. Wilson, "On the Hindoo Law as it is Current in Bengal," \textit{Ibid.}, III (May, 1825), 171–240.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 172.

\textsuperscript{59} See Colebrooke's discussion of this point \textit{supra}, pp. 88–89.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 176.

\textsuperscript{62} For his excellent scholastic background at the College of Fort William and for earliest elitist position, see Table 4, p. 99.
organized the results of his research on inscriptions of pre-Muslim Orissa and published the earliest systematic survey of the history of Orissa. In 1825 also, because of his own research in the writing of his "Essay on the Hindu History of Kashmir," Wilson developed a serious interest in the history of the Rajputs. The particular question to which he addressed himself and for which he had failed to find satisfactory historical documentation was why the Rajputs fell before the Muslims in the twelfth century. The knowledge of such questions and problems ultimately led James Tod to publish in 1829 his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, one of the most sympathetic and influential Orientalist pieces on regional history ever written by an Englishman in India.

By 1833, when Wilson set sail for England, he had himself brought to light or inspired others to bring to light so many original historical disclosures that he might well be considered the father of post-Upanishadic historiography in India. Under his tenure as leading Orientalist scholar in Calcutta, a beginning was made in reconstructing the era of the historical Buddha and the history of the Mauryan dynasty. Under Wilson the first authentic histories of Nepal, Orissa, Rajputana, and Kashmir, based on inscriptive and written records, were written.

Wilson's wide-ranging curiosity about the Hindu past and his encouragement of medieval studies endeared him to many members of the Bengali intelligentsia who saw in him a kindred spirit in their evocation of an all-embracing Hindu renaissance. It was Wilson who was the closest of any European to almost every charter member of the later Dharma Sabha and who defended their petition against the abolition of *sati*. In return, it was the intelligentsia who

---


64 *Centenary Review*, Part II, p. 6.

65 Tod spent ten years collecting his data (1813–1823) before thinking of publishing the material. See Philips, "James Mill, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and the History of India," *Historians of India*, p. 223. The three volumes actually were published between 1829 and 1832.

66 Wilson never defended *sati* but feared that all the educational progress achieved through the years with the assistance of the Bengali elite would be undone by the new wave of Westernization amid cultural polarity. In his own words, the legal prohibition of *sati* was dangerous because "the principle of a purer morality, as well as of a more virtuous and exalted rule of action, now actively inculcated by European education and knowledge, will receive a fatal check." Quoted in K. K. Datta, *Education and Social Amelioration of Women in Pre-Mutiny India* (Patna: Patna Law Press, 1936), p. 111.
helped save his Sanskrit College in 1835, when they amassed 10,000 signatures against Macaulay’s Minute and Bentinck’s resolution calling for its abolition.\textsuperscript{67}

The critical point is that H. H. Wilson, in contrast to his common image as medieval apologist, did in fact offer Hindus a form of dynamic classicism far more palatable to them than the Vedic ideal transmitted by Jones and Colebrooke to Rammohun Roy. It was certainly evident to Wilson and to his contemporaries that something had gone wrong with Hindu civilization and that means had to be devised to revitalize it. Colebrooke’s view of what was authentic in Indian civilization and his harsh judgment on all post-Vedantic developments in Hinduism were culturally unsatisfying to most articulate Indians. Wilson, on the other hand, argued that it was neither necessary nor desirable, and was perhaps even absurd, to eliminate traits that through the ages had become deeply ingrained in Hindu culture.\textsuperscript{68} Secondly, it was to become increasingly difficult to convince Bengalis, whose known cultural origins and achievements were an integral part of “medieval” Indian history, that their true identity lay with the remote culture of the Indo-European invaders.\textsuperscript{69} In fact, it was this kind of reasoning that led more and more Indians later in the century to conclude that instead of reforming the Hindu religion, Vedantic-inspired organizations like the \textit{Brahmo Samaj} were actually “denationalizing” Indian culture.\textsuperscript{70}

In view of these observations, it might be suggested that there was a direct correlation between the new regional middle-period subject matter of Wilson’s historical writings and the rise of a his-

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Infra}, pp. 247–248.

\textsuperscript{68} We are once more confronted by the interesting possibility that Wilson’s sympathies for medieval India were akin to the contemporary European’s sympathies for his nation’s medieval past.

\textsuperscript{69} In many ways, the history of Bengal began with the disintegration of the Gupta classical age in North India (seventh century of the Christian era). Since Bengal was never within the sphere of Indo-Aryan culture, her cultural growth was heterodox (little tradition-oriented). Many Bengalis are exceedingly proud of their regional achievements, which date back to the middle period. They identify strongly with the \textit{Sakti} tradition, the \textit{Sahajiy\textasciitilde} movement, and the Vaishnava religion and literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

\textsuperscript{70} For an excellent book on the Indian renaissance reflecting this fear of Brahnoism as a subversive force in Hindu civilization, see D. S. Sharma, \textit{Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism} (Benares: Hindu University, 1944).
torical consciousness in Bengal. For the same reasons that many Hindus felt uncomfortable with the Vedantic model as an ideal, they now felt more at ease with Wilson’s less damning view of the immediate Hindu past. Wilson’s work, then, perhaps served as a bridge linking the contemporary Hindu traditions with their historically authenticated pristine forms.

The historicity of the medieval past gave the reconstituted Hindu high culture a new dimension. Even more, the historical content of “Hindu” civilization revealed a series of golden epochs that infused the newly born cultural consciousness with a regional pride.

It is not intended to suggest that this was the only crucial factor in the rise of a historical consciousness. The reader is referred to the conclusion, where these classical models are discussed as cultural aspirations. See infra, pp. 284–289. In actuality, two things are postulated here: that the Vedantic ideal or model was by no means the only nineteenth-century view of the Indian past; and that the new feelings of regional identity and sympathy for the Hindu middle ages were in fact two sides of the same historical view. Moreover, it might be suggested that the Wilsonian legacy played a far more pivotal role in the historical outlook of later Indian nationalists than the legacy of the Vedanta.

It seems significant that almost every region in South Asia not only has a “classical” age but dates that golden epoch during the middle period. Besides the above Bengal example, others would include Orissa during the time of temple-building in Bhuvaneshwar and Kanarak (sixth to twelfth centuries of the Christian era); the Rajputs anywhere from the eighth century to the period of Aurangzeb (seventeenth century); Gujarat during the same era; Tamilnad from the early centuries of the Christian era to the Chola period (eighth to thirteenth centuries); Vijayanagar as the great age of Telegu- and Kanaresee-speaking peoples (fourteenth–sixteenth centuries); and Maharashtra from the era of Shivaji to that of the Peshwas (seventeenth–eighteenth centuries).
The Transmission of Orientalist Ideals and the Intellectual Awakening of the Calcutta Intelligentsia

There seems little doubt that the era of Marquess Hastings was the golden age of British Orientalism in India. Between 1813 and 1823, as a result of unprecedented experiments in cultural fusion, Calcutta became the earliest of Asian cities to develop the qualities necessary for what Daniel Lerner has described as the transformation of a traditional society.

A sociointelectual revolution had taken place in what may then have been the largest non-Western city in the world.¹ The emphasis being on social action during the administration of Marquess Hastings, every effort was made to reach the local elite. Hastings's policy was designed to encourage Orientalists and Bengalis to work together for common goals. As we have seen, new organizations were created for that very purpose. Through such institutions as Hindu College, Hastings provided the means for what Daniel Lerner has called "media participation" that aimed at "psychic mobility" or "liberating a man from his native self . . . to shape for himself a different personality than that with which he was born."²

¹ One estimate of the population of Calcutta in 1822, as compiled by city magistrates, was 179,917 (Adam, p. 5). This figure is evidently an underestimate. In 1801-1802, Wellesley ordered a population count for revenue purposes, and found that there were 600,000 people in Calcutta and 2,225,000 living within a 35-mile radius of the city. Adam, p. 5. Through 1830, most estimates of the metropolitan population ranged between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000.
² Lerner, p. 62.
³ Ibid., pp. 47-48.
As leading Orientalist during the Hastings administration, H. H. Wilson went far beyond scholarship and served, in effect, as a cultural and educational minister in Calcutta. It was Wilson who provided the philosophy for the new activist style of Orientalism under Marquess Hastings, and more than any other single man he embodied these ideas in experimental programs of higher education.

On October 6, 1823, Wilson, as secretary of the General Committee on Public Instruction, wrote a letter to Lord Amherst in which he outlined his new scheme for higher education in Calcutta. He suggested a possible union between the financially bankrupt Hindu College and the proposed Sanskrit College.⁴

In 1823, Hindu College, a private institution, was on the brink of financial collapse.⁵ David Hare, representing the College Committee of Managers, appealed to Wilson for assistance. The appeal was successful and the famed Hindu College of Derozio and Young Bengal really owed its survival to Wilson, who gave the dying institution a new lease on life.⁶ His motive, in all probability, was to use Hindu College experimentally in an effort to realize his own educational and cultural theories.⁷ In fact, Wilson viewed Hindu College and Sanskrit College as two complementary departments, which he housed in the same building.⁸

⁴ Wilson to the Governor-general, October 6, 1823, GCPI MPC.
⁵ The most authentic information on Hindu College thus far published is contained in the centenary volume of Presidency College. Concerning its plight in 1823, we learn that its financial backer, “the firm Baretto and Sons went into liquidation, and the expenses were much heavier than the income, so that in 1823 the Hindu College had no more than Rs. 65,000 which yielded an income of about Rs. 400 a month. On the advice of David Hare, the Managers applied to the Government for financial assistance so that the institution might not only continue to live but also expand its activities.” Presidency College, Calcutta, Centenary Volume, 1955 (Alipore, West Bengal: West Bengal Government Press, 1956), p. 2.
⁶ Hindu College’s reprieve resulted from its being supervised by the General Committee of Public Instruction through the control of a Visitor. H. H. Wilson not only was that Visitor but was elected by the Managers as Vice-President and Member of the Sub-Committee of the College. Ibid.
⁷ Wilson’s aim was twofold: to “preserve from decay and degradation a system of science and literature held in pious veneration by the great body of its subjects, deeply interwoven with their domestic habits and religious faith . . . but . . . to combine with this the still more important one of opening new sources of intellectual and moral improvements by the gradual admission of . . . European science and learning . . . .” Quoted in Lushington, p. 133.
⁸ The building for the new composite college seems to have been completed by May 1827. At that time, the Hindu College junior and senior de-
To appreciate fully Wilson’s projected fusion of a Western-with an Indian-styled institution with the aim of promoting a modernizing synthesis, it is perhaps necessary to review the origins of Hindu College to determine precisely what constituted a “Europeanized” institution of higher learning during the Orientalist period. Our concept of the nature of Hindu College seems to have been formed largely by its history during the Derozio years, the post-Macaulay period, and as Presidency College. Hindu College, having been founded in 1816 by the new Calcutta elite, was as much an expression of a collective sympathy for Orientalist values and ideals as it was of a practical need to provide the sons of that group with an advantageous European education. In this respect, Hindu College belonged in the tradition of the Eurasian academies that first exposed most of the early Tagores and Derozio, among others, to Western learning. On the other hand, the College, having been established during the Hastings era of revitalization schemes, was far more ambitious financially and intellectually than any of the other purely utilitarian primary and secondary schools. It was, in fact, the first collegiate institution of its kind anywhere outside of the West.

According to the best available evidence, Hindu College was established, financed, and managed by the Calcutta nouveaux riches. Such families as the Mullicks, Debs, Tagores, and Ghoshals owed much of their recently acquired wealth to European relationships. They valued highly competence in the English language and training in European fields of study. Prompted to act by leading Orientalist departments occupied the two wings and Sanskrit College the center of the building. Consequently the archival records for Sanskrit College began in 1827.

9 Hindu College was converted into Presidency College in 1855. For additional official information on the event see Centenary Volume, pp. 5–7.

10 See remarks on these schools in D. P. Sinha, pp. 1–2.

11 See Centenary Volume, pp. 301, 303. The administration of the college was entrusted to a Committee of Managers, consisting of “Heritable Governors, Governors for life and Annual Directors, or their Deputies” (p. 304). From the beginning, the executive control of Hindu College was in the hands of the new Calcutta elite. It was men such as P. K. Tagore, Radhakant Deb, and Ram Comul Sen who decided Derozio’s fate in 1831. Moreover, the institution was managed by the elite, without European participation, from the time it was founded. The early Orientalist supporters withdrew from “active participation in the management, desiring only to be considered as private friends” (p. 1).
talists in Calcutta, they apparently saw no danger to their Hindu identity in encouraging such an institution. Indeed, from the beginning, when the charter was drafted, the elitist founders insisted that the college not teach Hindu theology and metaphysics but concern itself primarily with “the cultivation of European literature and European science.” According to the official account in the *Presidency College Centenary Volume*, “the most striking feature of the Hindu College was its determined effort to impart secular education.”

Unless it is related to the Orientalist attitudes toward cultural change that had for years predominated among the English overlords in Calcutta, this secular emphasis at Hindu College seems incomprehensible. It might appear on the surface that the founders of the college had repudiated their own religious heritage and favored a radical transplantation of secular Western culture on Indian soil. This interpretation is difficult to accept, because the twenty Bengalis who wrote the original thirty-four rules of the charter and then approved them formally on August 27, 1816, were all conservative upper-caste Hindus. In fact, five key members of the founding committee who warmly endorsed the charter principles were “traditional” pundits. The explanation seems rather to lie in the fact that these Bengalis, including the pundits, who were all brokers to the English, viewed the contemporary West with the same sympathy that Orientalists had already demonstrated with regard to Indian culture. There is not the slightest reason to believe that the Hindus who founded the college also aimed to establish a beachhead for the diffusion of British values and the alienation of their youth. It was the Orientalist understanding and respect for Hindu civilization that probably impelled the founders to favor the idea of a Hindu College in the first place. The Orientalist belief that Western education should serve not as an end in itself but as the stimulus for changing the indigenous culture from within explains why Bengalis accepted the experiment without a recorded murmur of dissent. It was therefore not really secular knowledge in Western dress that was to be imparted at Hindu College, but useful knowledge from the West transmitted without ethnocentric bias.

---

16 *Infra*, pp. 204–205.
It is important to add also that the curriculum was not entirely Western. Though the founders clearly assumed a position of religious neutrality, they most certainly did not subscribe to the inflated view of later Anglicists who equated useful knowledge with that of the West and useless knowledge with Oriental learning. Bengali writing was taught along with English, and the Hindu system of arithmetic was evidently considered as useful as the European. In point of fact, according to the first rule of the very first section of the charter, “the primary object of the institution is, the tuition of the sons of respectable Hindous, in the English and Indian languages and in the literature and science of Europe and Asia.” Nevertheless, as evidenced by the upper-division curriculum offerings, Western history, Western literature, and the natural sciences were stressed from the beginning. But it cannot be too strongly emphasized that it was not the aim, in stressing these subjects, to Anglicize Hindu youth. The document that perhaps most clearly summarizes the subtle motivation behind the formation of Hindu College is a letter of Sir Edward Hyde East in which he records his impressions of a meeting held on May 14, 1816, to decide the character of the new institution. East, Chief Justice of the Calcutta Supreme Court, and an early European sponsor of the college, “was struck with the enthusiasm of the prominent pundits, Sanskrit scholars, for the introduction of Western literature and science.” He went on to add:

When they were about to depart, the head pundit, in the name of himself and the others, said that they rejoiced in having lived to see the day when literature (many parts of which had formerly been cultivated in this country with considerable success, but which were now extinct) was about to be revived with greater lustre and prospect of success than ever.

It was only after Wilson placed Hindu College under the aegis of the General Committee that it gradually developed into the outstanding institution so fondly remembered by historians of modern Bengali culture. The General Committee gave it a new building that contained science laboratories and a library. It recruited a capable staff to teach new subjects that went far beyond

---

the old utilitarian curriculum, and it made great efforts to provide the necessary books.\footnote{By 1828, Hindu College was able to accommodate 400 students. Funds had been provided for 100 free students who paid nothing for courses and books. English books worth 49,376 rupees had been donated to the college by the School Book Society and the General Committee for Public Instruction, and the latter body paid for 5,000 books recently imported from England. T. Fisher, “Memoir on Education of Indians,” Bengal Past and Present, XIX (July–December, 1919), 105.} When Derozio came to the college in 1828 as an instructor of English literature, he had at his disposal the resources and facilities of a first-rate institution of higher learning.

Wilson’s Sanskrit College proved to be a fascinating experiment in cultural fusion. Together with the traditional Sanskritic studies of rhetoric, sacred literature, law, and grammar, Wilson initiated a science curriculum of mechanics, hydrostatics, optics, astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, anatomy, and medicine.\footnote{Although the science courses at Sanskrit College seem to have been successful, the first apparatus-equipped science class at Hindu College in 1824 was a failure. Presidency College Centenary Volume, p. 3.} In 1828, Dr. Tyler, the anatomy professor, introduced anatomical dissection to his class, and before the end of the year, “the students not only handled the bones of the human skeleton without reluctance, but in some instances themselves performed the dissection of the softer parts of animals.”\footnote{J. Long, Brief View of the Past and Present State of Vernacular Education in Bengal (1868), reprinted as an Appendix in Adam, p. 516. Long’s facts are corroborated in a letter from H. H. Wilson, Secretary of Sanskrit College. Sanskrit College Archives, Calcutta, Wilson to Price, February 10, 1832, not paginated. Sanskrit College, General Records and Correspondence, 1827–55. Cited hereafter as SC GRC.} It should be added that almost half of the student body chose to study English and the sciences, even though these were not required subjects.\footnote{Of ninety-one students enrolled at Sanskrit College in 1827, forty were studying English. “College of Fort William Visitor’s Speech,” Calcutta Gazette, August 20, 1827, quoted in the Days of John Company, p. 227.}

Sanskrit College manuscript records indicate that, in general, the experiment proved satisfactory. Throughout the decade, students did remarkably well on examinations in all courses and, on the average, one of every three was a recipient of a yearly prize for high proficiency.\footnote{In 1833, the professors of untraditional subjects submitted course reports evaluating the response of Hindu students}
to the new learning. These interesting documents reveal that, on the whole, Hindu students trained in the traditional manner had no difficulty in responding to Western course-work.

In medicine and related subjects, for example, student interests and competence in dissection led to the establishment in 1831 of a small hospital "attached to the College." One graduate, N. K. Gupta, who had been trained as an apothecary, was apparently doing quite well in that position at the hospital. Other students trained as assistant surgeons were regularly attending "94 House Patients and 158 out ones." Though no Hindu had yet performed a major operation, they regularly performed minor ones such as "opening little abscesses and dressing sores and cuts." In 1834, John Tytler, professor of medicine and an ardent Orientalist, wrote an impassioned letter to the General Committee on Public Instruction (GCPI) on behalf of the natural-science program at Sanskrit College. Fearing that the Anglicists might abolish the entire non-traditional part of the curriculum, Tytler boldly defended the Orientalist credo:

European Science like the Christian Religion has by far the best chance of succeeding among the nations of Hindoostan by our avoiding even the appearance of coercion and allowing and even encouraging them to study their own system and ours together and quietly make the comparison themselves. We thus prove that we have no jealousy of their knowledge, we incline all their national feelings in our favour and give their understandings full room to act. . . .

Coercion always produces the direct contrary effect to what is intended. The outward profession of a belief in any system of Science like that of a belief in religion is of no value unless attended with an inward conviction. Almost nothing is gained by getting a Student to repeat in College our systems of Science unless he can be convinced of their truth and brought to act in the world according to their principles. . . .

On May 6, 1817, a special meeting was held at the College of Fort William to establish a school-book society that would supply "lessons and books in the Native Languages" to the indigenous

---

25 J. Grant to Major Taylor, January 1, 1833. SC GRC.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 J. Tytler to Troyer, April 3, 1834, ibid.
schools of Calcutta. It was attended by members of the European and Indian faculty of the college, along with some prominent members of the civil service. A committee of managers was formed under the leadership of William B. Bayley and included such Europeans as Thomas Roebuck, William Carey, and Anthony Lockett. Among the Indians on the committee were Mṛtyunjay Vidyalankar, Radhakant Deb, and Tarinicharan Mitra. Mitra, then chief munshi of the College Urdu Department, was appointed native secretary.

The Orientalists and Bengalis who assembled to form this unprecedented association did so chiefly to make cheap books available to Calcutta schools. Religious books (whether Hindu or Christian) were prohibited, although works on the “inculcation of moral duties” were permitted. The main purpose in supplying the books was to introduce not superior Western knowledge but “useful knowledge.” In theory, the Orientalists at first sought to democratize the traditional culture by laying open “the stores of [indigenous] learning and literature which have been hitherto shut off from the mass . . . and confined to a few, who like the monks in the early period of European history are more solicitous about their own personal advantage than the improvement of the public mind.”

The Society paid for the translation of British textbooks into Indian languages and sponsored new editions of indigenous works as well as some original compositions in the vernaculars. It was through these Society publications that Indian students first became acquainted with Western science, history, and literature. In 1818 the Reverend W. H. Pearce translated a geography text into Bengali. A year later, J. C. Marshman wrote a treatise in Bengali for the Society on Jyotish o goladhyāy (Astronomy and Geogra-

32 Mitra was secretary of the Calcutta School Book Society until 1831. Dās, pp. 204–205.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 The Bengali title was Bhugol britānta. The book was used in Bengali schools until the 1840’s. De, p. 234.
In 1820, William Carey’s son, Felix, a brilliant writer of Bengali, published in that language an abridged version of Goldsmith’s *History of England*. At about the same time, Felix Carey brought out the first volume of a *Bengalee Encyclopedia*. William Yates’s *Padārth-bidyā-sār, or The Essence of Natural Science*, was published in 1824 and was popular for decades as a textbook. These works and many others indicate that the Orientalists did not restrict their support to traditional works but also made recent Western learning available in the languages of the people. It is reasonable to assume that these translations of alien technical works greatly enriched the indigenous languages, especially Bengali.

The Calcutta School Book Society apparently functioned well until 1829. Bengali support for the Society seems to have ceased at about the same time that Bentinck began his educational program in 1830. According to William Bayley’s seventh report, of 1828, the Bengalis were still making liberal contributions, sales of publications exceeded expenditures, and the Society had actually made a profit of 7,827 rupees. In 1829, on the other hand, the Society was actually in debt. In the Society’s eighth report (1830), Holt Mackenzie was at a loss to explain why “we find only six Native names

---

87 A copy of this book is in the Carey library at Serampore, but part of the title page is missing. See pages 219 and 220.

88 S. K. Das believed that Felix Carey was the best writer of Bengali among the missionaries. Das, p. 212.

89 The complete English title was *An Abridgement of the History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Death of George the Second by Dr. Goldsmith and Continued by an Eminent Writer to the Peace of Amiens in 1802*.

90 Carey actually translated the section on anatomy from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Ibid., p. 215.

91 S. K. De believed that its popularity was largely due to its narrative style and to the lessons framed in the form of a pleasant dialogue between teacher and pupil. Ibid., p. 236.

92 In 1877, Rajendralal Mitra wrote an interesting pamphlet on this subject and reviewed the progress of integrating scientific terminology into Indian languages since the establishment of the Calcutta School Book Society. R. Mitra, *A Scheme for the Rendering of European Scientific Terms into the Vernaculars of India* (Calcutta: Thacker and Spink and Company, 1877).


94 Ibid., p. 303.
[among the subscribers] although in 1817–18 there were about eighty.  

One of the more fruitful contributions of the College of Fort William to the Hastings policy of establishing channels for transmission occurred in 1818. In that year, the private holdings of the college library were made available to the general public. The idea of opening the library of the College of Fort William to the general public was already considered by Marquess Hastings in 1816, when he asked Mohun Prasad Thakur (the Bengali assistant librarian) to prepare a list of printed Oriental books in the college library. The final decision to open the library came sometime in 1817 when the governor-general’s office ordered that the European and Oriental collections be catalogued and that rules be drawn up “for the use of the Books with due attention to the most effectual means of preserving them.”

The creation of a public library in Calcutta was one of several important gestures of cultural policy originating with the governor-general or the men around him. In England, Charles Grant also seemed enthusiastic about the idea, although, unlike the officials in Calcutta, his chief interest lay in attracting the “natives” to Fort William’s European collection. In response to a query by Grant, Lockett, the college librarian, in a letter of January 15, 1816, described Fort William’s European collection, which made up about one-quarter of the library’s holdings:

The English Library in the College is small but valuable. It was originally founded by voluntary contributions, and a few purchases have been since made. It consists of History, Travels, Law, Divinity, and general literature. It has been lately enriched by a valuable present from the University of Oxford of some of the best modern editions of the Greek and Latin Classics. The whole collection however does not probably exceed 2,000 volumes and will constitute I believe the only public Library in India.

On September 26, 1818, Lockett announced that the first complete catalogue of Fort William books and manuscripts had been completed and would be accessible not only to Europeans but

---

46 PCFW, DLXIV (May 30, 1816), 101–106.
to “literary men in general in India.” Lockett reported that “already the first part of the catalogue was printed and in a few days the second part will be published including a descriptive list of all the manuscripts in the Library. . . .”

The catalogue listed 8,341 printed books, catalogued under “Biography, History, travels, Law, Divinity, antiquities, Grammar, Lexicography and classical, Biblical and Oriental Literature”\(^{60}\), the library housed 2,994 manuscripts worth 200,000 rupees,\(^ {61}\) classified according to twenty-one categories from “copies of the Koran” to “Sanskrit Treatises on all branches of Hindoo Literature.”\(^ {62}\) These manuscripts were extremely valuable since they constituted the primary sources for the articles and books of the Calcutta Orientalists. (The present collection of manuscripts at the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal is basically the old Fort William collection, transferred to the Park Street building after 1830, when the college was dissolved.\(^ {63}\))

The Fort William collection of manuscripts was in fact the first major repository of authentic knowledge on the cultures of India in the modern world. It was composed largely of the Stewart Collection (gathered in an expedition to Mysore in 1804), the Francis Buchanan Collection (South India, 1805), the Claudius Buchanan Collection (South India, 1807), the Lockett Collection (Arabia, 1813), the Colin Mackenzie Collection (South India, 1814) and the Colebrooke Collection (miscellaneous sources, 1815). These collections and others elsewhere contained the elements necessary for reconstructing the dim past of pre-Muslim India.

Lockett was justifiably proud not only of Fort William’s manuscript collections but of the entire library holdings. According to his catalogue, the grand total of printed and manuscript sources was 11,335.\(^ {64}\) He claimed that the collection of orientalia at Fort William was “far superior to any similar collection with which I am acquainted.”\(^ {65}\) While the Paris orientalia figure was unknown, Spain’s Escorial had 1,851 volumes of orientalia and Oxford University 1,561, whereas the “Library of the Seraglio at Constanti-

\(^{49}\) PCFW, DLXV (November 24–25, 1818), 143.
\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) Ibid.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 144.
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 145.
\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 144.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 233.
\(^{57}\) PCFW, DLXV (November 24–25, 1818), 143.
nopale had only 7,294 volumes mostly on Theology and Jurisprudence. 67

At the conclusion of the report, Lockett warned that if the library were to be properly preserved and protected against theft the staff would have to be increased and their salaries raised. He was particularly concerned about deterioration and recommended strongly that "the volumes should be taken from the shelves, cleaned and examined every day, otherwise they will in a short time be entirely destroyed by damp and worms." 68

On October 23, 1818, Hastings approved Lockett's report in toto and modern India's first public library opened its doors. 59 Such scholars as Rammohun Roy, Ram Camul Sen, and Radhakant Deb must have found its resources immensely useful.

In the genesis of a developing cultural consciousness among the intelligentsia, there was perhaps no event more important in the transmission of new ideas than Serampore's experiments in journalism. In 1818, three separate journals and newspapers 60 emerged from that famous press, which for almost two decades had survived mainly as a publishing agent for the College of Fort William. In the 1820's, Bengalis followed Serampore's lead and started their own journalistic ventures, thereby greatly adding to the existing media for communication. 61

Serampore's Samāchār darpan (Mirror of the News) was, unlike the Dig darsān, a commercial journalistic venture. It has the distinction of being the first vernacular newspaper in India, its earliest issue being dated May 23, 1818. The Darpan appeared in Bengali only until the Bentinck administration. In 1829, as a result of the Bentinck emphasis on English, 62 J. C. Marshman, its editor, made

57 Ibid., p. 144.
58 Ibid., p. 130.
59 Ibid., p. 151.
60 The third of these was the Friend of India, which first appeared in May, 1818. It is not discussed in this section.
61 The first journal edited by a Bengali was Rammohun Roy's bilingual Brahmmunical Magazine, dating from 1821. In that year, also, he began publishing the Sambād kaumudī. In 1822, the conservative Samāchār chandrikā came into existence. In 1829, the Banga dut, another Rammohun weekly, was published simultaneously in English, Bengali, Persian and Hindi. Two years later, Iswar Chandra Gupta started his Sambād-prabhākar. All-India Exhibition of Newspapers, pp. 46-47.
it bilingual (English and Bengali). Published in Calcutta, the *Darpan* was essentially an English newspaper translated into the vernacular. Each issue carried news of the world and of local events, organizational reports, shipping intelligence, police reports, and advertisements. Though precise figures for this early period are not available, the *Darpan* was presumably well received by those of the Calcutta elite who preferred to read a newspaper in their own tongue. Bengalis immediately saw the value of the press as an excellent medium for conveying their ideas. Not only Rammohun Roy but that remarkable commercial entrepreneur Dwarkanath Tagore as well saw the potential importance of the *Samāchār darpan*. One of the first subscribers to the Serampore paper, 63 Dwarkanath was apparently so captivated by the idea of communicating via newsprint that in the 1820’s he began buying and controlling as many of the Calcutta papers as he could. 64

Just as other associations that emerged during the Orientalist period served as media to institutionalize cultural positions, so did some newspapers and periodicals. Rammohun’s *Samād kaumudi* (*Mirror of the News*) represented his views both in the presentation of news items and in editorials. In fact, Rammohun published his first journal, the bilingual *Brabhumunical Magazine* (1821), for the expressed purpose of defending his concept of monotheistic Hinduism against the contrary views of the Serampore missionaries. 65 The *Samāchār chandrika* (*Moonlight of the News*) apparently first published on March 5, 1822, represented the cultural position of Mrtyunjay, Radhakant, and the majority of the intelligentsia.

This variance of cultural attitudes probably accounts for many of the early newspapers’ consistent policy of slanting even the most trivial news items. Serampore’s *Darpan* always glowingly described literary and educational achievements in Calcutta. 66 In contrast, indigenous items demonstrating pomp, idleness, superstition, and amorality were reported with disparaging detail. For example,

---

63 J. C. Marshman, II, 163.
64 Not only did Tagore support Rammohun’s journalistic ventures in the early 1820’s, but he bought the *Bengal Herald* (or *Banga dut*) in 1829, the *India Gazette* in the same year, and in 1830 the defunct *John Bull*, which later became the *Englishman* in 1833.
65 *All-India Exhibition of Newspapers*, p. 46.
among the *Darpan*'s most lurid prose offerings were articles on human sacrifices,\textsuperscript{67} *sati*,\textsuperscript{68} and the Juggernaut festival in Puri.\textsuperscript{69}

The *Kaumudi* often seemed to echo the sentiments of the missionaries on all issues pertaining to “native improvement.” The *Kaumudi* editorials were constantly railing around new educational schemes\textsuperscript{70} and calling for public support of existing ones. Caste prejudice, religious excesses, and *sati* were regularly attacked.\textsuperscript{71} Unlike the *Darpan*, however, the *Kaumudi* strongly championed Indian needs and aspirations. On March 24, 1822, in an editorial possibly written by Rammohun, the *Kaumudi* called for the Indianization of the higher ranks of the civil service.\textsuperscript{72} If the *Darpan*’s prose was most telling when it described the inhumanity of Indians to fellow Indians, the *Kaumudi*’s most impassioned passages dealt with examples of European brutality to Indians.\textsuperscript{73}

The *Chandrikā*, edited by Bhabanicharan Bannerji, reflected a cultural outlook different from that of either of its competitors. In 1822, conceivably as a reaction to the repeated attacks on *sati* by the *Darpan* and the *Kaumudi*, this organ representing a powerful group of the intelligentsia began defending the practice of self-immolation.\textsuperscript{74} The first article on the subject, which appeared in the *Chandrikā* under the heading “Widow Cremation,” was essentially an argument against the cultural interference of foreigners (and of Rammohun) who did not understand the virtuous aspects of this self-sacrificial act.\textsuperscript{75} By willing to die by fire next to her departed spouse, the Hindu wife displayed a faithfulness and heroism unrivalled by her counterparts in any other culture.\textsuperscript{76} Ironically, the particular *sati* described in this article occurred in

\textsuperscript{67} Under Samāj [society], *ibid.*, pp. 251–252.
\textsuperscript{71} *Sambād kaumudi* article on “The Folly of Caste,” *ibid.*, I (February 1, 1822), 330; “Juggernaut,” *ibid.*, IV (July 24, 1822), 331; “Burning of Widows,” *ibid.*, II (March 18, 1822), 178.
\textsuperscript{72} “Natives in Civil Service,” *ibid.*, I (March 24, 1822), 260.
\textsuperscript{73} “Appeal to Magistrates to Protect Hindus from Being Whipped by Europeans on the Streets,” *ibid.*, I (January 31, 1822), 321.
\textsuperscript{74} *Samāchār chandrikā* article, “Widow Cremation,” reprinted *ibid.*, I (March 18, 1822), 179.
\textsuperscript{75} *Ibid.*
\textsuperscript{76} *Ibid.*
Serampore, and the Chandrikā proudly related "how the wife ascended the funeral pile of her husband without the least sign of pain or symptom of reluctance, to the utter astonishment and discomfiture of her enemies." On other issues, however, the Chandrikā reflected the enlightened attitude of the Calcutta intelligentsia. Though it may seem surprising to those of us accustomed to regarding the "conservative" opponents of Rammohun as narrowly limited, the Chandrikā consistently supported every educational reform, while conveying to its readers the "need for a well-informed public of natives." In the late summer of 1822, the Chandrikā even seemed to endorse Serampore's program for Indian renaissance and was as committed to education and enlightenment as were the Kaumudi and the Darpan. Indeed, upon examination, the only basic difference between the Chandrikā and the Kaumudi was in their conflict of cultural values. Rammohun's group was opposed to idolatry and sati because these were considered by dedicated exponents of Vedantic religion to be medieval excrescences. The Chandrikā intellectuals were more flexible in their approach to contemporary folkways, even though these may have contradicted ancient dictates. Therefore, neither group could be classed as "conservative" or "liberal" but each looked to a different element in a newly created Hindu consciousness of their own past.

In most cases, the new avenues linking the regional elite of Calcutta both with the ideals of the Orientalists and with the broader horizons of European civilization came into being within the Hastings-sponsored associations committed to social action. After 1816, Hastings invited the Bengali intelligentsia to collaborate in these new groups. It was largely within these institutions and in their mutual interaction that cultural attitudes were transmitted to the Bengali intelligentsia, who willingly participated in most institutional activities. It should be stressed that under Orientalist guidance and sponsorship, cultural change was seldom considered a threat by any prominent member of the Hindu elite in Calcutta. The rapport between Orientalist and Bengali not only facilitated

77 Ibid.
78 Samachar Chandrikā article, "Well-Informed Public," reprinted ibid., IV (August 17, 1822), 666.
79 Samachar Chandrikā article, "Decay of Language and Orthography," ibid., I (April 10, 1822), 438.
the transmission of new cultural attitudes from Orientalist to Indian but helped shape a new intellectual tradition in Bengal.

The existence of cultural rapport and the process of transmission of new attitudes through Orientalist educational institutions is perhaps best illustrated in the case of Radhakant Deb. Deb has been a kind of bête noire among many historians, chiefly because of his defense of sati (1829–31). Just as Rammohun Roy captured the imagination of subsequent generations of Bengalis as the “father of modern India,” Deb has been pictured as Rammohun’s conservative adversary who dedicated his life to the preservation of traditional India. These expressions are convenient perhaps chiefly from the historical standpoint. Rammohun was far more traditional than he was generally acknowledged to be, whereas Deb was much more liberal than he was posthumously given credit by his critics for being.

Radhakant Deb was a member of the Calcutta Bengali-Hindu elite which owed both its wealth and social status to profitable relations with Europeans. Radhakant’s father, Gopi Mohun Deb, was the adopted son of Naba Krishna Deb (who had won fame, wealth, and social status for his family in Calcutta during the chaotic middle decades of the eighteenth century). In the sophisticated atmosphere of the metropolis, Radhakant learned Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Sanskrit, Bengali, and English. Unlike many other members of the Calcutta Bengali community (who were perhaps not as wealthy as the Debs), Radhakant did not feel compelled to enter a profession but developed his interests independent of direct British contact. In 1803, while his Calcutta-born friend, Tarinicharan Mitra, employed his linguistic abilities as a faculty member at the College of Fort William, Radhakant on his own initiative started to work on a Sanskrit dictionary, which by 1809 had become so large and diversified in subject matter that he transformed it into an encyclopedia.

---

80 The expression is used as the title for the section on Rammohun in Hay, p. 571.
81 In the historians’ presentation, Radhakant usually follows Rammohun as “the conservative reaction.” See particularly Bose, p. 34; and Amit Sen [S. C. Sarkar], Notes on the Bengal Renaissance (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1957), p. 16.
82 Supra, pp. 60–61.
83 Bāgal, Ṛādhaṅkānt Deb, p. 6.
84 Ibid., p. 34.
The Debs lived as did other members of the Calcutta Hindu elite, performing their religious and social duties apparently without question. They were not listed among the new Society of Friends that clustered around Rammohun Roy in 1815–16 and, as was the custom then, the Debs performed an elaborate enough Durga Puja in their home to gain attention in the local English press. In 1816, Radhakant’s father contributed a large sum of money towards the establishment of Hindu College and served on its first managing committee along with members of the prominent Tagore and Mullick families. Some years later, Radhakant took his father’s place on the committee. In this way, Radhakant Deb began his long and interesting career as a member of the Hindu College Managing Committee.

Radhakant’s intellectual development with respect to Western learning seems to have begun when he joined the newly formed Calcutta School Book and School Societies in 1817–18. Through these Orientalist institutions, and feeling no threat to his cultural integrity, he absorbed new cultural values that seem to have profoundly influenced him for the rest of his life. For the first time, presumably, he established contacts with the Serampore missionaries, the high-culture Orientalists, and independent philanthropists such as David Hare. He took an active role in the institutional operations of the Calcutta School Society by becoming its native secretary and by personally supervising the reform of Calcutta schools. He grew so involved with these activities that his house became the informal headquarters for the School Society, and the annual examinations were held there.

85 The term *Brahmo* was not used until the organization became established in 1828. At first, in 1815, the group called itself *Atmiya Sabha*, or Society of Friends.

86 *Calcutta Gazette* article on “Puja,” October 20, 1814, quoted in Ghose, p. 28.

87 The first committee was composed of Ram Gopal Mallick, Hari Mohan Tagore, and Gopi Mohan Deb. “Hindu College at Calcutta,” * Asiatic Journal*, II (January–June, 1817), 133–134.

88 For more details on Radhakant’s association with Hindu College see Bāgal, Rādhākānt Deb, pp. 9–17.

89 Ibid., p. 7.

90 Ibid.

Radhakant’s new cultural attitudes, intellectual development, and deepening social consciousness in the 1820’s are best reflected in his publications for the Calcutta School Book Society. His cultural attitudes were clearly Orientalist-inspired in that he saw no conflict between indigenous and Western learning and sought to integrate both into the Calcutta school system. This point cannot be overemphasized, since Radhakant and his Bengali peers would never have participated in a program that they felt was aimed at the destruction of their own civilization.

Radhakant’s Bāngla siksa-grantha (1821), which he translated as A Bengali Spelling Book, was in reality a small encyclopedia for student use and included an elementary analysis of language structure, spelling rules, geographical terms, and basic arithmetic. Though a simple textbook, it is notable for its harmonious combination of indigenous and nonindigenous knowledge without the slightest hint of contradiction or stress between the two. Also in 1821, Deb collaborated with J. D. Pearson in bringing out the first edition of the Nitikatha (Moral Tales), which drew on both Christian and Hindu traditions and were designed to inculcate a feeling of morality without any religious bias.

In 1822, Deb collaborated with a pundit friend of his in a book advocating female education. The Strī-sikhar bidya (Female Education), though it urged that girls be instructed largely in domestic skills at home, was radical for its time not only in India but in Europe as well. In historical perspective, Radhakant can hardly be blamed for not advocating institutional coeducation for women and their equal occupational rights with men. It might be noted

---

92 The book’s contents are briefly described in De, pp. 554–555.
93 Bāgal, Rādhākānt Deb, p. 7. Deb was also interested in the natural sciences, with which he probably became acquainted thanks to William Carey, John Mack and others. The popular textbook on astronomy (Jyotibidya) attributed to William Yates was written at least in part by Deb. See Bāgal, Rādhākānt Deb, p. 7. Finally his Prācin itibāser sammaccha (Epitome of Ancient History), published in 1830, suggests that he had become equally familiar with Western historical writing.
94 Deb’s 1824 edition contains an interesting dialogue by means of which he obviously attempted to dispel traditional prejudices against female education. For example, “Question: But old men say that a girl who reads and writes becomes a widow. Answer: Nonsense. It is not supported by scriptures and our Puranas refer to educated women... .” Quoted in R. C. Majumdar, Glimpses, p. 60.
that Radhakant actively supported missionary efforts in educating girls,\(^6\) even though this may seem contradictory to those who know him only as the defender of the women’s right to burn as widows.

Rammohun Roy was one of the most fascinating and complex Indians to have emerged during the Orientalist period of modern Indian history. His work as a Westernizer has been lauded by generations of admirers, who have glorified him as the “father of modern India.”\(^6\) Perhaps no other Bengali, with the exception of Rabindranath Tagore, has been so thoroughly identified with the cultural self-image of the people. The aura surrounding this man has exerted so profound an influence on later historians that he is frequently portrayed as a virtual god-man containing within himself the seeds of a regenerated India. The genesis of the Indian renaissance is often traced back to 1815, the year Rammohun settled permanently in Calcutta.\(^7\)

According to the charismatic image that began to evolve after his death in 1833, Rammohun was a lone progenitor of modern India who owed little of his enlightenment to European contact and who shared little of his vision with Bengali contemporaries. In the light of new research in the twentieth century, however, the evidence suggests that Rammohun sought exposure to European Orientalism just as did Deb and other members of the intelligentsia.

It is reasonably certain that Rammohun was in Calcutta between 1797 and 1802.\(^8\) Rammohun might well have come to the metropolis in search of a livelihood, as so many others did as a result

\(^6\) Radhakant’s active support of missionary efforts to develop a program of female education are reviewed in Bāgal, Ṛādhākānt Deb, pp. 28–33.

\(^6\) The historian, N. S. Bose, in a recent addition to the historiography of the Bengal renaissance has continued this rather flattering homage to Rammohun: “In the midst of the darkness that prevailed all over the country the first man who saw the vision of a new India was Raja Rammohun Roy. He is aptly called the inaugurator of the Modern Age in India.” N. S. Bose, The Indian Awakening and Bengal (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960), p. 10.

\(^7\) Bose writes, “The Bengal Renaissance started in 1815 when Rammohan came down to settle in Calcutta and to begin his life’s work.” Ibid., pp. 12–13.

\(^8\) Scraps of evidence include a petition to Lord Minto by Rammohun written on April 12, 1809, in which Roy clearly stated his association with munsbis of the College of Fort William; quoted in B. N. Bandyopādhyāy, Rāmmohun Rāy (S-s-c series; 1942), pp. 26–29. John Digby, a student at the College of Fort William in 1801, and Rammohun’s later employer, wrote in 1817 that he was “acquainted” with Roy during his student days; see
of the Cornwallis native-exclusion act of 1791 and the Permanent Settlement of 1793. That conjecture is not unreasonable when it is considered that he came from a family with a vested interest in the old established order and that his father, a zemindar of the traditional ruling class in Bengal, lost his property in 1800, went to jail, and died a ruined man in 1803. On the basis of reliable evidence, Rammohun's "professional" activity in Calcutta between 1799 and 1802 was to loan money to civil servants presumably in or near the College of Fort William.

There is some truth to the belief that Rammohun was an original thinker and that his early associations, which led ultimately to the formation of the Brahmo Samaj in 1828, were without precedent in Indian history. On the other hand, Rammohun owed far more to his British Orientalist contacts and to the ideas of other Bengalis than is generally acknowledged.

His civil-service employer, John Digby, was among the earliest College of Fort William students (1801–1803), and though none of Digby's essays are extant, his fellow students have left evidence of his preoccupation with Hindu renaissance. Rammohun acquired his knowledge of the English language from Digby, who presumably provided him with his first window to the West.

---

Digby's Preface to the London reprint of Rammohun Roy, Abridgement of the Vedant (London: T. and J. Hoitt, 1817). A third piece of evidence is the testimony of a witness for Rammohun during the Supreme Court litigation of 1817–1819, from which it appears rather certain that Roy was in Calcutta between 1798 and 1802, loaning money to civil servants and speculating in Company paper; see Selections from Official Letters and Documents Relating to the Life of Raja Rammohun Roy, pp. xxxiv-xl, 190–191.

99 His grandfather served Alivardi Khan; see Bandyopādhyāẏ, Rāmmohun Rāẏ, p. 11.

100 Selections from Official Letters and Documents Relating to the Life of Raja Rammohun Roy, p. xxvi.

101 In May, 1819, Golobnaranjan Sarkar appeared before the Supreme Court on Rammohun's behalf and stated that Roy loaned one civil servant, Andrew Ramsey, 7,500 rupees in 1799. Business was apparently so good that Roy purchased two taluks of land in Burdwan in July, 1799; see ibid., pp. xxxiv–viii.

102 Supra, pp. 97–104.

103 Digby himself said of Rammohun: "By pursuing all my public correspondence with diligence and attention, as well as by corresponding and conversing with European gentlemen, he acquired as correct a knowledge of the English language as to be able to write and speak it with considerable accuracy. He was also in the constant habit of reading the English news-
Rammohun’s idea of the theistic *Brahmo*, the cornerstone of his reformation movement, was already expounded in published tracts between 1800–1802 by Ramram Basu, and there is a strong possibility that the two men met and discussed theology at the College of Fort William during this period.\(^{104}\) Rammohun also knew the leading Orientalists such as H. H. Wilson\(^{105}\) and was familiar with their practical programs and scholarly accomplishments.

In fact, as already noted, H. T. Colebrooke’s “Essay of the Vedas,” which he published in 1805, contained the essence of Rammohun’s later arguments centering around the discrepancies between ancient textual requirements and contemporary practices.\(^{106}\) Moreover, Colebrooke, more than twenty years before Rammohun, demonstrated from textual sources that the voluntary immolation of widows in Bengal was a departure from the authentic tradition.\(^{107}\)

Not only does the evidence seem to reduce Rammohun’s contributions as an original thinker, but it appears also to controvert the view that he was the earliest “liberal” David, locked in mortal combat with the “conservative” Brahman Goliaths bent on preserving a diseased social system against the inroads of humanitarianism and common decency. As a matter of fact, it is extremely doubtful that there was a so-called “Whig” faction led by Rammohun and a “Tory” faction guided by Radhakant Deb. Most of the men during this period advocated identical programs of social reform inspired largely by Orientalists.\(^{108}\)

Indeed, the liberal-conservative polarization theory is completely untenable in the light of Rammohun’s actual relationship to programs for social change. Rammohun never participated (as the others did) in any of the Orientalist institutions promoting educational reform. Recent studies have proved that he was not involved in the establishing of Hindu College.\(^{109}\) He was not an active member of the School and School Book Societies, and he remained aloof from all the projects of the General Committee on Public Instruction.

---

105 *Supra*, p. 172.
106 *Supra*, pp. 40–41.
107 *Supra*, p. 40.
One aspect of Rammohun’s work and influence not fully understood is his contribution to the developing idea of Indian renaissance. It is noteworthy that however unsystematic Rammohun may have seemed from his writings on utilitarianism, rationalism, and liberalism, he was remarkably consistent about his view of an authentic Indian tradition. Furthermore, Rammohun’s writings on the golden age of authentic tradition were the outgrowth of cultural encounter between himself and Europeans or between himself and his fellow Indian critics. Indeed, as these writings reveal, and what has often been overlooked, is that if Rammohun contained within himself the seeds of a regenerated India, he carried also the seeds of alienation that stemmed from a struggle to understand his identity.

When Rammohun came to Calcutta in 1815 and published his translation of the Vedanta, he had already committed himself to a view of Indian culture that he would defend in private and public debates until his death in 1833. Without belittling his Westernizing activities, it should nevertheless be pointed out that from the publication of the Vedanta translation until the establishment of the Brahma Sabha in 1828, Rammohun did not succumb to the allurement of alien cultural imports, but devoted much of his time and energy to reinterpreting his own socio-religious tradition. While resisting the Serampore missionaries and other Europeans on the one hand, on the other he fought a long-drawn-out battle for the cultural purification of Hinduism. As a result he alienated Europeans as well as members of his own elitist class, whom he condemned for rationalizing the existence of moral and social evils.

In the Abridgement of the Vedant, Rammohun argued that image worship as then practiced in India was an aberration from the authentic monotheistic tradition, wherein worship of “the true and eternal God” left no room for idolatry. Whether or not Rammohun was influenced by his knowledge of Islam, the fact is that already, in the manner of the Jones-Colebrooke Orientalists, he divided Indian history into a Vedantic period that provided the authentic model for “the whole body of the Hindoo theology,


111 Rammohun Roy’s first published work was a Persian treatise on monothelism and demonstrates the influence of Islam on his thought. This work was translated into English as A Gift to Deists by O. E. Obaide and published with a preface by Rajnarayan Basu in 1884.
law and literature”\textsuperscript{112} and was “highly revered by all the Hindoos,”\textsuperscript{113} and a later period of “Hindoo idolatry” with its “innumerable gods, goddesses and temples” which have since been destroying “the texture of society.”\textsuperscript{114} Rammohun blamed the Brahmans (as did Jones and Colebrooke) for this miserable state of affairs, since they had preferred to conceal the wisdom of the Vedanta “within the dark curtain of the Sanscrit language,”\textsuperscript{115} rather than to transmit the truth to the people in their own languages. For this reason, he himself had translated the Vedanta into Bengali “to awaken [his countrymen] from their dream of error. . . .”\textsuperscript{116}

In an English translation of one of the Upanishads in 1816, Rammohun emphasized this new division of Indian history. He sought to convince his English readers “that in the most ancient times the inhabitants of this part of the globe . . . [used] allegorical language . . . to represent the attributes of the Creator. . . .”\textsuperscript{117} But only in the subsequent age, he wrote, “when literature and philosophy decayed,” did those “absurdities and idolatrous notions” appear.\textsuperscript{118} He concluded his introduction with a proposition (which the Serrampore missionaries later challenged) that India no less than the West had developed a notion of the “unity of the Supreme Being as sole Ruler of the Universe.”\textsuperscript{119}

At first, Rammohun drew fire mostly from other members of the Indian elite who seemed as much concerned by the fact that Rammohun had translated the scriptures into popular languages as they were by any of the propositions he advanced. In 1817, a year before his tract on the abolition of sati was published, Rammohun wrote a Second Defense of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas which is noteworthy for being the earliest detailed description by an Indian of the religious errors of the time. Rammohun maintained that the present age was benighted not only because the common people were ignorant of the Vedas but also because the Brahmans themselves were equally uninformed of their true content.\textsuperscript{120} Rammohun's work was controversial and met with resistance from his peers within the Bengali literary community.

\textsuperscript{112} R. Roy, Abridgement of the Vedant, p. 573.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp. 574–575.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 574.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 575.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. iv.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. v.
mohun maintained that there was, for example, nothing in the scriptures to authorize the burning of widows (and yet widows were being immolated)\textsuperscript{121} and, though the Vedas prohibited “the acceptance of money . . . in the marriage contract of a daughter”, this custom was “practiced by the Brahmins of Bengal who [sell] female children under the pretence of marriage.”\textsuperscript{122} Where was there a single reference in the Vedas, he argued, to Kulinism and its nefarious polygamous practice designed merely “to gratify brutal inclination”?\textsuperscript{123} Rammohun’s strong attack on Kulinism is most interesting as evidence not only of his zeal as a social reformer but also of his unfavorable view of medieval Indian history:

According to Manu . . . respect and distinction are due to a Brahman merely in proportion to his knowledge; but on the contrary amongst modern Hinduos, honor is paid exclusively to certain families of Brahmins, such as the Koolins, however void of knowledge and principle they may be. This departure from law and justice was made by the authority of a native prince of Bengal . . . Balla Sen within the last three or four hundred years. And this innovation may perhaps be considered as the chief source of that decay of learning and virtue, which I am sorry to say, may be at present observed. For whenever respectability is confined to birth only, acquisition of knowledge and the practice of morality in that country must surely decline.\textsuperscript{124}

By the early 1820’s, Rammohun was engaged in an intellectual conflict on two fronts. Attacked by traditionalists and syncretists among his countrymen, for different reasons, he now found himself attacked by Europeans as well because of his cultural attitudes. The underlying reason why years of quiet debate on Hinduism and Christianity between Serampore missionaries and Rammohun erupted into a violent public altercation is not entirely clear. There is little doubt, however, that the conversion of a young Baptist missionary named William Adam to Rammohun’s way of thinking and the fact that both later founded a Unitarian Committee in Calcutta contributed to the openly acknowledged rupture.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p. 44.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., p. 46.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} For more information on the Unitarians of Calcutta during the 1820’s and Adam’s place in it, consult W. Adam, The Principles and Objects of the Calcutta Unitarian Committee, Vol. CCVI of India Office Library Tracts (Calcutta: Unitarian Press, 1827).
The cause of the irreparable split was Rammohun’s publication in 1820 of a pamphlet entitled *The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness*. Joshua Marshman of Serampore was deeply angered and frustrated that an Indian should now openly challenge that hallowed inconsistency of Christianity, faith in the Trinity. The Bengali who, for years, the missionaries had hoped would become the Indian Luther now pushed his thinking on monotheism to its ultimate conclusion and engaged the Europeans on a most strategic point.

Rammohun argued that all major religions have a monotheistic tradition that had been perverted at different times by belief in “miracles and fabricated tales.”¹²⁸ Comparing the ethical Jesus of the New Testament with the divine Jesus of present-day Christianity, to the detriment of the latter, Rammohun effectively demolished the Serampore Baptists' golden-age view of sixteenth-century Europe. In his *Second Appeal to the Christian Public in Defense of the Precepts of Jesus*, Rammohun continued his attack on such “fabricated fables” as “the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus on the cross,”¹²⁷ which he felt were all designed to establish “the false identity of Christ with God.”¹²⁸ It is little wonder that the Unitarians in England proudly reprinted Rammohun’s *Precepts* in several editions during the 1820’s.¹²⁹

In 1828 Rammohun and his followers (men such as Tagore and Tarachand Chakrabarti), founded the *Brahmo Sabha*, precursor of the later *Brahmo Samaj* (*Society of God*). These organizations were chiefly institutions founded on Rammohun Roy’s purificationalist or puritanical view of the Vedic golden age. The *Vedas* were chosen as the scriptural basis of the new reformed religion.¹³⁰ Because of Rammohun’s conviction that Vedantic knowledge should be available to all, he insisted that the texts be published in

¹²⁹ The earliest London reprint included the *Precepts* and the *Appeals* in one edition. See R. Roy, *Precepts of Jesus and are added to The First Second and Final Appeals in Reply to Dr. Marshman* (London: Unitarian Society, 1824).
Bengali. More important, Rammohun’s basic idea that all major religions had similar traditions in spite of their diversity of form became the universalist credo of the Samaj. Indeed, this problem of unity and diversity that Rammohun raised but never resolved eventually became a major weakness in the Brahma ranks throughout the century. The source of the weakness was a deep psychological conflict that accompanied the search for a new identity. The schism between Keshub Sen and Debendranath Tagore, for example, clearly represented the polarization between Rammohun’s legacy of faith in the universality of mankind and the psychological need to maintain one’s Hindu identity.

Keshub’s letter to Debendranath of July 2, 1865, is a document typically reflecting a new generation’s angry denunciation of its elders, whom it accused of Indianizing Brahmoism to the point where it had become another Hindu sect. Keshub demanded that Brahmots discard their sacred threads once and for all; that the minister erase his caste marks; that women be accorded equal rights with men in the hall of worship; that intercaste marriage be permitted; and that new hymns to include passages from all the major faiths should be written. Debendranath had already answered Keshub a year earlier when he defended the sacred thread and other attachments to Hinduism as symbols which, if rejected, would lead to complete “denationalization.”

It should also be stressed that the notion of a golden age of Indo-European peoples that commenced with Jones and was carried on by Colebrooke and Rammohun Roy differed considerably from the

182 As one historian aptly puts it, “The Adi Brahma Samaj cry was ‘Brahmoism is Hinduism’ but the younger Brahmots’ cry was ‘Brahmoism is catholic and universal.’” Quoted in N. S. Bose, p. 95.
183 For a good discussion of these points in their proper context, see ibid., pp. 92–95.
184 On the other hand, it has also been argued that Keshub was as much opposed to denationalization as was Debendranath. One of his biographers offers Keshub’s two tracts, Young Bengal This is for You and An Appeal to Young India, as proof that he sought to “halt the spirit of revolt and stop demoralization and denationalization that had begun to corrupt the Hindu society.” See A. C. Banerji, “Brahmanda Keshub Chandra Sen,” Studies of the Bengal Renaissance, p. 82. The author’s impression is that Banerji is not covering up Sen’s desire to have his cake and eat it but is expressing Sen’s own later difficulty in reconciling his Hindu identity with his universalist sentiments.
later nineteenth-century view. The racist Aryan myth of a Hindu golden age that Max Müller did so much to popularize, and that was influential in later Indian thought, was a radical departure from the cultural beliefs of either Orientalists or Brabmos. When in 1883 Müller gave his famous speech commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Rammohun Roy’s death, he was expressing a view of Indian renaissance totally alien to Rammohun’s own tradition. Müller referred to Rammohun as “the best representative of the South-Eastern Aryans,”\(^\text{135}\) and interpreted Roy’s trip to Europe as a gesture of “turning deliberately North, to shake hands once more with the most advanced outposts of the other branch of the Aryan family. . . .”\(^\text{136}\) Thus a new age of revaluation dawned, and the eighteenth-century cosmopolitan reassessment of the Hindu golden age entered its second stage of Aryanized reinterpretation.

As noted in the last chapter, Rammohun’s ideal of a golden age in the remote past that might serve as a model for future aspirations by no means represented the major sentiment either among Orientalists such as H. H. Wilson or the Bengali elite. Rejecting the metaphorical distinction between an age of gold and an age of darkness, most Indians actually seemed to value what Rammohun described as medieval excrescences.

Rammohun did not represent the majority of that small articulate group of Calcutta intelligentsia. The hard core of that generation (Deb, Tarinicharan Mitra, Ram Camul Sen, Russomoy Dutt, Bhabanicharan Bannerji, Mrtyunjay Vidyalankar) had little to do with Rammohun’s schemes and organizations. Rammohun’s Unitarian Committee, for example, established with the aid of a former Serampore missionary, never developed beyond a small circle comprising himself, Adam, and those two Anglicized Tagores, Dwarkanath and Prasanna Kumar.

It was not liberalism—moral or political—that separated Rammohun from his contemporaries but his rather dim view of post-Vedantic Hinduism and his theory of renaissance. Too often overlooked is the fact that both factions openly voiced their disapproval with existing abuses in Hindu culture and both espoused programs directed at its revitalization. To condemn Rammohun’s opponents as traditionalist simply for their disagreement on the proper formula would be absurd. Also important is the fact that both clusters of

\(^{135}\) Müller, *Biographical Essays*, p. 43.

intellectuals shared a dubious form of modernization—at least from a westernizing point of view. In Orientalist fashion, they utilized the “West” syncretically as the proper means for realizing “traditional” ends.

Until the advent of Derozio at Hindu College (1828–1830), the Calcutta intelligentsia were modernizers of their own tradition rather than Westernizers. In this respect, Rammohun and his critics shared both a common identity in Hindu civilization (which they defended against Westernizers) and a common belief derived from Orientalism, that modernization could be achieved by pouring the new wine of modern functions into the old bottles of Indian cultural traditions. Since Indian traditions had continually changed to meet one challenge after another, it was hardly necessary to substitute alien traditions for those of the Hindus. The debate, therefore, was not between liberalism and conservatism, between the West and the East, or between tradition and modernity, but rather between two Orientalist-derived reinterpretations of the Indian heritage.

Furthermore, the Indian tradition that Westernizers tended to view as upper-caste, singular, and static had already changed considerably as a result of the Orientalist impact. From Mrtyunjay Vidyalankar’s debate with Rammohun in 1817 to Radhakant’s defense of sati in 1830, the intelligentsia’s evolving conception of Hinduism differed greatly from the rambling, amorphous, and orally-conveyed eighteenth-century tradition in India. Between Tarkapanchanon in the age of William Jones and Mrtyunjay’s first pamphlet in reply to Rammohun, the Orientalists had reshaped Hindu cultural traditions along systematic and rational lines.

The first published work expressing the new cultural attitudes toward the Hindu tradition was appropriately written by the most highly respected Calcutta Hindu scholar of his period, Mrtyunjay Vidyalankar. After serving as William Carey’s chief pundit in the Bengali-Sanskrit Department of the College of Fort William for fifteen years, Mrtyunjay entered the service of the Supreme Court in 1816 as Francis Macnaughten’s pundit. A year later, at Macnaughten’s request, this reputedly conservative Brahman wrote a brilliant treatise on sati in which he concluded that the custom violated the dictates of most authoritative sastras. He not only

137 See Bandyopadhyay’s introduction to Mrtyunjay Grantabhālī, pp. vii.
138 See contemporary analysis of Mrtyunjay’s position in Friend of India, II (October, 1819), 473–476.
condemned sati because of its deviation from scriptural authority, but also attacked it for being irrational and inhumane. At that time, sati had not yet become a symbol in a culture conflict and members of the intelligentsia were still flexible in their outlook. Mrtyunjay’s position regarding sati was later transmitted to his countrymen in a pamphlet that constituted the first printed attack on the custom by a Bengali.139

Also in 1817, Mrtyunjay wrote the earliest of a long series of attacks by several Bengalis throughout the century on the Brahmo concept of Hindu religion and culture. His Vedāntā Chandrikā (Moonlight of the Vedanta), which was aimed directly against Rammohun’s own view of the Vedanta, contained the germ of an idea of renaissance in which Mrtyunjay sought to challenge the puritanical image of a Vedic golden age. This work has not been given the serious attention of scholars, partly because of its pedantic and highly Sanskritized style of Bengali and partly because of the traditionalist reputation of its author. Nevertheless, the Chandrikā is extremely important in the historiography of the Indian renaissance because it contained a crude form of the same kind of Hindu revivalism that Vidyasagar and Vivekananda would express so meaningfully in prose and oratory at a later date.

On the surface, Mrtyunjay wrote a defense of status quo Hinduism in Bengal. He not only defended all the institutions, ideas, and practices of Hinduism throughout its long history but found no basic contradictions between later Hindu developments and those of the Vedantic period. He was angry with Rammohun Roy and his friends, those “intoxicated moderns,”140 who were recklessly tampering with their faith and transforming it into a “marketplace theology.”141 The sacred literature should be expounded only by those especially trained for the task and not by dilettantes “pretending to Divine Knowledge . . . assuming the appearance of a lotus,” and “adulterating the purity of the sacred writings.”142 Mrtyunjay defended the validity of the Puranas and saw no contradiction between their teachings and those of the Vedanta.143 He also defended the worship of images144 and, though it may seem

139 Mrtyunjay’s pamphlet was published in 1817, whereas Rammohun’s first tract on sati appeared in 1818.
141 Ibid., p. 1.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid., p. 21.
144 Ibid., p. 13.
strange after his long years as a teacher and writer of Bengali, he disparaged the vernacular, comparing it to a “naked and prostituted female,” whereas Sanskrit was depicted as a “beautiful and virtuous woman.”

Upon deeper examination, Mrtyunjay’s argument appears quite different from the position of an eighteenth-century pundit. In this tract, he logically and lucidly defined Hinduism. He was not merely appealing to tradition (which now was, incidentally, a very selective tradition indeed) but was using it to win a debate on precisely how one would define Hinduism. Finally, though he might have condemned the vernacular (as some Brahmans still do), he chose to write the pamphlet in Bengali in order to transmit his ideas to other members of the intelligentsia.

One of the critical issues that separated Mrtyunjay from Rammohun was idolatry. Like his antagonist, he agreed that a stone or piece of wood was certainly not God. To Mrtyunjay, God was omnipresent and without attributes, but in order to fully concentrate on his Divinity, some “medium of materiality” was necessary. In fact, Mrtyunjay took a position very different from that of the truly traditional pundit. He did not view image-worship as a necessary evil but as a necessary symbol. There were not 330,000,000 deities but that number of “representations of one true God.” Like Rammohun he warned, however, that the Vedas have declared that “He who entertains the notion of independent existence ([i.e.] ... he who imagines a thing to exist apart from the Supreme Being), he is in great danger and will never achieve salvation.”

Actually, both Rammohun and Mrtyunjay argued from the same eighteenth-century position on the universality of all cultures that was the commonly shared component in the Orientalist value system. In the same way that Rammohun contended that monotheism was the authentic tradition in all major religions, Mrtyunjay argued in the Chandrikā that the use of idols was likewise an authentic tradition in those religions. If Rammohun valued the strong iconoclasm in the Jewish, New Testament, and Mohammedan traditions, Mrtyunjay pointed to the use of idols among ancient

148 Ibid., p. 28.
149 Ibid., p. 16.
Greeks, other Asian peoples, and the Roman Catholics in Western Europe. Furthermore, just as the universality of Rammohun’s Vedic cultural image would become Aryanized in the service of racism, the universality of Mṛtyunjay’s image of Hindu restoration would be reinterpreted by later neo-Hindu revivalists to serve their bitter polemic with the West.

Tracts, journals, and newspapers not only helped produce a feeling of cultural identity among the intelligentsia through the transmission of cultural attitudes but, along with newly published books, also promoted the creation of a corresponding social identity and solidarity. The new cultural attitudes did not exist in a social vacuum. They originated in a class of professional intellectuals developed largely as a result of close European contacts, special training, and European-style occupational status within the institutional environment of the College of Fort William. The group’s response to urban Calcutta, their professional role in British-oriented institutions, their prolonged relationships with different kinds of Europeans, and their recently acquired wealth, knowledge, and values were the distinguishing characteristics of this new social elite (see Table 5).

In 1823, Bhabanicharan Bannerji, the editor of the Samāchār chandrikā, published an original sociological work describing the life and manners of Bengalis in Calcutta. He entitled his book Kalikātā kamalalāy (which might be translated as “Calcutta: dwelling-place of the goddess of fortune”). The fact that this was an original prose work on a contemporary subject, written in Bengali by a high-caste Brahman, indicates the extent of sociocultural change that had occurred during the Orientalist period. Bhabanicharan’s book was of great value in that it may have been the first attempt by a member of the intelligentsia to hold a literary looking-glass before his peers so that they might better perceive their own social image.

When Bhabanicharan published the Kamalalāy he was already an accepted member of the new class, having acquired his professional training in British government offices and commercial firms. His

180 Ibid., p. 22.
181 Supra, pp. 108–126.
182 When sixteen years old, Bhabanicharan worked for the agency house J. Dukett and Company. Eleven years later he left the firm and took various new positions, including that of secretary of Middleton, the Anglican bishop
reputation for bilingual fluency and wit was widespread in Calcutta circles, and it was he whom Rammohun chose to be an editor of one of the first Indian-language vernacular newspapers, the Sambād kaumudi. Disagreement over cultural values estranged the two men, and Bhabanicharan left the paper in 1822 to found one of his own, the Chandrika, adopting a cultural position that was perhaps more representative of the prevailing sentiments of the intelligentsia. While Radhakant Deb, the future leader of the “conservative” wing, was only beginning in the early 1820’s, to acquire professional and intellectual maturity through his work in educational societies, Bhabanicharan seems to have assumed the actual leadership of the non-Rammohun intellectuals. It was therefore understandable that he should be the first to write a descriptive social commentary on his class.

The Kamalālāy was ostensibly intended to be a guidebook for rural Bengalis coming to the metropolis of Calcutta for the first time in hope of settling there. The book purported to explain how the Bengali city-dwellers differed from the village-dwellers and consequently attempted to set the country people at ease about the townsmen’s strange habits and speech. Bhabanicharan employed the interesting device of a dialogue between a townsman and a villager to describe the social structure of the Bengali Babu.

In the first pages, Calcutta was described as a “bottomless ocean of wealth” attracting thousands in search of fortune. The city of Calcutta, and chief assistant to the Hooghly Collector. See biography of Bhabanicharan Bandyopādhyāy in Samāchār chandrika (June 8, 1848), quoted in B. N. Bandyopādhyāy, Bhabanicharan Bandyopādhyāy (S-s-c series, 1959), pp. 7-10.

153 Ibid., p. 19.
154 There is some doubt whether he was the editor or the editor’s assistant. See ibid., pp. 16-17.
155 Ibid., p. 16.
157 Bhabanicharan’s use of terms is interesting: Nagarbāśī is the townsman, palligrāmanībāśī the villager. To denote the new phenomenon of metropolitan Calcutta he uses mabānagar, or great city.
158 Bhabanicharan does not always clearly distinguish between the new Babu class of professional intellectuals and the absentee land-owning gentry of Calcutta, which he calls bhadralok, or class of cultivated gentlemen. See B. C. Bandyopādhyāy, Kamalālāy, p. 8.
159 Ibid., p. 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Date of Birth</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Languages of Early Education</th>
<th>Main European Contacts</th>
<th>Profession (As Intellectual)</th>
<th>Sociocultural Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bannerji, Bhabinicharan, b. 1787</td>
<td>Twenty-four pargannahs</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Sanskrit, English</td>
<td>Agency houses; Anglican Bishop Middleton</td>
<td>Editor <em>Samāchār chandrikā</em>; prose satyrist</td>
<td>Gaudia Samaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basu Ramram, b. 1757</td>
<td>Twenty-four pargannahs</td>
<td>Kayastha</td>
<td>Persian, Sanskrit</td>
<td>Serampore Mission; College of Fort William; William Carey</td>
<td>Linguist; stylist in Bengali prose; historian</td>
<td>Serampore Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidyalankar, Mrytunjay, b. 1762</td>
<td>Midnapur</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>College of Fort William; William Carey</td>
<td>Linguist; stylist in Bengali prose; translator</td>
<td>Hindu College; Calcutta School and School Book Societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deb, Radhakant, b. 1783</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>Sudra (?)</td>
<td>Persian, English, Urdu, Sanskrit</td>
<td>Calcutta School and School Book Societies; Mack; Carey; H. H. Wilson</td>
<td>Author of texts; translator; supervisor Calcutta schools</td>
<td>Hindu College; Gaudia Samaj; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Language(s)</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutt</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Sanskrit, Persian, English</td>
<td>Agency House; Administration</td>
<td>Clerk; judge, Small-Claims Court</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rossumoy, b. 1780</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaudia Samaj</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitra, Tarinicharan, b. 1772</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Persian, English, Urdu, Sanskrit</td>
<td>College of Fort William; John Gilchrist</td>
<td>Linguist; Urdu prose stylist Calcutta School and School Book Societies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy, Rammohun, b. 1772 (?)</td>
<td>Hugli (District)</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Persian, Sanskrit, Tibetan (?)</td>
<td>Civil Service; John Digby; missionaries; William Adam</td>
<td>Clerk, Civil Service; Bengali prose stylist; journalist Brahmo Sabha; Unitarian Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen, Ram Camul, b. 1783</td>
<td>Hugli (District)</td>
<td>Kashatriya</td>
<td>Persian, Sanskrit, missionary English</td>
<td>Hindoostanee Press; Asiatic Society of Bengal; H. H. Wilson</td>
<td>Printer; native secretary Asiatic Society Hindu College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarkalankar, Jay Gopal, b. 1775</td>
<td>Nadiya</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>Serampore Mission; John Clark Marshman</td>
<td>Native editor Samāchār darpan Serampore Mission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagore, Dwarkanath, b. 1794</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Persian, English, Sanskrit</td>
<td>Agency houses; administration Civil Service; entrepreneur; publisher</td>
<td>Brahmo Sabha; Unitarian Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagore, Mohun Prasad, b. ?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>College of Fort William</td>
<td>Librarian Serampore Mission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled principally from Sāhitya-SādhaK-Charitmālā Series (Kalikātā: Bangiya Sāhitya Parishat).
was unique in offering so many different ways of accumulating worldly goods. Those who were most successful in capitalizing on their opportunities became "purse-proud" and began to follow a new mode of living that seemed totally alien to their village cousins.\(^\text{161}\)

Initially, however, the newcomer to Calcutta found himself bewildered by the different kinds of people he mixed with on the street.\(^\text{162}\) He soon realized that the road to financial gain was through the European, who controlled the money but needed the menial, clerical, or linguistic assistance of the native. If the Bengali was resourceful he would learn some English and persist in his effort until he found employment with the European. By serving his master well and by adapting his work habits, the Bengali was well on his way to a life of relative ease. Later, after having accumulated some money, he would probably invest it in land.\(^\text{163}\)

Bhabanicharan distinguished this new class (which he divided into intelligentsia and absentee gentry) not only from the rural elite but also from the more traditional members of the literati in Calcutta. He betrayed his own cultural ambivalence by writing the first of many satirical sketches on the Calcutta Babu who had fallen away from his ancestral customs and duties. Nevertheless, he condoned Bengali participation in the Orientalist institutions promoting revitalization. In one section he condemned the members of the new middleclass for having lost their Hindu heritage and for reducing their religion to an occasional gift to a pundit.\(^\text{164}\) He also accused them of spending so much intellectual effort in learning English and Persian in order to advance themselves professionally that they were left with little time to study the sastras.\(^\text{165}\) Some had gone so far in disgracing themselves and their families that they could not or would not perform śraddh (funeral rites) for a departed parent.\(^\text{166}\)

Yet, much later in the book, Bhabanicharan praised the Babu’s

\(^{160}\) The term used is dhanaamattatādi, employed by the author to denote a new feeling of status based on wealth.

\(^{161}\) B. C. Bandyopādhyāy, Kamalālāy, p. 4.

\(^{162}\) Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{163}\) Again, there is a confusion between the intelligentsia with moderate means and the wealthier bhadralok financially able to invest in land. Some apparently belonged to both categories. Ibid., p. 9.

\(^{164}\) Ibid., pp. 10–11.

\(^{165}\) Ibid., p. 11.

\(^{166}\) Ibid.
modern, cultivated habits evidenced by his support of literary and educational reform. The Babu bought books of all sorts (although he did not always read them) and proudly boasted of a library in his home.\textsuperscript{167} Because of his patronage of printed works, bookstores had multiplied in Calcutta and knowledge was a sought-after commodity.\textsuperscript{168} It was the new class of Babus who established Hindu College and currently sponsored the noteworthy Calcutta School Book and School Societies.\textsuperscript{169} They had also provided scholarships for needy students.\textsuperscript{170}

It should be added that although Bhabanicharan criticized his own class for their unorthodox ways, he was also highly critical of the orthodox pundits in Calcutta, who not only inflexibly and dogmatically resisted change but were also guilty of selfishly craving riches.\textsuperscript{171} As he portrayed them they were gossipy, factional, hypocritical, corrupt, and to a large extent surprisingly ignorant of Hindu learning.\textsuperscript{172} This is an important point, for however much Bhabanicharan and others in his class championed the orthodox cause, they did not identify themselves with the authentic eighteenth-century literati. Standing between these two groups was a newly formed cultural tradition and social consciousness.

The class that he described and to which he himself belonged was, therefore, a distinctively new social grouping in India. It was composed of an elite and an intelligentsia. The class was urban, not rural; it was literate and sophisticated; its status was founded more on wealth than on caste; it was a professional, not a literati, group; it was receptive to new knowledge, ideas, and values; it absorbed new attitudes and its intellectuals created a syncretic cultural tradition; and perhaps most important, it mentally transcended kin and caste and thought in broader social terms.

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., pp. 36–37.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., p. 39.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., p. 43.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., pp. 33–34.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., pp. 26–29.