PART V

Macaulayism and the
Decline and Fall of the
Orientalist Movement
1828-1835
We are among the people, but not of them. We rule over them and traffic with them, but they do not understand our character and we do not penetrate theirs. The consequence is that we have no hold on their sympathies, no seat in their affections.

—WILLIAM ADAM TO LORD BENTINCK

There are some who are exclusively modern, who believe that the past is the bankrupt time, leaving no assets for us, but only a legacy of debts. They refuse to believe that the army which is marching forward can be fed from the rear. It is well to remind such persons that the great ages of renaissance in history were those when man suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE
A Return to the Exile Mentality and the Dissolution of the College of Fort William

In 1820, the venerable, indefatigable William Carey entered his third decade of service for Wellesley’s “University of the East.” It was to be his last. His long-time colleague in the Hindoostanee Department, Thomas Roebuck, had died in 1819 and the fifth Urdu professor in twenty years, Major J. W. Taylor, succeeded him.\(^1\) Mathew Lumsden, the Arabic-Persian professor who had served the college for eighteen years, left India for the last time in April of 1820.\(^2\) His successor, Lt. Ayton, was another of the dashing military officers who now dominated the faculty. Lt. D. Bryce was the second professor of Persian, and the teaching of Hindi (more and more generally regarded as the “Hindu” vernacular) was shared between Major Taylor and Captain W. Price.\(^3\)

In the 1820’s, skirmishes broke out anew between Carey, representing Bengali, and his competitors, representing Urdu and Hindi. Actually, Urdu was as much on the defensive against Hindi as was Bengali.

In 1822, when the College Council contemplated reducing the native faculty of the Bengali department while leaving the other departments at full strength, Carey sent in a strong letter of protest. Burning with indignation, he wrote:

\(^1\) PCFW, DLXVI (May 1, 1820), 111.
\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 92-93.
\(^3\) Ibid. (May 28, 1821), p. 401.
Convinced as I am that the Bengalee language is superior in point of intrinsic merit to every language spoken in India, and in point of real utility yields to none, I can never persuade myself to advise a step which would place it in a degraded point of view in the College. While therefore as [a] first and second pundit are retained in the Persian and Hindooostanee Departments I must consider them as equally necessary in this.4

The Council, composed largely of his former students, upheld Carey.

In 1823, Taylor, now a colonel, advocated that the Council divert college resources into an ambitious program of Hindi development.5 In his view, Hindi and Urdu or some mixture “between these with various shades of difference may be comprehended as encompassing most of the Dialects of the different Provinces under this Presidency.”6

But the vernacular struggle had in fact just entered a new phase, for in 1824 Carey brought out a complete edition of his monumental Dictionary of the Bengali Language, containing 85,000 words.7 This edition was an incredible achievement, which marked the culmination of almost thirty years of painstaking work. Though it may have met with disinterest at the college, it had a significant effect on the Bengalis themselves.

On November 16, 1824, Carey submitted a plan to the College Council in which he advocated a radical departure from the customary patronage policy of the college. He argued that it was no longer necessary to support only philological works or elementary literature in the form of textbooks for student use.8 Unlike Urdu and Hindi, Bengali could now boast original prose works on a wide range of subjects by Bengali writers. Bengalis now wrote tracts debating contemporary philosophic and religious problems;9 they conducted their own newspapers in the vernacular; and, in 1823,

5 Ibid. (May 27, 1823), pp. 228–230.
6 Ibid.
7 With his usual thoroughness, Carey not only analyzed all compound words but examined their signification etymologically and semantically. In 1827–1828, J. C. Marshman published an abridged edition in which he eliminated many “useless” nouns dealing with plants and animals.
8 PCFW, DLXVII (November 16, 1824), 510–512.
9 Ibid., p. 511.
an excellent and popular Bengali work on social commentary in Bengali had been published. Carey therefore believed that the time had come for the college to take an active part in this literary renaissance. The Council might begin by sponsoring an original work on Indian history. Carey then criticized the Rajaboli, written several years earlier by his former chief pundit, Mṛtyunjay Vidyalankar, and regretted that it was still being used as a college textbook in Indian history:

The Rajavalee was... intended to be a history of Hindoosthan. This work would have been highly valuable had it been properly filled up with the incidents, and details of circumstances which occurred during the reign of the different princes, but for want of that it is little more than a dry chronicle of the more striking events which occurred and has been found unfit for the purpose [for] which it was intended.

Not only did the Council reject Carey's plan but, during the year 1825, Carey found his beloved Bengali department threatened once more in the latest reassertion of the primacy of Hindi. Understandably, the Council was perhaps less interested in the Bengali literary renaissance than they were in adequately training personnel to administer the new territories in which Hindi was spoken. Carey, in one letter to the Council, emphasized that an attempt was being made to remove pundits from his Bengali and Sanskrit department simply because they did not know Hindi.

Carey managed to save his pundits and his department and the number of students in his classes even increased, astonishingly, from three in 1825 to thirty-four in 1828. Though the records do not disclose what methods he used in his fight for survival, Carey had obviously profited from long years of internal politics at the college.

The customary college activities were continued during the 1820's without any notable change. The Court of Directors still

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10 Carey probably had in mind Rammohun Roy's numerous debates in the vernacular and Roy's newspaper, the Sambāda kaumudi (est. 1821). The social satire was probably the Kalikātā kamalālāy by Bhabānicharan Bandopādhya.
11 Supra, pp. 124–125.
12 PCFW, DLXVII (November 16, 1824), 511.
13 Ibid., DLXVIII (August 23, 1825), p. 266.
14 Ibid. (January 14, 1825), pp. 27–29.
15 Ibid., DLXX (July 3, 1828), 20.
authorized a yearly budget of 150,000 rupees, and literary patronage—though reduced—was still substantial\(^\text{18}\) (see Table 6). The library, now public, was enriched by Brian Hodgson’s Tibetan and Nepali manuscript collections.\(^\text{17}\) From college records it is evident that the library was quite actively used. In 1824, some 1,284 volumes were circulated among the public; of these, 409 unfor-

**Table 6**

**Fort William College: Expenditures, and Amounts Spent for Literary Patronage, 1812–1827**

*(in rupees)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aggregate total</th>
<th>Literary patronage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>181,068</td>
<td>28,018</td>
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<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>203,014</td>
<td>35,409</td>
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<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>197,183</td>
<td>26,602</td>
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<td>1815</td>
<td>191,124</td>
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<tr>
<td>1816</td>
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<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>147,516</td>
<td>15,121</td>
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<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>156,649</td>
<td>17,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>135,504</td>
<td>13,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>19,829</td>
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<td>123,331</td>
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<td>?</td>
</tr>
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<td>1824</td>
<td>116,473</td>
<td>4,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>135,497</td>
<td>21,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>126,500</td>
<td>8,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>139,636</td>
<td>7,722</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Compiled from Proceedings of the College of Fort William, *Home Miscellaneous Series*. Indian National Archives, New Delhi.

\(^{18}\) Grants varied from year to year, depending on the extent and kind of work being supported. In 1825, an average year, grants amounted to 21,185 rupees. Carey’s *Bengalee Dictionary* cost 10,000 rupees; a *Burmese Dictionary* 2,000 rupees; a *Booan Dictionary* 7,435 rupees; an *English-Burmese Vocabulary* 1,000 rupees; and a *Turkish Vocabulary* 750 rupees. *Ibid.*, DLXVIII (December 26, 1826), 490.

\(^{17}\) Carey first appealed to the Council on behalf of Hodgson in a letter of December 21, 1824. He justified the huge expense involved in shipping this collection to Calcutta by maintaining that it would “throw light upon the Religions and Literature of the inhabitants of the Himalayan range of mountains.” *Ibid.*, DLXVII (December 21, 1824), 449.
tunately were never returned.\footnote{Ibid.} New languages continued to be systematized,\footnote{The new languages included Tibetan, Nepalese, Burmese, and Bhutanese.} new textbooks were published,\footnote{Some of the more interesting textbooks published in the 1820’s for college use were H. H. Wilson’s Sanscrit Plays (1825), Wilson’s new edition of the Futsava Alengiri on Muslim law (1826), Brigg’s new translation of the Ferishta (1826–1830), and Wilson’s new version of a Sanscrit Dictionary (1827).} and the usual plethora of new projects was proposed to the Council. Therefore, on the eve of the Bentinck administration, the College of Fort William was apparently in the full vigor of institutional health.

(Although, on the faculty level of the college, all seemed well with the world of Orientalism, on the student level the older Hastings-Wellesley ideal encountered serious difficulty.)

In February, 1822, College Council Member Holt Mackenzie penned a minute deplores the new wave of indiscipline at the College of Fort William.\footnote{PCFW, DLXVI (April 1, 1822), 563–567.} He noted a serious lapse in “studies and proficiency.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 564.} In the sixth chapter of statutes, promulgated in May, 1822, the governor-general warned the students that if they made no progress in the first two months of their studies, the professors would be obliged to report them to the Council, who were then to consider the possibility of expulsion.\footnote{Ibid., DLXVII (July 25, 1822), 47.} This warning was supplemented by the authorization of new monetary prizes to encourage higher proficiency in languages.\footnote{Ibid., DLXVI (May 6, 1822), 599–600.}

(‘In 1823, for the first time in college history, no disputations were recorded.) The annual event was now described in newspapers merely as the “annual awarding of prizes.”\footnote{Ibid.} Regrettably, according to John Adam, acting governor-general and the Visitor for that year’s graduation ceremony on July 18, there were too few students meriting awards. Indeed, reported Adam, of the sixteen students who should have graduated that year “only three were reported qualified by proficiency in the required two languages to enter the public services.”\footnote{Ibid.} Throughout this decade, Fort William produced no more than
a handful of proficient scholars. Only four of them—Colvin, Trevelyan, Thomason and Marshall—were able to earn high-proficiency awards in at least two Indian languages.) In 1827, on the eve of Bentinck’s ascent to administration, the College Council expelled thirteen students for “idleness” and sent them to remote stations in East Bengal and Orissa. For the Orientalists, the most crushing blow of all fell when truly gifted and outstanding students turned radically against them. A noteworthy case in point is that of Charles Trevelyan (class of 1827), who mastered Hindi and Persian with honours, but later reacted violently against the Orientalists and became an outspoken leader of the Anglicists.

(It may seem ironic that the Calcutta elite ultimately accepted Orientalism whereas the British civil servants, for whom it was originally designed, did not. At the same time that Orientalist programs profoundly influenced Bengali intellectuals in the 1820’s, several English officials challenged the Warren Hastings-Wellesley ideal by ridiculing it in satirical verse.)

This turn of events might be explained on the ground that the philosophy of an Orientalized public servant, which Wellesley sought to routinize at the College of Fort William, never permeated the lower ranks of the service. There is little doubt that that philosophy attracted and helped transform the most able of the elite. From the time of Warren Hastings the highest positions were reserved for those who demonstrated linguistic proficiency, a deep understanding of India, and a sense of benevolent responsibility in regard to the Indian people. Consequently, for many who did not make the grade and were assigned lesser posts in the interior, disappointment and resentment may have encouraged a negative response to Orientalism.

The satirical literary movement against Orientalism was apparently prompted by the appearance in Calcutta, in 1819, of Lord Byron’s eagerly awaited Don Juan. Byron’s literary style and predominant mood of melancholy were immediately imitated by those Company servants who felt that they had a flair for poetic composition. It was not long before the fate-bemoaning verses of Fort William graduates assigned to jungle posts appeared in print:

Reader adieu!—when next I court thy eye
Th’ amusements of the city I’ll recite
For which alas! I daily pine and sigh,

27 Ibid., DLIX (n. d.), 630.
28 “Medals of Merit Awards,” ibid., DLXVIII (July, 1827), 183.
A Return to the Exile Mentality

Lamenting I'm a poor Mofussilite
Nailed to a station which gives me no delight
Would I could get a sick certificate,
I'd hasten down and renovate my sight,
With all Calcutta charms, but helpless fate,
Denies the hopes and keeps me here to vegetate. 29

(The Orientalists, especially the professors at the College of Fort William, became targets of merciless satire. All the existing evils of India, which Orientalists generally ignored in favor of the more scintillating historic past, were defiantly satirized by new, self-discovered poets.

In June, 1820, the Calcutta Journal printed the first of the "Byronic" poems by local talent. The title was rather long: "Letter from Sir Anthony Fudge to his Friend, Sir Gabriel, #36 Writers' Building, Calcutta." (It should be recalled that the Writers' Building served as the dormitory for Fort William students.) As was the custom then, the epic was unsigned. The poem related the adventures of an employee recently assigned to a remote jungle station. He not only experienced disaster after disaster but discovered that his associates there were distasteful beyond endurance. He was an exile learning to resign himself to his fate. Of particular interest is the poet's view of his college career in Calcutta. His employer, "a rum sort of fellow," was impressed with Fudge's credentials from the College of Fort William:

He seemed to be glad when I told him my knowledge
Acquired in the languages down at the College
Had induced the good folks, comme mon droit, to award
Some prizes and Medals, by way of reward;
But they seem'd to be cracked, when I added just after,
(My face as demure as it could be from laughter), . . .
That the prizes of Books, being mouldy and old,
I'd sent to an auction to try to get sold;
And that the Diploma, or rather Degree,
With which they'd the goodness to decorate me,
I'd affixed to a drum, and had made it a toy
For the use and diversion of Billy, my boy... 30

One of the most readable of these heavyhearted odes was printed in the Calcutta Journal in installments, beginning on July 16, 1821. Entitled "Ruin: A Familiar Tale of the East in Two Cantos," the

29 "Canto," Government Gazette, VIII (September 5, 1822).
30 "Letter from Sir Anthony Fudge to his Friend, Sir Gabriel, #36 Writers' Building, Calcutta," Calcutta Journal, III (June 27, 1820), 675.
poem has as its subject “the progressive History of a young Officer, who enters the Service of the Company, quits his parents with regret, . . . leaving behind him a young lady who was strongly and unalterably attracted to him.” The first canto opens with the usual tribute to the master:

Byron—thou proud epitome of all,
That men adore and hate,—abor and hail;
Thou strange antithesis, whose witcheries call
The Genii of the mind within the pale
Of minstrel mastery. . . .
Yet Byron—yet I love thee;—thou art as
A drug, that in its subtle drunkenness,
Steals us to sweet delirium. . . .

The poem is particularly interesting for the reaction of a young “exile” to India. He perceived himself alone in an alien, exotic land and felt terribly homesick for his England. At the college, he indulged in the “freaks and follies of the students” and could only deride the glowing descriptions of the City of Palaces. His habits grew intemperate and soon he “drinks to forget.” Eventually “abandoned even by his friends,” he finally put an end to his “dreadful life.”

Perhaps the most interesting of the poems being considered here was first printed in the Calcutta Journal of January, 1822, under the title of “Rinaldo, or the Incipient Judge, A Tale of Writers’ Building.” The main character, Rinaldo, “a Dandy of renown,” was the kind of idle student who was becoming more and more common at the college in the 1820’s:

Not one of his associates could own
So fine a stud or pack as he kept there
Nor one of the Civilians in Town
With him in table, dress, or style compare,
He was the Exquisite—Bang-up—the thing,
Whether to hunt, race, drive, drink, dance or sing.

This work is one of the most revealing available descriptions of a student’s life at Fort William during that time. We learn that Rinaldo had a “mistress who loved him for his lovingness.” We dis-

32 Ibid.
33 “Rinaldo, or the Incipient Judge, A Tale of Writers’ Building,” Calcutta Journal, V (January 22, 1822), 228.
34 Ibid.
cover that exhibiting good taste in "wine and mess" was probably more important to the fop than learning any of the esoteric languages of the East.\textsuperscript{35} Readily furnished with funds by the Bengali money lenders located near the College, the Fort William dandy even went out of his way to win the respect of jockeys by laying "precious bets." In one verse, Rinaldo's "scholarly" activities in the college classroom are summarized:

\begin{quote}
He studied Persian for a year or more,
    And Hindoostanee at the same time read;
He did not relish much the bore
    Of filling with these languages his head,
But by degrees he so improved his store
    Of 'vox et nil praeterea,' that he made
Proficiency in Oriental knowledge
    Sufficient to pass out, last year.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

Upon graduation, Rinaldo is sent to a post in the country, far from Calcutta, and his reaction to the new surroundings was fashionably in the style of the Byronic exile:

\begin{quote}
Rinaldo did not well endure
    The dullness of a country life at first:
It was so tame, insipid, and demure,
    Ten thousand, thousand times he daily cursed
The fate which had bad influence to lure
    Him from the best unto the very worst;
I mean from the society of town
    Unto the vulgar circle of the clown.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Obviously, Rinaldo was not responding to his new official responsibilities in the manner recommended by Orientalists:

\begin{quote}
Mofussil is indeed a mopish place
    Particularly to a man of taste
And spirit, like Rinaldo, with a face
    Adapted to attract; as he is placed,
Where he cannot shew off his knowing grace,
    To any purpose, and is doom'd to 'waste,'
Like flow'rs, 'his sweetness in the desert air,'
    Without the chance of waiting on the fair.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

It is interesting to note how little Rinaldo was concerned either with official duties or the culture of the local inhabitants. In Rinaldo's time, the social and cultural norms of the East were not as well understood or appreciated by those who came to the region. The following notes reflect the views of the time:

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. (February 1, 1822), p. 332.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
naldo’s case, the training at Haileybury and Fort William, designed to produce a competent, serious-minded administrator, certainly had been a costly failure. In these poems of “exile” we search in vain for descriptions of the British civil servant in contact with the Indian people. We learn instead of relationships between one European and another. In the following lines the author depicted the other European gentlemen serving with Rinaldo:

The gentlemen were equally to blame
   For the stupidity of their discourse,
Which dwelt eternally upon the same
   Stale subjects—now the action of a horse
Or goodness of a Mouton—or the fame
   Of terriers and greyhounds in a course.
They smoked their hookahs, swigg’d a bowl of gin
   And got half drunk before they would turn in. 39

On the other hand, the poet, in a fleeting moment of “serious” reflection, seems to suggest that Rinaldo’s training was inadequate for his official duties:

Our Hero much of Persian had persu’d
   And Hindoostanee, as I sang before;
But as the books in College that are used
   Are chiefly works on literary lore,
He felt himself excessively confused. . . 40

An additional reason for Rinaldo’s professional failure was, according to the author, the climate:

But soon he found in this ungenial clime
   He could not bear to go there [office] everyday
Without the risk of hurrying in his prime
   To mingle his with his forefather’s clay;
For could he hope in India to survive
   Diurnal toil from nine or ten ’till five? 41

(39) In 1825, when Holt Mackenzie 42 became president of the College Council, the question arose among its members as to whether or not Fort William had indeed outlived its usefulness. Mackenzie was

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid. (February 16, 1822), p. 488.
41 Ibid.
42 Holt Mackenzie, after distinguishing himself at the College of Fort William in Urdu, Persian, and Bengali, was retained in Calcutta and ascended the hierarchy in the customary stages: first as Sudder Court Registrar (1810),
the only member who urged the abolition of the college. His critique of Wellesley's scheme and his proposed solution for the general problem of training civil servants in India reflected not only an empirical mind but a strongly individualistic one as well. In fact, Mackenzie in this 1825 Minute of the Council became one of the first responsible government officials to advocate the Indianization of the civil service (closed to Indians by Cornwallis' 1791 Regulation), whose many functions he felt "could be performed cheaper and better by Natives." He realized, however, that such a move would never be sanctioned in London. In his summation, Mackenzie reviewed the salient points of his argument:

Wellesley erred in over-estimating the importance of the civilians coming to the Country at an early age: he doubtless underestimated the difficulty of establishing such an Institution as he projected in India. And he does not appear sufficiently to have weighed the difficulties arising out of the mode in which the nomination is made to civil appointments. He proposed indeed to give certain advantages to the possessors of collegiate honors. But he overlooked the jealousy with which any extended system of selection in this Country would justly be regarded at home: still further the fact that when the number of Offices approaches so near the number of candidates, no really effective selection is practicable; and that any plan which should render civilians insecure in the tenure of their offices, though it might render them more zealous in forwarding the wishes of Government would probably render them less faithful in their duties to the Country.

Mackenzie advocated abolishing the college, extending the linguistic program at Haileybury, and compelling students to study "during their long voyage to India." In connection with the latter suggestion, he thought a prize of 800 rupees might be offered "to anyone who during that time might master some moderately easy oriental work." Finally, he believed that a "legal restriction" should be put on the lending of money to civil servants.

then as Translator of Regulations (1813), and finally as Secretary in the Territorial Department (1817–1831). He was an original member of the General Committee on Public Instruction (1831) and President of the College of Fort William Council (1825). For more information see General Register of Company Servants, p. 217.

42 PCFW, DLXVIII (April 2, 1825), p. 112.
44 Ibid., p. 119.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
During this debate, the problem of student indebtedness loomed large. That money was readily available is indicated by the verse of an anonymous civil servant:

And there are Baboos rich and fat and greasy,  
Who prowl around the Cranny barracks ever,  
With bags full of Rupees to tempt and please ye,  
And lean Sirkars “in Master’s business clever,”  
That is who fool and money—try to sever,  
And bonds usurious—compound interest.  
And promises to Relatives whenever  
In some good situation you are placed,  
To let them have the plundering of the pidgeon’s nest.47

J. H. Harington, the veteran jurist and old friend of Wellesley and the college,48 argued that this “noble institution” should not be abolished simply because some students, as Mackenzie charged, “incurred a debt which the most prudent find it difficult to discharge in ten or twelve years.”49 Indeed, he doubted the accuracy of Mackenzie’s ten- to twelve-year figure. If the college enforced existing rules, he felt, the problem of debts would disappear. Harington saw no reason for all this fuss since “the young men graduating from the College have done well.”50 Besides, the college had “the advantage of twenty-five years of experience” in training civil servants.51

William B. Bayley,52 who was one of Wellesley’s first students at the college, reechoed Harington’s defense of the institution. He

48 J. H. Harington had been a chief judge in the Sudder Dewani Adualat since 1811. In 1823, he was named a member of the Supreme Council. His connection with the College of Fort William can be traced as far back as its inception in 1801, when he served as a law specialist. In 1809, he was President of the College Council, and he served on the Council intermittently until his death in 1828. In 1813 he won college support for his important work, The Analysis of Laws and Regulations by the Governor-General-in-Council.
49 PCFW, DLXVIII (December 27, 1824), 102.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 William Butterworth Bayley gradually worked his way upward in the hierarchy until he became Hastings’s chief secretary in 1819. In 1821, Bayley served on the Supreme Council and four years later became its leading member. He was an original member of the General Committee on Public Instruction in 1823. In the early months of 1828, while Calcutta awaited Bentinck’s arrival, Bayley acted as provisional governor-general.
offered a plausible explanation for the increase in student indebtedness, stating that, even though the cost of living had risen substantially “since Cornwallis’ time, thirty-five years ago,” the allowances for the incoming civil servants had remained the same. He urged that the Council raise initial pay and offer liberal advances during the student’s first two months in Calcutta.  

(Anboret, the governor-general, ended the controversy by supporting Bayley’s scheme. On April 21, 1825, he stated that the college would continue to exist unaltered and that “an advance of two or three thousand Rupees would be made to any newly arrived Student really in want of pecuniary assistance, to be repaid without interest by moderate installments.”

In December, 1827, the Court of Directors despatched a bitter letter to the College Council reviewing the problem of indebtedness among the civil servants in Bengal. They reported that among the twelve worst cases, the average debt was 120,000 rupees per man. Shocked that one-half of the total number of servants in the Bengal Presidency were still paying off debts incurred during their student days at the college, the Court concluded with a suggestion that incoming servants might avoid Calcutta entirely and be sent immediately to the “interior” to be trained under experienced officers. In addition, the Court expected the new governor-general to commence an investigation of the college but would not consider abolishing it “until all facts and opinions” were ascertained.

The merits and demerits of the College of Fort William, and whether it should be continued or discontinued, were already being argued by the College Council when Bentinck arrived in Calcutta on August 1, 1828. In many ways, this debate of 1828–29 was similar to that of 1825. The Orientalists argued that the problem of indebtedness was peripheral to the main issue, which was the existence of the college as an effective training center for civil servants. All the Orientalists believed that the college succeeded admirably in this purpose. Three of the Minutes in which the debate

58 PCFW, DLXVIII (January 2, 1825), 106.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid. (April 21, 1825), p. 123.
56 Ibid., DLXIX (July 1, 1828), 575–583.
57 Ibid., p. 575.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., p. 580.
60 Ibid.
was recorded represented the prevailing Orientalist sentiment on Wellesley’s institution: those by Henry Shakespear, Andrew Stirling, and William H. Macnaughten.

Henry Shakespear,\(^{61}\) then Officiating Chief Secretary of the Government, summarized his defense of the college in these words:

> When I look back to the sound and statesmanlike views of the Marquis Wellesley under whose auspices the College was established; When I see around me, in every Department of the service, so many men whose career of Service sheds a lustre on the institution in which they were trained to habits of application, and a knowledge of the languages which are essential to the efficient conduct of the principal officers under the Government, I confess I contemplate the abolition of the College with feelings of deep regret, and strong forebodings that the measure will in the end be productive of serious evils to the best interests of the Country.\(^{62}\)

(Andrew Stirling\(^{63}\) defended the college for its “greatness as a literary institution” and for the “attainments of its eminent scholars.”\(^{64}\) Though perhaps the college may have been lax with its students recently, he was convinced that it would be a serious error to abolish an institution “affording such great encouragement and facilities to study.”\(^{65}\) He warned that the situation would be much

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\(^{61}\) After graduating from the College of Fort William in 1805, Henry Shakespear entered the judicial service in Eastern Bengal. He was brought back to Calcutta in 1819 as a chief magistrate. In 1821, Shakespear was given the office of Superintendent of the Calcutta Police. In 1823, he was invited to be an original member of H. H. Wilson’s General Committee on Public Instruction.

\(^{62}\) PCFW, DLXX (June 24, 1828), 6.

\(^{63}\) Andrew Stirling was a scholar at the College of Fort William, winning three 1,000-rupee prizes for his proficiency in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. Upon graduation in 1814, he was appointed Assistant to the Resident at Delhi. From Delhi he went to Cuttack, Orissa, as the Commissioner’s Secretary. Like Brian Hodgson, Stirling devoted much time to archeological digging and collecting of antiquities. He wrote the first history of Orissa, which appeared as an article in the *1825 Asiatik Researches*. Twelve years later he expanded it in an article for the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. He was invited to join the Calcutta elite in 1823, when he became Officiating Persian Secretary. In the same year he was also made an original member of the General Committee on Public Instruction. In 1828, when given the College Council post, he served in the Secret and Political Department as Officiating Secretary.

\(^{64}\) PCFW, DLXX (Summer, 1828), 6–14.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 8.
A Return to the Exile Mentality

There would then be no "restraint on idleness" nor "the prospect of distinction held out as the stimulus and reward of successful application." In short, Stirling was persuaded that "the College of Fort William fully accomplishes one, at least, of the main objects of its establishment, and may fairly claim the merit of producing or perfecting those attainments which shed a lustre on its own character and that of the scholars it contributes to form."  

W. H. Macnaughten, perhaps the most distinguished linguist the college ever produced, had spent most of his career until then (1828) in Calcutta, moving from one bureau of state to another. Probably more than any other Council member, Macnaughten was closer to the core of the problem when he noted a difference in quality and attitude between students in his own time and those of the present generation. To him the college, so long as it maintained "Wellesley's ideals," was not to blame for the existing student apathy and indiscipline. Among the students then attending the college, he distinguished three types. The first, which in his time constituted the majority, were currently in the minority. These students were "naturally steady, studious, and disposed to avail themselves of all the means of improvement within their reach." According to Macnaughten, "to these the College . . . affords pure, unmixed advantages." The second type, the troublemakers, "are radically ill disposed and . . . will run their careers of folly in spite of impediments." When he was a student the second group was isolated and inspired no great following. Now, however, it seemed to him that they strongly influenced the third and most numerous type: "the neutral or compound character who evinces no decisive

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 W. H. Macnaughten broke all records in linguistic proficiency at the College of Fort William (1814–15), where he collected 7,000 rupees for prizes. For more information see Roebuck, Appendix, p. 58.
69 McNaughten became the most prominent Persian specialist in the 1820's and supervised the translations of regulations and despatches while also helping to shape foreign policy. He joined the General Committee on Public Instruction in March, 1824, and the College Council in 1825.
70 PCFW, DLXX (Summer, 1828), 14–20.
71 Ibid., p. 16.
72 Ibid., p. 18.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
disposition, and with whom no influence is so strong as the example of his associates."

(Macnaughten went no further in determining the causes for the apparent change in student values. Like his fellow Orientalists, he expressed great loyalty to Wellesley and to the ideals that had prompted the establishment of the college. Concluding his eloquent appeal, he wrote: "The efficiency of the College of Fort William has been uniformly acknowledged during a long series of years by a succession of able, impartial and eminent men. Of the noble fabrik designed by its illustrious founder there is but a small portion standing—but enough to answer the chief purpose of its foundation."

(The Orientalists, who maintained their control in the college, managed to evade Bentinck’s executive axe until 1830. In March of that year, Ruddell, Secretary of the College, knowing that Bentinck had already decided for dismemberment, wrote an urgent letter to the governor-general requesting a pension for William Carey," who had given "twenty-nine years of life to the College.""

(On March 22, 1830, Captain Price, the Hindi professor, wrote the last recorded protest against Bentinck’s decision (still unofficial) to suspend the college faculty and to abolish the lecture system. "The new system," he predicted, "would create low proficiency in students." Price maintained:

This is not an unfounded conjecture but rests upon the long experience I have had in the College in which I have had constant opportunities of observing how much the assistance of the Professor was required for the pupil’s advancement; and how rarely he has made the most moderate progress, when he has been removed for a period from the system pursued in the College. It has scarcely ever happened that a Student from the Mufussil has been able to pass the examination until he has again enjoyed for some time the advantages of regular lectures and the personal contact of a Professor."

(The official resolution embodying Bentinck’s new educational policy was dated May 4, 1830. The Governor-general had re-

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75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p. 19.
77 Ibid., DLXXI (March 23, 1830), 18–20.
78 Ibid., p. 19.
79 Ibid. (March 22, 1830), pp. 21–24.
80 Ibid., p. 22.
81 "Resolution of the General Department," quoted ibid. (May 4, 1830), pp. 43–45.
solved that “from the first Proximo” the professorships, both European and native, would be abolished and lectures to students discontinued. All members of the regular faculty would receive pensions. The new system provided for a Board of Examiners (Price, Ousley, and Todd) and a kind of floating establishment of native tutors who would be hired by students for private instruction. In July, 1830, Carey submitted the last of his well-intentioned proposals to the College Council. He first predicted, however, that the new system, without “experienced European tutors and regular lectures,” would fail. Then he asked that the Council prevail upon Bentinck to allow his own Serampore College to continue “Fort William’s species of instruction.” Carey stated that Serampore was prepared to offer “a series of lectures conducted on the same principle which regulated the lectures delivered at Fort William College.” Bentinck refused the request in a cool letter to Henry Shakespear more than a month later.

On March 1, 1831, Bentinck dissolved the College Council following Shakespear’s angry resignation. The governor-general then dispersed the library so quickly that in 1833 the Board of Examiners was compelled to repurchase some of its own books in order to meet the sudden, critical need by the college for textbooks. Another reason for the book shortage was that Fort William’s customary subsidization of Oriental works had ceased two years previously (see Table 7). Most of the valuable college-library collections were gradually absorbed into the Asiatic Society’s library. In 1835, the momentous year of the Anglicist victory, Bentinck completed the dismantling of the college structure by closing the dormitory at the Writers’ Building, allowing students to live wherever they pleased.

82 Ibid., p. 43.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid. (July 17, 1830), p. 227.
85 Ibid., p. 228.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid. (August 24, 1830), p. 229.
88 Ibid. (March 1, 1831), pp. 464-465.
89 Ibid., DLXXII (June 17, 1833), 537-538.
90 Ibid., DLXXI (July 27, 1831), 616.
91 It should be added that the European collection of the College of Fort William formed the nucleus of the Calcutta Public Library in 1835.
92 Bentinck rented the rooms to private individuals and business houses. Newton, p. 8.
Thereafter, when Haileybury graduates disembarked at Calcutta expecting to resume their formal education, they discovered a "phantom College." In 1841 Major George T. Marshall, one of the last of the brilliant students in the old college (1830–31), became the secretary of the new college and struggled to reactivate the institution. He succeeded in restoring patronage and in arousing a limited amount of interest among the students. Indeed, the situation seemed promising in 1843 when a student named Seton Karr won the first degree of honor awarded by the college in nine-

Table 7

Fort William College: Annual Expenditures, and Amounts Spent for Literary Patronage, 1828–1840
(in rupees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aggregate total</th>
<th>Literary Patronage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>135,460</td>
<td>5,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>117,884</td>
<td>11,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>82,597</td>
<td>6,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>71,882</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832-1835</td>
<td>[no record]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>51,464</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>44,399</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>[no record]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>36,344</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>32,350</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


94 William Taylor, who entered the College of Fort William just at the time of its collapse (1830), not only ridiculed his "education" there but joyfully recalled how, after winning a gold medal for his proficiency, he immediately had it melted and converted into a pair of earrings for his lady friend. W. Taylor, Thirty-Eight Years in India (London: W. H. Allen and Company, 1881), I, 86.

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ten years. Marshall was also fortunate in being assisted by a gifted Bengali named Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, whom he had discovered among the graduates of Sanskrit College.

With only a small fraction of the original budget at his disposal and without official approval for restoring the college, Marshall was unable to reverse Fort William’s prolonged process of decay. In October, 1853, after investigating the condition of the College of Fort William, Governor-general Dalhousie reported that he had found “no College, no buildings, no rooms, no professors, no lectures, but only a few Moonshis whom the Government pays but who have no employment.” Three months later, on January 24, 1854, the governor-general officially and completely dissolved the by then nonexistent College of Fort William.

96 “Fort William College,” Friend of India, X (February 29, 1844), 130-131.
97 Marshall recorded his high estimation of Vidyasagar in a letter of January 4, 1841, which is now among the records of Sanskrit College. SC GRC, Letters Received, 1835-1843 (January 4, 1841).
98 In 1841-1842, the college disbursements totalled a mere 16,069 rupees.
99 GPG-G-i-C, XIII (October 11, 1853), 101.
100 Ibid. (January 24, 1854), p.113.
Macaulayism and the
Defeat of the Orientalists

In 1819, the year that James Mill was hired as Assistant Examiner of Correspondence at the India House, his *History of British India* first became available in Calcutta. Eric Stokes has suggested that the impact of Mill’s Utilitarian ideas on British administration in India was profound. Mill’s cultural attitudes, which were decidedly in the tradition of Charles Grant and the Evangelicals, had an equally profound effect upon the thinking of the civil servants.

James Mill has the distinction of being the only great English philosopher to have written a serious book on India. Ten years of extensive research and revision passed before he finally published the *History of British India* in 1818. His reputation as an intellectual probably accounted for the book’s enormous influence. Only the Orientalists, who felt threatened by his indictment of all Oriental civilizations, questioned his qualifications to write such a history. Mill had never been to India, knew no Indian languages, and

1 Forster, p. 196.
2 “Mill’s History of British India,” *Calcutta Journal*, III (June 20, 1819), 1020–1022.
3 Stokes, p. 48.
had relied on secondary sources to support his sweeping generalizations.  

With James Mill, who was certainly cut from the same cloth as his Orientalist adversaries, the rationalist heritage of the Enlightenment betrayed itself as a double-edged sword. The same Mill who attacked Voltaire and other philosophes for their “silly, sentimental” infatuation with Oriental despotism also felt ill at ease with Macaulay’s extreme chauvinism in India. The same Mill who dared to deflate the exalted figure of William Jones also angered Macaulay by denying the utility of English education in Asia.  

Mill and Benthamite Utilitarianism were products of the eighteenth-century passion for discovering “natural,” “inalienable,” and “universal” laws. The hoped-for institution to promote the most happiness for the largest number, which Voltaire perceived in the enlightened despotism of Mandarin China and Rousseau in the legislative instrument of representative democracy, would be discerned by Bentham and Mill in the laws and judiciary structure of government. One important feature probably characteristic of the eighteenth-century intellectual was his philosophical pursuit of the institution or the principle that might transcend cultural frontiers and the apparent diversity of man’s historical evolution.  

Nevertheless, there were serious differences. Universalism inspired Voltaire, Gibbon, and the Orientalists with a cosmopolitan feeling of mutual tolerance, but the same outlook led James Mill in quite the opposite direction. Perhaps the main point of departure was Mill’s obvious aversion to the “primordial” classicism of his contemporaries. As a “progressive” modernist, he was concerned not with recapturing the glories of a bygone age but with reshaping the present to accord with a prospective glorious future. Not only would such a man as Mill refuse to share the melancholy of Gibbon  

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7 Eric Stokes argues that Mill was “no Anglist” and “was convinced that the vernacular languages were far better vehicles of instruction.” Stokes, p. 57. See also K. A. Ballhatchet, “The Home Government and Bentinck’s Educational Policy,” *Cambridge Historical Journal*, X (1951), 224.  
8 Stokes, pp. 66–71.  
9 In this sense, Mill belongs to the optimistic Victorian age. For an excellent discussion of the growing anticlassic dissatisfaction of the English intellectual from Bentham through the Victorians, see W. E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).
over the decline of Rome’s grandeur or Voltaire’s admiration of the four “classical” ages of Western man, but for him, all recorded history—compared with the possibilities of social improvement in the present—would appear a dark and unworthy chronicle.

Mill, because of the rising pressure for change in cultural policy at the time he involved himself in Company affairs,\(^\text{10}\) and also because of his Utilitarian bent, took the revolutionary step that paved the way for Macaulay. Mill extended the intolerance of Voltaire for the barbaric ages to the “barbaric” cultures in Asia, where he believed darkness had always prevailed. For the very reason that Mill looked more toward the future than toward the past, he developed an antipathy for the Orientalists. In his eyes, the Orientalists, instead of helping to eradicate the blight of Oriental despotism, were guilty of perpetuating it by giving its period the aura of a mythical golden age.

Although this kind of reasoning may help to illuminate the philosophical differences between Mill and the Orientalists, another type of analysis seems necessary to explain why Mill’s Utilitarianism proved more attractive than Orientalism to the younger civil servants in India.

The immense popularity of Mill’s anti-Asian *History of British India* among generations of civil servants may be explained on one level as a logical outcome of the Cornwallis cultural policy.\(^\text{11}\) Warren Hastings and Cornwallis represented two alternative theories on how best to keep the Englishmen in India from turning the clock back to the Clive period of self-imposed exile without the feeling

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\(^{10}\) We should keep in mind the Evangelical victory of 1813 that opened India to missionaries and the growing sense of rational self-importance after Napoleon’s defeat by the British.

\(^{11}\) The Cornwallis era (1786–1793) may be looked upon as a “westernizing” interlude between the birth of Orientalist culture policy under Warren Hastings and the extension of that policy under Wellesley. In all important policy decisions, Cornwallis chose alien solutions to Indian culture problems. Part of the explanation for this anti-Hastings philosophy of administration lies in the fact that he was “the first Governor General to be appointed without any previous experience in India.” A. Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1931), p. 7. In an effort to explain which political idea Cornwallis chose to accept as a guiding principle for his institutional innovation in Bengal, Eric Stokes writes: “The Permanent Settlement (1793) was a frank attempt to apply the English Whig philosophy of government.” Stokes, p. 5.
of public service. Hastings's idea, as we have seen, was to establish an elite of acculturated Englishmen, whereas Cornwallis believed that the key to successful rule in India was to maintain a purified bureaucratic atmosphere aimed at encouraging impersonal, dedicated, and efficient administrators.

Mill's Utilitarianism, as practiced in India, may be said not only to have revived the Cornwallis theory but to have reinforced it and brought it to its fulfilment in the late nineteenth century. Like Mill, Cornwallis distrusted Oriental despotism and sought legal solutions to sociocultural problems. Unlike Mill, Cornwallis placed his faith in English law, which he unhesitatingly transplanted to Bengal. Stokes points out that Mill criticized the Permanent Settlement for not clearly defining rights and obligations. Nevertheless, both men apparently believed in the efficacy of rational laws operating within a competent legal system.

But the feature most clearly common to the two men was their attitude toward Asians. Though Mill did not argue as a Westernizer, he differed little, in actuality, from Cornwallis in his low esteem of Asians. Mill's condemnation of Oriental peoples, in the following passage from the *History*, seems remarkably similar to the Cornwallis attitude that prompted the Native Exclusion Act of 1791:

12 Hastings and Cornwallis were almost diametrically opposed on the matter of solving the civil-service problem in India. When preparing to leave Bengal, Cornwallis apparently said that he had anxiously tried "to make everything as English as possible in a country which resembles England in nothing." Quoted in Aspinall, p. 173.

13 Therefore his "first task was purification." Cornwallis abolished the Board of Trade, raised the salaries of the servants, sought to eliminate "irregularities," and aimed at creating an uncorrupting atmosphere by excluding "Asiaticks" from the higher echelons of administration. Spear, *Oxford History*, pp. 531-534.

14 According to Stokes, Cornwallis employed the Whig philosophy against this kind of despotism. Behind the Permanent Settlement, for example, Stokes writes, "was the Whig conviction that political power is essentially corrupting and inevitably abused; that power . . . must be reduced . . . and even then kept divided and counterbalanced." Stokes, p. 5.

15 On Mill's "irreverence" for English law, see *ibid.*, pp. 60-61.


17 Spear writes: "Another unfortunate consequence of Cornwallis's measures was the exclusion of Indians from all higher government posts. . . . 'Every native of Hindustan, I verily believe, is corrupt,' he wrote." Spear, *Oxford History*, p. 532.
Even in manners, and in the leading parts of the moral character, the lines of resemblance (between Indians and Chinese) are strong. Both nations are to nearly an equal degree tainted with the vices of insincerity; dissembling, treacherous, mendacious, to an excess which surpasses even the unusual measure of uncultivated society. Both are disposed to excessive exaggeration with regard to everything related to themselves. Both are cowardly and unfeeling. Both are to the highest degree conceited of themselves, and full of affected contempt for others. Both are in a physical sense, disgustingly unclean in their persons and houses.\(^{18}\)

It is therefore understandable that Orientalists reacted angrily to Mill’s *History* when it appeared in Calcutta. Of the several volumes, it was Mill’s dismal view of ancient India in the first that would draw the most fire from irate Orientalists and Indians for decades to come.

Fundamentally, Mill argued, beneath the shining veneer of Brahman achievements lay a primitive and barbaric state of society held together from earliest times by despotism and priestcraft.\(^{19}\) Being a rationalist and a Benthamite, Mill viewed tyranny—not religion—as the root evil of Hindu culture.\(^{20}\) The absence of political liberty, natural in a society that condoned extreme caste rigidity and complete license of religious superstition, resulted from the twin tyranny of the despot and Brahman. Mill went so far as to suggest that “despotism and priestcraft taken together, the Hindus, in mind and body, were the most enslaved portion of the human race.”\(^{21}\)

The Orientalists in Calcutta published elaborate rebuttals of Mill’s *History* in the local press. On June 20, 1819, for example, the *Calcutta Journal* printed an article signed by a “philo-Hindu” which sought to discredit Mill’s work. The author considered Colebrooke a far better authority on the Hindus than Mill,\(^{22}\) and argued that the evidence for important contributions by the Hindus to mankind was too well-established by linguistically competent scholars to be dismissed in “so trivial a manner.”\(^{23}\) The article expressed puzzlement “that bigotry should exist on such a subject as the Hindus. . . .”\(^{24}\) Mill had “overlooked what was the duty of the

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19 Mill, I, 222.
22 “Mill’s History,” *Calcutta Journal*, III (June 20, 1819), 1020.
23 *Ibid*.
historian in this case" and had taken the side of "the zealots." As an historian, Mill should not "praise the Hindus, or blame the Hindus. [He should instead proceed] by a careful examination of facts, by a laborious collection, and vigilant appreciation of all the evidence . . . by an extensive comparison with the correspondent circumstances of other nations. . . ."

In 1828, William Bentinck—who had been recalled as governor of Madras in 1807 for his inability to prevent the Vellore massacre—came to India as the first governor-general with views openly antithetical to Orientalist cultural policy. If he arrived in Calcutta with a philosophy, it was assuredly derived from the "pure milk of the Benthamite word." Bentinck has been quoted as saying to James Mill, "I am going to British India, but I shall not be Governor-General. It is you that will be Governor-General."

Between 1829 and 1835, the effects of Bentinck's philosophy greatly reduced the dynamism generated by two generations of Orientalist institutional growth and development. Under his administration, the College of Fort William was dismantled, the Asiatic Society experienced grave financial difficulties, the Calcutta Madrasa and Sanscrit College came precariously close to extinction, the Calcutta School and School Book Societies were rendered impotent, Serampore College anglicized its curriculum and lost its attractiveness to Indians, and such Bengali socioreligious reform movements as the Brahma Sabha began their long drift to cultural nationalism. The Bentinck era, which many historians have viewed as an extension of British reformism to India, was rather, when regarded in another light, a highly disruptive, confusing period that was marked by a crisis of identity among the intelligentsia.

In 1834, Charles Trevelyan, an ardent Westernizer, wrote a tract aimed at justifying the "abolition" of the College of Fort William. It proved to be the beginning of what has come to be known as the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy. For Trevelyan, "the rage for Orientalism" began not with Hastings, but with Wellesley.

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Bentinck quoted in Stokes, p. 51.
28 Bentham to Colonel Young, December 28, 1827, quoted in ibid.
29 C. Trevelyan et al., A Series of Papers on the Application of the Roman Alphabet to All the Oriental Languages (Serampore: Mission Press, 1834), p. 16.
Wellesley’s object, said Trevelyan, “was to educate Europeans in the languages and cultures of the East.”30 The Anglicists, on the other hand, now hoped “to educate Asiatics in the sciences of the West.”31 If Wellesley and the Orientalists had intended to revitalize Hinduism by means of a college-directed program of indigenous literary and cultural revival, they were misleading themselves as well as others: “Instead of a revival of sound learning it was only a revival of antiquated errors. Our Orientalists fondly imagined that while they were propagating the profligacies of the Sanskrit dramas, they were promoting the cause of public instruction.”32

Trevelyan accused Wellesley of having done great harm by not keeping the College of Fort William “within proper limits.”33 Its support of Oriental literature “exceeded all bounds and deluged the country with such an inundation . . . as had not been seen since the time of King Bhoj. . . .”34 Trevelyan ridiculed the Orientalist efforts in the field of social action, believing, like Macaulay, that one could not produce change in a civilization which was already a corpse.35

On August 20, 1834, H. H. Wilson, now in England, wrote a letter to his Bengali friend, Ram Camul Sen, refuting the main arguments put forward by Trevelyan and the Anglicist party. Wilson’s worst fears about Bentinck’s policy of stemming the tide of the Orientalist movement were being realized, and he felt an overwhelming sense of frustration:

But neither Lord William, nor Mr. Trevelyan know what they are doing. . . . Upon its [Sanskrit’s] cultivation depends the means of native dialects to embody European learning and science. It is a visionary absurdity to think of making English the language of India. It should be extensively studied, no doubt, but the improvement of the native dialects enriching them with Sanskrit terms for English ideas, [must be continued] and to effect this, Sanskrit must be cultivated as well as English.36

Wilson then described the governor-general as “an ignorant man who has a vigorous mind and quiet observation but who never reads and therefore, often judges wrongly.”37

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 17.
36 Wilson to Sen, August 20, 1834, quoted in P. C. Mitra, pp. 16–17.
37 Ibid.
Macaulayism and Defeat of the Orientalists

Such sentiments (which Wilson also transmitted to the governor-general himself) not only were ignored in most cases but were openly challenged by that powerful friend of Bentinck whose famous piece of purple prose of February 2, 1835, has become the most frequently quoted Minute in the history of British India. Thomas Babington Macaulay, so well known in the West for his liberalism,\(^{38}\) nationalism,\(^{39}\) and historical style,\(^{40}\) is equally celebrated for his brief sojourn in Calcutta, where he is believed to have single-handedly broken the long deadlock between Orientalist and Anglicist and prepared the way for “freedom and progress” in India.\(^{41}\)

To those who contend that Westernization is the only true form of modernization,\(^{42}\) Macaulay’s renown is certainly justified. He was a highly articulate representative of the West European liberal intelligentsia whom we generally associate with the British Reform movement of the 1830’s and the revolutions of 1848.\(^{43}\) Macaulay was spokesman for a generation that held certain liberal principles of government and society to be universally valid.\(^{44}\) His faith in

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\(^{38}\) For a study of Macaulay’s liberalism in relation to the liberalism of other Victorians, see Haughton, pp. 27-53.

\(^{39}\) For Macaulay’s nationalism in comparison with the position of other Victorians, see ibid., pp. 196-217.

\(^{40}\) For a favorable essay on Macaulay’s historical style vis-à-vis India, see R. K. Das Gupta, “Macaulay’s Writings on India,” Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, pp. 230-240.

\(^{41}\) In the leading book of source readings on India in the United States, Stephen Hay writes on Macaulay’s Minute: “His judgment was nevertheless basically well-intentioned, for his purpose was not the eradication of non-Western learning in India, but its regeneration through contact with the best learning produced by the modern West.” Sources of Indian Tradition, p. 596.

\(^{42}\) For remarks on the synonymous use of these two concepts, see pp. 277-278.

\(^{43}\) Their role in the all-European revolutions of 1848 has been brilliantly analyzed in L. Namier, 1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964).

\(^{44}\) Benedetto Croce summed up these liberal principles rather eloquently when he wrote:

The liberal method converts all from subjects into citizens, and gives to all, or to as many as possible, the means of sharing power, whether in government and administration, or by criticism and counsel, or through resistance, direct and indirect, by means of its various institutions, freedom of speech and of the Press, and of association, of voting and standing for election, and so forth. Whoso wants to make use of these liberties can do so, inspired thereto by civil education directed to this end, and he can take
greater mass participation in government through representative institutions marked him as the apostle for what Croce has rightly called the nineteenth-century religion of liberalism. There was evidently no doubt in Macaulay's mind that what the intelligentsia valued as progressive or "modern" for the West could and should be exported to India.

Macaulay's belief that Asians could achieve a higher quality of civilization in the manner of Europeans seems to indicate a deep commitment to the cosmopolitan spirit of the eighteenth century. It surely separates Macaulay from the racists of a generation or so later during the rising tide of imperialism. Also, because Macaulay advocated a Westernizing program for India that was secular rather than religious, he seems to have had little in common with his father's generation of Evangelical zealots.

If Macaulay was neither a Kipling nor a Wilberforce but an

part in the competition and in the political struggle, whose larger or smaller fruits depend upon the quality, more or less good, of the forces in play, and of the men who share in them and handle the method.


46 There seems little doubt that to Macaulay's generation in Victorian England, the progressive era in which they lived was radically different from any other previous age in world history and was the beginning of modernity. See Houghton, pp. 27-53. Also, Macaulay explicitly stated in his famous Minute that he believed modernity or the new forces of liberalism could be exported. Thinking of Russia, in particular, Macaulay wrote, "There are in modern times...memorable instances of a great impulse given to the mind of a whole society—of prejudice overthrown—of knowledge diffused—of taste purified—of arts and sciences planted in countries which had recently been ignorant and barbarous." Minute of February 2, 1835, found in the GCPI MPC.

47 Nevertheless, as Houghton demonstrates in his chapter on "The Worship of Force," the love of violence evidenced by Macaulay, Carlyle, and other Victorians did reflect the same kind of spirit as that of the imperialists. But the distance between the two world views was still great. Writes Houghton, "It was British chauvinism...which by moments turned men like Kingsley and Froude, Carlyle and Hughes, into storm-troopers and led the British public to buy thirty-one editions of Creasy's Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World between 1852 and 1882 at least partly for the reason given by Spencer, in order to 'revel in accounts of slaughter.'" Houghton, p. 211.
ardent liberal champion of modernization for India, how do we explain the conflicting views of him among Asian scholars and other intellectuals?—many of whom seem to share his liberalism. In Indian historiography, the very name Macaulay evokes intense feelings and emotions. Though still praised for such prophecies as “in forty years time there would not be any idolatry among respectable classes of Bengal,” he is condemned for his “major weakness” of “knowing India and Indians very little . . .” which “. . . was due to his colossal ignorance of the rich store of Oriental learning.” One extremely negative view, by no means uncommon, is that Macaulay, rather than being a high-principled modernizer, was a Nabob who came to India to assume a position that paid £10,000 a year.

To assess Macaulay’s role as Indian modernizer is a very perplexing task, for various reasons. In the first place, twentieth-century man, who has suffered unparalleled dehumanization as a result of aggressive nationalism, imperialism, militarism, “technologism,” and totalitarianism, has often reflected on the optimistic, liberal period of the Victorians and pondered as to what went wrong. Secondly, mixed feelings about Macaulay are closely related to scholarly unwillingness, until recently, to acknowledge Orientalist syncretism as a viable alternative to modernization in India. A third significant reason, especially from the viewpoint of Asians themselves, is that Macaulay’s role has rarely been analyzed in the psychological perspective of cultural encounter.

A new scrutiny of the Victorian Age might suggest that there were certain aspects of Macaulay’s attitude that made him as much a forerunner of the later age of imperialism as other features linked him to universalist tradition of the eighteenth century. The Macaulay whom Walter E. Houghton depicts in his *Victorian Frame of Mind* is an excellent case in point. On the one hand, Macaulay the modernizer took great “pride in the power of man to conquer nature.” But on the other hand, as Houghton reminds us, “in Macaulay, pride in the power of man to conquer nature had already passed into pride in the power of Englishmen to subdue the earth, both material and human.”

Hans Kohn, an authority on nationalism in the West, places the

48 N. S. Bose, p. 66.
49 Ibid.
51 Houghton, p. 44.
rise of nationalism “as a general European movement in the nineteenth century,” and then refers to Macaulay as a chief participant in the movement.\textsuperscript{52} “Nationalism,” Kohn writes, “made the divisions of mankind more pronounced and spread the antagonistic aspirations to wider multitudes . . . than ever before.” It also produced “cultural tension which invested the national struggles with the halo of a semi-religious crusade.”\textsuperscript{53} When Macaulay wrote that “the English have become the greatest and most highly civilized people ever the world saw . . .,”\textsuperscript{54} he was evidently expressing a chauvinism (however seemingly true to Victorians) that was in sharp contrast to what Kohn calls “the rationalism of the eighteenth century with its emphasis on the common sense of civilization.”\textsuperscript{55} This is not to blame Macaulay for having observed rightly in the same essay that the English . . . have spread their dominion over every quarter of the globe . . . have created a maritime power which would annihilate in a quarter of an hour the navies of Tyre, Athens, Carthage, Venice, and Genoa together, have carried the science of healing, the means of locomotion and correspondence, every mechanical art, every manufacture, every thing that promotes the convenience of life, to a perfection which our ancestors would have thought magical.\textsuperscript{56}

These observations on Macaulay may help to explain why the Anglicist position on cultural change for India appears so arrogantly ethnocentric. They also might well account for the demise of the Orientalist alternative program because of lack of public support. Seen in historical perspective, as already intimated, Orientalists and Anglicists shared the same universalist faith in the capacity of non-Europeans to reach a high level of civilizational achievement. To be sure, Orientalists advocated syncretic schemes for self-help according to one’s own value system, whereas Anglicists were less sympathetic to traditional values and more convinced that no real change was possible without radical assimilation to the British style of life. Yet it was precisely the Anglicist argument that the process of modernization was organically related in some mysterious way

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{54} Macaulay’s essay on “Sir James Mackintosh,” (1835) quoted in Houghton, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{55} Kohn, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{56} Houghton, p. 39.
to the British culture pattern that constituted a fundamental difference between the two philosophies. This could also explain how later-day imperialists were able to modify Macaulayism so to justify claims of racial superiority.

From the point of view of the Asians themselves, the controversy about Macaulay may perhaps be best understood in terms of the psychology of encounter. Put simply, it was not so much what Anglicists intended to do or what they actually said that aroused so much indignation among the Europeanized Calcutta intelligentsia, but rather the invidious cultural values implicit in what Anglicists proposed. To understand better this Asian response to Macaulay in the nineteenth century, one has only to turn to a similar reaction by twentieth-century scholars—especially anthropologists—to the inflated self-image of the Victorians. We learn from Ruth Bunzel, for example, that one of the nineteenth-century attitudes that Franz Boas strongly opposed was “the ethnocentric . . . version of cultural evolution—that mankind had evolved in a uniform series of stages from ‘savagery’ to mid-Victorian England, and that all existing forms of culture were to be evaluated in terms of their similarity or dissimilarity to this most highly evolved culture.”

How Bengalis reacted to this view is the subject of the next chapter. At this point, suffice it to say that psychologically Victorian Englishmen like Macaulay expressed a certain offensive crudeness which in retrospect reflected the values they espoused. Some of the adjectives used by Houghton to describe this class of Englishmen should indicate something of their personalities: obstinate, rigid, arrogant, dogmatic, and self-righteous. Macaulay’s style of behavior and writing was apparently so obnoxious that even his warmest admirers today must surely wince from embarrassment by his complete lack of tact or sensitivity for the feelings of the very people whom he wished to reach.

An example of this may be found in H. T. Prinsep’s reliable account of the circumstances surrounding the “victory” by Macaulay and the Anglicist party. According to Prinsep, Macaulay easily manipulated “the well-intentioned Bentinck” into appointing him president of the General Committee of Public Instruction.

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given the post, Macaulay, without consulting the other members of the educational body, prepared and transmitted a proposal that "the Bentinck Government would withhold any further grant of public money from institutions ... conferring instruction in native languages." He went so far as to recommend that Sanskrit College be abolished.

After Bentinck approved the proposal, John Colvin, one of the younger civil servants in the Anglicist faction, became so "elated at the triumph of his party that he could not help boasting of it to the people of [Sanskrit] College." Word of this spread quickly among the Hindu and Muslim elite of Calcutta and the "mind of the public ... was in a ferment." By February 15, the Calcutta intelligentsia had circulated petitions against the secret Macaulay Minute of February 2, "signed by no less than 10,000 people."

Only then did the actual debate between Orientalists and Anglicists begin in the educational committee. According to Prinsep, the immediate public reaction to the Macaulay resolution saved Sanskrit College from total abolition. Bentinck, however, remained as unmoved in 1835 about what Orientals desired as he had in 1807. On March 7, 1835, he embodied the main principle of Macaulay's Minute in an official resolution which stated: "His Lordship in Council is of opinion that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science amongst the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone."

Macaulay's Minute, which served as the basis for the Bentinck resolution, clearly indicates why Macaulay continues to be such a controversial figure in Indian historiography and why his program for modernizing India, sound as it is from a Westernizer's standpoint, continues to be coolly treated by Asians. Macaulay began his Minute by ridiculing the Indian vernaculars as "poor and rude." Besides putting South Asians themselves on the defensive

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59 Ibid., p. 133.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., p. 134.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Resolution on Education (March 7, 1835), found in the GCPI MPC.
66 Minute of February 2, 1835, found in ibid.
with such a remark, Macaulay angered the Orientalists, who had devoted well over thirty years of hard work to modernizing Indian languages at such institutions as the College of Fort William.

Oriental classical languages seemed especially inferior to Macaulay since "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." This statement is an excellent example of how Macaulay obscured his real intention and confused the reader with an invidious comparison between cultures that was highly imperialistic in tone. It is precisely in this context that one Indian writer after another has returned to the charge, emphasizing that such sweeping generalizations were freely articulated by a man who had never read a single line in any Asian language. In all fairness to Macaulay, what he probably meant was that in comparison with the impressive accomplishments of modern European literature, the literary and linguistic achievements of each and every classical civilization were, in his opinion, trivial. Macaulay, the Victorian modernist with an unshakeable faith in the idea of progress, showed the same contempt for his own Western heritage as he did for Oriental ones. The following passage in his Essay on Bacon might suggest the relationship between his scathing judgments of other cultures and those passed upon his own tradition: "Words, and more words, and nothing but words, had been all the fruit of all the most renowned sages of sixty generations."

Therefore, and the point cannot be overemphasized, it was Macaulay's outspoken expression of his values, in a tone of dogmatic certainty, that created so much misunderstanding. In paragraph after paragraph, Macaulay gave the reader the impression that he had rejected the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment in favor of the aggressive nationalism of a later period. Actually he had abandoned the past for the glorious future and saw England as embodying the spirit of the new age. Unless we understand that Macaulay used invidious cultural comparisons as a means to the end of Westernizing India, we can easily be misled into believing that he intended to demonstrate the inferiority of non-European peoples and cultures. Take, for example, another of the oft-quoted passages in the Minute:

It is I believe no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected to form all the books written in

67 Ibid.
the Sanskrit language is less valuable than that what may be found
in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in
England. In every branch of physical or social philosophy, the
relative position of the nations is nearly the same.89

Another perplexing source of confusion lay in Macaulay’s ex-
cessive pride in the English language and literature. “It may safely
be said,” Macaulay noted casually, “that the literature now extant
in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which
three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world
together.”70 We might surmise that in this case Macaulay’s display
of cultural immodesty probably offended Frenchmen and Italians
as well as Asians.

Macaulay concluded that he did not believe that the General
Committee on Public Instruction should feel “fettered by the Act
of Parliament of 1813” or any “pledge expressed or implied there-
in.”71 Available funds ought to be utilized “in teaching what is best
worth knowing.”72 He was convinced that, since the “natives are
desirous to be taught English” and since the government was now
anxious that they learn it, support for the indigenous languages
should cease.73 Macaulay therefore recommended that “our efforts
ought to be directed . . . to make natives of this country thoroughly
good English scholars.”74

Weeks later, on March 24, W. H. Macnaughten sent a vigorous
reply to Bentinck on behalf of the Orientalists. He began by ques-
tioning the qualifications of the men who were responsible for the
resolution. “I have heard gentlemen,” he wrote, “who confessing
without any pretentions to Oriental erudition, are in the habit of
declaring their belief that the cherished Literature of one hundred
millions of people is an unmixed mess of falsehood and absurdity.”75
He viewed the Anglicists as dangerous Utopians. For him, “the
notion that the English Language would ever become the Language
of India is purely chimerical.”76

If we wish to enlighten the great mass of the people of India we
must use as our Instruments the Languages of India . . . . Our object

89 Minute of February 2, 1835, found in the GCPI MPC.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 W. H. Macnaughten, Minute (March 24, 1835), ibid.
76 Ibid.
is to impart ideas, not words, and it must be much more easy to acquire these through the medium of the mother tongue than by a foreign one. They who assert that the Oriental Languages are incapable of being made the medium to conveying new Ideas must have but a superficial knowledge of those tongues.\textsuperscript{77}

Macnaughten, in his attempt to refute every Anglicist contention, even went so far as to question the success of English education in Britain. “We expect so much from Indians,” he wrote, “but how many in our country after receiving a most liberal education enter public life with more knowledge than suffices to enable them to use their mother tongue with facility and precision.”\textsuperscript{78} Yet the Anglicists expected the Indian people no only to master a foreign language (“the most difficult perhaps in the World”), but also to adopt its arts and sciences.\textsuperscript{79} In answer to Macaulay’s observation that Indians themselves desired to learn English, Macnaughten replied that it was the “love of lucre” that prompted this attraction to English.\textsuperscript{80} He predicted that the Indians would resist the resolution\textsuperscript{81} and that in time the government would realize how “useless, wasteful and cruel it was to force a people to consume their valuable time in the acquisition of that which is not in itself knowledge, but only the means of gaining knowledge and which provided but a few of them with the means of gaining subsistence.”\textsuperscript{82}

Although the popular-culture Orientalists did not really figure in the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy, their opposition to Macaulayism was well aired in the Calcutta press. William Carey, the missionary who had dedicated his life to the cultivation of India’s popular languages and who might have led the struggle, had died on June 9, 1834. The man who stood in Carey’s place to controvert Macaulayism was Carey’s brilliant student at Fort William, Brian Hodgson, Resident in Nepal.

In 1835 Brian Hodgson already anticipated the cultural imperialism that the Macaulay program would engender. In a series of letters to \textit{The Friend of India}, he advocated a middle way between the Anglicists and the high-culture Orientalists. Like the Seringapore missionaries, he advocated a popular-education program

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
through the vernaculars. He predicted that “Macaulayism . . . will help to widen the existing lamentable gulf that divides us from the mass of people.” Although he shared the Orientalist value system, he condemned the tendency of its general policy to favor the elite and neglect the masses. Hodgson’s own idea of renaissance represented a democratic form of Orientalism now almost forgotten:

We seek to regenerate India; and to lay the foundations of a social system which time and God’s blessing on the labours of the founders shall mature perhaps long after we are no longer forthcoming on the scene. Let then the foundation be broad and solid enough to support the vast superstructure. Let us begin in the right way, or fifty years hence we may have to retrace our steps, and commence anew! Sound knowledge generally diffused is the greatest of all blessings; but the soundness of knowledge has ever depended and ever will on its free, and equal, and large communication.

84 Ibid., p. 66.
85 Ibid., p. 25.
Macaulayism and the Bengali Intelligentsia: The Seeds of Ambivalence and the Beginnings of Indian Nationalism

Although the overwhelming majority of the new intelligentsia in nineteenth-century Bengal sought to reinterpret some phase of their past history as a guide to an uncertain future, a small minority of intellectuals denied the validity of their entire cultural heritage. From Derozio to M. N. Roy, there has been a highly articulate intellectual tradition of extreme Westernization and accompanying cultural alienation. Originally nurtured by Derozio at Hindu College during his brief but influential tenure as instructor of English literature between 1828 and 1831, the group representing this tradition, often known as Young Bengal, devised a new solution to the problem of revitalizing Indian culture. Though most of them eventually returned to the indigenous cultural fold, a small number either espoused Christianity and adopted the European Reformation as their model for regeneration or remained faithful to Derozio’s secular spirit and promoted the new idea of man’s perfectibility or progress in a hopeful future.

To say that Derozio had a key role in originating a secular wing of the intellectual elite is not as exaggerated as it may seem. On the contrary, the popular impression that a new era opened at Hindu College with Derozio’s appointment there seems to be confirmed by historical fact. In the eleven years that preceded 1828, Hindu College had not produced a single known graduate who completely
rejected his own culture and sought to identify himself with the alien West.

Hindu College, as we have already seen, was the creation of the newly urbanized Bengali elite in Calcutta, who desired a Westernized institution of higher learning for their sons. Because the college had been established during Marquess Hastings’s administration, when Orientalism was first being expressed in programs for social action, there was not the slightest apprehension among the elite that that institution would alienate their children from their own culture.

Why Derozio, one of a number of faculty members, was able to capture completely the imagination of his students is difficult to determine. The fact that he was born a Eurasian with a Portuguese father and that he probably did not know Bengali indicates something of his own cultural background. In 1843, twelve years after his death, he was described in a literary journal in the following manner:

In his dress, he went to the extreme of foppery. He was like a woman fond of gold and his person was adorned with a goodly quantity of it. He never wore a hat and his hair was parted from the middle. He was conspicuous for his yellow-painted Stanhope and English horse, and it was laughable to see him in the morning, spurred and booted to the knee, on a powerful Arab, coursing the plain. The effect of his dress was increased by his diminutive stature.

Derozio was committed to alien ideas and movements no less intellectually than he was socially and culturally. From his early years at Dharmatola Academy until his death, he seemed to concern himself solely with David Hare’s religious scepticism, Diderot’s rationalism, and Rousseau’s democratic faith. Rammohun Roy shared Derozio’s concern with the fate of popular sovereignty in Europe, but he did not or could not share Derozio’s complete lack of interest in reinterpreting the Indian tradition. It is not without significance that in the later historiography of Indian nationalism,

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1 *Supra*, pp. 179–182.
2 *Ibid*.
3 “Henry Louis Vivian Derozio,” *Oriental Magazine*, I (October, 1843), 381.
4 For a recent biography in Bengali that traces these influences on Derozio from a sympathetic point of view, see B. Ghose, *Bidrobi Dirojio* (Kalikāṭā: Bāk-Sāhitya, 1961).
whereas Rammohun’s ambivalence toward the West has earned him the characterization of “Father of Modern India,” Derozio, far more Westernized, has increasingly been treated as a denationalizer of Hindu youth.⁵

Yet it was precisely in this legacy of an expatriate mentality to the younger generation of the intelligentsia that Derozio made his contribution to the idea of renaissance. He shared with Macaulay and the Orientalists the same faith in the eighteenth-century ideal of universality. As this study attempts to demonstrate, almost every component of renaissance thought in early nineteenth-century Bengal was predicated on this cosmopolitan belief. Whether it be William Jones linking Europe and Asia through a common linguistic source, or the Serampore missionaries de-Westernizing their Reformation model to accommodate all Asians, or Rammohun Roy arguing for the universality of the monotheistic tradition, or Mrtyunjay arguing the same for the validity of so-called “medieval” tradition, each position rested on a common cosmopolitan base.

Derozio also developed a cosmopolitan view of Indian renaissance that was spiritually akin to Condorcet’s unswerving faith in the universal rhythm of historical progress. Derozio, who died a victim of cholera at twenty-two after a brief decade of meager literary activity, has left us nothing to suggest Byronic cynicism or post-Napoleonic nationalism. Instead, he held steadfastly to his faith in the eighteenth-century prophetic concept of man’s perfectibility:

But man’s eternal energies can make
An atmosphere around him, and so take
Good out of evil, like the yellow bee
That sucks from flowers malignant a sweet treasure,
O tyrant fate! Thus shall I vanquish thee,
For out of suffering shall I gather pleasure.⁶

It is, therefore, understandable why the Eurasian Derozio, who perhaps overidentified with the West in his dress, personal habits, and even thought, was the same Derozio who celebrated India in his poetry to such an extent that at least one American historian of

⁵ Nationalism probably explains this phenomenon. Derozio has been praised for his modernizing and enlightening activities in Hindu College but censured for aping the Englishman.

India has read into it “the first expression of . . . Indian nationalism.”
Expressive of more than nationalism, however, a poem like “The
Harp of India”—if we were not certain who wrote it, and if it were
written in a pedantic, Sanskritized Bengali—might have been an
invocation to a reascent India:

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung, forever, must thou there remain?
Thy music once was sweet—who hears it now?
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
Neglected, mute and desolate art thou
Like ruined monument on desert plain—
O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave;
Those hands are cold—but if thy notes divine
May be by mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country let me strike the strain!

Such poems, though they may seem flattering to India's remote
past, apparently did not reflect Derozio's deepest convictions. He
was most assuredly not a Radhakant Deb nor a Rammohan Roy.

In the light of other poems by Derozio, it is more likely that
his quest for a golden age or model was not projected backward
into India's past but forward into her future. The way to revitalize
India was not to revere a period of her past or her institutions that
were already dead, but to open Indian minds to the cultural offer-
ings of the West so that India might once more share the benefits of
human progress. Derozio never defined his hoped-for golden age
but, as is reflected in the following sonnet, he felt a deterministic
optimism that the students he trained would help direct India's
course toward the secular millennium:

Your hand is on the helm—guide on young men
The bark that's freighted with your country's doom.
Your glories are but budding; they shall bloom

7 Stephen Hay writes: “His [Derozio's] poems to India are virtually the
first expressions of Indian nationalist thought, and their appearance among
other poetry whose inspiration is clearly derivative dramatize[s] the fact
that modern nationalism is essentially an alien importation into the Indian
world of ideas.” Sources of Indian Tradition, p. 566.
8 Derozio quoted in ibid., pp. 570–571.
Macaulayism and the Bengali Intelligentsia

Like fabled amaranths Elysian, when
The shore is won, even now within your ken,
And when your torch shall dissipate the gloom
That long has made your country but a tomb,
Or worse than tomb, the priest’s, the tyrant’s den.
Guide on, young men, your course is well begun;
Hearts that are tuned to holiest harmony
With all that e’en in thought is good, must be
Best formed for deeds like those which shall be done
By you hereafter till your guerdon’s bow
And that which now is hope becomes reality.9

The significant fact, often overlooked however, is that the sociocultural differences between Derozio and Young Bengal made it as easy for him to accommodate to such an intellectual position as it made it difficult for them to do likewise. The historical over-emphasis on Young Bengal’s adolescent fervor in the early 1830’s, which coincided with the Bentinck period and the sati controversy, has distorted that group’s impact on Indian cultural history. Only recently, when scholars have shifted to Young Bengal’s mature years, their research has focused on a different kind of intelligentsia, one cultivating Bengali at the expense of English and struggling desperately to return to the cultural fold, but without losing its belief in modernization.10

Unlike Derozio, Young Bengal’s background was high-caste Hindu, usually one generation removed from the village and nurtured in Calcutta joint families surrounded by tightly knit Bengali neighbors. Whereas Derozio received his secondary-school education in the pragmatic eighteenth-century academy which taught English, reading, writing, and reckoning,11 Young Bengal was educated in traditional patsalas revitalized by Radhakant Deb and David Hare under the Calcutta School Society.12 Since the reformed schools of the Calcutta Society constituted one of the Orientalist

9 Ibid., p. 570.
10 S. K. Sarkar, arguing from a Westernizer position, resolves the problem in the following way: “It is wrong to say that this generation were Anglicized Indians . . . its most memorable positive aspects were a fearless nationalism and a candid appreciation of the regenerating new thought from the West.” S. C. Sarkar, “Derozio and Young Bengal,” Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, pp. 29–30.
12 Supra, pp. 160–162.
experiments in syncretic education, all of the ingredients of contemporary English learning were integrated into the curriculum. When these Bengali students later went on to Hindu College, therefore, it was not Westernization that Derozio introduced them to, but the Macaulay-type polarity between the superior West and their own tradition.

What Derozio actually imparted to his students was not so much the components of modernity as the cultural components representing a Western style of life. Was modernity or Westernization the basis of the oft-cited assertion that instead of the sacred mantras the Derozians now recited from the Iliad? In a dozen books and articles, a rather dubious form of modernization is implied when the authors proudly recall that the Derozians, like Englishmen, ate beef and drank wine. The pathetic absurdity of confusing cultural trappings with modernization is apparent in the following contemptuous definition of the Anglicized Bengali which appeared in a Calcutta periodical of 1851: “He has a smattering of English... is ultra fashionable in dress and unceremoniously drags poor Shakespeare and Milton from their repose and misquotes the most familiar passages... sensual delights are the goddesses of his idolatry. He eats beef, cracks a whole bottle of cognac at Spence’s or Wilson’s.”

It is precisely this kind of unfortunate creature, who increasingly turned to alcoholism to escape his cultural no-man’s-land, that frightened the older intelligentsia and made them violent critics of Derozio, Bentinck, and Macaulay. As a result, one of the chief reasons for taking the extraordinary action of dismissing Derozio was that, for the first time in the history of Hindu College, irate parents were withdrawing their children from the institution.

Many letters from such angry parents were published in the so-called “conservative” Bengali newspaper, the Samāchār chandrikā, in 1830–31. One letter that appeared in May, 1831 (the month Derozio was fired) probably contained the most representative list of grievances by the Calcutta families who withdrew their sons from Hindu College. According to the father, his son, who “was a

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14 N. S. Bose, p. 17.
18 Intemperance was apparently a serious problem among Anglicized Bengalis later in the century. See N. S. Rose, p. 142.
17 See a discussion of this in B. Ghose, Durofio, pp. 62–78.
good boy before”, now “has his hair cut”; wears “European shoes”;
eats food as soon as he receives it and “without bathing.”

The boy’s “Bengali is unintelligible”; he knows “nothing of ready reck-
oning” or how to write “bazaar bills.”

His son “can tell any river or mountain in Russia, but can give no account of his own coun-
try.” Furthermore, his son has lost all respect for caste practices
and calls “holy brahmns and pundits thieves, hypocrites and
fools.” And what seemed the worst blow of all, his son no longer
“wishes to sit with me because I have no great knowledge of Eng-
lish.”

Derozio’s untimely death in December, 1831, accounts for the
rapidity with which he came to be portrayed as a sacrificial victim
of the revulsion against modernization in India.

Nevertheless, the Bengali managers of Hindu College who voted for his dismissal—
men such as Radhakant Deb and Ram Camul Sen—who also were
modernists, have been portrayed as his bigoted tormentors.

In reality, as should be increasingly evident, it was not academic free-
dom that was at stake here but rather the psychological need to
maintain one’s cultural integrity. Derozio was indicted, then, for
the disastrous effect of his “skepticism,” which was allegedly alien-
ating Hindu youth from their own culture.

It was Alexander Duff, the militant Scottish Calvinist, who
frightened the Bengali intelligentsia far more than had Derozio’s
teaching, because of his activities in Calcutta after 1830. Duff had
even less appreciation for what Derozio represented than did the
Bengali managers of Hindu College. In May, 1830, he founded the
General Assembly’s Institution, the nucleus for the later Scottish

18 Article in Samæchăr Chandrikā reprinted in “Asiatic Intelligence,” New
Asiatic Journal, II (August, 1831), 195.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 On January 5, 1832, Derozio’s disciples erected a monument for him
and dedicated themselves to preserve his memory and beliefs. B. Ghose,
Dirofio, p. 142.

24 Traditionally, Derozio is regarded as an Indian Socrates who was con-
demned for his commitment to truth. The impression is that he died a victim
of bigotry. The evidence of Derozio’s intellectual and moral integrity is a
letter he wrote to H. H. Wilson protesting his dismissal and defending his
“skepticism.” The letter may be found in Sources of Indian Tradition, pp.
567–569.

25 A complete list of the charges against Derozio and the reasons the man-
gagers voted as they did may be found in B. Ghose, Dirofio, pp. 67–74.
Church College (which was to become one of the important institutions of higher learning in nineteenth-century Calcutta). His purpose from the beginning in this endeavor was to direct the minds of the young Bengali intellectuals away from Derozio's rational skepticism and "atheism" and bring them into the blessed realm of Christian culture, which Duff believed to be the mainspring of Western civilization.

Duff was Macaulay's religious counterpart and very much in the tradition of Charles Grant and the Clapham Sect. Like Macaulay, he violently attacked Oriental languages while praising the usefulness of English—though he did so as an advocate not of British nationalism but of evangelization. Duff’s *magnum opus*, *India and Indian Missions*, ranks with Macaulay’s *Minute*, Mill’s *History* and Grant’s *Observations* as one of the most effective and highly publicized indictments of Hinduism. Probably no other missionary before or since aroused such organized opposition on the part of Calcutta elite as did Duff. His goal, which seemed to fascinate him to the point of obsession, was to convert the entire city of Calcutta, whose population of 2,000,000 was twice that of his native Scotland.

What Duff represented in the history of mission activity can best be appreciated by contrasting his cultural attitude with that of his predecessors in Bengal, the Serampore missionaries. Certainly, what Duff was to the Anglicists, William Carey had been to the Orientalists. Whereas Duff promoted evangelization by accentuating the polarity between East and West, Carey promoted it through the reconciliation of apparent differences. Duff aimed at transforming Calcutta Bengalis into Scottish Presbyterians, but Carey aimed at introducing the basic principles of Christianity into the existing structure of Hindu society. The inflexible Duff, who, in despair and frustration, eventually left Calcutta bemoaning his inability to Westernize it, ought to be contrasted with the flexible Carey.

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who—as has been shown in earlier chapters—made India his home.31

The Serampore missionaries published works in every Indian language and made important contributions in modernizing the popular languages of South Asia. Duff never wrote in any language but English. Serampore printed the first Bengali newspaper, the Samāchār darpan, (which was supported by the local indigenous elite) as well as an English quarterly called Friend of India. Duff’s paper, the Calcutta Christian Observer, which he began to publish in 1832, was in English and far more polemical than any of the more-objective journalistic ventures emanating from the Serampore Mission Press.

But it was probably in the field of education as a tool for cultural change that the contrast between Duff and the Serampore missionaries was sharpest. Duff’s Scottish Church College with its totally Westernized curriculum represented the Anglicist value system designed to eradicate the false learning of the East and supplant it with the model of superior Christian learning of the West.32 In contrast, Serampore College, at least until Carey’s death in 1834, was founded on a value system that was clearly Orientalist in educational philosophy.33

It is understandable, therefore, why the Bengali elite feared Duff as they did Derozio and Bentinck. Derozio’s death favored Duff, since many of the leaderless adolescents at Hindu College found assurance in the latter’s dogma of the Calvinist God. Krishna Mohan

31 Supra, pp. 79–80.
32 For curriculum offerings and textbooks, see Long, p. 48.
33 In 1821, William Ward’s defense of Serampore College was also very much a defense of the Orientalist value system:

This institution... belongs to a system upon which we have been attempting to act for a number of years; that is, to make India evangelize itself and all the surrounding regions. As a part of this system, we have carefully avoided everything which might Anglicize the converts. We have made no changes in their dress, their names, their food, their language, or their domestic habits. Krishna who was baptized more than twenty years ago, appears among his countrymen as much a Hindoo as ever those things contrary to Christianity excepted. If we had given the converts English names and the English dress and appearance, the idolators would have triumphed. . . .

And thus, in this College also, all that is good is Hindoo science, will be retained; native professors for the Eastern languages appointed, and European science engraffed upon the talents, the acquirements, and energies of the natives.

Bannerji, a Hindu College student who had idolized Derozio while he lived, suddenly declared the bankruptcy of secular rationalism and underwent a spiritual crisis.\textsuperscript{34} In the following passage, written just after his conversion to Christianity in October, 1832, Bannerji clearly revealed the influence of Duff’s formula on how the West might best regenerate India:

Does not history testify that Luther, alone and unsupported blew a blast that shook the mansions of error and prejudice? Did not Knox, opposed as he was to bigots and fanatics, carry the cause of reformation into Scotland? Blessed are we that are to reform the Hindu nation. We have blown the trumpet, and we must continue to blow on. We have attacked Hinduism and will persevere in attacking it until we seal our triumph...\textsuperscript{35}

Shortly before Duff baptized Bannerji, Mohesh Chandra Ghose, another Derozian, confessed to the Scottish missionary that “My soul is pierced thoroughly with horrible reflections and terrible alarms; it seems as if racked and rent to pieces.”\textsuperscript{36}

He, too, was baptized by Duff, on August 28, 1832.\textsuperscript{37} Then followed Gopinath Nundi, who under Derozio’s teaching scorned all religions. Now only Hinduism seemed false to Gopinath. One day he stormed into Duff’s study and with tears in his eyes cried, “Can I be saved? Can I be saved?” Bannerji was called for and the two former Derozians prayed together. Gopinath was subsequently converted.\textsuperscript{38}

These experiences seem to suggest that, at least in Bengal, the spiritual form of Westernization proved psychologically satisfying to an intelligentsia beset by the self-torment of cultural ambiguity. It is interesting to speculate whether Macaulay and other secular Anglicists could ever have anticipated that the Westernized intelligentsia would ultimately repudiate the rationalist spirit and return to religious values. Evidently, it was the Anglicist emphasis on the need to assimilate completely to an alien culture that brought about the dilemma. In the first place, the Macaulay-type Westernizer seemed to underestimate the function of cultural traditions—his own as well as others—and was inclined to view traditions as

\textsuperscript{34} Smith, \textit{Duff}, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{35} Article from \textit{Enquirer} quoted in \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{37} A report of the conversion was published in the \textit{Enquirer}. See \textit{ibid.}, p. 158.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 162.
useless survivals of antiquity that had no *raison d'être* in modern society. Quite to the contrary, in fact, the connecting series of cultural traits in nineteenth-century Bengal served not as useless, fossilized traditions, but as the means for maintaining a particular moral and social stability. Therefore, when the Bengali intellectual severed the ties between himself and his heritage, he underwent an identity crisis. In existential terms, this shift in his commitment from the Indian heritage to British culture, without a physical shift from India to England, could only have disastrous psychological repercussions. In effect, the Anglicized intellectual, having acquired alien emotional and intellectual traits, was estranged from his own cultural milieu. It is not to be wondered at, then, that fifty Bengali intellectuals offered themselves to Duff for baptism,³⁹ and that most of the other members of Young Bengal who decided that they wished to maintain their identity as Hindus joined Debendranath Tagore in 1842 to revitalize the *Brahmo Samaj*.⁴⁰

In 1828, while many of the young students of Hindu College, like Derozio, were ridiculing Hindu customs and manners, Kashi Prasad Ghose, the most brilliant man in his class, launched an attack in the opposite direction on James Mill’s *History of British India* that preceded H. H. Wilson’s widely publicized refutation by eleven years.⁴¹ The twenty-two-year-old Ghose read his essay condemning Mill at the annual Hindu College examination. Like Wilson, Ghose was most disturbed by Mill’s indictment of the ancient Hindu polity. Ghose perceived in the remote Hindu past no barbaric society held together by despotism.⁴² The power of a Hindu king was never absolute; he was “restrained by the people and the law.”⁴³ For Ghose, “The monarchs of Hindustan . . . were . . . to be mild and observant of the law. The allurement of wealth and power on one side, and the terror of religion and law on the

⁴⁰ For a description of Debendranath Tagore’s organization as champion of Hinduism, see Biswas, *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, pp. 40–42.
⁴¹ See H. H. Wilson’s notes and commentary in Mill, I.
⁴² Mill wrote: “No idea of any system of rule, different from the will of a single person, appears to have entered the minds of them, or their legislators.” *Ibid.*, p. 202.
other, secured the peace of the kingdom."\textsuperscript{44} He also defended the ancient Brahmans against Mill's charge that they were a "tyrannical priestly caste."\textsuperscript{46} The privileged position assigned to them by society resulted not from their esoteric priestcraft but from their reputation for being learned.\textsuperscript{48} So that they might be uncorrupted in their pursuit of knowledge, they were wisely prohibited from acquiring wealth.\textsuperscript{47}

Ghose defended the Hindu chronological scheme as being meant for astronomical calculations, not for historical purposes.\textsuperscript{48} He also refuted Mill's charge that the Hindus were a "rude and credulous people"\textsuperscript{49} by pointing proudly to their achievements in the sciences, the arts, law, and government.\textsuperscript{50} Ghose's essay is important historically because he was the first known Bengali intellectual to defend a secular concept of a golden age among the Hindus. His arguments and evidence clearly derived from the work of the Calcutta Orientalists.

On January 7, 1829, H. H. Wilson proposed that members of the Bengali intelligentsia be admitted to membership in the Asiatic Society.\textsuperscript{51} Among the first group welcomed into the Orientalist institution were Ram Camul Sen, Russamoy Dutt, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, and Dwarkanath Tagore.\textsuperscript{52} It was not until December of 1832 that Radhakant Deb was invited to become a member.\textsuperscript{53} On December 12, 1833, almost a year later, Ram Camul Sen reviewed his "29 years with the Society" in a letter of acceptance of the post of native secretary.\textsuperscript{54} It is noteworthy that, while Bengalis were withdrawing support from many societies identified with the government, they accepted membership invitations from the Asiatic Society and infused this key Orientalist institution with new blood. Moreover, Wilson appointed Sen to his new post a week before the special meeting announcing his own departure for England.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pp. 292–29.
\textsuperscript{45} Mill, I, 222.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 289.
\textsuperscript{49} See Mill's attack on Hindu chronology and mythology in his History, pp. 155–167.
\textsuperscript{51} LASB MP, IV (January 7, 1829), 68.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. (July 1, 1829), pp. 82–83.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. (December 12, 1833), p. 144.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
At this special meeting (December 19, 1833), the Society’s president, Sir Edward Ryan, reviewed the achievements of the Orientalists from Jones to Wilson. He regarded the rediscovery of the ancient learning of India as a miracle. To him, the Orientalists had been the prime movers in restoring to the world this classical culture that was slowly emerging “from the obscurity which had for ages encompassed it.” The Society was particularly indebted to “the ardent enquiring mind of our illustrious founder,” to “the profound erudition of Colebrooke,” and to the “philological diligence of Wilkins.” But the Orientalists had made perhaps their greatest contribution in transforming that “intricate labyrinth of Indian mythology and chronology into an authentic historical tradition.”

It was in the field of history, Ryan believed, that H. H. Wilson had done his best work: “You have discovered where order could be deduced from the chaos of existing materials, where conclusions satisfactory to sound historical criticism could be attained, from which . . . the future investigator might safely proceed in exploring what is elsewhere most doubtful in this most undiscovered region of Asiatic antiquity.”

In 1837, four years after Wilson’s departure, James Prinsep,

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55 Ibid. (December 19, 1833), p. 150.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 James Prinsep was born in 1799, the seventh son of John Prinsep, who had served under Warren Hastings in the 1790's. At fifteen, James had thought of becoming an architect, but he developed an eye disease that forced him to give up this idea. His father arranged his apprenticeship to the assay master at the Royal Mint in London and in 1819 Prinsep received his qualifying certificate. Again through his father's influence at the Court of Directors, Prinsep was given a position at the Calcutta Mint, where he worked under H. H. Wilson. In 1822, however, Prinsep was sent to Benares to head the mint there. While in Benares, he caused the streets to be widened and bridges and ghat's to be built, and he installed that city's first modern sewage system. He also took the city's first census and made drawings of Benares, later published in England (Views and Illustrations of Benares, 1824, 1825). In 1830 he returned to Calcutta and worked directly under Wilson at the Mint and at the Asiatic Society. He also helped edit a periodical with Major Herbert, an engineer and old friend from Benares. In 1832, when Wilson prepared to leave, Prinsep replaced him both at the Mint and at the Society. For more details see “Memoir,” Essays on Indian Antiquities, Historic, Numismatics, Paleographyes of the Late James Prinsep, ed. E. Thomas (London: John Murray, 1858), I, i-xiv.
then Secretary of the Asiatic Society, unravelled the mystery of
the Brahmi script and thus was able to read the edicts of the great
Emperor Asoka. The rediscovery of Buddhist India was the last
great achievement of the British Orientalists. The later discoveries
would be made by Continental Europeans or by Indians themselves.
In 1846, two years after Ram Camul Sen's death, a young Bengali
named Rajendralal Mitra joined the Asiatic Society as an assistant
librarian. In Mitra the scholarly values and ideals of English Oriental-
ism found their first major Indian exponent.

Whereas Bengalis such as Mitra carried on the scholarly tradi-
tion of the Orientalists, most other members of the intelligentsia
continued to maintain their cultural values and ideals in defense in
Hinduism. In many ways, the next stage of the renaissance began
with the formation of the Dharma Sabha in 1831. It is still fashion-
able in the mid-twentieth century to attack Radhakant Deb, Ram
Camul Sen, and Bhabanicharan Bannerji, the leaders of this organi-
zation, for their defense of sati. The tendency has been to accuse
these members of the intelligentsia of being callously indifferent to human
suffering and of supporting inhumane treatment of females. This
version of the basic issues underlying the sati controversy tends to
be misleading, if not incomplete. Perhaps no other episode in Brit-
ish Indian history has been so thoroughly worked over in countless
historical texts to demonstrate the social-reform aspect of Bentinck's
administration.

In contrast to the historiographical ambiguity surrounding Mac-
caulay and his Minute of 1835, Bentinck's formal decree abolishing
sati has been approved formally and universally as a humanitar-
ian act of great importance—a milestone in the history of social
reform in modern India. Actually, these actions were equally
motivated by liberal intentions and both aroused violent oppo-
tion from the same highly-Europeanized segment of the Cal-
cutta intelligentsia. Unfortunately for this wing of the intelligent-
sia, as soon as they affixed their signatures to a petition protesting
Bentinck's legal abolition of the custom, they lost their earlier
status as modernizers (gained through reform work with Oriental-
ists) and became stereotyped as the reactionary defenders of Hindu
orthodoxy. The reason that the sati controversy has been histori-

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61 For the most authentic and comprehensive study of the Prinsep discov-
er, in print see the appropriate sections on antiquities and history in R.
Mitra, Centenary Review.
cally treated in this one-dimensional or polarized way is not difficult to understand. In the first place, because the Hindu custom of allowing widows to immolate themselves on the funeral pyre of their dead husbands was so obviously cruel and inhumane, we have taken it for granted that those who supported its abolition were heroes while those who opposed it were villains.

This dubious practice of explaining history from the standpoint of self-righteous moral indignation perhaps only half explains why historians have left us caricatures instead of real people arguing for and against sati. It seems that we have seen the controversy entirely through Western eyes—as a barbaric custom typical of "Asiatic" cultures but somehow unthinkable in the West. By evaluating Bentinck's reforms solely within the Indian context, instead of viewing them in the global perspective of the growing humanitarian consciousness of man's inhumanity to man, writers have made the sati issue appear to involve a benevolent Westerner's crusade against the stronghold of Hindu decadence.63

To clarify the argument, it should be stated that our rather limited view of the sati controversy seems to betray a lack of cultural and historical relativism. On the other hand, this is not to argue in defense of sati as the condition sine qua non of the Bengali self-image of its life and culture. To be sure, historically there was an heroic aspect of sati in which Hindus recalled the valor of Rajput women who burned themselves willingly rather than submit to the Muslim invaders. But the practice of sati in Bentinck's time was thoroughly unrelated "functionally" to that of Rajput days.64 Official reports show that many Bengali widows were murdered by their relatives, who drugged them and led them involuntarily to the burning pyre. Therefore, even from a relativist point of view,

63 Percival Spear in his most recent history of modern India seems to have transcended the older Western view of the abolition of sati and explains Bentinck's motives in a refreshingly objective and relativistic manner. Spear concludes that Bentinck attacked Hindu social evils "in the name of universal moral law (which for him was Western moral law)" and that "the action on suttee represented the imposition of Western values on Indian society." P. Spear, A History of India (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 125.

64 Writes Spear, "In orthodox theory this practice was a voluntary action on the part of the Hindu widow anxious to rejoin her god-husband through the purifying flames. She was sati or devoted. In practice it was often induced by relatives ambitious for the prestige of a sati in the family, greedy of her property, or wanting one less mouth to feed." Ibid.
it is difficult to justify sati or more important the defense of sati, in the same manner that, let us say, Jomo Kenyatta defends clitoridectomy among the Kikuyu in his *Facing Mt. Kenya*:

The real argument lies not in the defense of the surgical operation or its details, but in the understanding of a very important fact in the tribal psychology of the Gikuyu—namely, that this operation is still regarded as the very essence of an institution which has enormous educational, social, moral, and religious implications, quite apart from the operation itself. For the present it is impossible for a member of the tribe to imagine an initiation without clitoridectomy. Therefore the abolition of the surgical element in this custom means to the Gikuyu the abolition of the whole institution.\(^{65}\)

From the vantage point of the psychology of encounter, however, it seems to matter very little whether the practice of clitoridectomy among the Kikuyu functioned as Kenyatta said it did or whether sati in Bengal had lost its cultural function and was as much a vestigial element of Hindu tradition as it was an offense to the humanitarian reformer. The important thing is that the reaction against Bentinck's abolition of the custom in 1829 was almost identical with the reaction of Africans in 1929 when the Church of Scotland Mission to the Kikuyu issued an order prohibiting the initiation rite among all of its followers and among those who sent children to its schools. The zealous attempt by the mission to decree the custom out of existence led to a controversy that not only split the church but compelled "a large section of people to break away from the main body and begin to seek other means to satisfy their spiritual hunger without denouncing their social customs."\(^{66}\) As Kenyatta tells us, this particular grievance was joined to a list of others: "Apart from religious sentiments, there was a general discontentment about political and economic affairs of the country, especially about the land question. At this time people who broke away from the missionary influence, together with the indigenous population, began to form their own religious and educational societies..."\(^{67}\)

One difference between the Bengali and African controversies, separated as they were by a century, was the role of the British gov-


\(^{67}\) *Ibid.*
ernment. The Bengali petition of 1830 against Bentinck’s abolition was rejected by Parliament. In 1930 the issue of whether or not clitoridectomy should be abolished was raised in the House of Commons, and a committee was established to investigate the matter. Kenyatta himself was invited to express his views. According to Kenyatta, “It was then agreed that the best way was not by force of an enactment, and that the best way was to leave the people concerned free to choose what custom was best suited to their changing conditions.”

In 1931, the group for abolition of the initiation rite brought its case before a Conference on African Children that was held in Geneva under the sponsorship of the Save the Children Fund. Whereas a hundred years earlier, in Calcutta, the Orientalists and “traditionalist” intelligentsia found themselves on the defensive, now the Westernizers seemed to have their backs to the wall. The Westernizers argued “that the time was ripe when this ‘barbarous custom’ should be abolished.” In their view, “like all other ‘heathen’ customs, it could be abolished at once by law.” However, writes Kenyatta: “This urge for abolishing a people’s social custom by force of law was not wholeheartedly accepted by the majority of the delegates in the Conference. General opinion was for education which would enable the people to choose what customs to keep and which ones they would like to get rid of.”

This kind of psychological response by non-Western peoples under colonial rule to even the most well-intentioned forms of Westernization should help suggest why there was almost unanimous disapproval of Bentinck’s action by the thinking elite in Calcutta (including Rammohun Roy, who thought sati ought to die “quietly and unobservedly”). In both the Bengali and African cases, it should be noted, it was the European-educated community and not the truly indigenous orthodox who initiated movements against legal interference with what they valued as deeply integrated cultural traditions. To reiterate, sati in nineteenth-century Bengal seems to have become very different from the idealistic act that it was in the middle period. A careful, well-documented history of sati in Bengal before and after Plassey could be very revealing. At

68 Ibid., p. 126.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., p. 127.
72 Rammohun quoted in N. S. Bose, p. 132.
present, it is by no means clear whether this custom was intrinsically a part of the regional configuration or whether it was a facet of cultural distortion produced by the debilitating forces of British colonialism. What is important is that, for the intelligentsia, sati became a key symbol in their new posture of cultural apologetics.

In general, it might be said that the people who banded together to petition against Bentinck's sati decree on January 14, 1830, were largely the same people who opposed the new policy of colonizing India with Europeans. As the Calcutta elite, they naturally had a vested interest in the Permanent Settlement and in the Agency House system. Unlike Rammohun Roy, who openly encouraged Alexander Duff and who supported free trade and colonialization out of a blind faith in the nobility of English intentions, the majority of his peers in Calcutta looked upon Bentinck's Westernizing policies with fear for the future.

In the January 14 petition, the Calcutta elite defended their position against abolishing sati not by condemning an inhuman act but by pointing to all previous governor-generals who had respected the custom (however misused) as a vital aspect of Hinduism. They questioned the right of a foreigner to interfere with a people's religion and ethics. In short, instead of appreciating Bentinck's philanthropic zeal, they accused him of religious and cultural intolerance.

By December, 1830, the older generation of the intelligentsia had institutionalized their protest against Bentinck by organizing

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73 Tripathi, pp. 224–234.
74 Upendranath Ball writes: “he was shocked at Derozio and did not believe in education which did not teach sound morals.” U. Ball, Rammohan Roy (Calcutta: U. Roy and Sons, 1933), p. 175.
75 Dwarkanath Tagore, P. K. Tagore, and Rammohun openly and consistently supported the British plantation system in India.
76 Amales Tripathi believes that the Bengal elite did not oppose the abolition of sati because of perversity but “because defeat might open the floodgate of further positive actions . . . which would shake the whole social fabric and endanger the vested interests.” Tripathi, p. 225.
77 In the petition, Warren Hastings, Charles Wilkins, and Jonathan Duncan were praised for their understanding of Hinduism. Duncan, for example, because he was a social reformer as well as an Orientalist was referred to as the “excellent” administrator who “will be remembered by the natives [of Hindustan] with gratitude.” “Petition of January 14, 1830,” quoted in Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements in India: A Selection from Records, 1775–1845, p. 157.
78 Ibid., p. 156.
what they called the *Dharma Sabha*. In the context of the cultural issues that brought it into existence, the *Dharma Sabha* may best be defined as a society in defense of the Hindu way of life or culture.

The development of the *Dharma Sabha* is important for at least two reasons. First, it represented a definite polarization in the ranks of the intelligentsia vis-à-vis Westernization. The *Dharma Sabha* became the earliest organized group of Indian ‘slavophiles,’ while the Derozians who supported Bentinck’s policies by means of their own societies became the first ‘Westerners.’ Second, because the *Dharma Sabha* organized its defense of Hindu society and culture against alien intrusion and used collective political means (such as petitions to the Crown) to articulate its position, this association became the earliest protonationalist movement in modern India.

That the *Dharma Sabha* of the early nineteenth century was a group of bigoted orthodox Brahmans meeting periodically to conspire against modernity in India is, in large part, untrue. Most of them were not Brahmans, and they were certainly not orthodox—for they were the same people who worked with Orientalists in promoting syncretic schemes. And if they were bigoted, their hostility was not directed necessarily against modernization as such but against what they came to fear as intrusive forms of Westernization. Since they were organized and led by Bengalis who had worked with the English for as long as twenty years, the institution was extremely Western in orientation. The executive body of the *Dharma Sabha* included a president, a board of directors, a secretary, and a treasurer, and the members regularly organized committees for special purposes. It might be added that the *Dharma Sabha* conducted its meetings according to strict rules of parliamentary procedure, a form of Westernization acquired from contact with the British.

As for the general belief that the *Dharma Sabha* was organized simply to defend sati, this also is inaccurate. Bentinck’s act was the event that impelled the Bengalis to institutionalize their protest against the new cultural policy. From its inception, the *Dharma

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79 The earliest informal meetings probably started in February, 1830. See *ibid.*, pp. 163–165.
80 In 1835, the staff of the Friend of India recorded their amazement that this “orthodox group [*Dharma Sabha*] did not contain a single Brahman.” “Proceedings of the Dharma Subha,” *Friend of India*, XIX (May 7, 1835), 145.
Sabha was clearly protonationalist. On December 1, 1830, the group’s program called for an Indianization of the civil service, a hands-off policy on the Permanent Settlement, a warning about the evil effects of colonization, a defense of sati, a plan for aiding the rural poor, and a proposal for aiding Calcutta’s poor by building a charitable institution and a hospital. One aspect of the program which has often been taken out of context was its advocacy of militant means in defending Hinduism against the Derozians and missionaries. Instances have been recorded of the group’s threatening to excommunicate from the upper strata of Calcutta society families in which religious conversions and other extreme forms of cultural estrangement had taken place.

It seems evident, therefore, that the process of polarization represented by Macaulayism had the immediate impact of dividing the loyalties of the Bengali intelligentsia into two opposite camps. The Calcutta cultural mediator who for decades had responded favorably to the culture of the European (who was himself favorably impressed with Indian culture) now faced the different view that all patterns of reform were an integral part of Western civilization and that all Asian civilizations were almost by definition static and decadent. The intelligentsia in Calcutta were compelled to confront a crisis in identity. The Derozians temporarily set themselves adrift in a cultural limbo between their own heritage, which they rejected, and the Utopia across the seas, which they understood only imperfectly and to which they could never belong. Most of the intelligentsia, however, responded to the crisis by identifying with the Orientalist-reconstructed view of Hinduism, which they romanticized as apologists.

If Anglicists such as Trevelyan and Macaulay believed that they were writing the obituary for Hindu cultural customs and civilization as they had succeeded in doing be for the Orientalist movement, they proved to be poor prophets. Trevelyan’s Hindu “corpse” began to stir in the 1830’s, started kicking in the 1840’s, became more aggressive in the 1850’s, and emerged as belligerently defiant in the 1860’s. Though the British Orientalist movement died during the Bentinck administration, its primary legacy of a reconstituted Hindu cultural tradition lived on in the self-image of the Bengali intelligentsia.

88 Samachār Chandrikā article quoted in B. B. Majumdar, History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda, 1821–1884 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1934), I, 159.
PART VI

Conclusion
Before Asia is in a position to co-operate with the culture of Europe, she must base her own structure on a synthesis of all the different cultures which she has. When, taking her stand on such a culture, she turns toward the West, she will take, with a confident sense of mental freedom, her own view of truth, from her own vantage ground, and open a new vista of thought to the world. Otherwise, she will allow her priceless inheritance to crumble into dust, and trying to replace it clumsily with feeble imitations of the West, make herself superfluous, cheap and ludicrous. If she thus loses her individuality and her specific power to exist, will it in the least help the rest of the world? Will not her terrible bankruptcy involve also the Western mind? If the whole world grows at last into an exaggerated West, then such an illimitable parody of the modern age will die, crushed beneath its own absurdity!

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE
The Quest for New Perspectives on the Encounter of Civilizations

As portrayed in this book, the Orientalists bear little resemblance to the dismal image that has been theirs since the Victorian era. The Orientalists served as avenues linking the regional elite with the dynamic civilization of contemporary Europe. They contributed to the formation of a new Indian middle class and assisted in the professionalization of the Bengali intelligentsia. They started schools, systematized languages, brought printing and publishing to India, and encouraged the proliferation of books, journals, newspapers, and other media of communication. Their impact was urban and secular. They built the first modern scientific laboratories in India, and taught European medicine. They were neither static classicists nor averse to the idea of progress; and they both historicized the Indian past and stimulated a consciousness of history in the Indian intellectual. It was they who transmitted a new sense of identity to Bengalis that enlarged what Robert Bellah has called "the capacity for rational goal setting," an instrumental process in the development of a modern outlook.¹

The fact that British Orientalists were modernizers of Indian culture despite their opposition to Westernization should suggest that these two processes are not necessarily synonymous. Guy Metraux, in the preface of a UNESCO book of studies by various authors entitled New Asia seems to have diagnosed correctly the confusion which results from the proposition that Westernization

equals modernization. In his view, this correlation between a “geographical or cultural concept (the West) and a social process (modernization)” really represents a historical accident: “In reality the latter term is preferable, because what the West brought to Asia was those elements which came to constitute modern society, i.e.: new forms of political organization, new bases for economic activity, new social classes, new ways of life which removed traditional societies from the patterns which had been theirs for centuries.”

In the context of the Orientalist-Anglicist alternatives to modernization, Metraux seems to stand with the universalism of the eighteenth century against the nationalism of the nineteenth. He expresses a tolerance derived from a conviction that stresses unity over diversity, process over pattern. Metraux is distinguished from the nineteenth-century system builders—whether Marx or Macaulay—in that he completely lacks a narrow, European-centered view of the static Orient. Twentieth-century universalists are quite aware of the close correlation in the nineteenth-century world-view between an appalling ignorance of the languages, cultures, and history of Asia, and strong, unfounded prejudices about “Asiatics.” Perhaps most important, new universalists like Metraux guard themselves against the older tendency to devise universal systems based upon the parochial contemporary European experience.

Unfortunately, however, the problem is not that easily solved. The Orientalists, despite their cosmopolitanism (or perhaps because of it), identified closely with an alien culture and sought to change it from within. Like the Jesuits, the Orientalists evolved a cultural policy based as little on the naive assertion that all peoples would respond uniformly to modern elements, as it was on the deceptive proposition that modernization everywhere would be a pale reflection of one’s own cultural self-image. Indeed, the Jesuits in China, the Orientalists in India, and possibly the Peace Corps recruits today, not only share a healthy appreciation for other culture patterns but operate most effectively from a belief in the relativity and plurality of cultures. What Orientalists actually proposed were creative syncretic schemes in which alien and indigenous traits were combined meaningfully to produce a desired change. In fact, this is precisely how Metraux ultimately resolves the dilemma of Westernization and modernization:

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When Asian countries "adopted" Western techniques and ideas, they did not entirely relinquish their ways. There was super-imposition of institutions, various forms of syncretism, new attitudes arising side by side with ancient modes of thought. But whatever the fulness of change that took place, or its pace, Asian societies have created, or are creating a way of life that enables them to participate fully in a modern world community.  

To some readers, even after a careful reading of this book, the differences between the Orientalist and Westernizer alternatives to modernity may seem small. One critic has gone so far as to argue that Orientalism was not so much alternative to as it was an alternative of Westernization. The only difference here between Anglicists and Orientalists is that the Anglicists went farther than the Orientalists in importing Western values wholesale and were less sympathetic to Oriental culture and to the need of integrating the new values smoothly into the old fabric. From this vantage point, there was little that was different in substance between the two alternative programs other than a conflict in cultural values. Was not the source of the actual social and cultural changes desired by both types of modernizers almost invariably the West? Indeed, the Westernizer argues, are not all modern values in essence Western values, even though described under cosmopolitan universalist labels and introduced by Orientalists?

This is a persuasive argument that only demonstrates even more how perplexing the problem is. Fundamentally, however, such a position may be regarded more as a liberal, fair-minded restatement of the Westernizer's ideal than as a valid description of two very different approaches to change and modernity. In the first place, nineteenth-century Europe was not so much the source of modernity as it was the setting for modernizing processes that were themselves transforming Western cultures. In the midst of the Industrial Revolution, a Victorian patriot like Macaulay may have imagined a very real relationship between something as universal as industrialization and something as particularist as the genius of British culture. From this stems the rationale for his Anglicist position: for Indians to modernize, they must also adopt English dress, manners, and language. This view, in the light of the history of industrial modernization since the British example early in the nineteenth century, is not without some degree of absurdity. The industrialization of cultures as diverse as those of Germany, Japan, and Russia.

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8 Ibid.
was not only accomplished without benefit of British-style social and political institutions but was deliberately formulated in direct opposition to the British model. Secular paternalism under Bismarck, traditional Japanese paternalism under the Meiji, and Marxist collectivism under Stalin were all radical departures from the industrial capitalism of the British Victorians. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that, in all four cases, industrialism was accompanied by nationalism which intensified loyalty to four distinct cultures and reinforced older traditions fostering a sense of legitimacy in each of the nations.

On the other hand, the Orientalist had a very different view of change. For him the important thing was to set into motion the process of modernization through which Indians might change themselves according to their own value system. It mattered little whether the source of the stimulus were British, French, Scandinavian, or Indian. The model for modernity could as readily be an indigenous institution rediscovered in the Indian past as it could be an idea or value of contemporary Europe. The important thing was that the cultural innovation should be meaningful to the people for whom it was intended. The end result of this kind of modernization would therefore be creative and evolutionary rather than imitative and diffusionist. Each culture that achieved modernity would not be absorbed simply into the dynamic West expanding along its frontiers but would constitute a new synthesis of the old and the new, the alien and the native.

If indeed this work demonstrates a new perspective on the role of British Orientalism in India, it was in no small way the result of exploring the “psychological” aspects of the encounter between the British and Bengalis. By analyzing a special sort of historical data, i.e., cultural values, attitudes, beliefs and the quest for identity, one should begin to see the persisting problems of impact and response, continuity and discontinuity, tradition and modernity in a totally different light. This is not a proposal for a new form of determinism. On the contrary, this study should make evident the bankruptcy of any monocausal explanation for the impact of the British in South Asia. The argument is simply that any social, economic, political or other analysis of modernization that ignores underlying cultural values is incomplete.

It is hoped that the use of the psycho-cultural dimension of analysis in this book has exposed another related kind of incompleteness or distortion. On the one level, there is simply too much evidence
against the image of a monolithic British nation in India which symbolizes either a multiplicity of sins as imperialist or a multiplicity of virtues as guardian of a sacred trusteeship. For many persons of today, the problem of interaction between India and the West is reduced neatly to the grim record of economic exploitation in India and economic drain to England. This study of the Orientalist period does not deny such a record but simply exposes these images as plausible half-truths that obscure the complexity of culture contact and acculturation.

On another level, there is an overgeneralization of ideal types to represent particular historical forces in relation to one another. Babu, I. C. S. official, and missionary in India are terms so loosely used that they really suggest stereotypes. In the context of cultural attitudes, there were, as is shown in this book, some missionaries like William Carey and others like Alexander Duff. There were Orientalized as well as ethnocentric civil servants. If we examine the training programs for civil servants, we find one kind of orientation at Haileybury and another at the College of Fort William. The Englishman who went to serve in India could not possibly isolate himself from his new environment. He was compelled to respond in some way, and that response was as much a determining factor in his administrative judgment as anything else. In one period, the problem of identity in an alien environment may have been solved by acculturation, while in another, Englishmen constructed fortress-like clubs to protect their wives, their children and their racial purity from the pernicious effects of an " Asiatic" culture.

On the Indian side, in the light of the over-all problem of Western intrusion—cultural encounter—and modernization, the Bengal experience seems to point to one generalization: the receptiveness to change on the part of the indigenous intelligentsia in Calcutta largely depended on their evaluation of the colonialist agent introducing phenomena from abroad. As stated in the introduction, the term intelligentsia has been employed in this book somewhat in the manner of Toynbee, Redfield, and Singer—as denoting cultural intermediaries between the foreigner and their own people. From this standpoint, the nineteenth-century historical literature that dealt with the transmission of ideas in a colonial setting without

4 Robert Redfield and Milton Singer have developed the notion of "cultural brokers" (native intelligentsia) which is appropriate in this case. Singer defines the broker as "a new type of professional intellectual ... who stands astride the boundaries of the cultural encounter, mediating alien cultural in-
a thorough analysis of the psychocultural relations between the native elite and the alien overlord seems almost absurd. The evidence seems to suggest strongly that Bengalis responded well to foreign ideas and customs when introduced by sympathetic Europeans (Orientalists) who were themselves highly responsive to the Hindu way of life. To express this in another way, so long as the European masters viewed modernization as cosmopolitan rather than parochial in nature, the Bengalis offered little resistance to cultural change. When Modernization took on the guise of Macaulayism, the older response pattern collapsed and the cultural barricades of nationalism were rapidly erected.

Throughout the book, the words modernization and renaissance (revitalization) have been used interchangeably. In this sense, the Bengal renaissance could be taken as depicting the general impact of Orientalism. On the other hand, as the facts also suggest, the events, attitudes, and ideas associated with the Bengal renaissance are far too autonomous conceptually to be comfortably subsumed under the rubric of modernization. The original notion of renaissance that referred to a definite period in the history of Italian civilization or to the pre-Reformation humanist movements of northern Europe has been expanded considerably by historians during recent years to include a range of new patterns.\(^5\) Largely with the aim of legitimatizing their respective cultures’ advance into modernity, historically minded intellectuals in the non-Western world have freely reinterpreted the European model or models to suit the values im-


explicit in their self-image as a culture. One result has been a confusing proliferation of crosscultural renaissance theories that are basically variations on two approaches: the diffusionist argument, which traces revitalization movements in countries outside the Western world to the spread of European culture,\(^6\) or the evolutionary argument, which stresses parallel developments that are not modelled after but are stimulated by cultural encounter with the West.\(^7\)

From whichever theoretical position, scholars of non-Western renaissances are faced with the problem of defining their concept as a historical period, as a culture pattern, and as a sociocultural process. The failure to distinguish clearly between these uses of the term renaissance has often led to considerable confusion. Historically, for example, scholars of Asia and Africa are inclined to view renaissances in those two areas as transition periods between the breakdown of traditional societies and the rise of nationalism or consciousness of nationalism.\(^8\) Since to many a historian of Europe the word Renaissance denotes a specific series of events that occurred at a fixed time in the history of the West, the Asian-African use of the word is inappropriate, if not meaningless.

Contemplating renaissance as a culture pattern is closely related to considering it a periodic concept. Hu Shih's modernizing movement in 1917–1918 has come to be accepted semantically as the Chinese renaissance. In the Islamic world, the historiography of Arab, Turkish, or Iranian renaissances also suggests definite culture configurations. Again, among scholars specializing in European history (or those who utilize their conceptual models), renaissance with a capital R seems to imply a universalization of a particular set of culture traits. A classic example of this viewpoint is Jacob Burckhardt's highly influential work entitled *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.\(^9\) This book, and others like it, have made it

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\(^6\) With reference to what has already been said about the psychology of cultural encounter, this posture on renaissance may be likened to the Westernizer view in general. S. C. Sarkar in India and Hu Shih in China are good cases in point.

\(^7\) One of the convenient but misleading terms applied to this position is neotraditionalist and in India would cover such figures as Vivekananda and Aurobindo.

\(^8\) See for example, Hodgkin, pp. 169–184.

virtually impossible to think of the word renaissance without acknowledging the unique role played by the Italian people.

It is only when renaissance is treated as a process that the term begins to lose its historical and cultural uniqueness and that, like nationalism or modernization, it can be universally applied.\(^\text{10}\) Indeed, the use of processes as analytical tools by social scientists has had revolutionary implications. This method of thinking about ideas, customs, and institutions has opened a challenging dimension in comparative studies.

The analytical use of the term renaissance as a process has had a liberalizing effect in that it can be applied to any culture, high or low, East or West, at any period in history.\(^\text{11}\) The problem, of course, is to discover a universal set of components that accurately describe a sociocultural entity undergoing a special kind of transformation. Besides the obvious difficulty involved in such a task there is the unsatisfying quality in process analysis by which the richness of detail in the older period and pattern studies are replaced by a set of intellectualized principles.

It is evident that the over-all problems of renaissance, whether in its European context or used with reference to an area outside of Europe, must be rethought on the basis of new conceptual criteria. The fact that the generalized concept of renaissance has been applied to their history and tradition by non-European peoples should be reason enough to abandon the older European-centered notion of the Renaissance. Nor must we perpetuate the confusion that inevitably results from misapplying the European model to cultures whose “rebirth” occurs in totally different historical circumstances. Moreover, if we choose to view renaissance as a process, care must be taken not to generalize too freely unless there is solid monographic detail to back up each principle.

The historiographical is one viable method for treating renaissance. Indeed, it is a perfect antidote for any rigid absolutist view of the concept. In the European tradition a work such as Wallace K. Ferguson’s *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* not only has broadened the general interpretation of the period of the *quattrocento* and the *cinquecento* but has related the very concept of

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\(^{10}\) One highly successful attempt to do this is A. F. P. Wallace, “Revitalization Movements: Some Theoretical Considerations For Their Comparative Study,” *American Anthropologist*, LVIII (June, 1956), 264–281.

\(^{11}\) This is precisely what has been done very impressively in A. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), IX.
The Quest for New Perspectives

renaissance to its changing image in the minds of historians during four centuries of reevaluation and redefinition. The important lesson to be learned from the Ferguson historiographical approach is that a highly effective means for ascertaining the nature of renaissance is to discover what different people, living in different periods, thought it was.

Regrettably, however, Ferguson's historical relativity has a limited applicability when it comes to understanding more recent non-Western renaissances. Despite his liberalization of the concept, he is still referring to a changing view of a single period and pattern within one community of cultures. The challenge now is to apply this relativity to a diversity of cultures.

One concrete way to begin a pattern analysis of the Bengal renaissance is to isolate the six fundamental characteristics or traits used in this book. These were: the Vedic golden age, the Puritanical image of the Vedantic age, the post-Vedantic or Hindu golden age, Reformation Europe as golden age, the millenium as golden age, and the revitalization of Bengali language and literature. Each of these components has been traced from the circumstances of its birth to its growth in the propitious atmosphere created by Orientalist policy. Hopefully, it has been demonstrated how each one of these ideas rather than being the vision of a single man was in reality the invention of several men interacting with one another within institutions established to meet policy needs.

There was neither a single "father of reascent India" nor an individual who promoted his revitalization scheme apart from some cluster of like-minded individuals. Behind Jones and Colebrooke stood the Asiatic Society; behind Rammohun, the Brahmo Sabha; behind Mryunjay, the College of Fort William; behind Derozio, Hindu College; and behind William Carey, both Fort William College and Serampore Mission.

The Bengal renaissance was the child of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism and pragmatic British policy built around the need for an acculturated civil-service class. Calcutta, made the capital of British India through what might be termed historical accident, provided the ideal environment. Spurred on by Orientalists engaged in a scholarly reconstruction of the Hindu tradition, a newly formed intelligentsia selectively reinterpreted their heritage and strove to reshape their culture in the new image.

Surveyed historically, the evolution of the renaissance follows the chronological scheme of the book. In the first period, 1772–1800, the Indo-Aryan discoveries represented the earliest of the distinguishing qualities of the Bengal renaissance. In the period 1800–13, the development of Bengali language and literature simultaneously with a continued glorification of Sanskritic civilization also became components of the Calcutta-based renaissance pattern. From 1813 to 1827, H. H. Wilson’s idea of a Hindu golden age and the Serampore interpretation of the Protestant Reformation model were two additional fertile conceptions that enriched the flowering of Bengali culture. After 1827, Derozio’s contribution of the eighteenth-century view of universal progress represented the final facet of renaissance under the Orientalists.

Defining the Bengal renaissance as a process is not an easy task. Too few scholars have addressed themselves to the problem of collating the multiple studies of non-Western revitalization movements and evolving a viable set of generalizations. Perhaps the best that can be done at present is to examine the Bengal renaissance in relation to what is apparently the common denominator of all such renaissances—the classicistic preoccupation with a golden age.

In sum, the rediscovery and revitalization of a Hindu golden age was probably the Orientalist’s most enduring ideological contribution to modern India’s cultural self-image. Knowledge of this golden age would become the cohesive ideology underlying a new sense of community. It is doubtful that the rise of nationalism would have been possible without the sense of community, the sense of community without a collective feeling of self-respect, and self-respect without the stimulus of a rediscovered golden age.

The classicistic pursuit of golden ages should facilitate understanding of the subtle difference between modernization and renaissance in Bengal during the heyday of the Orientalists. If modernization is regarded as the immediate social, cultural, and psychological readjustments to the new stimulus provided by the Orientalists, then renaissance was seemingly the ensemble of historical reorientation to change. We might view modernization as consisting of the actual institutional and other changes that resulted from spatial contact. The term renaissance nearly always seems to imply a manipulation of temporal patterns to suit changing values and norms.

The important question is whether Orientalist-inspired classicism in Bengal was a correlative of modernization. As has already
been intimated, a major intellectual revolution had taken place between 1772 and 1828 in Calcutta. The genesis of urbanization, professionalization, the proliferation of communicative media, the growth of literacy, and other commonly recognized attributes of a modern transformation can be traced back to the implementation of Orientalist policy. Many historians have found it difficult to reconcile the modernizing impact of the Orientalists with the apparently antiquarian nature of their classicism. In short, how can this zealous appreciation of India’s past glories be reconciled with the ardent faith of the modernizer who projects the golden age not into man’s history but into his future?

It appears that many writers have confused the historical content of classicism with the function of classicism as a cultural aspiration. The fact that Rammohun readily accepted the Jones-Colebrooke image of the Vedic golden age is less significant than the way in which he refashioned the model as an instrument for cultural change. An underlying significance of Kashi Prasad Ghose’s stirring defense of the classical Indian polity against James Mill’s indictment of Hindu civilization is not that Ghose identified himself as traditionalist but that he secularized the image of the past. This important process of secularization represented an act of contemporary cultural creativity.

This point will become clear enough if we examine the Bengal classical models against G. E. von Grunebaum’s analytical scheme for judging the real impact of classicistic movements. In his “Concept of Cultural Classicism,” Von Grunebaum lists six categories to help determine the nature of the classicistic ideal: function in the cultural setting; its psychological dimension; the meaningfulness of the attributes accorded the model; the genetic relationship between model culture and classicistic culture; the influence of the historical situation on the way in which the model is manipulated; and classicism described in terms of its operational effectiveness. For our purposes, an analysis of the Bengali experience in the light of the first four categories should suffice.

To reiterate, the important question is whether or not a correlation exists between the classicistic zeitgeist of the Bengal renaissance and the modernizing impact of the Orientalists. If we start

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with function and ask what Orientalist-inspired classicism purported to do, the answer would probably be to justify change.

British intrusion in the eighteenth century from Plassey (1757) to the Permanent Settlement (1793) so disrupted the social system of the traditional elite of Bengal that when Orientalists did provide a golden age-dark age polarity many Bengalis readily accepted it. The Bengalis who sought new interpretations of their heritage—the Rammohuns, the Mṛtyunjays, the Ghoses—were a newly established intellectual and social elite that owed its transformation and privileged position to European contact. The pre-Macaulay Bengali intelligentsia, unlike the later nationalists, adopted the golden-age models not only as an explanation for their desperate situation in history, but as a rationalization for change (i.e., to reinforce their recently acquired status).

This helps us to understand why Bengalis in the early nineteenth century were so receptive to ideas and customs brought from overseas and why the Orientalists were far more effective than the Westernizers as modernizers. The reason the intelligentsia responded so well to H. H. Wilson’s syncretic schemes for social improvement was that they believed that the Orientalists aimed not at the wholesale Westernization (or the partial eradication) of their culture but at Hindu revitalization. Whether, in the end, Hinduism could have survived the experiments in cultural fusion had Bentinck allowed them to do so is beside the point. In spite of their willing transformation, the intelligentsia were simply not prepared to disavow their heritage. On the contrary, they required a sympathetic cultural ideal projected historically to rationalize their desire for change.

A psychological interpretation of Bengali classicism in terms of whether or not it was experienced as “a dynamic or dynamizing concept” or as “a static notion of perfection”14 should help to reinforce the modernizing thesis. Did a Rammohun seriously entertain the possibility that the age of the Indo-Aryans could be repeated in nineteenth-century India? Or did he use the image as a tool in the service of modernizing the Hindu tradition? Did the Serampore missionaries seriously predict an exact repetition of the European reformation in India? Or did they use the model as “an ideal whose recapture will transform it into a means of advance-

ment and enrichment of those who succeed in using it." The fact that originators of these ages of gold were all committed to programs of social action should indicate that they used history not to shape the present in the image of the past but to rediscover guidelines in their heritage appropriate to a society in transition.

The third question is whether, from an examination of the models themselves, we find the values of the creators traditionalist or modernist. It would appear that all the models presented in this book express dissatisfaction with the present and a corresponding desire to revive some quality of the past. H. T. Colebrooke called for a revival of the mathematical and scientific spirit of the ancient Hindus; Rammohun asked for a restoration of the monotheistic tradition and a high level of civilization. In his golden age, *Kulin* polygamy was unknown, *sati* was prohibited, and the social system operated harmoniously for the good of society. K. C. Ghose depicted a classical Hindu political structure which included a built-in checks-and-balances system.

The answers to these three questions should be obvious. Every influential model in the Orientalist period reflected a value system essentially modern in spirit or at least revolutionary in its unfavorable depiction of the present. In fact, this is precisely the subversive element of renaissance that many interpreters of the past have been apt to overlook. Since every classical model is reversely linked to a dark age visibly in the present, every dynamic classicist is invariably an antitraditional rebel. In this sense, the Bengali intelligentsia who chose to reinterpret their past in an effort to change the present were as modernist as the early Derozians, who chose the alternative of Westernization at the cost of alienation.

When we set the Bengal study against Von Grunebaum's fourth category of the genetic relation between the model culture and the classicistic one, the analysis adds an interesting note on the problem of Westernization and modernization. The question is whether the chosen model is "orthogenic" (in direct lineal descendency of the classicistic culture) or "heterogenetic" (foreign culture as an authoritative model). If we assume that Bengal classicism functioned to justify change, that it was experienced dynamically, that the models reflected a modern spirit—then it is also sig-

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significant that through the nationalist period most articulate Indians have appropriated models from their own heritage. As testimony to the Orientalist legacy, from Rammohun’s disenchantedness with the Reformation ideal of the Baptists at Serampore to Nehru’s “discovery of India,” only a handful of Indian intellectuals abandoned their own heritage and identified wholly with the traditions and culture of Western civilization.

In Von Grunbaum’s terms, the Orientalist approach to change in India was to introduce heterogenetic components in hope that they would become assimilated within the Indian tradition. We might even characterize H. H. Wilson’s plan for Indian modernization as the ultimate orthogenetic transformation of alien imports through institutional interaction in an atmosphere free of cultural polarity. When, by means of Macaulayism, polarity became the official policy of the government, the plan of modernization changed from the orthogenetic transformation of the alien imports to the complete heterogenetic transformation of the indigenous tradition. The consequence, of course, was nationalism. Indians not only intensified their search for inspirational models within their own heritage but felt compelled to appropriate the scholarly models of the Orientalists and infuse them with heightened feelings of national pride.

It is just at the crossroads between the defeat of Orientalism and the ultimate triumph of Macaulayism in India (during the years 1830–45) that the apologetic mythification or the historiography of the Bengal renaissance begins. One additional source of con-

18 We sometimes ignore Nehru’s gradual evolution as an Indian nationalist. In the introduction to The Discovery of India, Nehru wrote: “There is a special heritage for the people of India—not an exclusive one, for none is exclusive and all are common to the race of man—one more especially applicable to us, something that is in our flesh and blood and bones, that has gone to make us what we are and what we are likely to be. . . . It is the thought of this particular heritage and its application to the present that has long filled my mind and it is about this that I should like to write . . . ” (p. 23).

19 There is much evidence to suggest that in this period the earlier figures of the first generation became exalted as heroes and their life’s work dramatized as a struggle to defend their own identity against alien intrusion. By the end of this period, historic personages such as Warren Hastings, William Jones, H. H. Wilson, Rammohun Roy, William Carey, and Derozio had become “sanctified” as charismatic heroes in the Bengali interpretation of the nineteenth-century renaissance. No scholar has yet addressed himself (at least to the author’s knowledge) to this fascinating subject.
fusion about the Bengal renaissance is that we rarely bother to distinguish between the events of the Orientalist period and the sanctification of these events in the name of nationalism.

The crisis of identity and the genesis of apologetics in the wake of Macaulayism are crucial. This new complexity altered the nature of classicism in Bengal. The renaissance entered another stage of development, in which the older rationalizations slowly succumbed to a defiant eschatology.

In the years 1830–45, the most distinguishing feature of the renaissance was the determined effort by factions within the intellgentsia to keep alive the vision of their predecessors. The Orientalist and Bengali creators of the six ideas of renaissance became apotheosized and their efforts were lauded as herculean attempts to revitalize India.

During these fifteen years, a Eurasian youth named Derozio was hailed as the Indian Socrates. Rammohun’s image as Hindu Reformer can probably be traced to Debendranath Tagore, who, while revitalizing the idea of a Brahma Samaj in 1840–42, promptly reedited the Raja’s works and popularized his “message” on reformation from within. Rammohun’s historical role as progenitor, in which he appears all things to all men, can be traced back to K. C. Mitra’s biographic article in the Calcutta Review of 1845. From then on, Rammohun was regularly credited as the source for all that was modern in India. In 1834, with the publication of the second volume of Ram Camul Sen’s Dictionary of the English and Bengalee Languages, not only was the history of the new language and literature romanticized but the place of William Carey and the College of Fort William assured in the history of the Bengal renaissance. It should be remembered that Sen’s book was written during the period of Macaulay’s Minute and Bentinck’s Westernizing policies by a Bengali intellectual who had been a “native” secretary of the Asiatic Society and a charter member of the Dharma Sabha. Sen’s introduction to the second volume was one of the first pieces of cultural apologetics by a Bengali proto-nationalist with a great sympathy for the generation of Englishmen who had respond-

20 It was to become increasingly clear to the Calcutta elite that behind the Macaulay-style Westernization lay the arrogant belief that liberalism and progress were an integral part of Western civilization and that Asian traditions were by definition static and decadent.
ed favorably to his own language and customs. Sen’s oft-quoted and accurate prediction that in the future Bengali “will become a most excellent language, equal in strength and beauty to any other,” was probably intended less as a prophecy than as a gesture of defiance.²¹

For Sen, as for scores of literary historians after him, 1800 was the crucial year in the literary and cultural history of modern Bengal. “In that year,” Sen wrote, “the College of Fort William was instituted and the study of the Bengali language was made imperative on young civilians.”²² In Sen’s historical account, cultural self-esteem seemed so powerful a motivation that there was not a word of criticism of Carey’s over-simplified, Anglicized Bengali or of his pundits’ overly intricate Sanskritized Bengali. Instead, he warmly praised the pundits for “having produced many excellent works,”²³ while reserving for William Carey the heroic aspect of a selfless, devoted father to the new language.

I must acknowledge that whatever has been done towards the revival of the Bengali language, its improvement, in fact the establishing of it as a language must be attributed to that excellent man Dr. Carey and his colleagues, by whose liberality and great exertions, many works have been carried through the press and the general tone of the language of this province so greatly raised.²⁴

The high-culture Orientalists were not forgotten by the intelligentsia with whom they had worked in the early decades of the century. Bengalis such as Rajendralal Mitra carried on the scholarly tradition of the Orientalists, while an obscure pundit of the College of Fort William named Vidyasagar became Principal of Sanscrit College in 1851 and promptly revived H. H. Wilson’s educational ideal of modernity through cultural fusion. It was racism and cultural imperialism that probably accounted for the increasingly nostalgic vision of the age of the Orientalists harbored by later generations of Bengali intelligentsia. On January 6, 1862, Girish Chandra Ghose, a leading Calcutta journalist, wrote:

There are those among us who look upon this state of things [the growing feeling of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority among the Brit-

²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Ibid.
ish] with surprise. They call to mind the generation of English-men who, in past years, walked among our fathers without betray-ing the least symptoms of hatred . . . they call to mind . . . Jones, Colebrooke, Wilson . . . and ask how it is that the successors of such men be so unsympathetic?

As regards Indian literature . . . history, antiquities, the present race of Anglo-Indians [the British in India] . . . are lamentably ignorant. . . . Jones, Colebrooke, Wilson . . . respected our fathers and looked upon us hopefully at least with melancholy interest, as you would look on the heir of a ruined noble. But to the great un-washed abroad today, we are simply niggers—without a past; per-haps, without a future. They do not choose to know us.25
