Political Agenda of Education

A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas

Second Edition

Krishna Kumar

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To the memory of J.P. Naik

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Still more important than Wordsworth, or the eminent authors, Burke and Hare, was the art and science of mensuration. A boy who had passed his examination in these branches—for which, by the way, there were no cram books—could, by merely marching over a country with a compass and a level and a straight eye, carry away a picture of that country which might be sold for large sums in coined silver.

Rudyard Kipling in *Kim*

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Preface to the Second Edition

A lot seems to have changed since the early 1990s when this book was first published. Considerable policy-level interest has been in evidence on the matter of universalization of elementary education. An amendment in the Constitution has been made in order to make elementary education a fundamental, justiciable right of every child. This is no small measure, even though the precise meaning of this measure will only emerge when suitable laws and procedures are put in place in every state, enabling citizen groups to seek justice when children are deprived of their fundamental right to education.

This book concludes by arguing that the utilitarian doctrine of the colonial state kept India divided between elites and masses. Liberal democratic procedures were set in motion in the late colonial period, but liberalism as a political and social perspective failed to develop, especially in the context of education. And now, in the early twenty-first century, India finds itself facing the onslaught of a harsh, neo-liberal doctrine. Implicit in it is the idea that the process of building the state is no longer necessary, that the market would serve better where the state has failed. At a time when the state seemed to have developed at least the urge, if not a plausible plan and credible commitment, to universalize elementary education, the popularity of neo-liberal ideas does not augur well. And these ideas are already influencing policy quite negatively. Privatization is rampant and spreading further at great speed; teachers are losing what little status they had; and the humanities are losing out in competition with high-income-oriented forms of knowledge. As the second edition of *Political Agenda of Education* goes to press, one does wonder what the changes mentioned in the first paragraph of this preface mean.

In the book itself there are many changes. The most important one is the inclusion of a section on girls' education in the discussion on equality in Chapter V. The absence of this topic in the last edition was a major lacuna, reflecting both a limitation in my awareness and in the discourse of the 1980s. Rarely does one know the precise source and moment of awareness: in my case it was a visit to the

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photo exhibition organized by the Centre for Women's Development Studies, more specifically, by my contemporary, Malavika Karlekar, pictorially demonstrating women's struggle for new roles and identity since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Apart from this addition, the reader will now find a more nuanced discussion of caste as a factor of equality in educational opportunity. Several editorial changes have also been made to make certain parts of the book more readable. I am grateful to Shinjini Chatterjee of Sage for suggesting these changes, and to Latika Gupta and Raghavendra for helping me trace some of the sources cited in the expanded text.

I hope the return of *Political Agenda of Education* to bookstores will boost the morale of individuals and institutions who have kept the struggle against colonial and neo-colonial ideas and practices alive in civic and cultural spheres. In the latter sphere, the resurgence of Hindu revivalism as a major political force has given renewed relevance to the discussion of identity in the Hindi region given in Chapter VII. This has been one of the most popular parts of the book, and I hope that those who have read it in isolation in the last round will look at other parts this time. My original aim in writing this book was to explore the web of social and political relations in which the school is embedded. This aim has gained renewed value at a time when the urge for quick remedies poses a threat to the awareness that educational reform demands a historically informed perspective.

Krishna Kumar
25 July 2004

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Preface to the First Edition

Like most educated Indians I had been socialized to believe that Macaulay was the architect of India's education system. I had also shared with fellow nationalists the other common belief that the main *purpose* of colonial policy in education was to produce office clerks and petty officials. That these customary views could be erroneous first occurred to me about nine years ago, when the late J.P. Naik hired me to assist him in a project on educational reforms. I was probably the last of his many disciples. During the first three months of my brief association with him, he mainly taught me how to read government reports. He also trained me to view India, with its striking variety of historical experiences, as a whole. Above all else, I had the benefit of getting to know his reflections on his own career as a policy advisor. These provided me with an essential core out of which a critique of liberalism in colonial and post-colonial contexts could be developed.

My association with J.P. Naik ended with his death. Years passed and in the spring of 1985, when I saw an announcement of fellowships at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, I wondered if the time had come for me to pursue my curiosity about colonial rule in India. This fellowship enabled me to take a solid chunk of two-and-half years off routine teaching. The Nehru Library had materials which I could use to study the history of ideas that had shaped colonial policy in education and the struggle against colonial rule. I am grateful to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library for granting me a fellowship, and to its Director, Professor Ravinder Kumar, for the interest he showed in my work. I owe him more than customary thanks for the incredibly easy access he permitted me to his own knowledge of colonial India and the materials related to it.

I owe thanks to the staff of the Nehru Museum Library, especially Miss Satinder Kaur, Mr Rajesh Chopra and Mr Navin Mahajan, for their cheerful readiness to help me whenever I asked them to. I am grateful to Delhi University for giving me leave to avail the Nehru Museum Fellowship. Many friends—and not only friends—have contributed to the writing of this book. Some gave valuable comments

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and insights, others provided equally valuable audience for ideas, some of which eventually found place in the book. I owe thanks to them all, but I would especially like to mention Sujata Patel and Poromesh Acharya. My senior colleague, Professor Sureshchandra Shukla, was often impatient with me while I was busy writing, but never withheld his suggestions and comments. He gave me an important idea, and my old friend Phool Chandra Jain gave me an important document, which proved indispensable for Chapter VI. I gratefully acknowledge their help. Finally, I must mention my wife and son who have seen the slow development of this book at close hand. I especially thank my wife for listening to portions of the book over and over again and for helping in the revision of earlier drafts.

Krishna Kumar
March 1991

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I

Introduction

Schoolchildren throwing stones at the crocodile or the hippo are a common sight at the Delhi zoo. These children are dressed in their school uniforms, so one can tell that they are on a formal excursion. This is confirmed by the presence of one or two teachers who stand with them. It is a rare teacher who tries to stop children from throwing stones at the animals. The teacher who shows some enthusiasm and draws their attention to specific details concerning an animal is also rare. The children walk around huddled together, oblivious of the enormous wonder of the presence in New Delhi of a wild ass or the North American puma. Both their lack of curiosity and their readiness to commit violence raise serious questions about the political role of education in our country.

The behaviour described here is, of course, not confined to the zoo. One can see it in any number of public institutions, especially those involved in the preservation and display of the nation's heritage. Large groups of schoolchildren accompanied by one or more teachers visit Delhi's unique railway museum just about every day. Invariably, the teachers show no interest in the museum; they only seem interested in maintaining order. They make the children march through the museum building with not a word said about the extraordinary objects and texts exhibited there. The child who stops to take a closer look at something is pushed on, and if s/he does not move, gets slapped on the head. The same story is repeated among the outdoor displays. None of the old engines—each with its special technical features neatly written on a notice nearby—attracts the teachers. Their interest is in keeping the children in order, and not in what they might be noticing or ignoring. All they seem to want urgently is the end of the excursion.

Most children in these groups, including the youngest, have been socialized to ignore the details of whatever the place has to offer.

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From the way they walk, you can see that the idea of order has become of paramount concern for them too. Their eyes do not follow the designs of engines in a place like the railway museum or the subtle aspects of the habitat of different animals in the zoo. They momentarily stare at a thing, and then move on. Nothing seems to matter, to be new and exciting, to arouse curiosity or emotions. It is a rare child whose behaviour contradicts this. Many groups have no such exception; the entire crowd has been socialized to see things the teacher's way, which means never to be moved by any experience to the point of forgetting that order is all that matters.

If we probe the teachers' concern for order, we will come to the extraordinary finding that violence or vandalism does not contradict the order which the teachers are engaged in maintaining every moment. They do not mind if a child teases or hits an animal with a stone during the one or two minutes the group is permitted to stay at the animal's site. Nor do they mind if some children write their names over an engine's surface which the museum has spent a lot of effort to protect from corroding. During visits to historical monuments, schoolchildren (and others) can write their names and little messages on the ancient walls in full view of their teachers. All over India, walls of protected monuments are littered with such self-proclaiming graffiti. Teachers by and large seem to bother little about this kind of behaviour. Though it violates 'order' in the wider, legal framework of society, it has nothing to do with the immediate orderliness that they are in charge of maintaining. That a precious piece of heritage is being destroyed by their children or that an animal is being harrassed does not concern teachers who have no interest in the heritage or the animal in the first place. They see no relationship between their job and these things.

It is frighteningly easy to label the behaviour I have described as 'lack of civic sense' in our children, and then to blame the teacher for it. Established traditions of educational discourse would happily permit this. Not a day passes when some eloquent Indian does not articulate his analysis of the educational crisis in these terms. To question the terms and to show that the analysis is wrong are very difficult tasks indeed in the face of a discourse that is at least 150 years old. Nevertheless, we must recognize the inadequacy of a term like 'lack of civic sense'. It is inadequate because the behaviour we are describing is a part of the 'civic' sense which it seems, on the surface, to violate. The order which the teachers are trying to maintain

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in our examples is an aspect of 'civic' sense. But from their perspective, the 'order' does not extend to the relationship between children and civic property of the kind we are concerned with. Why doesn't it? My answer is that the concept of knowledge that underlies our system of education stops teachers from perceiving 'order' in its extended sense. How the concept of knowledge confines the teacher's perception of 'order' within a narrow limit has to do with the history of ideas, mainly political ideas, that underpin our education system.

Knowledge in a Colony

By 'knowledge' is meant here the 'appropriate' or 'valid' knowledge associated with education and learning.[1] What is taught in our schools and colleges today acquired the status of 'valid school knowledge' under a very special kind of cultural and economic stress: the stress of colonial rule. From the vantage point of the late twentieth century, it is not easy to assess the intensity with which this stress was registered by Indian society throughout the nineteenth century. Nor is it easy to recognize that a link exists between what our educational institutions teach young people today and the selection of valid school knowledge that took place in the nineteenth century. For one thing, our political independence deludes us into thinking that the present-day conceptualization of school knowledge in India would not carry the marks of the stress that colonial rule had put upon Indian society and culture.

Not only does a link exist between the selection of school knowledge that was made under colonial rule and present-day pedagogy and curricula, but the very idea of 'what is worth teaching' remains to this day clouded by a colonial view of Indian society. In colonial India, the job of deciding, selecting and shaping school knowledge was performed by the 'enlightened outsider'. This was the role that the British officers and missionaries involved in developing an education

[1] See my 'Curriculum, Psychology and Society' (1987) for a discussion of the concept of 'validity' of school knowledge. For a wider discussion, see my *Social Character of Learning* (1989a).

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system for India adopted. From the point of view of the 'enlightened outsider', very little of the knowledge and skills that the native population possessed appeared fit for educational use. Rather, they were considered to be symbolic of 'ignorance'. With the spread of colonial education, the role of the 'enlightened outsider' was picked up by educated Indians. They became the 'enlightened outsiders' to the 'masses'. Barring exceptions to whom we shall refer later, these 'enlightened' Indians did not challenge the forms, content and texts of the knowledge that colonial administrators had assembled as appropriate curricula for schools. Critics of the education system were, of course, aplenty. But the basic structures of knowledge and the styles of transmission that were determined to be appropriate for educational use under colonial rule continued to shape education both through the independence struggle and after it.

The knowledge that schools were supposed to disseminate was thus dissociated from the forms of knowledge and skills that existed in India. A few forms and skills (usually those associated with dominant groups) were preserved as special cases, and were allowed to be used for education in distinctly labelled institutions. The wider system of education denied recognition to people's knowledge and to the modes of thought and action prized in the culture. Colonial rule permitted no possibility of the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and cultural forms in the curricula of ordinary schools. The cultural function of colonialism, which evolved from the beginning of the nineteenth century, was posited in the view that indigenous knowledge and culture were 'deficient'. India's material poverty was seen as a 'proof' of the numerous weaknesses that Indian culture was supposed to suffer from. Education as an instrument of moral and material improvement could not possibly use a deficient culture as its epistemological basis; it had to be rooted in the knowledge and culture that represented the colonizer.

With the advancement of the colonial system of education, the school curriculum became totally dissociated from the Indian child's everyday reality and milieu. The curriculum, and the textbooks prescribed to operationalize it, represented the values and visions of colonial bureaucracy. The life of the local community found no reflection in the school's curriculum or in its daily routine. Moreover, the teacher had no say in the selection of knowledge represented in the school curriculum. His low salary and status ensured that he would not exercise any professional autonomy or even have a professional

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identity. By keeping the schoolteacher's salary and status low, the colonial state ensured that its perception of valid knowledge would be faithfully transmitted to Indian children without the distortions that an intellectually alive teaching profession might force upon the system. Further sharpness and surety were imparted to the state's aim by the use of English as a medium of instruction. English removed what little possibility there might have existed in the curriculum of linking school knowledge with the child's everyday world. It created a shell within which the educated man's cognition could develop without encountering the world outside school and college walls. Exceptional men and women could drill holes through this shell, but ordinary students and teachers accepted it as the limit of relevant knowledge.

At the heart of this walled knowledge was a vision of civil society based on eighteenth-century English political ideas. In England, the vision consisted of a dream of bourgeois individuality, equality and security of property; in the colony it became a programme to train a small minority of property holders in the attitudes and skills of colonial rulers. A key attitude was to look upon the labouring masses as a category set apart by certain features of behaviour and character. Illiterate the masses manifestly were; the educated Indian was now socialized to regard this illiteracy as an aspect of their moral and intellectual decadence. Education enabled one to place oneself above the masses intellectually and morally, and see oneself as a legitimate candidate for a share in the colonial state's power and the privileges that went with it. This identification between the educated Indian and the colonial state consolidated the boundary walls around school knowledge. None of the skills, crafts, arts and knowledge that the illiterate masses possessed could impress the educated Indian, including teachers, as being worth learning. These forms of culture became symbols of ignorance and decadence, and as such, became irrelevant to education.

This is, in a nutshell, the thesis presented in the first part of this book. The three chapters included in this part cover the conceptual as well as the institutional arrangements initiated by the colonial state. We start with an analysis of the educational ideal of colonial India, namely the 'colonial citizen'. The concept of citizenship underlying the vision of the educated man in colonial India is examined in terms of its ideological roots. The next chapter looks at the curricular planning of colonial administration. Here the focus is on the

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attitudes that shaped the selection of school knowledge when the colonial system of education was taking its final form. In the last chapter of this part, we move to a consideration of how the teacher's role and status were affected by colonization. The focus here is on the schoolteacher, but some of the issues have relevance for college teachers as well. The moot point of inquiry in this chapter is the interplay between existing traditions of pedagogy and the colonial initiatives in shaping the profession of school teaching.

The Three Quests

The second part of the book deals with the dynamics of the freedom struggle. These dynamics are examined in terms of certain ideals or value orientations that inspired educational thought during the prolonged struggle for independence. The focus of analysis here is on educational ideas and programmes proposed by prominent leaders of the anti-colonial struggle. It was difficult to conduct this analysis without taking into account the ideas espoused by these leaders in the wider socio-economic and political context of India's struggle for freedom. In fact, an adequate interpretation of the educational ideas formulated by eminent nationalist leaders demands that we place these ideas in the context of the political, economic and cultural ideals they espoused. In the case of a leader like Nehru, it is pointless to look for his thoughts concerning specific issues of education, for he rarely spoke or wrote on education in this narrow sense. The place and role of education in his vision of an independent India has to be reconstructed on the basis of his thoughts on India's economic and political progress.

The struggle for independence involved three major quests. One was for justice, which found expression in the demand for educational opportunities for the downtrodden castes. Although this demand served an important role in widening the social base of political awareness and action against colonial rule, its focus was not on the injustices perpetrated by the colonizers. Rather, the colonial state was the audience of this demand, an audience that was expected to be sympathetic to the demand. The adversaries were the upper castes, especially the Brahmans who had used their inherited social

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advantages to dominate the new opportunities for education and employment presented by colonial rule. In western and southern India, leaders of oppressed caste groups were able to mobilize a large social movement against Brahman domination. Education was the central concern of this movement, and was perceived as an agency that could bring about a radical change in the entrenched social hierarchy. This potential of education was, however, understood mainly in a distributive context. The intellectual aspects of education were debated, but the focus of the struggle was not on redefining the intellectual content of education or on ridding it of Brahmanical associations; it was squarely on demanding from the colonial state an equitable share of educational opportunities.

Another quest of the independence movement was for self-identity. It confronted the colonial education system as an agency of cultural domination. Out of this controntation arose the urge to define India's educational needs from within India's own cultural repertoire. In another direction the confrontation led to the boycotting of colonial institutions during the Swadeshi movement. This latter movement did not last, but it strengthened the urge that already existed for seeking the answer to India's educational problems in a broader religio-cultural revival. For revivalist organizations, the challenge lay not in widening the distribution of educational opportunities, but in shedding the foreign associations that education carried. This aim was only partly achieved. In northern India, revivalist efforts succeeded in projecting Hindi as the symbol of a liberated self-identity. The Hindi movement became a major resource for the creation of a community purged of 'foreign' influences. The manner in which collective self-identity came to be defined in the Hindi belt from the 1920s onwards was a new and uniquely northern development. Language and education became the means to evolve a Hindu identity in which the rejection of English was but one layer sitting above a painstakingly assembled mass of anti-Muslim consciousness.

Unlike the struggle for equality in opportunities for education, the quest for self-identity involved an interest in pedagogy. Chapter VI pursues this development in the context of the Hindi movement. In the Gangetic–Vindhya region of northern India, this quest influenced the organization of knowledge both at school and college levels in a key area of curriculum, namely the teaching of Hindi. The pedagogical agenda of the Hindi movement was no less specific than its political agenda; indeed, in an important sense, its pedagogy *was* its politics.

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Its pedagogical agenda was to transmit to the younger generation a language rooted in the tradition of Sanskrit, and especially purged of the pedigree of Urdu. The language that prescribed textbooks codified and family magazines disseminated became the vehicle of a provincial literati—composed of discrete elements, both landed and urban-employed—in the emerging nation-state. But the class dialect that this literati carved out of the lingua franca of the region impeded the progress of elementary education and literacy. This by itself had implications for the shaping of politics in northern India. Added to them were the more directly political implications of the link that purified Hindi provided between religious revivalism and the national state which was to become a patron of Hindi in independent India.

A third dynamic in the independence movement had to do with the concept of progress. Industrialization was the focus of this dynamic. The dream of an industrialized India stirred many great minds throughout the nineteenth century and afterwards. Some of them accepted Europe as an example of what an industrialized country might be like. They went about constructing plans and institutions that would generate the appropriate manpower and financial resources to realize this dream. There were others who rejected Europe as an example for India to follow. Within this stance, there were distinct strands. The stance Gandhi took appears to be the most radical of all. He not only severely criticized European progress on a number of points, but also launched massive programmes of economic regeneration qualitatively different from the plans that advocates of the European-type progress had mooted. However, as we shall see in Chapter VII, Gandhi's perspective on India's future progress does not appear as hostile to industrialization as it is customarily made out to be if we examine it in the context of education.

The scheme Gandhi proposed for the progress of education incorporated the culture of an industrial society at a deep level. Only, it insisted on a drastic reorientation of polity and economy as a precondition for industrial advancement. It stipulated thereby a longer route towards industrial progress than that which Indian capitalists and many political leaders thought necessary. It also visualized a saner construct of society at the end of India's quest for progress than battle-happy Europe exemplified. This construct appeared too idealistic to be bothered about in the view of those who were not Gandhi's followers but only cherished him as an influential colleague in the

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fight against British rule. Gandhi's peculiar position in the Indian political scene implied that his educational plan could not be rejected even if it had to be delinked from his larger socio-economic philosophy. Thus, for the record at least, Gandhi's 'basic education' was implemented as a programme fo educational reconstruction. It soon died, and left the structure of knowledge, values and opportunities embedded in the education system untouched. It made no impact at all on the old liberal idea of the propertied citizen and his priorities for leading a comfortable, secure life that had underpinned the concept of education since the early nineteenth century. The education system in independent India remained an agency contributing primarily to the maintenance of law and order. It is towards this aim that teachers accompanying children in the Delhi zoo work in their own modest way.

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Part I

Dynamics of Colonization

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II

Colonial Citizen as an Educational Ideal

We owe the concept of an educational ideal as a means of historical inquiry to Mannheim. He defined it as 'a residue of attitudes, principles and forms of behaviour' which shapes educational aims and arrangements in a period of history (Mannheim and Stewart 1962). This concept enabled him to debunk the notion—which still prevails—that education has certain universal and eternal aims. He was able to demonstrate that educational aims have a historical character, that they change as much as the guiding ideals of other cultural activities change over time. The concept of an educational ideal also served Mannheim as a method of analysis. He used it both for historical investigations and for participating in the discussion of educational aims in his own day. I intend to use the concept as a means to identify an organizing principle in Indian colonial education during the nineteenth century.

The customary statement that colonial education was 'aimed' at producing clerks is both theoretically feeble and historically untenable. Its theoretical weakness lies in the fact that it does not help us distinguish between the ideas underlying the educational system and its practical purposes. But even if one saw it as a statement about the immediate outcomes of colonial education, one finds little evidence to support it. Colonial education produced political leaders, professional men and intellectuals, not just office clerks. No simple model or statement will help us understand why colonial education had the kinds of effects it had. It socialized many into colonial values; at the same time, it turned many of its products against those values. The rejection of colonial education may not have been sustained for long periods, but the broader rejection of colonial rule was sustained and we cannot ignore the role of education

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in inspiring this rejection. A plain, instrumentalist view of colonial education—as a factory producing clerks—prevents us from seeing this aspect of nineteenth-century Indian history. It also stops us from appreciating the contradictions in which the freedom struggle was caught. One contradiction related to the perception of the uneducated population as an object of moral improvement. On this matter, there existed a strange homonymy between colonial and anticolonial discourses on education. To make sense of this homonymy against the broader context of the role of education in the nationalist struggle, we need a more adequate model than exists at present. Such a model should have the capacity to accommodate the contradictions that were inherent in the vision of colonial education as well as those that became manifest in its consequences.

Pursuit of Order

At the heart of the colonial enterprise was the adult–child relationship. The colonizer took the role of the adult, and the native became the child. This adult–child relationship entailed an educational task. The colonial master saw it as his responsibility to initiate the native into new ways of acting and thinking. Like the little elephant Babar in the children's series of that name, some of the natives had to be educated so that they could be civilized according to the master's idea.[1] This may be a simplistic summary, but it does capture the core agenda of colonial rule in education. The agenda was to train the native to become a citizen. Writing in *The Citizen of India* (a school textbook that lasted for many years) in 1897, Lee-Warner described the British empire as an educational experience for India. It did not matter that the system of education had remained rather limited, he argued, for it was wrong to judge the education of India merely by the development of the education system. The railways, the public works, the posts and telegraphs were all educational agencies of the empire. They all showed the benevolence, the industriousness and the dedication of English administrators, he said (Lee-Warner 1897).

[1] For an analysis of Brunoff's Babar stories, see Dorfman (1979).

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For the English officers of the early nineteenth century in India, the concept of 'citizen' symbolized a new way of life and a new social order. It encapsulated the visions and tasks that post-Reformation social thought, science and literature had placed before the emerging urban bourgeoisie of England. The colonial administration in India had shown little interest in education before 1813 when the Charter of the East India Company was renewed and a modest provision was made for expenditure on institutions of learning. However, interest in education which was now expressed was conceptually consistent with the steps that had been taken earlier in matters of general administration. The creation of landed property rights was one such step. It was implemented somewhat differently in the three presidencies, but the ideological assumptions behind it were the same in all three cases. These assumptions were part of the social philosophy of liberalism (cf. Macpherson 1962, 1977). The state's role, according to this philosophy, was to assist the civil society to fulfil its goal of ensuring individual rights, particularly the right to hold and increase property. Ownership of property was thus a key concept in liberal thought (Bearce 1961; Stokes 1959). It constituted the ground on which the emerging commercial class of English society had fought its battle against the powers of the church and monarchy. Several of the late eighteenth-century colonial administrators in India, who put in enormous efforts to establish the concept of private property, were inspired by early liberal political thought. They were also working under the imperative of creating a dependable fiscal base for the colonial state. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the empire had been more or less won. The job now was to keep it, and to use it for profit. The colonial adventure was in a sense over, ready to be exploited by writers of boys' novels over the next 100 years. The construction of an imperial power structure was the task at hand. The East India Company's monopoly over trade with India had come under pressure from a variety of business houses. With the advancement of industrial production, commercial interests in England had begun to be tempted towards the markets of Asia—markets far larger than England could ever provide. The East India Company was accused of monopolizing the Indian market, and of keeping it underdeveloped with its impractical policies. Among the critics was Adam Smith, who had criticized, as early as 1776, the Company's monopoly of trade with India. He had found a serious contradiction between the Company's role as

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an administrative body and as a trading concern. With the Company's successes in subduing India's native sovereignties and thereby in clearing away the insecurities that lay in trade with India, the demand for the end of the Company's monopoly became increasingly stronger.[2]

The appropriate role for the Company was now believed to be that of a custodian of English trading interests. Accordingly, it was required to create congenial conditions in which the 'free trade' ideology of an ambitious English bourgeoisie could safely flourish. A commercial institution was thus made to become a colonial state, and to change its rhetoric from profit for itself into service of the empire. Involving dominant groups of Indian society in the functioning of the colonial state was part of the Company's new job. It implied the creation of a new order in the colony, a civil society among the natives. The ethos, the rules and the symbols of the new order had to be constructed in a manner that would not disturb the ongoing commercial enterprise. The violence which had helped build the empire could henceforth be practised only on the outskirts of the proposed civil society. Within it, coercion had to be replaced by socialization. This is where education had a role to play.

The educational aspect of this role has not received much analytical attention. It is easy to place education within the broad context of empire building, but that does not help us identify the ideological roots of colonial education. We cannot make sense of the Company's educational programmes if we only look upon them as variations on the utilitarian doctrine, or, alternatively, as steps to strengthen imperialist domination. These models may help us narrate what happened during the nineteenth century in India, but they do not impart to us any better understanding of the residues that the nineteenth century left for India to live with. This perhaps is not the historian's job, but it is certainly an important task of educational theory. The residues are related to the idea of creating a civil society in India. It was a complex idea, constituting elements of several different kinds—liberal-economic and political doctrines, paternalism and evangelicism. But what gave it the edge of plausibility was the self-delusory confidence so typical of colonizers. Until the late nineteenth century, colonial officers worked in India with that supreme self-reassurance which demands superficial acquaintance

[2] Marshall (1968) provides a useful commentary on, and important documents related to, the development that took place in later eighteenth century.

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with the colony's society and geography. Colonization was a project undertaken with inadequate data, which is why it was the adventure depicted in many children's novels of the nineteenth century (Parrish 1977). It was precisely the aspect of adventure in the colonial enterprise that gave the colonizer such craving for security mixed with a sense of prowess, his grand visions and his awe of expense, his paternalism and his readiness for military action.

In order to appreciate the role of education in creating civil society, and to analyse the assumptions behind the role, let us look at an early formulation of the problem. The following note was written by Lord Minto (Gilbert Elliot), Governor General from 1807 to 1812. The specific purpose of this note was to justify the setting up of two new Hindu Colleges and the reform of the existing one at Banaras. It is the wider rationale for the spread of education under British initiative that interests us. Minto wrote this note in 1811:

> The ignorance of the natives in the different classes of society, arising from the want of proper education, is generally acknowledged. This defect not only excludes them as individuals from the enjoyment of all those comforts and benefits which the cultivation of letters is naturally calculated to afford, but operating as it does throughout almost the whole mass of the population, tends materially to obstruct the measures adopted for their better government. Little doubt can be entertained that the prevalence of the crimes of perjury and forgery, so frequently noticed in the official reports, is in a great measure ascribable, both in the Mohomedans and Hindoos, to the want of due instruction in the moral and religious tenets of their respective faiths. It has been even suggested, and apparently not without foundation, that to this uncultivated state of the minds of the natives is to be ascribed the prevalence of those crimes which were recently so great a scourge to the country. The later offences against the peace and happiness of society have indeed for the present been materially checked by the vigilance and energy of the police, but it is probably only by the more general diffusion of knowledge among the great body of the people that the seeds of these evils can be effectively destroyed.[3]

[3] Extract from Lord Minto's minute dated 6 March 1911, in Basu (1952: 145).

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Minto was talking about the moral role of education in the context of civil administration. 'Happiness' to him was that state of comfort which derives from being governed well. Lack of good governance obstructs the opportunities of pleasure—even in the case of those who could individually obtain pleasure through means such as literary reading. Their chances of enjoyment are clouded by the prevalence of insecurity. For others too, the government cannot offer sustained comfort as its own capacities are exhausted dealing with criminal tendencies. Efficiency of the police helps, but the spread of education would be better. It would make the maintenance of law and order easier. This was the gist of Minto's thought according to Butler, who concluded his speech at the Imperial Legislative Assembly in 1911 after the discussions of Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill by saying:

> Exactly a century ago, in the year 1811, Lord Minto, who looks down upon us in this Council from that wall, penned his famous Minute in which he said—for the first time in the course of British rule, it was then said—that the ignorance of the people was subversive to good government and conducive to crime (Gokhale 1911).

The validity of Minto's line of argument rests on eighteenth-century concepts of 'happiness', 'cultivation' and 'ignorance'. Indeed, his line of thought can hardly be understood at all if we do not remember the extent of poverty in eighteenth-century England and the perception that the aristocratic elite had of the poor as a dangerous mass. Now, to proceed with Minto's English, 'happiness' was the result of pleasure-causing sensations. The seat of these sensations was the mind which was regarded as a repository of forceful passions. Achieving happiness was like commerce, involving the ability to trade off a harmful passion with a profitable one. 'Reason' was the ultimate, defendable ally in the pursuit of happiness, but we will return to reason later. If circumstances and reason could ensure the formation of a series of profitable pleasant sensations, the amount of happiness produced by the sensations was supposed to be greater. This view of happiness, which was derived from associational psychology and was nourished by Newtonian mechanicism and the fascination of commerce, found a political context in the concept of the civil society under which the sensations causing happiness were

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deemed to proliferate. Security of one's property was a key necessity in this regard, which the utilitarians were going to use later as the cornerstone of their model of protective democracy. Security would allow not only the enjoyment of available means of happy sensation, it would also give man's mind the freedom to enhance the sources of such sensations. Indeed, freedom (of the propertied man to apply his knowledge and skills to increase his material comforts) became an aspect of happiness, and the insurance of both was expected to be provided by the state.

In the civil society that the English middle class regarded as its ideal and which Minto's predecessors had inaugurated in India, rational behaviour or the application of reason meant translating one's concern for the safety of property into the desire to strengthen the state's efforts to establish order. This kind of civil rationality alone was supposed to ensure the ultimate advantages of leisure for cultivating one's sensibility. Lack of such rationality meant ignorance. This was the philosophy of a rapidly rising and ambitious urban commercial class. Its determination to wed practical sense with personal morality had found ample literary expression throughout the eighteenth century, from Addison at the beginning to Jane Austen towards the end. The vision had already been scattered widely, not as a utopia of the elite but as a viable dream for all. The dream provided the motive force for popular education movements in nineteenth-century England, movements which gradually pushed the state to assume responsibility for the education of the poorest.

This did not happen in India. Here, the dream of the English bourgeoisie merely provided the vocabulary with which a miniscule civil society could legitimize its rise in the midst of exploitation of the working population. The dynamics of colonial administration in India gave a very long life to eighteenth-century English diction, in which 'people' and 'citizen' meant only the men of status or property.

Others were not deemed to possess individuality. The labouring classes were perceived as the 'masses' among whom it was considered unnecessary to recognize individuals. They were used as cheap, often forced, labour by the bourgeois colonizer with the same indifference with which they had been used earlier and continue to be used now by feudal or quasi-feudal powers within Indian society. The use of the colonial government's funds for the diffusion of elementary education among the masses was questioned within the bureaucracy on the ground of good business sense. Warden's

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argument[4] that 'education, as a Government concern, will be expensive without being beneficial', and that it could be made beneficial by 'judicious encouragement' of the better-off sections of Indian society, was shared by many English officers. Malcolm, the Governor of Bombay stated that 'the expenses of running the government could be reduced by allowing some of the public services to be performed "by natives on diminished salaries" '.[5] Along this line of thought, state spending on education could be explained mainly as investment in the preparation of cheaper, trustworthy subordinates. The Charter Act of 1833 opened the civil services to Indians. From here on, every student was assumed to be aspiring for civil service, and the Indian civil servant was perceived as the heart of the small civil society.

Moral Agenda

The thought that the civil society in India could only be a miniscule minority disturbs neither the ideas nor the terminology we have examined. The perception of the usefulness of education as an aid to social order and peace, by virtue of being a morally uplifting influence, remained remarkably aloof from demographic and social reality. Trevelyan, writing in 1838, went so far as to predict that the educated classes, 'a small minority' then, would 'in time become the majority'.[6] For the colonial officers of the first half of the nineteenth century, the empire had not yet been 'translated' into palpable demographic and geographical reality. This was to occur in the latter part of the century, particularly after 1857. The sense of reality that comes from geographical surveys and censuses was a late development. It occurred too late to influence the vocabulary in which the colonial vision of education had found expression. By then it had become clear that the 'civil society' could only be a small network of men of property ('respectable natives'), civil servants and professionals (mainly in law and medicine). The fact that education and its effects could not possibly go beyond this small part of the population did

[4] Francis Warden's minute, dated 29 December 1823, in Basu (1952).
[5] Extract from Sir J. Malcolm's minute of 1828 in Sharp (1920: 144).
[6] Trevelyan (1838), extracted in Paranjpe (1938).

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little to alter the discourse which continued to echo the eighteenth-century English equation between good governance and improvement of public morality.

The persistence of this discourse calls for an explanation, and we can find one in the manner in which colonial conditions distorted eighteenth-century educational ideas. We have seen that the concept of 'order' was central to colonial policy in all areas of administration, including education. This concept was rooted in the liberal belief that the state's role is mainly to maintain congenial conditions for the enhancement of pleasure (of the man who had the means to enjoy himself). Emanating from this belief, 'order' stood for the state's contribution to the bourgeoisie's pleasure. The state was supposed to make this contribution by providing for a dual arrangement for education. The arrangement would consist, on the one hand, of a scheme of moral improvement of the masses, and, on the other hand, of a different sort of provision for the intellectual and aesthetic enrichment of the propertied classes. The moral education of the children of ordinary people would emphasize religious and quasi-religious literary learning aimed at imparting virtues such as obedience, modesty, rule-governed behaviour and acceptance of one's station in society. The education of upper-class children would provide for the learning of classical languages and literature, and the skills related to reflection and inquiry.[7]

The framework of a dual role for education became somewhat distorted under colonial conditions. Here, the moral improvement of the masses could not be pursued in any substantial sense due to the weight of the rhetoric of financial constraint. The colonial state was, after all, no welfare agency. It existed to facilitate and expand exploitative trade. Funding a programme of mass education was beyond its purview even if charitable souls like Munro passionately supported it. At the same time, the colonial state needed people within the colonized society on whom it could depend. It was important that these trustworthy people be influential in the native community, since the administrative apparatus was much too small to ensure order without the collaboration of such influential people. But although this collaborating class had men of property within it, the liberal notion of a mainly intellectual and aesthetic education

[7] For a discussion of these ideas in the context of English education, see Silver (1965).

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could not apply to their children. They too, after all, were part of the colony, and hence needed moral upliftment in order to become trustworthy. So 'mass education' became a programme which, owing to its financially restrained expansion, could only reach the upper classes, but it remained an essentially moral programme as was appropriate for a colony. Literature, political philosophy, history, and later on, even science, were to be treated in it as morally beneficial influences.

The 1844 report of the Board of Education for the Bombay Presidency reflected the vision of an educated India in terms of two currents of contemporary English thought—utilitarianism and evangelicism. The first represented a crystallization of the line of thought that Minto was following, sharpened by the faith in scientific reasoning brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The second current was not an altogether new development either, but it had by now virtually reversed the earlier English perception of India. Whereas many eighteenth-century liberals in England perceived India as a developed civilization, Victorian liberal opinion depicted India as a sort of sad, sleeping beauty that needed charity and the touch of a new life. The Bombay report of 1844 says:

> The object of Government we take to be perfectly distinct and intelligible, namely, to make as vigorous an impression upon the Asiatic mind as possible, to rouse it from the torpor into which it has subsided for some hundred years past, and to place it in a condition for receiving and digesting the results of European progress and civilization .... Ignorance in all ages has been the fruitful mother of vice, in a great degree by the undue development given to the passions in minds where intellectual enjoyment can find no entry, but mainly by the temptation and facility, which it affords to the crafty and designing, of preying upon the ignorant masses. One of the main duties of Government in modern times is to protect one class of its subjects, the weak, the unwary, the helpless, in one word the large majority, from the unprincipled few, and the remedy, acknowledged to be the most available one, is to inspire the bulk of the population with the desire, and to afford them the means, of acquiring as much exact knowledge as possible on the various subjects and idea ....[8]

[8] Quoted from the extracts of the 1844 report of the Board of Education for Bombay Presidency, in Richey (1922: 144–45).

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The problem of immoral behaviour is squarely equated with that of ignorance. This understanding gave to many nineteenth-century rationalists a strong hope of seeing the utopia of an enlightened humanity built within a foreseeable future. The state's role in this vision was that of a protector of the 'ignorant masses' who personified the 'Asiatic' mind portrayed by James Mill in his popular history of India; enemies of the state's paternalistic role were considered to be few in number, personified in practitioners of obscurantist forms of knowledge. These forms of knowledge and their hold on 'ignorant' people were both characteristics of the Asiatic mind as Victorian intellectuals and administrators had come to understand it. The means by which the state could subdue its enemies, in this perception, was education of the masses in 'exact' forms of knowledge. These 'exact' forms represented the West's scientific tradition. If the masses could be prepared to accept it as the guiding light of conduct, the state's role in transforming the Asiatic mind would be largely fulfilled. Education was thus perceived as the chief agency for accomplishing the great moral agenda of colonialism. Irrespective of the success of the colonial government in educating the masses, the rhetoric of education would provide the legitimation that the colonial enterprise always needed, especially in the moral climate of Victorian England.

Although the rationale for public education took an epistemological form, it was ethical at its core. No doubt knowledge by itself was seen as a moral influence in post-Reformation thought, but prevailing stereotypes of the Asiatic mind and the further accentuation of these stereotypes by evangelical enterprise made this association far stronger. The core stereotype was that Indians were highly emotional, and were incapable of rational conduct. This perception was based on the eighteenth-century differentiation between 'passion' and 'reason'. As numerous examples from English literature of the time show, no success in life could be imagined unless a person controlled 'passions' with the help of 'reason'. The idea was that the guiding light of rationality, emanating from puritanical Christianity and scientific reasoning (no conflict had yet developed between the two), was essential to purge the passions which would otherwise lead to certain ruin, both material and spiritual. And this light was precisely what Indians lacked from the English point of view. The great fear of the English bourgeois, that he would ruin his fortunes by giving in to 'passions', and his sense of conquest over the fear in

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his own life, were both transposed on the Indian society. This is where the metaphorical darkness of India and the Indian mind, representing its 'ignorance', acquired its emotive force. For the early nineteenth-century planner of education in India, the path was clear: to pierce India's ignorance with the light of western science to enable Indians to lead a life of reason, with their passion under control.

Knowledge was what the new education was supposed to give, but its inner agenda was to improve conduct. The opportunity to receive knowledge at an English school became an excuse to become disciplined, to have one's morality improved. Education in the sense of learning became less important than the moral influence it was supposed to exercise (Walsh 1983). And 'moral influence' was a euphemism for Christian ethics. A programme for mass education was a well-guarded excuse in Trevelyan's reasoning to bring India securely under England's domination. As he acknowledged privately to Bentinck in one of his letters, the role of education in imparting western knowledge was only the practical part of the scheme of education, and that alone needed to be revealed; the latent part was to influence India morally and to treat her as a footstand for extending the moral light of the West throughout Asia.[9] Elphinstone, too, secretly rejoiced at the fact that natives were not aware of the connection (that is, between education and their eventual acceptance of Christianity).[10]

Education did not help Christianity the way Trevelyan and Elphinstone, among many others, had hoped, but it did influence the self-perception of the educated Indian. In some individuals, education caused a turmoil, an identity crisis, but in a greater number of cases that we can study with the help of biographies, education led to a new, positive self-image. The educated man's loyalty to the empire was distinct from that of the semi-literate soldier, precisely because it had the added component of faith in oneself as a product of English education. This faith made the completion of one's educational career look like a second birth. Success in the Matriculate or the B.A. examination marked this event, as many nineteenth-century biographies show (Walsh 1983). So did a journey to England for higher education. Like success after the rigours of an examination,

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[9] Trevelyan to Bentinck, 9 April 1834, quoted in Clive (1973: 361).

[10] Extract from M. Elphinstone's minute, dated 13 December 1823, in Basu (1952: 211).

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arrival in England gave one a new identity. W.C. Bonnerjee, who became the first president of the Indian National Congress, conveyed this sense of having acquired a new identity when he wrote from England to his uncle in 1865: 'I have discarded all ideas of caste, I have come to hate all the demoralising practices of our countrymen and I write this letter an entirely altered man (Bonnerjee 1944: 14).

Civil Society

The little civil society that education helped to form consisted of the higher castes, particularly the Brahmans, of the major towns of British-controlled India. Facilities for English education were quickly exploited by the better-off families of Brahman and other higher castes to equip their children with the new skills, knowledge and certificates required for employment in colonial administration. This was nothing new in the history of Brahmans and other castes of high status. Their capacity to renovate their repertoire of skills for maintaining status and power had manifested itself many times earlier. Nehru gives us a brief view of this process in his autobiography in the context of Kashmiri Brahmans. They had a 'remarkable capacity for adaptation', he says, which was displayed in their interaction with the Indo-Persian culture of the plains. 'Later they adapted themselves with equal rapidity to the changing order, when a knowledge of English and the elements of European culture became necessary' (Nehru [1936] 1980: 69). The Brahmans of Bengal, Maharashtra and Madras were among the first Indians to master the new language and to imbibe the modes of behaviour necessary for dealing with the English officers. Although they proved culturally nimble and prudent, they did not spare from criticism others who adopted western ways. These 'others' included men of non-Brahman higher castes, converts to Christianity and women. By criticizing others' westernization, Brahmans struggled desperately to maintain the authenticity of their status in a situation in which the right to assign status was no more theirs. English education had triggered competition among all caste groups, including the lower castes. What made this competition unique in the history of castes was its speed.

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By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the function of education in undermining traditional structures of dominance had become well established. It is true that developments in certain regions expressed this tendency far more sharply than in other regions. On the whole, the role of education in disturbing traditional social hierarchies was more clearly expressed in the south than in the north. In Kerala, the struggle of downtrodden groups like the Izhavas owed considerably to their educational attainments under Christian missionaries. Pullapilly makes the point that the Izhavas' fight for civil rights and justice 'presupposed a certain amount of social consciousness and educational preparation' (Pullapilly 1976). The same thing could be said of several non-Brahman peasant castes and some of the untouchable castes of the areas in present-day Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In Maharashtra, the work of the Satyashodhak Samaj established by Phule led to the demand for educational facilities among oppressed caste groups. In his submission to the Hunter Commission, Phule wrote: 'Upon what grounds is it asserted that the best way to advance the moral and intellectual welfare of the people is to raise the standard of instruction of the higher classes?' (quoted in Keer 1964: 169).

While it is true that the recognition of education as an agency of material and social benefits triggered a competition in the caste hierarchy, the upper castes nevertheless maintained a strong hold over educational facilities, especially facilities for higher education. The small civil society of the educated remained in all parts of British India largely confined to the higher castes. There was a trickle from below, but it was too small to alter the character of the civil society. It is thus worth asking which of the two roles of education was more influential in shaping the cultural and political life of India at the turn of the century—the role of strengthening group solidarity among the educated, or the role of disturbing traditional hierarchies. The first is rarely acknowledged, whereas the second has been highly overestimated. In his Elementary Education Bill speech in 1911, Gokhale had mentioned that only 1.9 per cent of India's total population was attending elementary schools. One can hardly overemphasize the group-forming force of an experience as narrowly spread as education was in colonial India. Education did facilitate limited upward mobility among lower caste groups in certain regions of British India. This role of education was significant, though it was confined to those regions where cultural resources for

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an egalitarian social movement already existed to support and enhance the effects that access to education triggered, in conjuction with the implications of competitive opportunity for employment, new modes of transport and ultimately, the beginning of representational politics. When education is celebrated for its historic role in social change, its complex interplay with other factors tends to get underplayed. Also, the identity-forming role that education played, creating the consciousness among the educated that they were a new elite, is overlooked. The egalitarian effects education had in colonial India need to be carefully balanced against this contrary function.

Whether it was the case of the higher castes using education to renovate their repertoire of skills, or the alternative case in some areas of middle and lower castes using education to move up, we notice that the major social function of education was to differentiate its beneficiaries from the larger population. It did so by serving as a new cultural property. Certificates, marksheets and medals were the manifest possessions that this property brought, and people cherished and displayed them avidly. Names of students who had passed Matriculate and higher examinations appeared division-wise in newspapers. Locating one's own name or that of someone from the village became a dramatic social event as several memoirs indicate. But more important were the possessions that education gave in terms of new capacities, particularly the capacity to read and write English and to quote from English literature. The fact that someone could read a letter written in English or compose an application distinguished him from other ordinary people. It gave the educated man a rare distinction, considering how small a proportion of the Indian population came into the orbit of English education.

Command over the colonizer's language, eligibility for state employment and status were the components of the educated Indian's new identity which have been widely acknowledged by historians. What has been ignored was the sense that the educated citizen had of being morally superior to the uneducated masses. This sense obviously arose out of the identification that he felt with the English, but the argument that supported it was different. The moral superiority that the English felt over Indians had two bases—the stereotypes of Indian culture and society, such as the ones projected in James Mill's volumes of Indian history, and the fact of having succeeded in subduing India's native powers. Evangelical as well as utilitarian writings had portrayed Indians as a degraded people, in

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need of moral reform. But these writings attributed India's depravity to remediable causes; later in the century, the Victorian attitude was quite different—it ascribed India's degradation to racial, climatic and other such incurable sources.[11] Compared to this attitude, moral superiority of the educated Indian in the later nineteenth century and afterwards had more rational props to support it. A prominent philosophical school that provided the rationale for moral superiority was that of evolutionism.

Spencer's theory of evolution served educated Indians at two levels. At one level, it answered the search for causes of India's defeat. Bharatendu in Hindi and Bankim in Bengali were among the many creative minds who were making this search and giving it expression through their literary writings. Evolutionism gave a purpose to history; it explained in a modern idiom why the English had to come to India and were propagating their system of administration, law and knowledge here. Ranade thought that it was of crucial importance for Indians to study the lessons that the history of India's defeats had to teach. 'If those centuries have rolled away to no purpose over our heads,' he said, 'our cause is no doubt hopeless beyond cure (Ranade 1965). At another level, Spencer's theory provided the hope that a small body of people could influence and reform the much larger society surrounding it. Spencer had argued that 'while each individual is developing, the society of which he is an insignificant unit is developing too' (Kazamias 1966: 69). This organic role of the individual offered great consolation to the educated Indian who was part of a miniscule minority of the total Indian society. It gave him reason to believe that so small a section of society could be an effective agency for influencing the rest. In his presidential address to the students gathered at a conference in Bihar in 1910, Sachchidananda Sinha echoed Spencer's theory when he said that 'unity can only be the direct result, not the negation, of a full-developed individualism of each organic part of the whole organism' (Sinha 1910). Evolutionism thus provided the educated Indian with a rationale to perceive himself as a shaping influence on the larger society. We find this rationale in the writings and speeches of such eminent Indians as Bankim, Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo in Bengal, Ranade and Gokhale in Maharashtra and Lajpat Rai in Punjab.

[11] Francis G. Hutchins makes this point in *The Illusion of Permanence* (1967).

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One wonders whether these men reflected a widespread mode of thought or whether they expressed a special, individual urge. Public personalities they were no doubt, but we have reason to accept that their sense of having a moral responsibility to transform the traditional social orders was typical. It is not just eminent people like them who expressed the feeling of being morally responsible for the upliftment of the masses. Less-known people, who were not involved at any point in public action, voiced the same perception. The prize-winning essay in a contest organized by a House of Commons member after his visit to India to study the aspirations of educated Indians uses a landscape metaphor to convey the distance between the educated few and the masses:

> What the educated classes are thinking today, the masses will be thinking tomorrow. Just as the mountain-tops catch the light of the rising sun first, and then the plains, and lastly the valleys—so the light of knowledge must first shine on those whom Nature has placed in a higher sphere than the rest, and then extend itself to the labourer in the field and the artisan in the workshop (Mody 1928: 60).

It was the self-perception of a colonial elite. Although educated Indians were not the ruling powers of the colonial order, they were a dominant group within the colonized society. They aspired to share power and the privileges of office with the English administrators, although this aspiration was mostly expressed in the vocabulary of request. Two salient characteristics of an elite's self-perception were present in the educated Indian's personality—a sense of moral superiority and the urge to assign to oneself the task of transforming a given social order.[12] Group feeling, which need not always graduate into solidarity, originates in the first characteristic; and the driving energy commonly associated with elites originates in the second. It was group feeling which resulted in the formation of associations of educated Indians in all three presidencies of colonized India during the nineteenth century, especially in the later years when the system of education was well established. These associations are often described as precursors of modern political consciousness, as expressed in the Congress which was formed in 1885.

[12] For a discussion of these characteristics, see Thoenes (1966).

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Two common features of these associations were the prominence of social reform terminology in the description of their objectives, and a ready inclination to associate with or to challenge other organizations (Seal 1968). The first tendency gradually evolved into a vision which encouraged the second tendency. The vision represented in many cases a blending of economic interest and concerns with cultural aspirations. Education provided the point and the means of this blending, since it symbolized the possibility of universal upliftment. It provided the vocabulary in which the aspirations of the colonial citizen could be expressed as an invocation to the masses rather than merely as an appeal to the colonial masters. This aspect of education enabled many nineteenth-century associations to spread across geographical and cultural boundaries. Education became the symbol of a new kind of secular ethnicity. It was a 'secular' ethnicity because it was based on western knowledge. The 'truth' of this knowledge was above the kind of controversies in which the 'truth' of several branches of indigenous Indian knowledge were caught. The feeling of being in possession of the same knowledge as the colonizer helped the educated Indian to identify with the latter's role in relation to the masses. However, the secular element in the personality of educated Indians could not protect many of them from the lure of religious revivalism. As we shall see later, the commitment to India's moral upliftment provided impetus (under the influence of revivalism) to a search for self-identity.

The urge to transform the social order found expression in different forms, depending on the specific intellectual and cultural exposure that individuals received during their personal development. In some, such as Vivekananda and later Aurobindo, the urge found expression in a vocabulary of spiritual evolution; in others, like Ranade, Gokhale and Lajpat Rai, it was conveyed through a vocabulary of political evolution. Religious and social revivalism, as expressed in Tilak's politics, was a third expression. These variations were later transmuted into a composite vocabulary of social upliftment, focusing on the upliftment of the downtrodden castes, by Gandhi. In all these variations, we find the recognition of education as an instrument of moral upliftment. Obviously, in this usage 'education' did not refer to the prevailing system of education. Rather, by attacking the prevailing system of education, Indian leaders sought to establish the role of education in idealistic terms. In many cases, most clearly that of Gandhi, education became the practice

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and central metaphor of the leader's own life. Gandhi posited his pedagogical role against his political role in a dramatic manner throughout his life. For others, education became a means of helping the masses reclaim their self-identity from colonial masters. Change in self-identity implied a previous step, that of enlightenment and amelioration of character.

Colonial–Nationalist Homonymy

If we observe the relationship within which Indian intellectuals and social reformers of later nineteenth century performed their pedagogical role vis-à-vis the masses, we will recognize that it was not different from the relationship which the English had established in the early years of the nineteenth century. It was a paternalistic relationship built upon the grand theorisations of the Victorian age concerning the causes of the decline of some nations and the rise of others. The panoramic view of history and society, which shaped several major schools of nineteenth-century European social philosophy, had been passed onto the early generations of Indian university graduates through college syllabi and textbooks and the speeches made by professors and administrators. At one level, this view implied an acceptance of racial differences between nations; at another, it carried a sense of moral obligation on the part of 'superior' nations. This view legitimized imperialism in the name of the destiny of humankind. Indeed, it portrayed imperialism as an agency of change in societies such as India which were supposed to be static (Nisbet 1976). Within a society, it assigned to the economically and culturally dominant classes the role of a moral teacher vis-à-vis the larger population.

In his 1862 convocation address at the University of Bombay, Bartle Frere, the Governor of Bombay, said to Indian graduates: 'The character of your whole people is to a great extent in your hands.' This attitude of paternalism was imbibed and expressed by Indian social leaders. Its mode of expression varied according to the cultural experience of colonialism in different regions. For instance, it was more copiously expressed by leaders of the Bombay region than by their Bengali counterparts. This difference may be attributed, as

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Tucker (1972) points out, to the fact that the Bombay region did not face the intensity of cultural conflict that Bengal faced in the early period of colonization. Nevertheless, the idea that the Indian masses suffered from serious weakness of character, and that the educated Indian ought to improve the moral fibre of Indian society was as important for Ranade as it was for Vidyasagar and their respective contemporaries in the two regions. This was the central theme of the colonial discourse on education to which both English and Indian intellectuals contributed, a discourse which implied a morally superior teacher and a society whose character was in need of reform.

Before we proceed further in our analysis of this discourse, we ought to recognize that the homonymy we have perceived does not fit in with the prevailing conception of later nineteenth-century nationalist thought in education. It is commonly believed that Indians like Ranade, Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and Bankim had a view of education, especially of its social purpose, which differed significantly from the English view. The most articulate expression of this position has been made by Panikkar, who says that the educational ideas of Indian intellectuals of the nineteenth century 'were different *both in purpose and details* from the policy of the colonial rulers' (Panikkar 1975, emphasis added). He argues that the views held by Indians differed from the English policy on three major counts: first, in the emphasis on science education; second, in the realization of the need for mass education; and third, in support for education in the vernacular. As we shall see, none of these points permits us to separate the early nationalist discourse of education from the colonial discourse.

Though little was done to introduce the learning of science in schools, colonial rhetoric from Macaulay onwards was never lacking in the emphasis on the role of science in India's progress. Indeed, the alleged lack of science in Indian tradition, and its strong presence in the European tradition of knowledge, served as the hinges allowing a smooth introduction of English language and learning in the curriculum of Indian education. Similarly, the point about the importance of mass education was so dear to the colonizer's heart that we find it elaborated upon in just about every major document written since Trevelyan's famous book, *On the Education of the People of India* (1838). The incompatibility of a mass education programme and the internal imperatives of colonial control was beyond the perceptual range of the colonizer. Finally, the question

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of education in the vernacular was taken up with considerable detail in no less a document than the famous despatch of Charles Wood. This should suffice to show that the Indians whom Panikkar cites for advocating science, mass education and the vernacular as a medium were hardly going contrary to the colonizer's discourse on education.

The similarity in the Indian and the English perceptions of education went even deeper. We find it reflected not only in the choices advocated as policy steps, but also in the understanding of the implications of these choices. The most striking instance of this can be found in the justification of science. Science was expected not just to improve India materially, but intellectually and morally as well. One of the intellectuals Panikkar quotes, namely Mahenderlal Sarkar, put this succinctly: 'The great defects, inherent and acquired, which were pointed out as the characteristics of the Hindu mind of the present day, could only be remedied by the training which results from the investigation of natural phenomena' (Panikkar 1975: 390). Sarkar was obviously working along the theory which attributed India's defeat at the hands of Europe to moral and intellectual defects of her population. He saw science as a cure for these defects, and with this perception of science just about every English officer in India concerned with education would have been in agreement.

We can now proceed to examine the homonymy between the colonial and the nationalist views on the role of education. One source of this homonymy lay in the resonance that the emphasis on moral development in the colonial discourse had in an indigenously Indian discourse on education. In what is usually referred to as the Brahmanical tradition, the teacher was regarded as a renouncer of the ordinary course of life, someone in possession of esoteric knowledge. For a pupil to receive knowledge from the teacher demanded total commitment to the teacher, along with the sacrifice of his own ordinary urges during the course of youth. Placing this obviously idealized picture in a historical location is difficult, but there is no doubt about the symbolic potency this idealized picture has enjoyed in social lore. Numerous myths and legends constructed around the theme of the dedicated pupil and the renouncer-teacher continue to enjoy great popularity. The modern Hindi literateur, Muktibodh, captured the essence of the lore most vividly in his short story, 'Brahmrakshas ka Shishya' (Muktibodh 1980). It narrates the slow process of a young pupil's transformation, and

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ends by telling us how his teacher attained liberation by transferring his moral and intellectual authority to the pupil.

When Indian leaders and intellectuals started to talk about educational reform during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they did not find it necessary to invent a discourse. The one that the English administrators (including heads of educational institutions) had been using turned out to be quite suitable. It conveyed a familiar-looking truth about education, namely its value for the development of character. Only the association of this truth with alien masters and alien knowledge had to be purged. The nationalist framework was able to take care of the first kind of association quite well, but the second—the association with foreign knowledge—proved harder to purge. Even a militant leader like Tilak in his early phase endorsed English education in preference to traditional education. He saw English education as a means through which modern western knowledge could become available for the reconstruction of a traditional India. It would hardly have been possible for him to have this attitude if he had rejected western knowledge as an 'immoral' force.

The fact that the colonial discourse on education proved so convenient to Indian leaders can also be attributed to the social background of these leaders. The majority of them came from upper-caste families, particularly from Brahman families (McDonald and Stark 1969). This meant that even without the considerable advantages that college education under colonial rule gave them, they were placed far above the labouring masses of rural India. The social distance between them and the masses provided a fertile ground in which the sense of moral superiority, a concomitant of upper-caste status, would rapidly grow with a measure of English education and linkage with colonial administration thrown in. The distance was not a creation of colonial rule, but the economic processes triggered by colonial rule undoubtedly accentuated it, and education gave it a new legitimacy. Opportunities for economic advancement through steady employment or the practice of a profession, such as law, had a glamour quite new in Indian society. Education seemed to offer direct access to these coveted paths of personal upliftment. It also offered the skills and knowledge that gave the successful native a certain amount of power. These included the skills of mediating between divergent interests, and the knowledge of administrative rules.[13] Armed with

[13] Gordon Johnson (1973) discusses the advantage these skills gave.

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these abilities, the educated leaders of Indian opinion enjoyed a high status and an aura of power in the eyes of the uneducated masses. Their status would by itself explain a self-perception of moral superiority and an educative role. The prevalence of an educational discourse that articulated a specifically moral function of education in India complemented this self-perception.

In the writings of Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Lajpat Rai, educational discourse acquired a nationalist slant without losing its homonymic ability to accommodate the two distinct connotations of moral discipline, which the imperialist discourse on the one hand, and the traditional Indian discourse on the other, had associated with education. Nor did it lose the stamp of eighteenth-century rationality which was devoid of any clues to the problem of human unhappiness in relation to inequality. The faith that a small number of enlightened individuals were all that we needed for a change in the social order figured centrally in both associations of meaning. Vivekananda came closest to posing inequality as a moral problem, but he too believed that personal transformation was a means of social reform. A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness and willingness for sacrifice could bring about social regeneration, he thought. Though he acknowledged the problem of Indian masses being 'engrossed in the struggle for existence', he emphasized that 'spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries forever' (Advaita Ashrama 1963: 113).

Gandhi's political philosophy and carrer present a peculiar contrast in this matter to his pedagogical ideas as expressed in the scheme of *nayee taalim* or basic education. Gandhi used education as a key metaphor of his political style, and even of his personal life. In this usage, he was undoubtedly following the Brahmanical tradition in which the teacher is expected to give up worldly attainments so that he can have unassailable moral authority. He did not, however, follow this line of thought in the programme he proposed specifically for the advancement of education. There he chose a remarkably modernist approach, though he dressed it in his well-known concern for pragmatic considerations like budgets. The approach was to engage children in manual activity and to relate school learning to local processes of production. Religious teaching and moral improvement as goals of education were conspicuously absent from Gandhi's articulation of his pedagogical agenda.

Gandhi's programme lived a short life in the Indian education system. Two other modernists, Tagore and Gijubhai, had even less

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of an impact. Indeed, modernist child-centred thought always met with hostility or indifference. Ideas such as the practice of inquiry within one's milieu, and the application of knowledge to solve daily problems were alien to the agenda of moral upliftment which had a central place in both imperialist and nationalist discourses. Since nationalist discourse drew so heavily from the Brahmanical tradition, it could not provide room for non-esoteric forms of knowledge that could be pursued, questioned and added to by ordinary teachers and children. In the colonial view, knowledge and the capacity to inquire were the colonizer's unique privileges; the native was supposed to be ignorant and passive. It was the colonizer's responsibility to kindle in the masses the desire to learn about new ways. It was a fatherly responsibility, and nationalist discourse on education absorbed both the content and the tone of this sense of responsibility. But as Partha Chatterjee (1986a) points out, practitioners of the nationalist discourse, as it matured towards India's independence, could afford to be self-consciously paternalistic in the style of English administrators.

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III

Appropriate Knowledge: Conflict of Curriculum and Culture

One of the key processes involved in educational change concerns the question: what is worth teaching? English administrators of the mid-nineteenth century answered it in terms of their perception of what Indian society lacked. They saw it as their job to change the indigenous system of education into one that would match the aims of the empire. We have already distinguished between the aims of the empire and its practical needs. It is not difficult to identify the practical needs—subordinate officers and clerks, for example—and to note the components of school and college curriculum which matched these needs. This aspect of the history of colonial education has been thoroughly covered by earlier research. But useful though this coverage is, it need not have led to the confusion one finds so widespread in Indian educational discourse between the needs of the empire and its aims. This confusion is at the base of the popular belief that the aim of colonial education was to produce clerks. If one shares this belief, one would see no need to probe mid-nineteenth-century colonial perceptions of 'what is worth teaching'.

If we choose to avoid probing this question in the context of mid-nineteenth-century choices made by English administrators, we are likely to remain incapable of pursuing a chain of problems that are relevant to educational inquiry in India to this day. The chain starts with the problem: 'why is there a wide gap between an Indian child's life at school and that at home?' That the question is a valid one can be ascertained by a visit to any one of the million primary schools in the country. The school's daily curriculum has no reference to the children's life outside the school. The teacher is, of course, free to make such a reference, and some teachers occasionally do. But the curriculum makes no such demand from the teacher. On the

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contrary, curriculum policy permits the teacher to teach all the school subjects without establishing any link between the child's life and social milieu on the one hand, and the knowledge content of the syllabus on the other. This hiatus between the curriculum and the learner's social milieu is part of the colonial and pre-colonial legacies of our education system. The middle of the nineteenth century seems to be a particularly useful period to study from this perspective, especially since the epistemological basis of contemporary education took shape during this period. We are referring to the years following the famous Despatch of 1854 (Richey 1922).

That there was a conflict between the indigenous system of education and the colonial system is accepted by many researchers who have looked at this formative period of Indian education. The economic aspect of this conflict is clear. It relates to the fact that the indigenous village school lost its economic base once educational provision, howsoever meagre, was begun to be made by the colonial state. In the indigenous tradition, the teacher was remunerated by the community he served. Under the new system, he became a paid servant of the colonial government. This switching over of the teacher from the charge of the local population to that of the government triggered a process of estrangement of the school from the local community. Once the state's interest in running schools was established, locally available financial support began to dry up, permitting the state to bring all aspects of school education under its direct control.

State control of schools had significant implications for curriculum and teachers. We will focus here on the implications it had for curriculum and examine the implications for teachers in the next chapter. In both cases, we need to keep in mind the colonial nature of the state. In the context of curriculum, colonial perceptions and understanding of Indian society shaped the state's policy on what ought to be taught in schools. In the last chapter we referred to these perceptions in the context of the educational ideal underlying colonial policy. We now need to examine more closely how some of these perceptions were translated into a specific policy on curriculum. For this purpose we will analyse the reports prepared by William D. Arnold during his tenure as Punjab's first Director of Public Instruction. The two reports he wrote during his brief term of two years in office provide us with useful and highly interesting case material to examine colonial policy in the construction of curriculum.

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Reading and Meaning

William D. Arnold was appointed Director of Public Instruction in Punjab in 1856 and he died in early 1859. Arnold's appointment to this post at the young age of 28 might have owed to his special interest in education and to the fact that he was Thomas Arnold's[1] son. His special interest in education is reflected in the two reports (Richey 1922) he wrote during his tenure as Director, which covered a crucial time in Punjab's social and educational history. Punjab had become a British province in 1849, and by 1854 the English officials working in Punjab had prepared a scheme for initiating an education system there along the lines evolved earlier in the north-western provinces. This is when the Educational Despatch of the Company's Directors arrived with a detailed plan of work to be undertaken in education. The reports Arnold wrote during 1857 and 1858 are, therefore, significant documents of colonial policy in education at an important juncture.

These reports are also important in a broader context, representing as they do the emerging Victorian view of India and the role of the English empire in it (Edwardes 1958; Hutchins 1967). By the mid-nineteenth century, the older kind of officer, who took India as he found it and lived here to gain pleasure and wealth, had retired from the scene. The young officers who now came to India carried a new attitude, that of an imperial sense of moral responsibility towards it. Moral superiority and a self-assured perception of 'what is to be done' were characteristic of this new generation whose task consisted of more detailed planning and decision making in the various branches of the colonial state's activities. The broader outline of colonial policy in education had already been laid down; only

[1] Thomas Arnold was born in 1795 and got his education at Winchester and Oxford. In 1828 he was appointed headmaster of Rugby (a public school), where he remained till his death in 1842. He was popularly known as 'Arnold of Rugby'. A prolific writer, he was associated with the liberal movement of his time. It was under Arnold's supervision that public school education was for the first time based upon a definite social theory and informed with a definite religious and ethical ideal.

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the details had to be worked out. This is where Arnold confronted the problems posed by the conflict between indigenous traditions of school learning and what appeared to him as the obvious steps his office must take.

In his second report, written in 1858, Arnold acknowledged that the efforts his office was making to initiate a new kind of education had met with considerable resistance and suspicion. He felt that what he had noticed was a clash of beliefs about the meaning of education. 'We found a population,' he said, 'with their own idea of the meaning of education, and to that idea thoroughly attached; and *to whom our idea of education*, being inconsistent with their own, as thoroughly distasteful; as to an Asiatic everything is distasteful which is new' (Richey 1922: 302, emphasis added). We need to examine carefully the points of 'inconsistency' between the two ideas Arnold mentioned in his report. But before we do that, it is important to note that Arnold took recourse to a *stereotype* to explain the initial Indian response in Punjab to English educational efforts. Instead of relating the negative response to unfamiliarity with the new system, he attributed it to what he believed was a racial characteristic of Asiatic people. The impact of James Mill's reflections on India and of other early nineteenth-century writings of that type is obvious.

The points of 'inconsistency' Arnold noticed between the Indian and the English concepts of education can be placed in two categories. In the first category we will include his observations concerning language and reading or literacy, and in the second category we will place his observations concerning science, including geography and mathematics. In the context of language education, Arnold made two basic points. One is that he found pupils capable of reading but unable to derive any meaning out of what they read. The other point is that he found education in a 'common vernacular' like Urdu—which his office decided to introduce in schools in place of Persian—was 'utterly inconsistent' with people's idea of 'erudition and learning'. Both these points relate to the perception of literacy and that of its functions in a culture. It appears plausible that Arnold's perceptions of literacy and education were rather different from the perceptions he found prevalent in the Punjab of his time, and it might be interesting to analyse his observations in the light of this difference.

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With regard to reading, Arnold records his observation of the system he found in existence in a long-winding sentence:

> We found a whole population agreed together that to read fluently and if possible to say by heart a series of Persian works of which the meaning was not understood by the vast majority, and of which the meaning when understood was for the most part little calculated to edify the minority, constituted education (Richey 2002: 301).

As if he realized that the sentence could be read as being somewhat sarcastic, he wrote in the next sentence: 'I do not wish to speak too contemptuously of the Persian schools of Instruction; I have no right to do so' (ibid.). In the long sentence, which this one was supposed to balance, Arnold was making two points—one, that reading was not regarded as a means to derive meaning or to interpret; and two, that when meaning was derived, it was not for edification or any kind of personal or moral improvement. In other words, he was saying that the *prevailing perception of reading was that of a process of sounding out the text without relating to it*. In Arnold's view, this was hardly worthy of being called education. Unless a text meant something to the reader, and better still, exercised an influence on the reader, particularly on the moral or spiritual aspect of his personality, it could hardly be said to have served any educational purpose.

This view of reading which Arnold articulated was a product of the Reformation. It was then that the printing press and the spread of literacy made it possible for people at large to distinguish between a religious text as a sacred symbol and the interpretations of a text. The period that divided the old world of 'received' texts from the future that consisted of individual interpretations was the seventeenth century. For a man of Arnold's generation, the post-Reformation perception of texts and reading was something that could be assumed to be universally applicable and 'true'. (Twentieth-century anthropology that ascertained the role of ritual in oral societies, as it applied to the role of texts in social organization, was yet far off.) In the middle of the nineteenth century, an officer of the East India Company serving as a Director of Public Instruction would have had every reason to see text reading which was dissociated from the expectation of moral benefit in a contemptuous manner as of no educational consequence. What might have added to the contempt in this case was the contemporary stereotype of Indians as lacking morality, and therefore in great need of any source

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of moral stimulation. As we saw in Chapter II, moral improvement was the key concept in terms of which colonial administration explained its educational role in India. Any pedagogical exercise which was not related to this goal could not possibly be seen as a part of education.

Precisely how the Reformation and the growth of printing technology affected popular perceptions of 'reading' is far from clear in the case of Europe. One point of view (cf. Olson 1980) is that the Protestant revolution led to a final collapse of the oral world and strengthened the logical capabilities of European societies by placing the 'meaning' of religious and other texts safely in the texts themselves. A second view (cf. Eisenstein 1985). is that whatever happened during the Reformation had more to do with the spread of printing technology than with something inherent in western culture coming to fruition. This second view leads us to recognize the social functions of reading in post-Reformation Europe in a manner that contrasts with the first. Whereas the first view persuades us to believe that with the advent of mass literacy 'meaning' came to reside in the text, the second view takes us to the conclusion that meaning became personal, a matter of contention among the literates. Our choice between these two views depends on our understanding of the difference between oral and written communication on the one hand, and that of the economic and social basis of mass literacy on the other. If we insist, as some researchers do,[2] that oral communication invites the contamination of meaning by interpersonal dimensions, then we are likely to see Arnold's Punjab as a place which had little room for 'rationality' or rational behaviour, at least of the European variety. If, on the other hand, we recognize that 'written language invites contention' (Smith 1985), and therefore, that the proliferation of written texts by means of printing would advance a culture of varied interpretations and personal meanings, we will be able to see a society such as Punjab before the growth of printing more objectively, at any rate without attributing to it a cultural deficit. This objective view can sharpen considerably if we take into account the economic and social basis of the behaviours commonly—and rather glibly—associated with literacy. The kind of 'rationality' that is customarily attributed to literacy is an element of the political economy of European modernity. Literacy was an important means whereby this political economy was transmitted under the auspices of colonization.

[2] See, for example, P. Greenfield's study on oral and written languages, cited in Street (1984).

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Arnold's unhappiness with the literacy he saw in Punjab was related as much to his expectation that reading ought to be a sense-making exercise as to his being a part of the colonial administration in India and being directly responsible for the educative role of colonial rule.

In India, the perception of reading had passed through no social or technological revolution of the kind witnessed in seventeenth century Europe. It is not possible to say with any basis what proportion of the population in Punjab was literate in the early nineteenth century. Literacy and oral communication had co-existed in India since ancient times. The functions that the two kinds of skills served were different, and there is no reason to believe that someone with the ability to read and write was necessarily held in higher esteem than someone whose proficiency was in the oral mode of communication and preservation of knowledge.[3] As the printing press had only come to Punjab in the early nineteenth century, the ability to read was restricted to handmade manuscripts. Personal possession of a manuscript in a pre-print society was not necessary since memorization of lengthy texts was a common phenomenon. Indeed, the ability to read was perceived as a means to memorization. Since texts were few and not easily accessible, reading served as a means of sharing a text with others and also of storing it in one's own memory. For both these purposes, it was important to read aloud, and in ways that were correct (in terms of pronunciation, intonation and rhythm) and pleasing to the ear. The sound of a text was therefore no less important than its meaning. In any case, the readers, or the listeners, were not looking for personal meaning that might radically differ from one individual to the next. If we agree to see the concept of personal meaning as a consequence of mass production or printing of texts, we can well appreciate that the situation that Arnold found in Punjab was not conducive to personal interpretation or enjoyment of literary texts: possession of a text and its reading were just as much acts of sharing as was the enjoyment of a text's meaning. Accounts of indigenous education from other parts of India in the nineteenth century corroborate our scenario. William Adam's report (di Bona 1983) of his visits to indigenous schools in Rajshahi district in the 1830s gives a detailed account of the manner

[3] Romila Thapar's *Basu Memorial Lecture* (1988) confirms the point that literate and oral competencies were not necessarily held in differential esteem in ancient India.

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in which literacy skills were imparted to children. Writing of letters inevitably came first, along with sounding them out correctly. In both Hindu and Muslim houses, Adam reported, the child was introduced to letters of the alphabet in a formal, ceremonial manner. The graphic form of the letters and the sounds they stand for were treated as sacrosanct. Instruction at school started by focusing on these aspects, leaving the meaning of text material to a later stage. In Persian schools, according to Adam, familiarization with the alphabet was followed by the 'reading' (decoding) of the thirtieth section of the Koran, and then by the *Pandnama* of Sadi[4] —a collection of moral precepts—which was 'solely used for the purpose of instructing him in the art of reading and of forming a correct pronunciation, without any regard to the sense of the words pronounced' (di Bona 1983: 60)

A similar picture emerges from the description of the indigenous pedagogical tradition Chaturvedi (1930) gave from his memory of schools in the United Provinces in the late nineteenth century. According to him, elaborate instruction in writing and sounding out of letters and words was carried out for its own sake, without any attention to the meaning that written language might have. In the Persian schools, where specific books such as *Khaliqbari* and *Pandnama* were used, 'these books were generally committed to memory and in the first reading the meaning was generally not explained' (ibid.: 29). Clearly, the ability to read, when attained, was used as a means to memorize a text. Later on, when the student had been introduced to several texts, such as the *Mahmudnama*, *Mamkiman*, *Gulistan* and *Bostan*, in this manner, 'the meaning of the text was explained (to him) literally, word for word. Idiomatic rendering was very rare, if ever attempted' (ibid.).

The point is that even when the student was expected to recognize the text as meaningful, the meaning was regarded as something the text contained, not something that the reader could attribute to it. Such a 'meaning' would be the same for all who read or listened to the text. Personal meaning did not exist. The meaning of the text was supposed to reside in the text, not in the mind of each individual reader. At any rate, no sharp distinction was made between the meaning that the text contained, and the interpretations one could make of it. To return to Arnold, he noticed that even though

[4] Adam erroneously attributed the *Pandnama* to Sadi. There is no such title in the known works of Sadi.

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texts were not understood, nor were they supposed to be understood, they were nevertheless somehow enjoyed. In his first report of 1857 he wrote about Persian schools which, he claimed, were attended by a greater number of Hindus (Khatris) than Muslims. In these schools

> [w]riting is taught, but not with great energy, and certainly not with great success. The great object is to teach a boy to read the Gulistan and Bostan, and the lad who will read a page of either in a fluent sing-song without understanding a word, has received an education which fully satisfies both his teacher and parents. Little as the words of Sadi are understood by these boys, there is no doubt that they are much enjoyed. In one of the too frequent cases of child murder with robbery of ornaments, the victim a lad of 13, was enticed out by his murderer a youth of 18, on the pretext of having the Bostan read to him (Richey 1922: 290).

The passage shows Arnold's recognition of the aesthetic function that literary texts play while still not being read for personal meaning. Obviously, a text which could be used to entice a boy by someone who wanted to murder him had great cultural significance. Reading aloud from it was a source of pleasure and satisfaction, even if its meaning could not be comprehended in the sense Arnold would regard as essential.

Despite the fact that he recognized this role and status of such texts, and the role of this kind of reading (that is, without personal comprehension), he could not consider giving these old texts a substantial place in the new curriculum which his office was trying to introduce. The main reason had to do with the official decision to replace Persian with Urdu in schools. According to Arnold, Urdu represented 'the nearest approach that exists to a common vernacular', and was therefore a fit medium of 'popular instruction' (ibid.: 301). This precisely went against the idea that people had of a language fit for education, for they associated being educated with 'erudition and learning'. Certain other Persian texts had to be phased out of the school curriculum for somewhat different reasons:

> We have not rudely discarded all the old Persian Books. I should think it very unwise, and worse than unwise to do so. But we

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> have greatly limited their number, prohibiting everything which is grossly indecent, on one ground; and everything which pertains to religion on another ground, and limited altogether the time allowed for Persian as distinguished from Urdu studies (Richey 1922: 302).

The issues involved here cover attitudes to both education and language, as well as religion and morality. In all such attitudes, the clash between the perceptions of the Victorian Englishman, to whose concepts of 'decency' and 'morality' bourgeois domesticity and Christianity were central, and those of a rural population among whom the patterns of aesthetic and spiritual pleasure were neither purely religious nor domestic, was total. This clash coloured all the major decisions that men of Arnold's generation took in the context of education and its appropriate curriculum, the main one being the replacement of all culturally significant texts with textbooks prepared by official writers who, in most cases, were either administrators or missionaries. Before we discuss the implications of this decision, let us look at the other domain of school learning which included geography and arithmetic.

Facts and Rules

'We found a people ignorant of the geography of their own province, ignorant that there was such a science as geography and therefore prepared to reject geography as men are inclined to reject whatever is strange or new to them,' Arnold wrote (ibid.: 301). In the Victorian era, the geography was a science of great practical and symbolic value. Its practical value lay in the foundation it provided to the study of nature and landmass. Nowhere was the use of geography more apparent than in a colony such as India, where planning of public works had started in a major way as a preparation for accelerated and necessarily exploitative trade. Geography was fundamental to surveying and mapping—the two activities that gave imperial rule its substance and precise image. The recently started building of railways had given these activities a scope as vast and ambitious as the dream of 'building' the Indian empire was to a

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young man of Arnold's generation. Geography and natural history had begun to find a place in the curriculum of some of the English public schools, somewhat leavening the hard staple of classical studies.[5] As a Rugby student of the 1840s, Arnold must have been exposed to the new interest shown in the study of nature and the earth. It thus makes sense that he should identify the lack of geographical knowledge among Punjab's people as a key symptom of their ignorance.

The other aspect of indigenously educated people that irritated him was their arithmetic:

> We found them in the matter of Arithmetic divided into two main classes; the Khattries trained by long and diligent practice to great skill and quickness in mental arithmetic, but at a loss (when) directly they got beyond their accustomed problems because unacquainted with scientific methods; and the Muhammadans scorning the whole business as quite unworthy of a scholar and a gentleman to say nothing of a true believer (Richey 1922: 302).

In his first report, Arnold had described the style of account-keeping popular among Khattris. And while he did not mind this traditional form of knowledge taught in the old village schools run on the basis of villagers' contributions, he did not approve of it being taught in government schools because

> ... a Government school is not an eleemosynary institution. We are bound to give them the best education we can; and if we think the four rules of arithmetic—the rule of three methodically taught through the medium of legible character—more profitable to the scholar than the cumbrous processes and illegible handwriting of Banias' book-keeping, we are I think bound to teach the former, in hopes of one day effecting a change in the latter (ibid.: 294).

Two years of Arnold's stay in Punjab as the Director of Public Instruction proved long enough to provide him with gratifying results

[5] For an historical account of the rise of geography as a school subject, see Goodson (1987).

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of the new curriculum policy. In every sub-divisional school, he said in his second report, there were boys, both Hindu and Muslim, who knew the first four rules of arithmetic, and who could 'pass a good examination' in the geography of India, Asia and the globe. And not just that, these boys could, he said, give an intelligent account of the 'early Muhammadan invasions of India' which was what they had been taught by way of fact-based history—in place of a book like the *Sikandarnama* which was 'a narrative of facts which are not true'. This was no small measure of progress for the director to report to his superior. Reports of progress did not have to show the awareness which many English officers in India showed in their elaborate books, that passing an examination was, from the very beginning of the examination system, a feat of memory for Indian students and of their teacher's ability to assist memorization. Consigning to memory large texts and bits of information was the prime skill used in traditional, indigenous pedagogy. Arnold had himself noted how reading and memorization were unrelated to understanding; yet he was willing to believe, or at least to convey to his superior officer without suspicion, that in two years the new curriculum introduced by his office had transformed the stock of knowledge available in rural Punjab.

He did, however, note that teachers resisted the new curriculum. They did not like the sudden change of what was to be considered worth teaching in schools, nor did they appreciate being given instructions:

> But having secured our teachers, of course we gave them their instructions. A short set of rules for their guidance was printed and given to each school master on his appointment. Then for the first time he heard the words—repulsive because strange—history, geography, and arithmetic. Sheikh Sadi was still retained but he was deposed from his place as absolute monarch; Persian was allowed, but Urdu was insisted on, and this change though essential and indispensable, still was a change and as such, unpalatable (Richey 2002: 293).

'Training' was seen as a trustworthy solution to the problem posed by teachers' distaste for the new curriculum. The 'mysteries of Geographies or the Rule of Three' were to be unravelled in the Normal School at Lahore. That is where all teachers who were not found

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'hopelessly incompetent' at the time of inspection were sent for periods varying from six months to two years. Others learnt the new knowledge with their own effort. Six months of stay at the Normal School at one-third of the salary (the remaining given to the substitute at school), 'will not work wonders', Arnold said, 'but after all the simple rules of arithmetic and the learning facts of geography are not very difficult, and an intelligent teacher soon learns enough to teach his boys on his return a great deal which they did not know before' (Richey 2002: 303).

So teacher training was in fact a means of giving the teacher all the 'facts' of geography and history and the rules of arithmetic that children were now supposed to learn. The 'training' was thus really a re-education of the teacher. It exposed him to a construct of school knowledge which was avowedly alien and was imposed on the old system with the speed of a government order. The teacher had, of course, no part in the reconstruction of curriculum. What he had been used to regarding as knowledge was now declared to be either false or useless. As we shall see in the next chapter, both his professional role and his status in society were going to change radically. In the old system, the teacher was his own master, and both the content and pacing of pedagogy were matters that he decided independently. Under the new system, not only was he not treated as an agent of curricular change, he was perceived as a source of resistance. His status in the hierarchy of the education department was subservient to the rank and file of inspectors. And his status in society would henceforth be determined by his meagre salary and powerlessness in the face of inspectors and higher authorities.

Impact and Resistance

Let us now consider how the colonial policy of denying indigenous traditions of knowledge and skills a place in the curriculum was received by the Indian society. There was, of course, no possibility that people would rise against the new schools. Colonial rule was not dependent on its epistemology for its maintenance. People had seen or heard about the power of colonial rulers in forms more crude than what was subtly expresed in the new curriculum policy. The

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response to colonial education, more specifically to its epistemology as reflected in its curriculum, thus took the form of negative or cynical attitudes. Such attitudes applied to the products of educational institutions, as well as to the character of the new learning available in schools and colleges. Inside educational institutions, especially at the college level, the response took the form of passive and subtle resistance to the new knowledge. We will now discuss these two responses in detail: first, the attitude representing suspicion of the Englishman's education, and second, the subtle resistance to his pedagogy.

The equation between the Englishman's religion and his education system could hardly be a matter of doubt in a society where education and learning had long been perceived as aspects of religion. Such an equation was certainly far from vague in the minds of the English officers who took a special interest in education. As we saw in the last chapter, Trevelyan was convinced that education would disseminate 'the moral light of the West' throughout Asia, starting with India. But he wanted great care to be exercised in how English aims in this matter were presented. The ideal thing, from Trevelyan's point of view, would be if the moral light of the West engulfed India before its people knew what was happening. This secretive reasoning also explains Elphinstone's happiness over the thought that Indians were not aware of the connection between education and the inevitability of the spread of Christianity. Pathetic though such a view appears if we place it against the Indian stereotypes of English education, it remained a source of consolation for the English administrator in India throughout the nineteenth century.

Right from the beginnings of colonial education, Indian parents who enrolled their children in English schools were aware of the cultural, and more specifically, religious conflict that it could cause between them and their children. As Walsh says in her study of childhood in British India, 'the greatest fear of parents, particularly in the early years of the nineteenth century, was that their children would convert to Christianity' (Walsh 1983: 44). Walsh discusses the biographies of several Indians in whose families the conflict between English and Indian perceptions of religion and ethics occurred in a dramatic manner. One such conflict took place in K.P. Menon's[6] family

[6] See Walsh (1983) for a discussion on K.P. Menon's autobiography.

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when he spoke at a local forum against idol worship and superstitions. His parents inevitably attributed such views to education.

How far parents were willing to go in blaming education for the views and behaviour of their children is illustrated in the autobiography of Bipin Chandra Pal. He narrates his experience of buying a lemonade from a man outside the school building. Bipin did not pay the man, so the man came to his house some days later. When Bipin's father came to know why the man had come, he paid the money, and then gave Bipin 'a severe hiding the memory of which', he says, 'still sends my flesh creeping into my bones'. His father was angry for two reasons—one, that Bipin had bought something without paying for it, and the other, that he had outraged caste rules by drinking water that had been touched by a Muslim. 'All this came through my reading English', he said (Pal 1951: 34).

The belief that English education was not good for one's character and morality spread quickly, both in urban and rural Indian society. It did not, however, prevent people from wanting to send their sons to school so that they could qualify for a government job. In the case of girls, though, the attitude did precisely that, and continued to do so till as late as the early twentieth century and probably still does in some quarters. The perception that women had remained the bulwark of India's moral strength because they had not been educated was common. It became popular particularly when revivalist movements such as Arya Samaj took up the task of indigenizing education towards the end of the nineteenth century. An interesting articulation of this view occurs in a Hindi essay by Pratap Narayan Mishra, entitled 'Swatantra':

> Due to the grace of God, the impact of Kaliyug has not yet become total in the case of India's women .... They are the ones to show the greatest faith in the stability of Aryanism, otherwise, you (that is, men) have poured everything into the fire of cigar while reciting the twenty-six letter mantra (of the English alphabet) (Mishra [1919] 1965).

In the same essay, Mishra writes how educated men are set apart from all others because they have a Christian look on their faces. This was perhaps an extreme response, given Mishra's revivalist views and sarcastic style, but a mocking attitude towards the products of educational institutions was not uncommon. Chaturvedi (1930)

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quotes a popular saying, 'Learn English and you lose your humanity', along with several other idioms and lines of poetry representing the same hostile view of education. The origins of this kind of mocking attitude towards educated Indians are not far to seek. Literacy in English that education gave, in whatever degree of proficiency, was surely a gateway to wordly success. Neither the chances of gainful employment nor the status that the knowledge of English brought with it could be sneered at. It could only be ridiculed under the familiar theme of the fallen morality of the man of success. Such ridiculing could serve as a means of relieving the collective guilt of a colonized society. The educated man served as a scapegoat in this respect: how could he deny having sold his soul (that is, culture) for the sake of money? And if we turn the coin around, we do indeed notice that the colonizer's design in teaching English language and literature to the natives was to influence their morality. The teaching of English had practical use for office hands, but Trevelyan and Macaulay also saw it as a moral tool, acting through the agency of literature.

As Viswanathan (1987) has shown, the curriculum of English literature in colleges served a quasi-religious function. It solved the problem that teaching religion directly would have created, or was feared could create. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the East India Company administrators had been under pressure from missionaries, traders, as well as members of parliament, to take steps to improve India morally by teaching religion in one form or another. The Company's administrators in India were wary of doing this, for they thought that the religion–education nexus could cause a backlash. But the possiblity of teaching Christian ethics through literature posed no such threat. Literary texts suitable for high school and college students in India were selected on the basis of the religious and moral ideas reflected in them. Macaulay and Trevelyan were among those who designed the literary curriculum, including Shakespeare for his 'sound Protestant Bible principles', Addison's *Spectator Papers* for their 'strains of serious piety', and Bacon for his 'scriptural morality', and so on.

This utility of literature notwithstanding, the question of teaching religion directly and morality remained uncertain throughout the nineteenth century and even later.[7] The colonial government

[7] For an historical survey, see Malikail (1976).

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remained stuck in the conflict between its acceptance of the goal to 'improve' India morally and its reluctance to permit the direct teaching of religion in schools. Out of this conflict arose the fluctuations that the government's relationship with missionaries went through. From its early policy of discouraging missionaries, the Company had been pushed towards a sympathetic view of missionary work around the time its own educational role had crystallized. By the middle of the nineteenth century, missionaries had become an important presence in India's educational scene. Not only were they running numerous schools, what was more important, they had taken a major part in textbook writing and production both independently and through bodies like the Calcutta School Book Society. They shaped the content of school pedagogy, as well as its method. It was William Carey, the pioneer missionary, who had helped Hastings to form the Calcutta Society (Annett n.d.).

The pedagogical work done by Christian missionaries[8] in Bengal in this early period of the colonial education system became the victim of a tragic paradox. The two pedagogical goals they had were to provide a curriculum that was wider than what the indigenous *pathshala*s were offering, and to apply new teaching methods. Apart from new subjects like geography and history, the curriculum provided opportunities to read the new textbooks ('copy-books', as they were called, since children were expected to copy them in order to learn them by heart) published by the Serampore Mission Press and the Calcutta School Book Society. Many of these texts provided moral lessons, directly or through fables, and others consisted of 'maxims' or collections of 'truths and facts' about nature (for example, 'The earth turns round on its own axis, which forms day and night') and history. Although teaching a lesson inevitably involved getting children to memorize the 'maxims' given in the textbook, mission teachers were concerned that the boys understand what they had learnt by rote. This expectation usually led to the missionary's worst disappointment, for the boys rarely offered evidence of a thirst for knowledge aroused in their little minds by the 'maxims' which they readily recited.

Why did the missionary teacher want Indian children to 'understand' the texts after memorizing them, and why did the children

[8] This discussion is based on Laird (1972).

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resolutely stop with memorization? In his history of Bengal missionaries, Laird tells us why the missionaries were keen to ensure that children understood, and did not merely memorize, the books: 'Apart from a genuine desire to advance learning for its own sake, the missionaries also believed that western science would undermine belief in Hindu scriptures' (Laird 1972: 86). Once the child saw how little the accounts of gods and goddesses have to do with the 'facts' of history and geography, it was expected that he would turn to the 'rational' belief system that Christianity had to offer. This was precisely what did not happen frequently enough to gratify the missionary teacher. Neither history nor science succeeded in getting the child's attention, missionary W.J. Deerr wrote, except to the extent it was required to pass an examination and to find a job. What was worse, from Deerr's point of view, was that 'no books would detain their attention for any considerable time except the accounts of their own gods, and traditions' (quoted in ibid.: 83).

It is a reasonable hypothesis that the memorizing of texts, apart from being a familiar skill for the Indian child, was also an instinctive defence against a body and form of knowledge that looked hostile to everything that was meaningful in the child's environment. Such a hypothesis would be tenable from a psychological point of view. Children learn by rote what they cannot understand, or do not want to understand for an emotional reason.[9] Children everywhere protect themselves in classrooms with the help of memorized reproduction when they are faced with concepts or material that they cannot grasp or find meaningless. Seen in this light, the missionaries' failure in achieving their pedagogical aim—namely, to make children understand and think—acquires a historical meaning. It underlines the discontinuity that colonial education and its curriculum caused in the traditions of learning and acculturation. Here, it is the epistemological aspect of the discontinuity that interests us more than the economic and social aspects. The colonial curriculum (which the missionaries also followed with some modifications) implied a total break in the prevailing concept of what was worth learning. It was too violent a break to be successfully plastered over by the availability of printed texts and the application of new pedagogies (that is, those currently respected in England).

[9] On children's learning strategies, see Elkind (1981). John Holt's *How Children Fail* (1968) is a classic on children's strategies for survival in the classroom.

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Prescribed Texts and Examination

The colonial government labelled its education system as 'modern', a labelling which survives to this day. The 'modern' aspect of English education in India was supposed to refer to the awakening of reason that post-Renaissance western thought and science represented. 'Reason' was the panacea with which colonial rule hoped to cure Indians of their slavery to 'passions' and custom (Richey 1922: ch. 2, n. 14). In the new curriculum for schools, 'reason' was signified by the presence of 'facts', both about nature and the past. The significance of these 'facts' depended on comprehension or meaningful learning, and this is what pedagogy failed to ensure in colonial India. As soon as the colonial system of education got entrenched with its codified procedures for the recruitment of teachers, its elaborate machinery for inspection, and its norms of evaluation for the award of scholarships and certificates, a new pedagogical culture arose and speedily grew to nibble away the system's object of promoting the acceptance of 'facts' and 'reason'—the mainstay of its modernity. 'Textbook culture' is a suitable name for this phenomenon. The basic norm of this culture was to treat the prescribed textbook as the *de facto* curriculum, rather than as an aid. The teacher taught the text by elucidating it, by asking children to copy and memorize it, and finally by drilling them to answer and memorize questions that were based on it. As we shall see in the next chapter, the teacher's poor status and powerlessness vis-à-vis the rank and file of inspectors above him contributed to the perception of the textbook as a sacred icon of required knowledge.

The textbook was 'prescribed' by the government, and teacher training institutions worked hard to make the teacher thoroughly familiar with it. Memorization of the written word was a part of the tradition of learning in India. The tradition now acquired a new validity and focus under the auspices of a text book-centred curriculum and examination. To the English administration, examinations—like textbooks—were a means of norm maintenance. As Shukla (1978) has pointed out, colonial policy used written examinations to evolve a bureaucratic, centralized system of education. The official function of the examination system was to evolve uniform

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standards of promotion, scholarships and employment. This function had a social significance inasmuch as it enhanced the public image of colonial rule as being based on principles and impartial procedures. The secrecy maintained over every step, from the setting of papers to the final announcement of the result, gave a dramatic expression to the image of the colonial government as a structure that could be trusted. The teacher, however, could not be trusted, and hence was not permitted to examine his own students. All he could do was to prepare them to the hilt, which meant giving them the opportunity to rehearse endlessly the skills of reproducing the text from memory, summarizing, and essay-type writing on any question based on the textbook. An early report by Kerr (1852) records that when the first uniform code of rules was prepared for government institutions in Bengal, the 'class-books' on which candidates for scholarship were to be examined were specified. A little later, in 1845, an even greater narrowing of the syllabus was implemented by 'fixing' not just the particular textbooks but the exact portions of each which were to be studied for the next scholarship examination. From then onwards the teacher knew the precise spatial limits within the textbook beyond which he did not need to go.

The content of textbooks had no other meaning for the teacher and the student except as material to be mastered which, in the case of most subjects, meant 'memorized' for reproduction at the examination. What meaning the lessons in the textbooks could have had for the student was inextricably linked to the urgency to pass in the examination. The failure rate was high right from the beginning of the examination system, and it fluctuated a great deal from year to year. Table 3.1 shows both these features of examination

Table 3.1

Results of Entrance and Degree Examination in Calcutta University

Year	*Pass percentage of the university entrance exam*	*Percentage in the B.A. exam*
1857	66.3	–
1858	23.9	15.3
1859	48.1 (March exam)	50.0
	34.4 (December exam)	
1860	51.3	20.0
1861	45.0	38.3

Source: Government of India (1960: 10).

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results in Calcutta University during its first few years. The rate of failure as well as the uncertainty of how 'hard' or 'lenient' the result might be need to be taken into account as we try to grasp the attitudes that the examination system created. But the primary factor shaping this attitude must have been the consequence of failure, or alternatively, the reward of success, in the examination. Failure at the entrance examination meant the end of one's dream of leading an economically secure life with a salary, and of social status that government employment brought. Walsh (1983) quotes the following passage from the autobiography of Bonnell, describing how he felt on failing in the matriculate examination:

> I went home after the examinations were over and my behaviour appeared very queer to all. I was weeping and wailing now and then ... I sought solitude so as to mourn my failure and avoided the roads and pathways. I was not communicative but very often shouted: 'The Fellow Who Failed in Matric.'

Fear of failure in the examination became part of the lore of childhood and adolescence. Short stories cashing in on this theme and describing examination disasters abound in Indian literatures. A classic is Premchand's 'Bare Bhai Sahib', in which the elder brother gives long lectures to his junior about how to prepare for the examination. These lectures deal with the content of syllabi and textbooks in various subjects from the point of view of an ordinary student. One of the lectures, dealing with the difficulties of mastering history, goes like this:

> It is not easy to memorize the names of kings. Just the Henries are no less than eight. Which outrage occurred in whose regime—you think it is easy to memorize this? Write Henry the Eighth instead of Henry the Seventh, and all your marks vanish. All finished. You wouldn't get a zero, even a zero (Premchand 1993: 90, translation mine).

But few actually left it to luck. Most students trained themselves to take any kind of pain to avoid the tragedy of failure. The willingness to take any degree of pains to ensure examination success became the norm of student life. The surest way to avoid the tragedy of failure was to memorize relevant chapters of the prescribed textbook or

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the summaries of these chapters as given in 'keys' and 'guides'. Metaphors of bodily storage of knowledge became a part of children's culture. Storage of knowledge for guaranteed dumping at the examination desk necessitated a strong symbolic association between the concept of knowledge and the prescribed textbook. In the biographical narrative of his Punjab ancestry since the middle of the nineteeth century, Tandon recalls how in his grandfather's days 'the boys had coined a Punjabi expression, remembered even in our days, wishing that they could grind the texts into a pulp and extract knowledge out of them and drink it' (Tandon 1968).

The association between 'knowledge' and textbooks influenced classroom teaching as well. Both teacher and students were anxious that all available class time be spent on the textbook. The printed text was perceived as a tangible manifestation of knowledge, and any time spent on other readings that might be available was seen as wasted. The Hindi writer Padumlal Punnalal Bakshi (1979) describes how dangerous it was to be found reading any books other than one's textbooks. If the teacher saw the boys doing this, he gave them a thrashing. Obviously, the idea was that whatever was worth learning was in the textbook. So the teacher's permanent concern was to elucidate the text and to make sure that students could answer any question about it from memory. He ensured this by teaching the text word by word, lesson by lesson, and when all the lessons were finished, by starting all over again. The textbooks were the only books that students possessed, and working on them everyday was the only self-assuring way of preparing oneself for the final examination and for life afterwards.

For both teacher and pupil, then, the textbook was the curriculum. It was seen as containing the only knowledge which mattered, in the sense of having been approved by authorities as the basis of examination. All other forms of knowledge were thus invalidated by the 'textbook culture'.[10] The invalidated sphere was large: it covered virtually the entire culture of the colonized society, including its traditions, religions, folklore, crafts, arts and sciences. Schools and colleges had nothing to do with this spectrum of knowledge—either with its written texts, of which there were many, or its far more numerous oral texts. Such texts were not the approved curriculum

[10] For details and other dimensions of this phenomenon, see my 'Origins of India's Textbook Culture' (1988).

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and did not count as part of school knowledge. Being familiar with them, or even having mastery over them, did not count as education. Howsoever close or emotionally meaningful they may have been to the student, the teacher could not refer to them or use them in the classroom.

One occasionally comes across the assumption that the consequence of colonial policy could have been averted if the Orientalist position on education had proved stronger than the Anglicist position during the early years of the development of English education in India. The Orientalist position had mainly to do with Indian philosophical and religious traditions, and with the use of vernaculars in education. In these spheres, the Orientalist view did continue to carry weight despite its defeate during Bentinck's regime. Particularly after 1857, it shaped the colonizer's reconstruction of the native's world. Anglicist policy, in the meanwhile, had already oriented the new system of education towards a literary curriculum. While the Anglicists talked a great deal about India's need for western science, their actual planning offered little by way of it. Indeed, science did not become a compulsory school subject in junior classes until well after the beginning of the twentieth century, and facilities for its teaching remained all but absent even then. It was from the study of literary texts that the moral force of western civilization was supposed to flow. On the use of indigenous texts and knowledge, Orientalist and Anglicist views seem to have been in conflict. But, as Vishwanathan (1987) has shown, Orientalism merely supplied grist to the Anglicist mill. Through government-sponsored research, Orientalist scholars produced a vast body of knowledge about the native society—about its history, language, literature and customs. This body of knowledge, and the stereotypes emanating from it, were used by Anglicists to attack the native culture. Orientalism and Anglicism thus appear to be two faces of the colonial enterprise, rather than forces in conflict. They both contributed to the construction of a colonized society in India.

A gap or conflict between the school curriculum and the cultural ethos became a characteristic feature of colonial systems of education. The origins of the gap are hardly in doubt; its permanence as a systemic feature is. The origins have to do with the vast distance dividing the idea of what constitutes education that colonial officers and missionaries had from the idea prevailing in the native territories. Not only did the ideas differ, the moral purposes associated

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with the two also differed. That there was a moral purpose to both formed the only bridge—the homonymy discussed in the last chapter—which was so purely symbolic that it could not serve as a means of genuine interaction between the two ideas. The fact that relations between the colonisers and the colonised were based on the power of the former also precluded any interaction. Despite these obvious facts, a tenacious view has prevailed that educational policy under colonial rule—and subsequently too—would have followed a radically different course if only the Orientalist view had prevailed over the Anglicist view in the controversy which erupted during Bentinck's vice-royalty. Like any other historical controversy which has a decisive and formally documented end, this one also catches the popular mind. Herein lies the secret of the widespread image of Macaulay as the architect of India's modern educational policy. But for his famous minute, the argument goes, India's own heritage of knowledge and languages like Sanskrit and Arabic would have a secure place in the curriculum of schools and colleges. Undoubtedly, the disparaging manner in which Macaulay treats India's indigenous knowledge,[11] and his dismissive tone, justify the feeling that one is looking at the fountain-head of British policy on education in colonial India. However, it does not take much historical awareness to realize that to give Macaulay such a status would be to deny colonialism its meaning as a global process.

The point made in this chapter, that the rejection of indigenous knowledge was the central issue in the development of colonial education, can be used as a basis to ask whether indigenous knowledge could have provided an adequate base for India's material advancement. Such a question is not particularly useful, nor is it answerable in any serious manner. There is no reason to believe that European knowledge could only have come to India through the agency of colonial rule. In any case, the issue is not whether Indian education and society would have fared better if colonization had never occurred. What is important to notice the consequences which followed specific colonial policies. The rejection of indigenous traditions of knowledge and the texts representing them created a conflict between education and culture. School-based knowledge became isolated from the everyday reality and cultural milieu of the child.

[11] Minute dated 2 February 1835 by T.B. Macaulay, in Sharp (1920).

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IV

Meek Dictator: The Paradox of Teacher's Personality

Although ancient and medieval Indian societies recognized teaching as a specialized activity, it was something rather different from what came to be recognized as a means of employment or 'service' towards the middle of the nineteenth century. The scene immediately preceding the expansion of the colonial education system has been the subject of some recent debate.[1] The earlier view that precolonial India was a vast sea of illiteracy marked by the absence of schooling stands clearly in need of scrutiny and correction, though it is hard to imagine that an average picture of the country as a whole in these matters can be meaningfully drawn. It is clear from presently available evidence that there was an enormous amount of geographical variation in the spread of literacy and schooling facilities. Present-day Bengal and parts of Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Kerala were among the areas that had numerous village schools supported by the local population. In several parts of central and northern India, on the other hand, there seems to have been no widespread system of imparting literacy and numeracy to children. However, even in these parts of the country, teachers of specialized arts such as music and dance were recognized. The practice of teaching in such specialized arts has remained much the same even in our times, which makes it a useful source of information about the character of teaching in the indigenous tradition. If we combine such information with the knowledge available in some nineteenth-century reports, we can obtain a view of the aspects where the indigenous tradition of teaching contrasted with the colonial system.

[1] This debate had been aroused mainly by the publication of Dharampal's *The Beautiful Tree* (1983). See reviews by Basu (1984), Kumar (1984) and Sivaramakrishna (1984).

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The contrast emerges most sharply on two matters, one of which—the selection of knowledge—we have already discussed in the last chapter. We have seen, with the help of Arnold's and Adam's reports, that established conventions and the teacher's judgement worked together to shape the school curriculum in the indigenous system. The village teacher was guided by conventions of belief and practice in pedagogy and by the needs of the village economy. Thus, certain literary texts had come to be regarded as worthy of being taught, or rather, worthy of mastery by the initiated pupil. Individual teachers seem to have had considerable room for exercising their own judgement and taste in the selection of texts that pupils were expected to be able to read on their own when their familiarity with the graphology and grammar of the language had matured. In the context of numeracy, the importance of the capacity to maintain and check land and property records certainly had a lot of influence on the curriculum of pre-colonial village schools. Here again, conventions of teaching, such as the musical rendering of multiplication tables of not just cardinal numbers but fractions as well, determined the precise shape that the curriculum took. Where the individual teacher exercised his autonomy was in pacing his pedagogy according to his assessment of his pupils' progress. This is the second feature in which the indigenous tradition contrasted sharply with the colonial system.

Nowhere is the exercise of this autonomy more commandingly expressed than in the teaching of the fine arts, particularly music and dance. Here the teacher had the freedom to delay the learning of a particular step for as long as he thought appropriate in the case of one pupil, and in the case of another to permit a rapid progression through several stages. This autonomy in the pacing of pedagogy gave the teacher tremendous power over the student and can be witnessed in our own day in the teaching of music, dance and certain folk arts by old-style tutors. Obviously, it works in the context of a small number of students under a teacher. This condition seems to have obtained in the pre-colonial situation not only in the teaching of fine arts but in the general education of children as well. Even in areas where rural schooling was widespread, the number of children actually attending lessons was small. The common village teacher rarely had more than thirty children of varying ages, learning the basic skills from him. In most cases the number was around twenty. That is the picture we get from Adam's reports written in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

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The total number of pupils, however, is a somewhat misleading statistic from a pedagogical perspective. The twenty or thirty pupils did not form a class and the teacher did not teach them as a group. He concentrated on senior pupils alone, and they had the responsibility of passing on their knowledge to the younger children. This was what the English observers of village schools described as the 'monitorial' system, the point of this label being that senior boys acted as monitors of the juniors' progress. The system permitted the teacher to focus attention on five or six boys at a time. A picture by an artist in the latter half of the eighteenth century shows eleven children assembled around the village teacher who is sitting on a cot.[2]

The Schoolteacher under Colonial Rule

Once the colonial administration had established an education system by the mid-nineteenth century, the teacher could no longer decide on his own or on the basis of convention what to teach and how to teach. Tradition lost its hold when prescribed syllabi and textbooks came into being. The syllabus and textbooks determined not only what had to be taught, but also the time within which the teaching had to be completed. This meant that the teacher could no longer pace his pedagogy to suit his pupils. Yet another aspect of the change was the concept of impersonal examinations. The teacher's satisfaction was no longer the criterion for termination of studentship; the new criterion was the student's performance at a test taken or designed by someone other than the teacher. It could be an inspector, or in the case of senior classes, a teacher from another institution who was appointed as an 'examiner'.

The material basis and status of the vocation of teaching went through a drastic change with the establishment of the colonial system. Whereas earlier the teacher was supported by the local community, he now became a functionary of the state, working for a salary. Teaching became part of government service, and a teaching job now carried with it considerable clerical work, such as maintaining records of admission, attendance, examination and expenditure.

[2] The picture is represented in Chaturvedi (1930).

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On top of these routine responsibilities, a teacher could be assigned other kinds of duties, such as acting as a dispenser of postal material, assisting in census work, distributing textbooks, and so on. Some of these additional assignments carried small bits of monetary benefit; others were expected to be performed without any such incentive. These varied tasks that a teacher could be asked to perform strengthened his relationship with the state. In this relationship, he acted as a meek subordinate of administrative officers. The range of functions that a schoolteacher could be asked to perform was itself a testimony of his low status and the non-specialized image of his job. Obviously, the academic challenge involved in teaching children was not recognized. While teaching at the college level was perceived as an intellectual job, teaching in schools was treated at par with low-ranking office jobs. Secondary-level teaching was somewhat less soiled by this association, obviously because it was closer to college-level education. The association was thus at its strongest at the primary level, and since teachers in this category were far greater in number than those working at secondary and college levels, it was they who shaped the popular view of teaching as a low-status occupation.

In the years following the 1854 Despatch, senior education officers were recruited from the prestigious Covenanted Civil Service. This practice did not last long, for Covenanted officers preferred being revenue officers or judges to serving in the education department (Government of India 1976). A specialized Indian Education Service was recommended by the Public Service Commission of 1886, and ten years later the Superior Education Service was created with two divisions—the Indian Education Service with English personnel, and the Provincial Educational Service staffed by Indians. There was considerable difference of salary, privilige and status between the officers of the two services; but from the point of view of an ordinary teacher, both kinds of officers were richly paid and carried enormous power. At the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when an average primary schoolteacher earned between Rs 5 and 15 a month, the Director of Public Instruction in most parts of British India earned over Rs 2,000. The salaries of inspectors ranged from Rs 500 to Rs 100 (ibid.).

The gap between the earnings, status and power of a teacher of young children and a member of the bureaucracy was obviously enormous. Consequently, not just teachers, even school headmasters were intimidated by inspecting officials. Pleasing the visiting official was one means to mitigate the fear of being punished, and the

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forms this strategy took were varied. Milburn lists some of these forms on the basis of his observations: flattery, self-abasement, exhortations to loyalty, display of English flags, and instant punishment when there was a suspicion that a boy might have offended an official (Milburn 1914: 341–42). Some of these forms have now become outdated, others persist. Premchand's biographer (Rai 1972) has recorded how the visit of a sub-deputy inspector (this was the post Premchand himself held in the United Provinces) would cause a stir in the village and the school. In a bold, critical essay written in 1909, Premchand said, 'Unfortunately, the government thinks that a lot of inspection must take place irrespective of whether instruction takes place or not' (1962: 116, translation mine).

At the time Premchand was writing, a primary teacher's salary was at least one-fifth of that of a sub-deputy inspector, and about a tenth of that of a deputy inspector. These proportions do not take into account the perks that the inspectorial staff was entitled to. But status and power cannot be measured on the basis of difference in earnings alone. An inspector's power to examine students on a brief visit to the school, and thereby to assess a teacher's performance, was by itself a major source of fear among teachers. The possibility of being transferred to an inconvenient location was another genuine source of anxiety. The point is that a teacher's status was far too weak to permit any sense of security or self-confidence. The assessment of his capacity to do his job was placed under the overt control of the bureaucracy through devices like graded certificates of performance and payment by results.[3]

The primary schoolteacher's low salary was apparently determined on the basis of his income in indigenous schools. This is how Hartog (1939) justified the scale of pay given to primary teachers in schools under state control or running with state aid. While fixing the pay scale for primary level teaching, colonial officers did recognize that the village teacher had access to incomes other than the small cash he received from his pupils, but they greatly minimized the value of these other earnings. An example of this kind of underestimation can be seen in a letter written by Alexander Duff, the man who is said to have inspired the 1854 Despatch. In this letter, written in 1858, Duff said that the Bengali teacher's earnings, 'partly

[3] For details of the process of certification whereby schoolmasters were placed in 'nine classes' in Madras, see Richey (1922: 221).

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in money and partly in clothes, vegetables, etc.' did not exceed Rs 3 a month (Richey 1922: 141).

How gross an underestimate this was can be judged from the elaborate description of the village teacher's earnings given by Lal Behari Day (1969). Apart from the total of roughly two rupees that the pupils paid every month, the teacher received from every pupil a monthly *sidha* consisting of rice, pulse, vegetables, salt and mustard oil. 'Each sidha often supplied materials for the break-fast and dinner of the gurumahasaya and his wife and child for one day; and thirty sidhas, therefore kept (him) supplied for the whole month' (ibid.: 455). Moreover, several boys brought 'a small quantity of prepared tobacco for the hukka of their teacher' every evening. And there were other perquisites, such as gifts at the time of harvest and at every ceremonial occasion. According to Day's description, 'when all these items are added together, it will be found that the Bengali gurumahasaya was after all not so badly off as he has sometimes been represented to have been' (ibid.: 456). Was Day hinting at the administration's view of the village schoolmaster? Probably, for it was on the basis of the Indian *pathshala* teacher's alleged poverty that the colonial government fixed his extremely meagre salary.

Once the teacher started to get a government salary, the earnings of the kind Day described began to dry up. Thus, the village teacher was squeezed from both ends—the government paid him a low wage on the ground that his income had always been small, and his extra earnings from the community started to shrink as soon as he entered the government's payroll. Appropriation of the village teacher's job by the colonial administration thus led to a substantial decline in his fortune.

School teaching was certainly not one of the coveted professions that emerged during latter nineteenth century following the consolidation of colonial rule. We can hardly compare the incomes that lawyers, engineers, doctors and government officers in British India got accustomed to live on, with what the schoolteacher received.[4] During the half-century following the Despatch of 1854, the salary of the primary schoolteacher in the three presidencies ranged from Rs 5 to 15 per month. In schools running without government aid, and in many that received aid, the salary was often lower than Rs 5 per month. If we leave Bombay aside, nowhere did the salary of a

[4] For the incomes of these recognized professionals in British India, see B.B. Mishra (1961).

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primary schoolteacher, howsoever senior, go beyond Rs 10 per month. On the whole, the salary was lower in northern than in peninsular India, and nowhere was it as low as in the United Provinces. In the early twentieth century, the village primary teacher in most aided schools of the United Provinces was living on about Rs 4 a month. This was an even less substantial income than what an ordinary labourer could hope to have at the rate of 4 annas a day (Premchand 1962).

The measly salary assigned to the schoolteacher's job ensured that only the neediest, and among them the most helpless, would go for it. Meston (1936) was right in pointing out that the primary teacher's salary could not be described as a living wage. He argued that training schools often failed to get a sufficient number of recruits because of the low wage they were to get after training. Meston talks about the extra income that village teachers could hope to earn by assisting in postal and co-operative credit departments' work, and as family tutors. But these additional earnings—and not every teacher could hope to have access to them—could hardly compensate for the loss of the kinds of gifts the village teacher earlier received from the parents of his pupils. Moreover, these new sources of extra income were not particularly conducive to enhancing the schoolmaster's status. Premchand describes the plight of the teacher who was also supposed to dispense postal material:

> Work of the post office increases everyday, and the teacher cannot fix a specific time for it. Village landowners and peasants walk up to the teacher whenever they find time, and the poor teacher has to cater to them. If he were to cite rules, the landowner might get angry and complain to the Postmaster General, or might talk roughly to the teacher, jeopardising his status. So the teacher serves them at whatever hour they show up (Premchand 1962).

Training for a Weak Profession

The English government perceived teacher training as the main instrument capable of elevating school teaching to the level of a

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profession. The 1854 Despatch referred to England's experience in improving the professional abilities of the schoolteacher. The plan involving pupil–teachers and Normal schools, said the writers of the despatch, 'appears to us to be capable of easy adaptation to India (Richey 1922: 383). This, was a typical expression of the pre-1857 view which equated the problems of the colony with those of England. Another expression of the mood of this period occurs in that part of the despatch where the need to improve the teachers working in indigenous institutions is discussed. According to the despatch, they should not be superseded, for this might 'provoke the hostility of this class of persons, whose influence is so great over the minds of the lower classes' (ibid.: 384). If they too could be encouraged to attend Normal schools, this would serve to both improve the fledgeling education system and quell the urges of social unrest. The 'profession of schoolmaster' was seen as capable of offering 'inducements to the natives of India such as are held out in other branches of the public service' (ibid.). The Court of Directors which wrote the despatch mentioned its plans for teacher training in the same breath in which it talked of medical and engineering education. The practical purpose of these specialized trainings apart, the symbolic aim was to exhibit that 'industry and ability' were rewarded under English rule.

The plan to start Normal schools was initiated during the following years, but none of the hopes that the 1854 Despatch had expressed materialized. In 1870 there were no more than 4,346 students enrolled in some 104 Normal schools (including both government and private schools) in the whole of British India. Out of these, 4,080 were male. The highest number of Normal schools was in Bengal, but the highest per student expenditure was incurred in Madras. In his summary presenting these data, A.P. Howell quotes the Bengal report which says that in the absence of a 'distinct promise of employment to teachers after they have obtained their certificates, most of the schools have a much smaller number of pupils than they are intended to provide for' (quoted in Government of India 1960: 431). Already, the Whig rhetoric of Charles Wood and his Court of Directors seems to have faded. Within so short a period, the hopes of using Normal schools to improve teaching and to elevate school teaching to the level of a respectable profession had proved to be false.

Instruction at Normal schools was at this time apparently going through the tension that had been triggered by curriculum policy in general education. We have probed this tension in some detail in

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the last chapter. A.M. Monteath offers a glimpse of the problem that Normal schools faced in being expected to impart pedagogical skills as well as good general instruction in the new curriculum. An experiment was tried at Poona and Ahmedabad to turn Normal schools into Vernacular colleges so that trained teachers would also be well-informed in the content areas of the college curriculum. The director who had initiated this experiment soon concluded that 'it is an anachronism to attempt Vernacular Colleges for Western learning' before 'large numbers, and perhaps generations, of scholars have been habituated to think and express themselves on scientific subjects in the Vernacular languages' (quoted in Government of India 1960: 228). In the meantime, it was considered best to abandon such experimentation in order to elevate the intellectual content of teacher training. The assumption was that Normal schools would do their job best if they concentrated on imparting teaching skills alone.

The underlying problem can now be seen for what it was. School teaching was a modest job that could not possibly interest the sons of wealthier families of urban centres. It remained, as it had traditionally been, a vocation of small landowners of upper-caste origin. The only new entrants to it were men of lower-caste social backgrounds who had converted to Christianity. The lure of western learning and the patterns of socialization that went with such learning were absent in the family background from which candidates for school teaching usually came. For this reason, Normal schools had to use Indian languages as the media of instruction. This by itself was a strong enough factor to keep teacher training somewhat aloof from the intellectual nourishment that colleges of general education could hope to provide with the help of books on diverse subjects imported from England. Printing of books in Indian languages was at a rudimentary stage in the late nineteenth century; and among the books that were available, there were few that concerned subjects like social philosophy, history and political economy. It was the availability of books in subjects like these that made teaching jobs in colleges somewhat intellectually stimulating despite the lacklustre nature of routine work.

The minimum qualifications required for admission to teacher training were too low to permit training institutions to reach for the status and ethos of higher education institutions. We are not arguing that college education was steeped in intellectual pursuits. The fact is that even in the best of Indian colleges, instruction was textbook-bound and the awe of examinations left little room for intellectual inquiry even if a rare student felt inspired towards such inquiry. But teacher

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training institutions could not even pretend to have intellectual interests. The craft of teaching, the core of which was classroom management, was the staple of the training curriculum. The craft, consisting of a bag of tricks to keep students' attention focused on the teacher, was easy to impart for it involved no intellectual effort. Whether the pupil had attained the craft or not could also be conveniently and reliably tested. Howell put it nicely, recommending that training institutions 'must be kept subordinate to the specific object in view, the training of masters, the proper test for whom is not of what they know, but of their ability to teach' (quoted in Government of India 1960: 447).

The fact that school teaching offered very meagre emoluments meant that the minimum qualifications acceptable for entrance into training would have to be very low. While graduates hankered after clerical jobs, and many graduates and matriculates remained unemployed for years, someone with a grade four pass certificate could enter a Normal school and qualify to become a primary teacher. In 1901, only 12 per cent of the candidates selected for admission to the Nagpur Training Institute had passed the Vernacular Middle School examinations; the rest had lower qualifications (Bhave 1983). As late as 1950, only 13 per cent of elementary teachers in India were matriculates. This percentage rose to thirty-four towards the end of the 1950s (Ministry of Education 1963). The recent Teacher Commission has reported that 65 per cent of Indian primary teachers have a Higher Secondary or equivalent certificate and 26 per cent have passed only the eighth or an even lower grade. Apparently, the system of keeping qualifications for elementary teaching as low as possible has not changed much. It continues to reflect the old belief that a primary teacher only needs to have passed the grades he is going to teach, with some additional skills related to teaching.

These additional skills were what the English government had introduced in India with the help of Normal schools. In many cases a Normal school was no more than an adjunct of an existing school. The daily routine resembled the life of boarding schools except that at many Normal schools the students had to do their own cooking. Standards of discipline were strict, and the major aim of training was seen in moral terms. As Cotton's report for 1892–97 tells us, the habits of 'punctuality, politeness, cleanliness and neatness, cheerful obedience, and honourable dealing' were given high priority (Cotton 1896: 24).

The curriculum of teacher training at Normal schools focused on methods of instruction and maintenance of order in the classroom. Lesson planning was presented as the core task of learning how to

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teach well. Each lesson was supposed to follow an orderly pattern modelled on Herbart's concept of connections between items of information.[5] Maintenance of the school register and preparation of the timetable were two other important features of the training curriculum. The art of teaching was imparted with the help of model lessons given by the head and other staff members of the training institutions. Once the trainee had learnt the rudiments of the art, he could improve by repeated practice and with the help of 'criticism lessons'. These latter classes were designed to be observed and analysed so that shortcomings could be removed in future. The whole exercise was strictly normative; the trainee was supposed to know what the correct method of teaching was and what was not.

We need not probe the historical records in order to get an idea of this aspect of teacher training, for the ethos and methods of Indian training institutions have remained remarkably stable over the last 100 years. The only important difference that has come about is in the instruction of psychology. Whereas the old Normal schools and higher level training institutes taught the 'truths' of 'mental science' as psychology was called then, today's training institutions teach facts about growth of personality and behaviour. The focus of the training programme continues to be the craft of lesson planning and orderly delivery of the planned lesson. A good lesson delivery is one in which the trainee starts with a dramatic opening question, which is supposed to prepare children to get into the right frame of ideas related to the lesson, and then proceeds to present the content of the lesson, using techniques appropriate to the subject he is teaching. The next step is to take children towards a 'generalized' or abstract understanding of the content under study. Such understanding can be defined differently in different subject areas, but the main idea is always to arrive at a correct verbal recitation of a definition or theme. Finally comes the 'application' of an assigned task which may be given as homework. The entire process is centred around the concept of a passive learner who needs to be fed with facts in a 'correct' sequence. This gist of Herbart's theory of teaching has proved to be an unshakeable cornerstone of 'practice teaching' in

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[5] German philosopher and educationist, Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), is considered as one of the founders of modern scientific pedagogy. His suggestions for educational instruction included: clearness (isolating individual concepts); association (connecting these with related concepts); system (arranging these in systemic relationships); and method (perfecting these relationships).

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Indian training institutions. It has survived all kinds of lip service which have been paid to modernism in psychology and the theories of learning.

The overall plan followed in training institutions of various levels might well have had spaces which permitted the trainee to relate his education to the larger social milieu, but contemporary reports do not indicate the existence of such spaces. We certainly have no evidence that training institutions ever tried to encourage anyone to relate the principles of pedagogy to actual classroom conditions prevailing in India. Training to become a teacher meant absorbing a petty skill which could properly be put to practice only during the planned lessons one gave in the training school. There, under the watchful eye of the supervisor, the young trainee displayed the best of his abilities in standard routines such as blackboard writing, questioning and pupil control. From start to finish, the lesson he gave was supposed to exhibit his mastery over a ritual. He could not begin in any other way except by asking a question that might lead to the dramatic discovery of the day's topic by the pupils. The acceptable end of a lesson could only arrive with two or three questions that supposedly helped students to recapture the essence of the lesson.

A training without intellectual context, combined with low salary and status resulted in a perception of teaching as a weak and vulnerable vocation. The record-keeping and accounting functions, which always accompanied tutorial work, were areas requiring utmost caution. The slightest error in these matters could cost the teacher heavily, for he had very little power to protect himself against inspectors and other official authorities. Due to his vulnerability to victimization, an office culture enveloped schools and teaching. Such a culture made sticking to rules the heart of professional wisdom. Mayhew (1926) thought this was a major reason that Indian schools were intellectually unstimulating. He described the Indian schoolteacher as someone with a book of rules in hand, cautiously protecting himself against any charge of deviation from the written code. Any lapse from the given format of his tasks and accepted procedures could lead to a damaging remark by an inspector in the teacher's service book. In matters of expenditure, the teacher was always open to suspicion even though the money available to him for running the school was extremely small. The loss of a single book from the school's collection, even when caused by attrition due to repeated use, could lead to punishment. Poor examination results would

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have meant the same. 'It is hard to imagine a Thring, Arnold, or Sanderson thrown up by such a system', Mayhew wrote. 'It will not produce a Sankara, Kabir, or Tagore in India' (Mayhew 1926: 72).

These conditions made school teaching a poor choice of career. Only those young men who could find nothing else to do opted for it, and whenever they got a chance to go into something else—an office job for instance—they did so. The poor desirability of teaching as a career was testified by Lytton (viceroy from 1874 to 1880) in the speech he delivered at the opening ceremony of the David Hare Training College:

> The ceremony which I have come to perform, may be taken as an emphatic declaration by the Government that the teaching profession is no longer to be regarded as the last resort of those who are incapacitated for any other profession; that it is rather the most responsible and important of all professions; and that those who embrace it require as good a training as those who enter any other profession (Littlehailer 1929: 114).

In retrospect, Lytton's words have significance only because they are consistent with the self-assurance of his overall style and policies. The impact that he thought training institutions would have on the image of teaching as a profession did not come about. In the century that followed Lytton, statesmen and administrators of education rarely failed to reaffirm Lytton's faith that teachers' status could be improved with the help of 'emphatic declaration' to this effect by the government. The powerlessness of the ordinary schoolteacher in the face of the bureaucracy did not change much despite improvement in teachers' salaries and the rise of teachers' unions. Nor did the self-perception and the popular image of the schoolteacher improve. In his reminiscences, the Hindi essayist Padumlal Punnalal Bakshi wrote a chapter on his life as a teacher. In it, he recorded a sample of the popular view of a school master's career in early twentieth century:

> One day when I was talking about my life as a teacher with a friend and colleague, he sharply revealed the pettiness of this part of my life. He said that an ass who dies carrying others' burden and munching dry grass becomes a teacher in his next life .... All sorts of people manage to gain some respect, but

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> even his own students do not hestitate to insult a teacher .... Inspectors ignore the load of work on teachers and regard them as fools or ignorant people. Only because of the vanity which arose from his status an inspector could go to the extent of saying, 'How far can I go after these teachers with a stick in my hand?' (Bakshi 1979: 146, translation mine).

Among the factors that contributed to the poor professional identity and status of the teacher was his lack of say in the curriculum. Bureaucratization brought about by the colonial order implied that all decisions pertaining to curriculum and textbooks were made by senior administrators. For colonial administrators, the textbook became an instrument of norm maintenance. It provided a convenient yardstick by which an inspector could judge a teacher's efficiency. From the teacher's perspective, the textbook was a symbol of the same authority which had the power to appoint, promote, penalize and transfer teachers. The best means for the teacher to protect himself against this power structure was to stick to the textbook. The powers given to officers left little scope for him to feel free and confident enough to infuse local relevance into the text-content he taught. As an article published by a teachers' organization explained, the teacher had become a mere instrument encompassed by 'a cloud of witnesses', namely inspectors and authorities of every kind.

The possibility of initiative being shown by a teacher was altogether closed off by the dominant role that the examination system acquired in shaping student expectations. Since the colonial administration could not trust the teacher to examine his own students impartially, it developed a centralized system of examination which would work in an aura of secrecy and bureaucratic ritual. It acted as an agency of social control, equipped to legitimize an unlimited amount of student failure. The examination system transferred the onus of failure from the system or the institution to the individual student. Fear of failure led both teachers and students to concentrate on the specific demands of the examination which were invariably linked to the content of the prescribed textbook. The teacher's job was reduced to preparing the student with the right kind of answers to be reproduced in the examination copybook, and the rational way to do this was to restrict teaching to the content of the textbook.

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An Established Culture

Patterns of teaching, once established, do not give way easily. They become part of the culture of education. The norms of pedagogy that evolved under colonial rule did not weaken with the coming of national independence. Sitting in a classroom today one can still observe the distinct features of teaching that are related to the colonial legacy. One is the fixed nature of the content that must be covered in the course of a year. It permits the teacher to switch off whatever ability or resources s/he might possess for making fresh associations or for drawing upon new examples. The tacit belief is that s/he need not make that kind of effort even if s/he realizes it will improve his/her teaching. The fear of being perceived as departing from the prescribed text, and of running out of time to finish the required content of a course serves as the background against which the 'decision' to stick to the text is taken. The fear has a basis in the teacher's material and service conditions. S/he is still a powerless subordinate in the hierarchy of the education department. Working in a private school makes no difference since the prescribed syllabus applies to these schools as well. Also, the overarching fear of his students doing badly in the examination deters a teacher from moving away in any respect from the prescribed content and textbook. Finally, the number of students is often so large that explicit instruction based on the textbook presents itself as the only practical method of exercising control. Freed of the urgency to reorganize knowledge in interesting ways, the teacher persists with the task of maintaining order in the classroom to facilitate safe and speedy delivery of the prescribed content. This is how classroom management, by sundry pedagogical techniques, becomes his supreme concern. Voice control, blackboard work, questioning and recapitulation—all such conventional means are used to direct children's attention towards the prescribed content. These tricks continue to be the staple of teacher training, particularly of the 'model' lessons given during training, even in the best of training institutions. Indeed, the concept as well as the content of teacher training have remained remarkably stable over a century. Minor changes have surfaced, such as the teaching of psychology and principles of educational theory, but the core of

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the training, namely the practice of teaching, has not changed at all. The model lesson and the norms of supervision of the lessons given by the trainee are almost exactly as we find them described in late nineteenth-century reports. Little wonder, then, that the focus of teaching continues to be where it was under colonial rule—on helping students to learn the content of a lesson so well that they can reproduce it in the examination.

Ironically, thus, the lack of any role in curriculum planning and in the choice of materials—two major indicators of teachers' professionally meek status—contribute to their acting as dictators in the classroom. The prescribed curriculum and textbook serve as the backdrop against which the drama of dictatorial power over docile children is played. The syllabus and the textbook conceal the teacher's lack of professional power; they are the 'givens' of the situation. The children do not know that their teacher is a feeble servant of the authorities who determine what knowledge the teacher must teach; nor do they perceive him as a mere delivery man. For them the teacher is the man on the spot with all the power in the world to force them to do what he wants. They do not know that their teacher hides his powerlessness behind the mask of being all-powerful.

We can now see that the colonial interlude had a paradoxical effect on the teacher's job. Status-wise, he stood at the lower end of the hierarchy of the new professions, losing a great deal of his revered—though monetarily poor—status in traditional society. Within his own department, he had a powerless standing; but in the classroom he could maintain an aura of power and total command. There, his link with old indigenous values and traditions remained intact. Colonization and bureaucratization of education could not exercise much influence on established beliefs and practices concerning the teacher–pupil relationship. The old Indian view of this relationship was based on the notion that the teacher is supreme, that he possesses knowledge, and that he knows best how to impart it. The pupil's role was to be modest, obedient and receptive. Several ancient texts describe the supremacy of the teacher and the modesty of the ideal disciple. One such story narrates how a pupil called Upamanyu starved himself to the point of dying in the process of sticking to his teacher's command. The teacher was all the time testing Upamanyu's loyalty and capacity to obey. Another popular story is that of the tribal youth Eklavya who readily cut off his thumb in order to satisfy

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his teacher. Eklavya's extraordinary skill in archery had earned him the jealousy of the princely disciples of his teacher.

Such stories typically depict a sage–teacher who had no more than a handful of disciples under his care. Each of the pupils thus had a chance to get a fair share of the teacher's attention. The pupils lived with the teacher in his *ashram*, and distributed among themselves the daily chores and responsibilities of the teacher's life. He was their guardian, a father figure who exercised nurturant authority and combined it with the aura of his learning. He was the master of the pupils' lives in all aspects, and he could put his pupils to the severest test whenever he chose to do so. The teacher's freedom to punish children physically was an aspect of his authority which continued to be socially accepted long after *ashram*-type education had disappeared. The violent yet legitimate behaviour of the village schoolmaster described by Lal Behari Day in his memoirs can be seen as part of the tradition that gave unlimited authority to the teacher. This is how Day describes the village teacher in the first half of the nineteenth century in Bengal's indigenous schools:

> He had by him constantly, besides his crutch, a thin but longish twig of bamboo, which often resounded, not only on the palms of his pupils' hands, but on their heads and backs; and sometimes also with cruel ingenuity he used to strike their knuckles, their knee-joints, and their ankles. You could hardly pass by the door of the house during school hours without hearing the shop-a-shop, shop-a-shop of the bamboo switch. But he had other ways of administering discipline. One famous mode of juvenile punishment was called nadu-Gopal, that is, Gopal (the god Krishna) with a sweetmeat in his hand. This consisted in making a boy sit on the ground with one leg in a kneeling posture; the two arms were then stretched, and a large brick was placed on each. In this posture a boy is expected to remain still for several hours. Should either of the bricks fall from the hand, down comes the bamboo switch on the pate of the delinquent (Day 1969: 55).

To return to *ashram* education, its ideals were consistent with a quasi-feudal order. The values that an *ashram* life was supposed to inculcate were of the kind that a disciple would find useful in his service to the ruler. These were total allegiance to authority, unquestionining

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obedience, capacity for enduring hardship and self-sacrifice. The teacher inculcated these values by providing a figure of authority during the student's training. In his pedagogical role, he acted as a king, controlling every sphere of the pupils' lives. The fact that the teacher was usually a Brahman made him eminently suitable for this quasi-monarchical role. His Brahmanhood gave him an authority that in reality even the king did not possess. As Heesterman (1985) has tried to explain, the Brahman teacher's authority came from having renounced all claims to power or property. This explanation seems conceptually valid even if in real life many Brahman teachers might have possessed both property and power. Lannoy (1971) suggests that the Vedic ideal of the teacher as sage evolved, in response to the rise of the concept of *bhakti*, into an institutionalized figure of a 'quasi-divine' person. He became an object of worship and sacred love, and was perceived as an agency capable of assisting the disciple to reach out towards the ultimate object of his pursuit. The importance of the guru in this concept lay in his ability to relate to the pupil in a manner otherwise inconceivable in a caste-governed order of impersonal bonds.

Many *bhakti* poets of the medieval period came from lower-caste backgrounds. One such poet, Kabir, has described the role of the guru in a famous couplet where the disciple has to choose between the teacher and the divine. He decides to touch the guru's feet for it is the guru, he says, who has introduced him to the divine. The idea of the teacher as an object of worship finds frequent mention in literature right up to this day; in contemporary literature it often appears as a subverted norm, providing material for satire. It continues to be a part of the lore of childhood and adolescence, though today it can be witnessed more commonly in villages and among the poorer sections of society than in the urban middle class. Lannoy's view, that the teacher evolved into an object of worship in response to the *bhakti* movement, referred to the spiritual teacher of repute; but it is equally relevant to our understanding of the common village teacher's status as well. At least one basis of this relevance seems to have been the idea that the teacher must live on voluntary donations. Lack of an economic interest gave the teacher and his vocation a glory that no other function in village society had. This idea was certainly the backbone of the village schools described by early nineteenth-century reporters, such as Adam and Day (di Bona 1983; Day 1969). We have earlier seen how substantial the gifts

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were that the village teacher in mid-nineteenth-century Bengal received from his pupils. In several parts of rural India, the convention of giving small gifts to the teacher continues to this day.

Belief in the teacher's supremacy over his pupils, as expressed in mythology and literature, is further reinforced by the norms that govern family relationships and the wider social organization. Kakar[6] has pointed out that authority often takes the form of a nurturing autocrat in Indian families and in other social institutions. Such an image of authority discourages any form of challenge or dissent. Independent decision making, questioning and criticism are usually not among the traits encouraged in children by adult members of the family. Also, fantasizing and role-play among children are often confined to the imitation of adults in the family, especially the parents. This is not due to the lack of toy figures but rather the absence of encouragement for the child's urge to imagine him/herself in a variety of roles.[7] On the other hand, there is usually no dearth of encouragement for modelling oneself after an ideal, invariably an adult figure similar to one's father or mother in possession of supreme and nurturing power. The preponderance of the adult figure in children's literature and in stories included in school textbooks is consistent with the norm of adult–child relationships prevailing in family life and the wider society. The legitimacy of adult dominance is accentuated when the adult happens to be a teacher—someone whose supremacy has been established since yore.

We can now appreciate how the interplay of the mythology of the teacher's role and the character of the teaching profession as it evolved under colonial rule shapes classroom teaching. The teacher standing in front of children assumes the only role that entrenched norms of adult–child relationship permit. His age, the tacit belief that he possesses the required knowledge, and his authority diminish the chances of any fraternal or friendly relationship emerging between him and the children. Teacher training makes a feeble attempt to lure him towards the virtue of friendlines towards his wards, but it is far too weak and haphazard to break the hold of the traditionally expected behaviour. Moreover, what is learnt during training is widely regarded as inapplicable to actual teaching. The

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[6] In a study of textbook stories, Sudhir Kakar identified a similar picture of authority. See Kakar (1971).

[7] This discussion is based on Narain (1964).

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lone teacher who tries to practise friendliness towards his students often becomes the subject of unfriendly gossip in the staff room. Even in colleges and universities, where students are close to adulthood, a teacher's attempt to treat them as equals is regarded as a cheap strategy to gain popularity. Such a teacher is perceived as a threat to the collective status of the staff, and is therefore treated as an outcaste. It is not unusual to see this sad fate befalling the teacher in charge of activities like physical education, drama or dance. Such activities seldom count in a student's academic performance, nor is the teaching involved in these activities usually regarded as serious work. To some extent, at least, this could be due to the close intimacy these activities force upon the teacher and the student.

The proper teacher, of a proper school subject, is expected to maintain a distance from students. This is consciously held to be the right means to uphold one's position of command. In several schools and colleges, this position is concretely expressed by the wooden or cement platform upon which the teacher's desk and chair are placed. Secondary schoolteachers are told during training never to leave the vicinity of their desk. The trainee who walks around in the classroom and readily reaches out to children is penalized. The blackboard, too, shares the zone invested with symbolic power. Trainees are told never to stand with their face turned towards the blackboard, even while writing on it. The idea is that the teacher must never turn his face away from the students, who must always feel and actually find him/her looking at them.

Questioning by students is a rare phenomenon in Indian classrooms. Teachers are expected to encourage students to ask questions, and trainees are sometimes required to write down the questions they expect their students might ask. Once training is over, however, few teachers find it possible or necessary to leave time for student questioning. It is true that students are rarely eager to ask questions, since their own upbringing does not encourage questioning. But even the teacher who somehow remains concerned about student questioning usually encourages questions only to ensure that nothing in the lesson is left unclear. Like everyone else, he treats questioning as a means of seeking clarification or further information; never as a means of independent inquiry. Typically, he ends his lesson by asking, 'Anything you want me to repeat? Anything unclear?' The message is that a question indicates unclear understanding. There is no scope for welcoming a question that

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opens up a possibility of fresh inquiry. If by chance such a question is ever asked, its freshness and depth are likely to be ignored. Worse still, it may be regarded as inconvenient if the teacher has difficulty responding to it. 'Good' students are supposed to regard the teacher's discomfiture in such a situation as unfortunate. The teacher is not supposed to say, 'I don't know'. It may take years of classroom visits for one to hear from a teacher, 'I'll look it up' or 'Why don't you check it?'

It can be argued that this is a global phenomenon, that genuine inquiry among students is not encouraged anywhere. Whatever truth there may be in such a general statement, it still leaves the Indian classroom reality a somewhat special phenomenon. What we see in Indian classrooms is not just reluctance on the part of students or apathy on the part of the teacher, but a conscious pursuit of unquestionable knowledge. Historically, this view of knowledge can be linked to the tradition of regarding the teacher or guru as an infallible authority. Colonial rule could not unsettle this perception of the teacher. Indeed, the policies that colonial rule followed in the area of curriculum provided an indirect support to this perception. As we saw in the last chapter, the curriculum and texts introduced by the colonial administration reflected an alien epistemology. The teacher was given no autonomy to organize or represent the 'truth' of the new knowledge. The fact that among the natives he alone seemed to possess the new knowledge further enhanced his status as an authority. It makes sense to argue that the decline that occurred under colonial rule in the economic and professional status of the teacher shaped his attitude towards the new knowledge that schools were expected to disseminate. The curriculum and the content of the texts he was required to teach under the new system had no cultural validity or resonance. Nor did the content have local relevance. The teacher had, of course, no choice. The limited skills some teachers might have possessed to contextualize the new content in the local ethos were further restrained by the assumed lack of sanction to do so. Under these circumstances, the act of imparting the new knowledge became a ritual which training programmes for teachers legitimized. Classroom instruction became an administrative necessity. As a member of the local community, sharing its culture and valid forms of knowldge, the teacher could well afford to scoff at the knowledge he was himself imparting in the school. It was not his job to make this knowledge meaningful. His personality was thus split into two halves—one representing the salaried employee

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of the education system, and the other representing a literate, traditionally revered member of the local community. If my thesis is correct, it answers the problem I had posed in the introductory chapter, namely, why the teacher accompanying a group of children to the zoo remains indifferent to the experience and knowledge children are supposed to gain there.

The only change that has come about in this matter since the days of colonial rule is that now bureaucratic authority is assisted by quasi-bureaucratic experts in curriculum and text selection. An international study (Morris 1977) of the teacher's role in curriculum planning revealed that the Indian situation presented 'the clearest and most negative picture' in the whole inquiry, indicating the absence of any meaningful role for the teacher. This conclusion is consistent with our understanding that in India the teacher's appropriate job continues to be regarded as that of delivering the prescribed content of textbooks. The student's duty is to ingest this prescribed content. There is no room in this process for genuine inquiry, for it is assumed that all necessary inquiry has already been made; and that the results of the inquiry have been packaged in the syllabus and the textbook. Questions can only be asked to clarify one's understanding of this packaged knowledge. As we have argued in this chapter, this perception of knowledge arose under the specific historical circumstances created by colonization and it became a part of the culture of education in India in association with the older traditions of teacher–learner relationship.

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Part II

Dynamics of the Freedom Struggle

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V

Pursuit of Equality

The freedom struggle can be seen as a social process involving the pursuit of several different ideals or values.[1] The Indian subcontinent was much too vast a geographical territory and much too varied a cultural territory for a single dominant construct of ideals to be sustained for any length of time. Such a development was also prevented by the fact that political leadership never took the form of a unified elite. Cultural, ideological and personality-related factors kept the leadership a loosely strung group at the national level. Elites—in the proper sense of the term—emerged and held sway only in local spheres, and that too only in certain parts of the country. Between the local and national spaces lay the substantial distances of cultural aspiration and perception of the desirable. These distances invariably diluted the tenacity and passion with which local or regional spokesmen could hold on to their value-premises when they engaged in national-level deliberations. When the deliberations led to a resolution, it was hardly ever a crystallization; rather, it was a map of the uncontroversial space available between the assertions of different value-premises.[2] What lay in this space were temporally useful clusters of values. Politics meant finding room in this space, and the contest was hard. Significant voices were often left out, and as the freedom struggle advanced, some of these voices formed a cluster outside the political space.

We can place the value orientations expressed in the context of education during the freedom struggle into three major categories: equality, self-identity and progress. These are not mutually exclusive categories, and that is why they are somewhat difficult to work with.

[1] I was first inspired to look at the freedom struggle in this way by Manoranjan Mohanty's paper, 'Value Movement and Development Models in Contemporary India' (1979).

[2] Many examples illustrating this point are given in Johnson (1973).

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Their usefulness lies in the fact that they permit us to see how the prominent discourses on education combined discrete value positions to develop distinct configurations.

The struggle for equality has proved a problematic area for historians of Indian politics. As we shall see, the core problem lies in the nationalism-centred perspective on the politics of colonial India. Such a perspective underlies the model of political development which has been quite popular among historians of colonization. In the context of education the model highlights the importance of the growth or dissemination of education under colonial rule, and suggests that the political awakening of the lower strata was the outcome of the growth of education. We find that historical accounts of political awakening among the lower castes in western and southern India discuss the egalitarian struggles of these regions within the context of the growth of the colonial education system. As education gradually filtered down to the lower castes in these parts, it is argued, it inspired them to fight for rational causes such as the right to equality.[3] An obvious problem with this argument is that it requires us to ignore the extremely narrow spread of education among the lower strata in colonial India. True, enrolment figures towards the end of the nineteenth century do show an increasing number of non-Brahman students in schools and colleges, but in proportion to the population of these castes the numbers constitute only a miniscule minority. The only way we can reconcile the measly spread of education in colonial India with the claim that education inspired the lower castes to rise is by accepting that it contributed to egalitarian struggles by nurturing an elite among the lower castes. That would be a more modest assessment of the role of education. To make it more accurate, we need to ask why the non-Brahman elite, unlike the older elite consisting of Brahmans and other upper castes, developed a dualistic attitude towards British rule when both kinds of elites had been socialized by the same system of education. The explanation is that the lower-caste elite found in the British presence an audience and an agency for fighting against Brahman domination. This struggle was many centuries old; it certainly predated colonial education and its supposedly enlightening influence. If this is true, then we need to recognize that it could not be so much

[3] See, for example, Basu (1974). Desai (1948) had earlier followed a similar line of interpretation on the role of education in colonial India.

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the intellectual aspect of education as its relationship with employment and status which contributed to the ongoing egalitarian struggle of the non-Brahman castes by crystallizing it.

We had started our discussion of colonial discourse on education by recognizing its eighteenth-century roots. The central idea of early liberal thought, which informed colonial education discourse, was the role of the state as a protector of propertied interests. As an agency of the state, education had a dual role to perform. It was supposed to equip the masses with morality, thus assisting in the state's peace-keeping function. And it was *supposed to* equip the upper classes with the skills and knowledge necessary for intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment. In the context of a colonial state's economy, the first aim was scuttled on financial grounds, and the second got tempered by the first. The upper classes of the colonized society were not above moral suspicion in the eyes of the master, hence the education of these classes could not be truly aesthetic and intellectual. At the same time, education for the masses could not be abandoned as rhetoric. Such rhetoric had a definite political value for an alien government. So the agenda of moral upliftment of the masses through education took the form of upper-class education for individual self-advancement. The colonial bureaucracy justified the concentration of opportunities in the better-off sections of society by referring to the theory of downward filtration. The argument typically ran thus:

> The improvements in education, however, which most effectively contribute to elevate the moral and intellectual condition of a people, are those which concern the education of the higher classes; of the persons possessing leisure and natural influence over the minds of their countrymen. By raising the standard of instruction among these classes, you would eventually produce a much greater and more beneficial change in the ideas and feelings of the community than you can hope to produce by acting directly on the more numerous class (Keer 1964: 169).

It was to this kind of argument that Jyotirao Phule was reacting when he wrote to the Hunter Commission regarding the need to disseminate education among the lower classes. He asked: 'Upon what grounds is it asserted that the best way to advance the moral and intellectual welfare of the people is to raise the standard of

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instruction among the higher classes?'[4] Phule was arguing from within the colonial rhetoric of moral improvement, but he was speaking on behalf of a class of people which eighteenth-century liberal doctrine and even the somewhat radical utilitarian ideas of a later date could only neglect. These were people without property or status. Yet, as Phule pointed out, their labour contributed the bulk of the state revenue. It was injustice, therefore, to deny them opportunities for education and state employment, while Brahmans, who constituted a very small proportion of the population took away the bulk of such opportunities. Phule's achievement as a social reformer lay in his capacity to use the colonizer's presence to intensify the struggle against Brahmanical dominance. Education became a key arena of this struggle when the colonial administrators and not just the missionaries succeeded in conveying the impression that they were concerned about the education of common people. Phule's attack on Brahmanism—both as an ideology of power and as a system of knowledge—was as striking as his faith in European fairness. His appeal to the Hunter Commission for special attention being given to the downtrodden castes reminds us that colonial rule opened up a space for India's domestic divisions to grow into significant political contests. As a measure of access to opportunities that the new colonial state claimed to provide, education of the downtrodden caste communities became a key symbol of the state's authenticity.

Phule's submission to the Hunter Commission is a profound testimony to the power of education and his uncanny awareness of the inner world of the primary school classroom. It is appropriate to call Phule's awareness uncanny because no Indian critic or British official of that period—and of subsequent decades too—showed interest in the details of classroom life. Policy and protest both remained content to focus on provision of education; concern for how education was imparted was seldom given the same importance. This is why Phule's style, and not just his strategy for making the British feel responsible towards the low-status poor, is so striking. In his submission to the Hunter Commission, he touched upon a wide range of issues, extending from matters of financial allocation and supervision to curriculum, textbooks and teacher training. Phule's capacity to link his reformist interest with an anti-Brahman ideology

[4] Letter from the Court of Directors of the East India Company, dated 29 September 1830, in Basu (1952: 195).

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is succinctly reflected in this passage of his submission where he criticizes the low salary given to primary schoolteachers but does not spare the teacher's indolent and prejudiced approach to manual tasks:

> The teachers now employed in the primary schools are almost all Brahmin; a few of them are from the normal training college, the rest being all untrained men. Their salaries are very low, seldom exceeding Rs. 10, and their attainments also very meagre. But as a rule they are all unpractical men, and the boys who learn under them generally imbibe inactive habits and try to obtain service, to the avoidance of their hereditary or other hardy or independent professions. I think teachers for primary schools should be trained as far as possible, out of the cultivating classes, who will be able to mix freely with them and understand their wants and wishes much better than a Brahmin teacher, who generally holds himself aloof under religious prejudices. These would, moreover, exercise a more beneficial influence over the masses, than teachers of other classes, and who will not feel ashamed to hold the handle of a plough or the carpenter's adze when required, and who will be able to mix themselves readily with the lower orders of society (Hunter Commission 1884).

Phule not only accepted the strength of liberal ideas (Paine's *Rights of Man* had made a deep impression on him), but also approved of colonial rule. He perceived the political role of the English government as beneficial to the downtrodden masses. In his framework, Brahman domination was the key element against which the downtrodden had to organize their dynamic forces, and education and state employment were among the resources from which they could draw energy for the struggle. Civil service and the liberal professions, such as legal practice and teaching, represented to Phule two important avenues of progress for Indians. The monopoly of Brahmans over these avenues was a source of great anxiety for him. If the monopoly continued, even after the withdrawal of the British from India, Phule thought, it would 'result in caste tyranny and caste oppression of an unparalleled intensity'.[5] But it would be unfair to view Phule's work as a struggle for upward mobility of the downtrodden.

[5] Quoted from Phule's 'Gulamgiri' in Kumar (1968: 314).

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The Satyashodhak Samaj which he established was aimed at a mission far wider than challenging Brahman monopoly over education and salaried jobs. Its aim was to popularize Phule's belief that each individual had the right to be guided by his own reasoning. It was also meant to serve as a forum where all non-Brahman castes, including the untouchables, could unite. As Omvedt points out, this larger vision of the Satyashodhak Samaj gradually lost its hold over the non-Brahman movement, partly because of 'the tragic dilemma of the colonial situation that the national revolution and the social revolution in a colonised society tend to develop apart from one another' (Omvedt 1971: 1970). It was thus upward mobility within an elite-dominated system that the non-Brahman movement ended up seeking under the circumstances shaped by an upper caste-led nationalist movement.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, nationalism had become an effective channel for the exposure of the educated Indian's desire for individual parity vis-à-vis the colonizer. This desire had been expressed most sharply in state employment. Equal and fair chance of competing with young English men in the examination for the prestigious Indian Civil Service (ICS) was the edge against which pride in indigenous talent and determination had shown brightly.[6] In waging their battles for parity with English candidates at the ICS examination, the Indian elites were mainly asking, 'If we can learn the same knowledge and skills that the English boys learn and excel in it, why can't we aspire for the same status?' This urge to be treated as one with Englishmen represented an important step towards the entrenchment of individual equality as a political value. The shape that non-Brahman castes' struggle took towards the early decades of the twentieth century was but a mirror image of the upper castes' urge to be treated at par with Englishmen. Even though the rivalry between Brahman and non-Brahman castes had been going on for centuries, the question of individual right to equality in education and employment brought it into a sharply visible frame of reference.

Expectedly, the non-Brahman movement found its best political articulation in seeking routes of assured entry into the edifice of state employment and political power, that is, the demand for reservations

[6] For a detailed discussion of the efforts made to establish equal opportunity for Indians to compete in the Indian Civil Service Examination, see Seal (1978).

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in jobs. The success achieved by non-Brahman leaders in this matter in Madras and Mysore in the early 1920s was so dramatic that it can easily lure us into overestimating the spread and depth of the anti-Brahman movement. Ram reminds us that:

> The initially spontaneous, growingly organised revolt of the intelligentsia and the masses against the Brahmin-dominated Hindu caste structure is not to be confused with the interests articulated in the formation of a political organization whose organizing credo was total loyalty to the British Raj ... and hunt for patronage (Ram 1979: 383).

He is referring to the Justice Party, established in 1916, which did express a quest for equality, but its perspective was that of the landed non-Brahman castes. It attacked the Brahman-dominated social structure, but it had little following among the worst victims of Brahman oppression, namely, the untouchables. Its success in winning for non-Brahman castes a quota of reservations in state employment owes not to its mass base but to its friendly stance towards English rule.

The same applies to the Praja Mithra Mandali of Mysore which sent a deputation to the Maharaja to protest against Brahman domination in state employment. Hettne (1978) points at the English hand behind this otherwise legitimate protest: the English were interested in reducing Brahman influence in the affairs of the state. The protest submitted to the Maharaja did not represent a deep-reaching social wave, which is what one may erroneously assume going by the stunningly positive response it received from the Leslie Miller committee. The committee used literacy in English to distinguish the 'forward' from the 'backward' castes (Dushkin 1974). This extraordinary decision enabled the committee to recognize only the Brahmans as a 'forward' group. As Hettne says, 'In terms of class, the difference between the various communal elites, which of course were the people most immediately touched by the reforms in question, was slight but their respective castes were used as a point of reference and as a dormant power resource' (1978: 150). The non-Brahman elites did, of course, claim that they represented all backward sections, including the untouchables, but this was essentially a matter of political strategy. The actual pay-off of the movement for the untouchable castes was far thinner compared to the pay-off that the landed non-Brahman castes received.

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The fact remains, however, that the non-Brahman movement initiated a contest for upward mobility, and this contest helped education to spread (Chakravarti 1998). Before it was fully dominated by the wealthy non-Brahman landowners, the Justice Party does seem to have triggered concerted action at the hands of the English administration for the spread of elementary education among the oppressed Adi-Dravids or untouchables. Administrative reports of the Madras Presidency tell us that between 1916 and 1921, the number of institutions, mostly elementary schools, that were primarily meant for the Adi-Dravids rose from 5,691 to 8,035 and that of the students studying in these institutions from 158,593 to 219,068. The expenditure on Adi-Dravid and Adi-Andhra schools increased from Rs 874,000 to Rs 1.3 million, whereas the total expenditure on education rose from Rs 31.9 million to only Rs 34 million (Madras Presidency 1923). The place of Tamil Nadu among the country's more literate states today owes considerably to this political history. The emergence of the Self-Respect League and later on, the deepening non-Brahman movement in the shape of the Dravidian movement, further assisted the dissemination of literacy and education. Equality became an aspect of the search for a new identity, distinct from what was termed the 'Aryan' identity of the north Indian. The myth of the Aryan race and its superiority had been well established among educated Indians since the mid-nineteenth century. Colonial education and textbooks were among the agencies disseminating this myth. The idealization it implied of the Gangetic valley, Indo-European languages and Brahmans had been reinforced in Madras by the Theosophical movement, in particular by its politically active leader Annie Besant. The transformation of the egalitarian drive of the non-Brahman movement into a drive for establishing a self-respecting regional identity was a reaction to this broader phenomenon of the mythologization of the Aryan race.

Ambedkar and Gandhi

The fight of the untouchable castes for recognition and justice crystallized in Maharashtra. A rather different kind of leadership, different from what was available to the backward castes in the south,

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succeeded here in welding the cause of the oppressed castes into the larger struggle for India's independence. This was the leadership of Ambedkar. He combined a liberal perspective towards the upliftment of the untouchables with a deeply personal sense of the urgency of social action for this cause. His own untouchable background, and his realization of the difference that education (including a doctorate at Cambridge) had made to his abilities and appeal, made him an untiring fighter against upper-caste domination. Making opportunities for higher education available to students of untouchable castes became his favourite mission. Like Phule, Ambedkar saw English education as a means of intellectual liberation from the tentacles of Brahmanical mythology. Though much of Ambedkar's life-struggle remained inconclusive, his function as a source of inspiration for radical social action has proved longer lasting than that of any other leader of the freedom struggle, not excepting Gandhi. To this day, his name remains a live-wire that can charge political action for equality and related values.

The difference between Ambedkar's and Gandhi's views on what might be a feasible strategy for empowering the oppressed was rooted in the broader political conditions prevailing in the 1930s. One of the incidents that permitted the difference to be expressed in specific terms pertained to schooling. In Kavitha village of Ahmedabad district, Harijans were attacked by upper-caste (Rajput) men for sending their children to the local elementary school. On hearing about the incident, Gandhi suggested that the Harijans of Kavitha go elsewhere. He had, he said in a letter, been recommending this strategy for a long time to persecuted individuals and groups (Gandhi 1935, 1977b: 79). At the same time, he wrote in his magazine that the Kavitha incident proved that untouchability was on its last legs. The 'proof' lay in the fact the incident 'has agitated "savarna" conscience more than it has angered the Harijans' (Gandhi 1977b). In another article, five days later, he said, 'The Harijan does not know how to secure redress. He has no will to defend himself. He is wholly unconscious of his human dignity or innate ability to protect himself against the insolence of fellow human beings' (Gandhi 1935: 65). All his remarks were meant to counter Ambedkar's wider solution for incidents like this one, namely conversion. Gandhi asked his readers, specifically social reformers, not to be dejected by Ambedkar's 'just wrath', but to feel inspired by it for more sustained action. In his book which was published eleven years later, Ambedkar

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asked why Gandhi did not advise his reformer colleagues at Ahmedabad to prosecute the *savarna* Hindus of Kavitha (Ambedkar 1945). This kind of action was of course incompatible with Gandhi's preference for reform without coercion. The state as a prosecuting agency could have no place in it for the kind of problem Kavitha had presented (Santhanam 1946).

Positive Discrimination

The Phule–Ambedkar tradition may some day find an interpretation and application that will bring out its radical potential. Before that happens, however, we must admit that like most other social reform movements and ideas of the century preceding independence, the Phule–Ambedkar tradition dealt with the question of equality within the bourgeois-liberal framework. This framework had reached India through the curriculum of college education (McDonald and Stark 1969) which copiously featured the liberal spirit in the texts chosen for the teaching of English language and literature, philosophy and political economy. The impact of these texts had been reinforced by the activities of numerous small groups and associations that students and professionals had formed since the beginning of the nineteenth century to discuss social issues (Seal 1968). Within the bourgeois-liberal framework, the Indian discussions remained by and large stuck to an early model, that of a protective democracy, which was based on the utilitarian ideas of Bentham and James Mill (Macpherson 1977). The many contradictions of this model shone glaringly in the context of India's poverty and the caste system. The notion of the propertied individual on which the model depended for its validity was a rather weak anchor in a society where property was as great an exception as was the belief in the individual's right to autonomy. In the context of education, the utilitarian model offered upward individual mobility as the major symbol of change, but individual mobility was not a particularly convenient concept for a caste society. The performance of positive discrimination policies, particularly the policy of reservations, has shown this.

Although positive discrimination for non-Brahman caste students was granted as a policy in Madras and Mysore as early as the beginning

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of the 1920s, a firm natural policy of positive discrimination for the lowest ranking castes and tribes, as it came to be institutionalized in 1943, must be seen as a legacy of Ambedkar's struggle. Before we consider how effective the policy proved, we need to examine the principle underlying it. This has been done by several scholars[7] from the perspective of politico-legal and sociological theory. From the perspective of educational theory, however, the principle underlying the policy of positive discrimination, particularly the policy of reservations, has not received much critical attention. The politico-legal aspects of the policy can hardly be dissociated from its educational aspects—indeed, we must start with these aspects—but we should also look into certain specifically educational issues which normally carry little interest for the political or legal scholar.

The policy of positive discrimination in favour of the lower strata is based on the concept of equal opportunity. In the Indian context, 'equal opportunity' is usually assumed to be an absolute and reliable expression of the state's commitment to equality. The assumption becomes somewhat dubious if we notice that the notion of equal opportunity is rooted in a competitive view of society, or in a market economy where individuals are permanently competing with each other for maximum possible gains.[8] All that the state's initiative in equalizing educational opportunity (for example, by positive discrimination in favour of the lower strata) might achieve in such a society is to equip certain individuals better for facing the competitive scene of the market. But such an action on the state's part does not change the scene itself. Rather, it reinforces the market, for it allows a few individuals who are poorly endowed a socio-economic sense to acquire unexpected gains. This validates the competitive morality of the market, an effect, howsoever unintended, that can hardly be considered compatible with egalitarianism. Even though the state ends up improving the lot of a few individuals who would otherwise have no chance of betterment in an unjust social order, it actually perpetuates the social order in which injustice is inevitable for a far greater number of individuals. The state's help creates the hope of individual ascent among members of the lower strata, a hope which apparently acts as an instrument capable of perpetuating the prevailing social order.

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[7] An authoritative study is Marc Gallanter's *Competing Equalities* (1984). Also see Desai (1984); Shah (1985) and Baxi (1985).

[8] For a detailed analysis of the concept of equal opportunity, see Entwistle (1977).

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We have used two rather different terms to refer to the state's scene of action. One is the 'competitive market' and the other is an 'unjust social order'. A great number of the problems associated with the policy of reservations in India have originated from the assumption that an unjust social order can be treated as a market. Though it is possible to argue that the market is essentially an unfair place, this was clearly not the view of the early nineteenth-century theorists who created the model of protective democracy. These theorists believed in the fairness of the market society, and the kind of state they proposed could well be egalitarian while it supported and encouraged the market. Our problem in India orginated in the wholesale acceptance of this view of society and state, despite glaring evidence that showed our social order to be categorically different from the market Bentham and Mill had portrayed. The individual, as the basic unit of the market society, did not exist in India; only castes did. The educated leadership of the anti-colonial struggle was well aware of this. However, the influence of early liberal political economy must have been very strong on many leaders from Ranade to Ambedkar. The fact that caste structure might seriously contradict the very basis of the market model of democracy did not seem to have deeply disturbed them.

If we now move to the more specifically educational aspects of the reservation policy, we realize that it locates the argument for equality in outcomes that are extrinsic to educational experience. 'Outcomes' or results refer to employment and selection in institutions of higher or professional learning. In order to evaluate the success of the reservation policy, we usually measure the representation of different social groups at different levels of the education system and in the pyramid of the job market. This is how the extent to which equality has been achieved is assessed; no criterion intrinsic to the education system is used in this assessment. One such criterion would be the treatment of children from the lower strata at the hands of teachers in actual pedagogical settings. Another would be the share of symbols representing the lower strata in the curriculum of schools and colleges. Application of such intrinsic criteria would compel us to draw a picture rather different from the one we might draw by applying extrinsic criteria alone.[9]

[9] See my *Social Character of Learning* (1989a, esp. ch. 3) for a study of curriculum and teaching from the point of view of a student from the lower stratum of society.

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Girls' Education

The education of girls and women presents an unusually complex challenge to the study of the history of ideas and values. 'Awakening', 'progress' and 'change' are among the key terms which were routinely used in the context of women's education from mid-nineteenth century onwards. When we attempt to contextualize these terms, we are faced by the need to construct gender identity for both women and men. We also recognize the contours of class, caste and region, and we realise that the larger enquiry we are making, that is, that of colonial ideas in education, requires an interactionist understanding to be meaningful. That the world of individuals who were awakened into a new kind of awareness with regard to women's education and right to equality was a world mainly of men comes as a sobering afterthought not sufficiently capable of indicating on its own what it implies for the limitations of our overview of the colonial encounter.

From the existing body of literature we have on education under colonial rule, we tend to infer that something altogether new was taking shape in Indian society in the context of women's role and status. The details of this new phenomenon cover a wide range of socio-economic, and later on, political activities. Education is viewed as a general, accommodating descriptor for discussing the source of this new phenomenon. Conventional knowledge of this phenomenon suggests that there was widespread resistance to the efforts to make education accessible to girls, and that the process of meeting this resistance should be treated as a measure of the determination of those making the effort, including the colonial government's officials, the missionaries and social reformers. It is also tempting to view the resistance as a measure of the conservatism prevailing in gender relations. Such a view fits in well with the standard theory of social change and modernization. The idea of native resistance is so satisfying and self-serving that its validity needs no further evidence than the slow rate of progress of education among girls, seen in terms of enrolment figure and completion rates. It is difficult to disentangle the slow progress made in this regard from the canon of colonialism that the native suspected everything new. As for resistance to

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indigenous social reform in the context of women, it seems that critical attitudes were directed more towards attempts to disturb specific cultural norms pertaining to child marriage and widows rather than towards initiatives for girls' education as such. The story of change in the life of Indian women, in its early phase at least, was influenced far more by social reform than by education (Raman 1996). What education should impart to girls, and what its impact would be are a different matter, to which we shall turn below. In the context of colonial policy and efforts to spread girls' education, the evidence of explicit opposition is rare in most parts of British India. As Bhattacharya et al. (2001) have suggested, the theory of resistance appears to be a post-1857 construction of colonial administrators, based on the general apprehension that their incursion in cultural matters will not be appreciated. To the educated Englishmen of the Victorian age, women were a cultural rather than a civic concern, and this was more so in a colony whose own cultural practices were firmly grounded in patriarchy.

Yet, if we interpret resistance as uncertainty or ambiguity, we find evidence to say that the prospect of getting girls schooled in a manner similar to boys did raise sharp questions and doubts. The reasons responsible for making these questions and doubts sharper than the ones raised about education in general take us into the larger sphere of culture and its relation to education. The association of women's education with the invasion of a protected cultural space is one such explanation. Opportunities for schooling were enthusiastically availed in the case of boys due to the lure of employment. The Hunter Commission noted the absence of this attraction in the case of girls' education. It seems that the lure of eligibility for employment did not obtain in the case of girls for a long time; rather, as we shall see, the prospect of a woman finding employment and thereby entering public space was perceived with suspicion far greater than was invoked by the thought of what she might learn at school. Indeed, as far as the content of education is concerned, the demand for special provision being made for subjects and items of knowledge appropriate in view of a girl's future role as wife and mother was met in a manner that few other demands for change in the system were met. Such a demand was voiced in different parts of the country soon after the new system had found a stable structure following the 1854 Despatch (Bhattacharya et al. 2001). In this matter, we can notice an easy consensus between the English officers

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socialized in Victorian ideals and the Indian men who articulated the logic of appropriateness of knowledge for girls (Sen 2002).

The consensus reflected the image of home as the primary space for a woman and the family as the essential arena for the exercise of her talent. The knowledge and skills relevant to this image were music, cooking, painting, needle work and first aid. That these items had found a place in the curriculum of girls' institutions well before the turn of the twentieth century looks quite remarkable when we consider how inflexible the system of education proved in other matters, such as the school's annual schedule, the system of examination and the use of prescribed textbooks as the only source material to be used in the classroom. Apparently, the idea of adjusting the curriculum to suit the perceived needs of girls was not alien; it struck a familiar chord in both the colonial and the native popular thinking about education. It is not as if all publicly voiced demands for curricular adjustment for girls were accepted. The demand for inclusion of morally uplifting material from religious texts was ignored, but that was not because of insensitivity to the main argument that girls need special curricular provisions. The reason had to do with the general policy of a disinterested attitude towards religion that had originated as part of the lesson learnt from the 1857 revolt. The other demands were seen as being secular and were accepted and implemented.

If, despite this harmony between the colonial and the native—obviously male—voices on what was appropriate for girls, their education continued to arouse suspicion and uncertainty, the reasons need to be looked for elsewhere; for example, in the direction of opportunities that education was known to open up. The prospect of a girl finding employment following her schooling evoked the thought of her leaving the confined and familiar home space for the larger, unpredictable public space. What might happen to a young woman once she entered that space became a favourite theme of many popular literary writings, including non-fiction. In his recent study of Hindi writing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Veer Bharat Talwar (2002) uses attitudes towards women and their education as one of the key issues to assess the social character of the so-called Hindi renaissance, the other issue being attitudes towards Muslims. Talwar offers numerous instances to prove his claim that the 'awakened' men who occupied the public sphere of the time were remarkably conservative in their views towards women, particularly

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towards the implications of modern education for women. They were apprehensive that educated women would have little devotion towards their family responsibilities, that they would lose their purity of character, but the worst fear was that educated women would try to be equal to men. Loss of the traditional hierarchy in which men had the power to control women was a matter of deep anxiety which had many sources, education being one of them. However, education had a special appeal for the 'awakened' among men because they believed they could shape education in the direction of making it an instrument of girls' socialization into becoming presentable, diligent wives and devoted mothers. Talwar has studied several textbooks and other material especially written for girls during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The examples he cites from these publications indicate the strong urge that male members of the emerging Hindi intelligentsia had for ensuring that education would be used as a means of maintaining the hierarchy of gender relations.

Talwar contrasts this psycho-literary landscape of the northern plains with the far more radical voices, men's as well as women's, in Maharashtra, Bengal and Punjab. The impressive body of research which is now available on these regions and the south reminds us that social and legal reform movements not only formed an essential background for the advancement of girls' education, they also created the necessary condition required to make education an emancipatory influence. Especially striking appears to be the case of Maharashtra where the push for girls' education came from the wider egalitarian consciousness which had for its focus the transformation of caste hierarchy. Phule's sharp criticism of the filtration theory takes on a new meaning when we apply it in the context of gender relations. He stands in sharp contrast to other nineteenth century social reformers of elite origin who, like Syed Ahmed Khan, thought that the influence of education would gradually spread from men to women (in his evidence before the Hunter Commission, Khan had expressed his belief in the 'powerful, though indirect, effect' that the education of Muslim boys would eventually have on the enlightenment of Muslim women) (Bhattacharya et al. 2001).

Phule's response to the colonial perspective on mass education reminds us that hierarchies of caste, class, and gender relationships were an important sub-text in the emerging Indian discourse of education. This point has been forcefully made by Bhattacharya

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in his introduction to the documents pertaining to women's education between 1850 and 1920. The only question that remains is a pedagogic one: to what extent did this sub-text differ from the metropolitan–colonial text in the matter of the choice of knowledge to be imparted in the process of education? Seen in the light of this question, the idea that there was a uniform, stable and uniquely native response to colonial education becomes harder to sustain. We realize that the native response was divided in terms of class, caste, region and gender and we also recognize that native responses developed and changed with time, even as forces of social change in spheres other than education gained strength (Bhattacharya et al. 2001). During the early twentieth century, many old ideas of reform in social practices—some of these ideas were rooted in pre-colonial social processes, such as the *bhakti* movement—gained momentum against the background of rapid changes in technologies of communication, transport and entertainment. Finally, the mass politics of Gandhi had a transformative effect on the social landscape, specially on the acceptance of women's presence in public spaces. These massive shifts notwithstanding, the question of curricular choices for women's education remained remarkably moribund, even as a new self-identity of the educated woman took shape in the context of opportunities of employment in professions like medicine, teaching and law. Those who believed that no differentiation could be made between boys and girls in the matter of appropriate knowledge remained a minority voice.

As an institution, patriarchy, like caste, does not depend on formal education to perpetuate itself, but modern education does aspire to weaken the formidable forces these institutions have at their command for socializing the young. This aspiration of modern education does not seem to have a long systemic history; lone individual voices expressed it, without evoking much response. Thus, Pandita Ramabai's hope that education would give women a new self-identity, and not merely a new role in society, can at best be described as a prophetic vision, even by our standards of early twenty-first century parlance on women's education (Chakravarti 1998). The mainstream perception, shared by colonial masters and native reformers, was that education was a means of women's upliftment. In her introduction to Ramabai's selected works, Meera Kosambi (2000: 7) observes that the upper castes of nineteenth-century Maharashtra 'were circumscribed strictly within a patriarchical

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framework and geared towards making women better wives for English-educated Indian men expecting companionate marriages, and more enlightened mothers of the future generations who would restore India to its former glory and ultimately to political autonomy'. Neither social reform nor nationalism tempered the popular feeling that girls' education under a foreign regime would pose a greater threat to the cultural ideals of Indian society than the education of boys had.

This difference in the levels of apprehension associated with girls' education as compared to the boys' found a rather startingly clear articulation in the note submitted by Muthulakshmi Reddi to the Hartog Committee Report (1930). Born in 1886 and educated as a medical doctor, Muthulakshmi was a social and political activist, who became the working president of the All India Women's Conference. In the note that she wrote as a member of the Hartog Committee, Muthulakshmi argued that whereas boys were given education out of economic necessity, this was not true of girls—a point made fifty years earlier by the Hunter Commission. Muthulakshmi Reddi used this point to argue that the government's efforts to educate girls will be more effective if the curriculum included subjects 'useful for home life'. A common curriculum policy was unsuited, according to her, to a country 'where even at the present day the majority of the people believe that wifehood and motherhood are the only legitimate functions of a woman'. People did not send girls to school, Reddi claimed, because they look upon women as the 'repositories of their religion, their holy tradition and their culture', so they did not want their girls to be 'influenced by Western ideals and a mode of living so alien to their nature and surroundings'. Reddi concludes her note by making a plea for value-oriented education, using the great epics and legends of ancient India to inspire girls.

Both her argument and recommendation are important inasmuch as they reveal how a professionally qualified and politically active woman assessed the public mind in the early 1930s. We cannot assign objectivity to any single voice, and the 1930s were a particularly cacophonous decade, marking a division between the progressive and revivalist cultural visions of the nationalist struggle, but Muthulakshmi's argument does capture a frame of mind that was gaining strength in the debate on women's education. It is a strain that resonates a deep difference between education as an opportunity and as a socialising force. The study of equality as a value in the context of education cannot, beyond a point, tell us much about

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education as a vital resource of socialization in modern society. Even as the system expanded and access to education and opportunities for employment for which educated women became eligible increased, education remained incapable of rivalling patriarchy as a socializing force.

To make fuller sense of the ambivalent, though dynamic, role that education plays in regulating social change, we need to ponder on the socialization of educated men; more specifically, on the shaping of their attitudes towards women. As a subject of study, this area has not received the attention it deserves. As an illustrative exercise, we can look at two literary works written during the 1930s: one, a book on women's emancipation, and the other, a short story by Premchand. Published in 1931, Mukut Bihari Verma's *Stree-samasya* (1931) was a liberal, enlightened reflection on women's condition. As its sub-title—*Stree Andolan ke Itihas Sahit* (along with the history of the women's movement)—shows, it was an attempt to situate the changes taking place in the lives of Indian women in the global context of women's emancipation. In the chapter on education, Verma starts with the statistics showing the dismal state of literacy among women, and then makes a general point about the impact that modern education has made on the Indian character. Like many other critics of colonial education, including eminent leaders like Lajpat Rai (whose views will be discussed in Chapter VII) Verma bemoans the debilitating effect it had had on men. Not only do they lack self-confidence, he says, they also have no generosity or commitment to helping others because education makes them egocentric and materialist. After making this general point, Verma turns to the specific impact that education makes on women, and this is what he has to say: 'The vanity of educated women is growing bigger then that of men. Because their number is smaller at present, it is likely that they will have rather more, not less of, men-like feelings, but there is one special thing about them' (Verma 1931). This special point is the key to how we understand Verma's position as well as the larger question we are addressing, namely why women's education continued to be viewed with suspicion despite the curricular adjustment discussed earlier. Verma says occasions where men and women can talk to each other are rare in our society, and it is men's nature to pay great attention to women, therefore, a women who moves in the company of men is likely to be singled out for attention. Referring to the women in this situation, Verma now makes

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the following point: 'most of them either on account of the nervousness and fear that such an atmosphere causes, and some due to their strong desire for freedom and at times due to the weakness of their own mind and character, fall into undesirable coincidences. We find that certain complaints about the character of the majority of educated women are commonly made by the public at large' (Verma 1931).

Verma's observation leaves us in little doubt that the 'public at large' included him, and for this reason we can consider his point as more than an observation. Though it comes in the chapter on education, the point he is making has to do with the consequences of education, not with education as such. A part of the argument does imply that even as an experience, education instills undesirable vanity; however, the focus is on what happens after education has been completed. The rare woman who had received education up to a certain level—presumably high school or more—ran the risk of moving in the company of men and becoming an object of their excessive attention. This was when the accident of falling into an undesirable situation supposedly occured, leading to the public (that is, educated men's) perception of educated women. The universe of educated women who were moving about in men's world was quite limited at the time in which Verma was writing, but apparently it was sufficiently large to cause an alarm. As far as opportunity for employment went, the areas where young women were finding jobs after completing their education were mainly school teaching and nursing. Only a handful of women were going into civil services and professions like medicine and law.

However, we need to remember that in the early 1930s the public presence of women was much larger than the opportunities for employment. This was due to the extraordinary impact made by the call that Gandhi had given to women to participate in the movement for independence. Though his seventy-eight co-walkers in the Dandi march did not include a single woman, thousands of women did participate in the nation-wide commotion that the breaking of the salt law created. But even outside the domain of active participation in public events of a political nature, educated women were a presence. Simply the physical fact of women's presence where there was none before was a major change to which men had to get accustomed, and this was no easy process. The use of the past tense to address this process is quite unnecessary, for the process is still going on. However, in its early phase, the process seems to have

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created a serious disjunction in people's everyday knowledge of public spaces. In Premchand's short story, *Manovritti* (Premchand 1993), published in 1934, we can see a fine portrayal of this disjunction by an observer who, unlike Verma, did not share the public perceptions he was portraying.

Though Premchand is known as a social realist, he chooses in this short story a situation we might call a social fantasy—a young woman who has fallen asleep on a bench in a park where she had come for an evening walk. Before she wakes up next morning, having spent the night on the bench, she is spotted and copiously commented on by men: two young joggers and two elderly professionals who have come for their morning walk. Their comments constitute most of the content of this unusual short story. It is unusual in the sense that it has no plot or narrative progression; instead, it focuses on a situation which reveals the mindset of upper-class society towards women. The discussion among the two young joggers concerns the question of whether the woman is a prostitute; how else can her 'forward' behaviour be explained, they wonder. The two older men, a doctor and a lawyer, talk in more personalized, prurient ways, the doctor offering to marry her in the hope that she will revive his virility. All four men perceive the sleeping woman as a symbol of *azaadi* or freedom that has intoxicated women. What precisely the freedom consists of becomes clear in the third or final episode in which the young woman is spotted by two women, a rich, elderly lady and a young woman accompanying her for the morning walk. They too wonder if the sleeper is a prostitute, but the conversation takes on an argumentative character when the elder woman says that this kind of shameless display of freedom makes her angry. Her young companion replies: 'Men are free, and they know in their hearts that they are free. They do not make a pretence of freedom. A woman knows in her heart that she is not free, so she makes a show of her freedom. The strong don't boast; only the weak do. Don't you want to give them this right to wipe their tears?' They decide to wake up the sleeping woman. Terribly embarrassed, she tells them that she has vertigo, that is how she fell asleep. When she reveals her identity, the reader learns that she is the daughter-in-law of the old doctor whose son was one of the two joggers, but her marriage has not yet been consummated. Premchand's allegory is directed at male psychology which continues be a little-researched territory of the social space. That the space has undergone major

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changes is beyond question, but we know little about how the changes are negotiated by men, both when they are growing up and later when they become husbands and fathers. Historical and contemporary knowledge on this matter is crucial for better understanding of the role that education has played historically and how this role might be shaped in future.

Gokhale's Bill

Gokhale's initiative in introducing a bill which sought to establish the provision of compulsory elementary education as a state responsibility did not meet with success, but it was gradually absorbed in the *etatiste* discourse of education. In post-independence India, Gokhale's legacy exists as a declared state policy from which all traces of urgency and realistic thought have been wiped out. Clause 6 of Gokhale's bill provided for the banning of child labour (as far as boys were concerned) as a concomitant condition for the enforcement of school attendance (Gokhale 1911). Equal opportunity for education could hardly mean anything without equal right to a childhood free from economic responsibility. The recognition of this linkage by many liberals like Gokhale failed to attract political mobilization for the the acceptance of children's rights.

It is very interesting that not one of the high-class gentlemen who made extensive comments on Gokhale's bill referred to Clause 6. They merely said that conditions in India were not ripe for such a bill. The main theme of the commentary was that haste should be avoided. The question of financing of education received some articulate attention. Gokhale had suggested fee exemption for parents whose monthly income was less than Rs 10 per month. In Clause 8 he had also provided for the levying of a 'special education rate' by the municipality or local board. This point, and what it implied in terms of social relations and responsibilities, was attacked. The most unguarded of all comments on this matter was the one made by the Maharaja of Burdwan:

> Of course, I am not an authority on statistics like my friend Mr. Gokhale, but I think that this is going a step further than they

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> have even gone in Europe, where the present situation is, to my knowledge, that elementary education is imparted free of charges in consideration of its compulsory nature. I do not mean to say that in the present circumstances of India education should be imparted free of all charges, for to receive the desired benefit of making it generally free, it should be also made compulsory, which cannot be done in India at the present stage, as the consensus of opinion on the question of the abolition of fees in primary schools would prove (Gokhale 1911).

After making this circular argument, the Maharaja went on to quote Raja Ban Behari Kapur who had opposed an education tax by arguing that it is 'improper to confer an unasked for favour on one section of the community by taxing another'. It needs little imagination to see that this was a civilized way of putting across the unwillingness of the richer Indian to pay for the education of the masses. The unwillingness was hardened by the fact that compulsory education would have affected the availability of cheap labour that children of the masses had been providing for ages. The Imperial Assembly was not the kind of place where a spade could be called a spade. Prosperous Indians attacked the idea of compulsory elementary education at other forums. A.S.N. Wadia wrote a whole book to challenge the egalitarian 'cant' reflected in Gokhale's bill (Wadia 1914). He felt that widespread elementary education would have serious negative consequences:

> One is seriously inclined to question the depth and quality of the wisdom of a policy that advocates for the youth of India, whether he be Brahmin or Bhungee, the shapes of letters and the tricks of number irrespective of the calling by which he is to live (ibid.: 43).

Gokhale's bill failed to get approval, but similar bills were passed in several provinces following the Montague–Chelmsford Reforms. In Bihar, the bill inspired the Maharaja of Durbhanga to collect 11,000 signatures against it (Fischer 1919). He and other powerful landlords stated in their petition what no one in the Imperial Council debate had been able to say, that the compulsory school attendance law would interfere with the employment of children for agricultural labour. In retrospect we can fault the Maharaja for taking the

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implications of legislation too seriously. Legislation of compulsory attendance at school was performed as a symbolic exercise, leaving the question of compulsion to the discretion of local municipalities and district boards. The question of levy of a special tax for the development of education was also left to discretion. As Sargent pointed out, in the absence of any legal provision that would enable central authorities to force local bodies to take action, the Primary Education Acts remained inoperative (Sargent 1968).

Let us now turn towards the legacy of Tagore, Gandhi and Gijubhai. Tagore's concern for education revolved around the narrow social space within which English education had operated. His sense of pain for the oppressed child, his advocacy of the use of the mother tongue for education and his pedagogical strategy are all offshoots of his main anguish which pertained to the diffusion of education. It is easy to bracket his advocacy of Bengali as a medium of instruction with the dominant current of linguistic nationalism. Equally easy is it to associate Tagore's experiments in pedagogy with his modernism and orientation towards industrial progress. Such interpretations are lopsided and unfair because they do not take into account the starting point of his critique of colonial education. The starting point is not the alien character of colonial language and learning, though it is a part of the overall argument. The argument he presented against colonial education starts with the problem caused by its narrow diffusion. The fact that colonial education had created a class of 'untouchable' gentlemen was the reason that Tagore found colonial arrangements and the pedagogies implied in them so unacceptable. Contrasting India with Japan, he said, 'By education Japan understands the entire country's education, not the education of a narrow community of so-called gentlemen. Whatever we may say, what we do understand by the country is the country of the gentlemen' (Viswabharati 1983: 26). Tagore's critique of the oppressive role of education in children's lives flows from this perception of English education as an exclusive system. He saw the callousness of the well-off Indian, his illiteracy in culture and his enslavement to modes of thought and behaviour as aspects of the problem created by the absence of a common education system. It would be wrong to see his own institution as an attempt to solve this problem. Santiniketan was neither conceived nor presented as a model, nor was it a laboratory for the testing of new ideas in pedagogy. Its failures, therefore, have no relevance for any discussion, let alone evaluation, of Tagore's critique of colonial education and society.

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Whereas Tagore was content to create a school of his dream, Gandhi presented an alternative to the system of education. His alternative provided for both a new educational ideal for the system to pursue as well as a new pedagogical strategy. The pedagogy he advocated was deeply reflective of the ideal he wanted education to pursue—that of the economically useful and socially committed citizen—and this was supposed to contribute towards the realization of Gandhi's ultimate social ideal of a nation capable of sustaining its population in modest prosperity and governing itself without the help of the state's coercive force. We have already discussed Gandhi's response to the incident that took place at Kavitha village, involving an attack on Harijans by the upper castes. Gandhi did not propose state intervention to protect the Harijans in this case. If we examine his response to this incident in the context of his programme for school education, we can find out what sort of longer-term solution he had in mind. His *nayee taalim* was essentially a socialization plan, introducing a new element in the culture of Indian schools. This new element constituted the knowledge and the daily practice of a local production skill. There is little doubt that Gandhi's insistence on linking schooling with production had to do with his concern for making Indian schools financially viable, at least cheaper if not altogether self supporting. At the same time, the ideological agenda of his programme is much too obvious to be missed even if he did not articulate it. It was to make the school a place where all children of the local community would share the learning and practice of a skill which, in the traditional social order, was invariably an occupation of the lower strata. The choice of a particular skill would have made no difference to this point, for all traditional skills involving material production were associated with the lower and untouchable castes.

By giving such skills a place in the school's curriculum, Gandhi was in effect proposing a radical change in the school's symbolic role vis-à-vis the culture of society. What social implications this would have had if the programme had been effectively carried out on a wide enough scale and on a sustained basis, is a matter of speculation. What needs no speculation is the gap the programme implied between the school and the wider culture. Of course, Gandhi had hoped that change in education would be sustained by a larger struggle for change in the socio-political order. However liberally we may assess the phenomenon of social change in post-independence

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India, we are unlikely to find it approximating the goals that Gandhi had set for his long struggle for change. As we will discuss later, this agenda was linked to Gandhi's vision of India's progress. Here it is sufficient to say that the egalitarian edge of Gandhi's basic education scheme rested in its pedagogy.

A third eminent educator of the freedom struggle was Gijubhai Badheka who made it his mission to combine Gandhi's social ideal with a western pedagogical credo, that of Maria Montessori. Gijubhai found in Montessori the secret door to reach the child's inner world (Badheka 1988). At his school in Bhavnagar he constructed a milieu in which Montessorian ideas were used in conjunction with local resources. He drew upon the wealth of Indian folklore and traditional arts to accomplish the Montessorian aim of preparing children to become free, self-reliant adults. Like Tagore, he translated western child-centred theory into an Indian idiom without making compromises with its basic premise, namely, that every human child has a distinct intellectual and creative potential, and therefore all children must be treated as 'equal' in their uniqueness. Like many heads of private schools today, Gijubhai had to face the problem of an excess number of applications for the limited seats in his school. He solved it by random selection, rather than through the kind of misleadingly meritocratic procedures used nowadays by many schools. In their emphasis on respect for the child's urge for autonomy, and on aesthetic experiences which help children to exercise their autonomy in creative ways, both Gijubhai and Tagore showed the latent implications of an egalitarian philosophy of education.

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VI

Quest for Self-Identity

Education was a central concern in the nationalist quest for self-identity, for it was in education that the cultural agenda of colonization had been most succinctly expressed. Even if Macaulay had not used the hyperbole he did[1] to decry India's culture and heritage, the conflict between colonial education policy and indigenous culture would have revealed itself. Long before the political struggle for freedom had started, the quest for self-identity had led to a conflict in the minds of many educated Indians. The conflict was between the perception of English education as an enriching contribution to India's culture, and the perception that English education had cast a shadow over Indian culture. Such a conflict often arose within the educated individual's own mind, for education was a major agency with the help of which Indians imbibed the culture of the colonizer.

'National' Education

Control of educational institutions was one of the key areas in which the urge for self-identity found expression. Administrative control of institutions was perceived by Indian social leaders as a tangible expression of the colonizers' grip on indigenous culture. The fact that many college principals were English was proof that the perception was valid. Further proof was found in the use of English as the medium of instruction, and in the absence of religious content—

[1] Macaulay's famous 'minute' has received exaggerated attention in narratives of the development of Indian education mainly because of its rhetorical qualities.

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representing Hindu texts or knowledge of Hindu traditions—in the curriculum. These aspects of the education system served as ready and popular butts of criticism. However, the knowledge content of the curriculum was seldom scrutinized in any detail. This may have been because many Indian social leaders had ambivalent feelings towards the value of the knowledge that English education imparted. They criticized the curriculum for being 'alien', but they also admitted the value of the exposure it gave Indian students to western ideas about politics, civic life and economy. If the control of educational institutions passed into Indian hands, they hoped the knowledge content of English education would become available for India's reconstruction. Tagore captured this duality of the nationalist view of education in a metaphor: 'We say that the only thing wrong in our education is that it is not in our absolute control; that the boat is seaworthy, only the helm has to be in our hands to save it from wreckage' (Tagore 1961b: 204).

The Swadeshi movement of 1905 and the non-co-operation movement of 1920 presented two major opportunities for the assertion by Indians of their right to control their own educational institutions. The specific forms that the search for self-identity took on these two occasions consisted of two main sources of collective self-identity: religion and language. These sources were intertwined with concepts of race, ancestry, caste and motherland. The conceptual framework of the plans for 'national' education, which surfaced during the Swadeshi movement, had been worked out in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Satischandra Mukherjee's journal, *Dawn*, which started in 1897, and which led to the creation of the Dawn Society in 1902, provided the forum to discuss a 'national' curriculum of education.[2] Mukherjee's journal represented the belief, shared by many eminent Bengali intellectuals of late nineteenth century, that India's resurgence would require a renewed interest in Hindu philosophy. This belief combined elements of cultural revivalism with faith in rationalist ideas and procedures of inquiry. In the pages of *Dawn*, and later on in the classes conducted by the Dawn Society, young readers were given intellectual and moral stimuli on a wide range of topics. The society was created with the specific aim of supplementing college education in order to compensate for its deficiency in

[2] For details concerning the Dawn Society and other aspects of National Education discussed here, see Mukherjee and Mukherjee (1957).

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'moral training'—a euphemism for knowledge about religion and cultural traditions. The Dawn Society's activities included vocational training and the establishment of an Industrial Section which worked as an educational as well as a sales agency for indigenous industrial products. Emphasis on industrial training developed as an important feature of the National Council of Education (NCE) when it came into being in 1906.

Dissatisfaction with English education was central to the idea of *Dawn*. In an article published in it in 1898, Satischandra Mukherjee had written that:

> the ideal of University education under the old Hindu regime and the modern ideal of education seem to differ as poles asunder. The Hindu ideas looked to the intellectual development of the student as a means to an end, the end being the development of the higher, the spiritual nature of man .... [In the case of Western education, the end is] greater worldly prospects, acquisition of wealth and power (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957: 10).

This criticism of the education system took a more specific form when the report of the Indian Universities' Commission was published in 1902. The reforms recommended by this commission implied greater bureaucratization of university education. The Universities Bill, passed in 1904 by the Curzon administration, received sharp criticism from the Bengali intelligentsia. The bill reflected Curzon's anxiety about the involvement of university students in politics, and it provided several strategies to make student life more strictly 'academic'. The prospect of Bengal's partition provided the broader context in which indignation against sterner government control of university life was expressed (Sarkar 1973). What acted as the ultimate catalyst for the idea of the 'boycott' of government institutions was a government circular asking school and college authorities to prevent students from taking part in 'boycotting, picketing and other abuses associated with the so-called Swadeshi movement'. Should the authorities fail in this matter, the circular said, their institutions would lose their grants-in-aid, their 'privilege' of competing for scholarships, and their university affiliation.

A graphic account of the incidents triggered by this circular at the Zilla School in Rangpur appears in S.C. Roy's autobiography (1934).

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Roy describes how he and his fellow students violated the instructions issued by their headmaster in line with government's circular. They chanted *Bande Mataram* and attended a public meeting at the town hall. They were fined and later received an expulsion order issued by their Bengali headmaster. Resentment at this course of events took the form of a student rally in Calcutta where the first 'national' school (at Rangpur) was planned. Roy, who was among the students expelled from the Rangpur school, describes the birth of the 'national' school as 'the best thing our leaders could do at that time to keep discipline intact while at the same time respect the sense of self-respect of the youthful students' (Roy 1934: 114). The 'national' school movement did not, however, stop after accommodating the Rangpur students. It grew rapidly after the creation of the NCE in which Satischandra Mukherjee and several other members of the Dawn Society played an active role. The Bengal National College established by the council had Aurobindo Ghosh as its first principal. Financial contributions came from wealthy landowners, industrialists and academics (NCE 1956).

The NCE proposed a liberal curriculum for the institutions it would run or recognize, and on this matter a group of its original members broke away to form the Society for the Promotion of Technical Education. Tarak Nath Palit led this society and formed the Bengal Technical Institute in 1906. The NCE had its own programmes in industrial education, but these formed just one component in a broad-based curriculum which included literary, philosophical and social studies. Ethical consolidation of Indian society was the thread linking different parts of the NCE's scheme, and therefore, technical training too had to have a character-building slant.[3] Indeed, the model of curriculum proposed by the NCE differed little from what could be regarded as a decent course of liberal studies in England at the time. What made it distinct was the vocabulary of patriotism in which its purpose was explained, and the political context (that is, of the Swadeshi movement) under which it was proposed. It was an upper-caste vision of cultural autonomy and identity, lacking adequate recognition of the problem of inequality.

It appeared distinct from the curriculum of ordinary schools and colleges mainly because it offered a specific cultural grounding to the aim of 'character-building'. This aim had been the mainstay of

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[3] See, for instance, B.C. Pal's speech quoted in Mukherjee and Mukherjee (1957: 63).

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colonial discourse on education, but the colonial government had not given it any articulate curricular shape. This could be explained to a certain extent by the colonial government's reluctance to enter an area concerned with culture and religion. In the minds of Satischandra Mukherjee and his colleagues, there was little doubt about the kind of academic exposure that would lead to character building along 'nationalist' lines. Their vision of national education was grounded in a revivalist perception of culture. As might be expected, the reading and discussion of ancient Indian texts of religion and literature acquired a central place in the curriculum of national education. For ethos building, too, national institutions depended on Hindu symbols and rituals. And this was true not just of national institutions in Bengal, but elsewhere as well. According to a description of the Andhra Jatheeya Kala Sala, Masulipatnam:

> The very ordering of the scene with its sketches of sweet water and garden ground, its specimens of ancient drawings and statuary, and many a morning opening with recital of Vedic hymns and many a day closing with a lecture or reading of the Epic story or a Bhajan party, helps to create an atmosphere strongly reminiscent of ancient Indian Vidhyalayas (Row 1914).

Non-Co-operation and Gandhi's Appeal

The number of national schools declined from 1910 onwards, mainly because these institutions were not 'recognized' by the government and hence the students they certified faced difficulties in finding employment. After 1920 (when the non-co-operation movement pulled students in many places out of their institutions), the idea of national institutions again became popular. The number of schools affiliated to the NCE rose to twenty-two in 1925, and then started to decline again (NCE 1956). However, several institutions of higher education came up in this phase, and these proved more lasting symbols of the national education spirit. These, however, were not ideologically linked to the Dawn Society. Prominent among these were Gujarat Vidyapith, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith, Kashi Vidyapith and the Jamia Millia Islamia.

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Of these, the Jamia Millia presents a specially interesting example of the search for self-identity which, from 1920 onwards, entered a phase far more complex than the previous era had been. The Jamia was born at the critical juncture where the politics of the freedom struggle was growing into a mass movement. Gandhi's rise to dominance in Indian politics started at this juncture. His ability to appeal to different religious groups with equally spontaneous sincerity was something new on the political scene. It meant a sudden stretching of the range of social particulars which could be addressed from within a 'liberal' position. Indeed, it meant a stretching of the meaning, style and nature of 'liberal' politics. Gandhi took the ball of Indian liberalism out of highly cultivated, hesitant hands, and threw it into the eddies of religious and caste-based allegiances. Western political theory could be of no help here. Appeal to religious sentiments for a political cause appeared to Gandhi as a 'natural' choice. His strategy in the non-co-operation movement of 1920 was based on this choice. The Jamia Millia, which was a product of the non-co-operation movement, epitomized the amalgamation of religious, nationalist and modernist elements in a new model of Indian identity.[4]

The non-co-operation movement included an appeal to students to give up their education at institutions controlled by the government. The possibility of a collective act being performed by thousands of students had its own considerable political attraction. The rationale for such an act was explained by Gandhi in these words to a gathering of students at the Banaras Hindu University:

> It is my firm conviction that the main reason why the present regime goes on and continues to perpetuate the atrocities it does, is that we have come under the spell of its education. Before its intrusion we were self-reliant and not dependent as we are today (Gandhi 1977c: 37).

Gandhi had in mind the acculturating role of education. He was placing this role against his well-published view that Indian society, before it was colonized, was capable of living off its own intellectual and economic resources. This argument was particularly suitable for an audience consisting of university students. By attributing to

[4] A handy guide to distinguish these elements is Tonki (1983). Some interesting insights can also be gained from Mujeeb (1972).

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education a crucial role in India's enslavement, Gandhi was showing the students how important their participation in the non-co-operation movement was. This sense of audience was even more sharply exemplified in the difference between his appeals to students at Banaras and those at Aligarh.

At Banaras, Gandhi invoked the symbols of *brahmacharya*, the temple within and individual conscience—symbols derived from popular ideas about the moral conduct expected of Hindus. He referred to Tulsidas and the characters of Ram and Janak. These references had little to do with the main body of his argument; their function was to create an effect. The question of students defying the will of their parents was particularly tricky, and on this question Gandhi made use of the negative association that the westernized style of life carries. 'If you have given up Western ways', he said, 'if you have God in the pure temple of your heart, you can disobey even your parents' (Gandhi 1977c: 26). At Aligarh, Gandhi's emphasis was not on the ideal of an identity purified of Western ways, but rather on the sinfulness of having anything to do with the British government. The government, he said, was responsible for the destruction of the holy 'Khilafat'[5] and that is why it was against the honour of Islam and the honour of India to receive education founded by such a government (ibid.: 368, 379).

The use of religious rhetoric to mobilize his audience was a part of Gandhi's style. Many other leaders of the independence movement used this style but seldom with Gandhi's ease. The spontaneity he displayed in this matter was a testimony to the fact he held religious faith to be an important ingredient of identity. There is no sign in Gandhi's discourse of this period suggesting an acknowledgement that religious identity could be a problem for the development of a national identity. His view of education as reflected in the speeches at Aligarh and Banaras is also sharply different from the one he was to express seventeen years later in his proposal for basic education. In that proposal there was no room for any specific instruction of religion. In the 1920 speeches Gandhi claimed that instruction of religion was essential for good education. He charged institutions like the Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College and the Banaras Hindu University of keeping boys in a 'false atmosphere' in which they were taught to deny their faith. At Banaras he praised Arab

[5] Popular term for the Caliphate.

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education because it was based on religion. 'That is what you need', he told the students of Banaras (Gandhi 1977c: fn. 14).

The fact is that neither of the two institutions was as devoid of a religious atmosphere as Gandhi alleged. Indeed, both these institutions were created with the specific purpose of providing an alternative to the 'secular' education imparted at government-run institutions. Gandhi was not unaware of this, though it is quite possible that he was not satisfied with the kind of religious instruction they offered. The use of religious rhetoric as a means of appeal, however, need not have been related to Gandhi's concern for religious teaching at these institutions. Gandhi must have been aware of the fact that many vocal Indians had been criticizing the absence of religious teaching in English education. Indeed, the argument that the morality of college-educated youth had declined due to the absence of religious instruction in schools had become quite common. Schools and colleges run under the auspices of religious reform movements such as Arya Samaj had been projected as representing a major advance on English education by virtue of the religious ethos and moral training they offered. The rationale for the setting up of a Hindu university had referred to the role that religious knowledge plays in the moral upliftment of students (Malaviya n.d.: 270). In the United Provinces the urge to infuse education with religious instruction had recently begun to take a more specific, administratively significant turn. The government's willingness to give grants to the newly established Islamia schools and to the old *maktab*s under the rationale of encouraging educational motivation in a 'depressed' community, had led to a demand for Hindu *pathshala*s. Many district boards had agreed to provide such *pathshala*s with financial grants.[6]

As Sheean (1954) tells us in his biography, Gandhi fought his battles by focusing on the goal at hand, to the exclusion of longer-term implications. Such implications were always there, but it was not Gandhi's style to distract himself by paying attention to them. No wonder the proposal he gave for India's educational reconstruction in 1937 was so much at variance with his argument in Aligarh and Banaras. We cannot explain this variance by referring to the time gap, which would be a natural thing to do otherwise. Though

[6] For details, see Government of United Provinces (1928).

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his basic education proposal was made in 1937, its theme had come straight out of his experience, at the Phoenix[7] where in South Africa and later on at the Tolstoy Farm[8], as we will discuss in Chapter VII. These experiments with education and community-living centred on the dignity and pedagogical advantages of manual work. The pedagogy of the Phoenix experiment, as of the basic education proposal, was secular in a very distinct sense. It represented the modernist element in Gandhi which many scholars choose either to ignore or to label differently. Why this modernist element did not surface in his speeches at Banaras and Aligarh cannot be explained except by remembering that Gandhi was a political man apart from being an ethical and educational experimenter. His politics did not always lead him in the same direction as his ideas.

Jamia Millia advanced this modernist aspect of Gandhi's proposal more than any other institution. Under initiators like Zakir Hussain and Mujeeb, primary education took a distinctly progressive line at the Jamia. German and American pedagogical practices, which both these stalwarts were familiar with, were given a very fair trial. This line of work, however, was rather unrelated to the overall agenda of Jamia which was to develop an Islamic model of the man of learning within a nationalist framework. Pedagogy is hardly the tool capable of rescuing an ideology from its contradictions. Jamia represented the tragic effort made by some extraordinarily dynamic intellectuals to overcome the backlog of literacy and political participation which they recognized in the Muslim community. The effort was tragic simply because it was made too late in the day.

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[7] Gandhi bought a farm near Phoenix in 1932. The farm was situated on a hill and was spread over a hundred acres with a well, some fruit trees and a dilapidated cottage. Gandhi ran an office at Phoenix Farm, where he received guests of all backgrounds. Phoenix Farm provided Gandhi with the opportunity to deepen his idea of a community living entirely on the basis of its own colour. He started *Indian Opinion* from Phoenix.

[8] The land for Tolstoy Farm was bought by Herman Kallenbach in May 1910. Situated near Johannesberg, Gandhi called it the Tolstoy Farm. When Kallenbach gave it to the *satyagrahi*s free of cost, the farm had more than a thousand fruit trees, two wells, a spring and a house. Additional houses were built of corrugated iron when Gandhi and his family came to live on the farm. It had a multireligious community. Tolstoy Farm represents the first opportunity in Gandhi's life to experiment with the idea of a self-dependent community.

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Self-identity in the Hindi Region

Over fifty years had gone by in the development of a new self-identity in the educated upper-caste groups of the northern plains. The repertoire of language, myth, religion and geographical symbols, which helped this identity to form, had created an alienating, almost hostile, milieu for the Muslim intelligentsia. The men of letters that the Muslim aristocracy was able to produce over the turn of the century were shaped by a different kind of mould. This mould was characterized by the amalgamation of western 'learning with a commitment to Islam. The Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College of Aligarh, started by Syed Ahmed Khan in 1874, was the symbol and the main seat of this amalgamation. A member of Delhi's Muslim aristocracy, Syed Ahmed Khan had lived through the many changes that the nineteenth century in northern India had brought for his class. He worked for the East India Company from 1839 onwards, while retaining his association with the Mughal court of Delhi. The revolt of 1857 and the beginning of imperial rule had led to the crystallization of his role as one of synthesizing 'loyalism in politics and modernism in institutions' (Aziz 1967: 31). Khan's educational work at Aligarh shaped the personality of the Muslim intelligentsia of the new century. The western-oriented modernist personality of the new Muslim intelligentsia took some of its members to the heights of national-level politics while they remained somewhat isolated from the influential Hindi literati of UP. They joined the new national elite but were cut off from the cultural currents of their own region.

The Hindi region had come under colonial control long after the penetration of coastal India by English administration, language and education had taken place. The University at Allahabad was the last one to be established in the nineteenth century. The development of Allahabad as a seat of literature and journalism started during last years of the nineteenth century. By then, Allahabad had already become a centre of administration, commerce and political activity.[9] A major contribution to the growth of Allahabad as a literary

[9] For details of Allahabad's development, see Bailey (1975).

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centre was made by the journal *Saraswati*, started by the Indian Press of Allahabad in 1900. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, who became its editor in 1903 and remained so till 1921, made it a unique medium of literary expression. Its readership was drawn from the heterogeneous citizenry of urban centres consisting of educated elements from landed or moneylending castes, families of men employed in government offices, and professionals in law, medicine and teaching. Though these groups belonged mostly to the upper castes, we call them heterogeneous to highlight the fact that they included families rooted in the countryside as well as families supported by urban employment.

Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi was born in 1864 in a small village of Rae Bareli district. From the age of thirteen he had walked daily from his village to the town school, where he learned English. Later he learnt telegraph work and got employment as a telegraph clerk in the Indian Midland Railway (Shukla 1953). In his rare personality, a village Brahman boy's self-esteem and a rigorous early education at home combined with the expansiveness that working with the telegraph and the railway might bring to a literary mind. When in 1903 his literary reputation landed him the editor's position in *Saraswati*, he quickly saw his role as an educator of the literati. From correction of grammar and vocabulary to advice and choice concerning worthwhile issues to write about, Dwivedi's role as the editor of *Saraswati* covered a wide range of responsibilities towards the development of Hindi prose. He trained a rising provincial literati and its audience in sober and clear self-expression.

During the years of Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi's youth, literacy was already taking on a more complex meaning, incorporating not just familiarity with a script but also the power to project meanings and share them through printing. The availability of the printing press as a means of literacy production implied a radical change in communication—both in its scope and aim. Any individual could now, in principle, participate in text creation. This was a change far more important in terms of the meaning of literacy than the expansion of elementary education, which was extremely slow and was based on poor practices. Indeed, the education that schools were providing was only important as a means of social selection. A far more vital education, as a process of reconstructing worthwhile knowledge and disseminating it, was taking place under the auspices of magazines and literature. It was to this education, that of the literati and its audience, that Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi devoted his attention.

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The historic role of *Saraswati* under Dwivedi's editorship was in the development of Hindi prose. It was on the capacity for expression in prose that the future of literacy and education in the Hindi region mainly depended.[10] The heritage of Hindi had plenty of great poetry, but poetry had never required the capacity to read and write in its audience. The great poets of medieval times had become popular on the strength of the symbols and the forms they had used, not on the strength of their audiences' capacity to read. The advancement of printing technology and the expansion of literacy-related employment in offices and schools, for example, had altered the role that poetry could play in the preservation and circulation of powerful symbols.

The function of prose in everyday life had also been enhanced by the need for communication with the state, and by the growth of a postal system. Text creation was no longer a function of a few gifted individuals; more and more people were taking part in the process, even in poetic forms.[11] The preservation and dissemination of culturally significant symbols could no longer be taken for granted, for virtually anyone could now widely disseminate his poetic exposition. Under these circumstances, journalism acquired a distinct cultural function, far wider than the function it had performed in England 200 years earlier, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the context of a rising urban middle class. Standardization of prose and the projection of an established Hindi diction occurred in conjunction with the appropriation of mythological, historical and geographical symbols by a rapidly maturing socio-political discourse. In the Hindi region at the beginning of the twentieth century, journalism performed the role of inculcating a sense of community within a heterogeneous town-based society. It consisted of salaried professionals and office clerks, merchant groups, property owners in towns and rural landowners with urban links. But heterogeneous though this educated town-based society was in terms of its economic character, it was mainly upper caste, dominated by Brahmans and Kayasthas.

The Hindi–Urdu differentiation had considerably deepened by now, although it was still treated as a matter of controversy. Right after taking over as *Saraswati*'s editor, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi wrote

[10] For a detailed study of *Saraswati*, see Sharma (1977).

[11] For an analysis of the impact of printing on literacy in the western context, see Eisenstein (1985).

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on this topic, taking a sober position on the question of acceptance of Urdu literature as part of the Hindi tradition (Sharma 1977). It is hard to imagine that Dwivedi's position had many takers. Reaction to the Persianization of Urdu had been well established by now, and the course of the two languages had already been set along lines of religious separatism. Language had become, both among the Muslim landed and salaried gentry and the Hindu upper castes, the means as well as the symbol of community creation. But while both Hindi and Urdu were being used for this purpose, Hindi was also perceived as the symbolic instrument for fighting colonization and English, whereas Urdu was perceived essentially as the instrument for the preservation of Muslim self-identity. The decision made by the English administration to use Urdu as the court language had tainted it anyhow, rendering it unsuitable for anti-colonial struggle.

Hindi represented a far more ambitious programme, that of crowning the emergent vision of an independent India with a pan-Indian language. This role was assigned to Hindi not just by the UP literati, but also by leaders of two major social reform movements of the later nineteenth century, namely, the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj. It is in this wider context of the perception of Hindi that we ought to place *Saraswati*'s contribution to the self-image of the upper-caste literati of the United Provinces. It was the self-image of a confident mofussil community, preparing itself for a culturally hegemonic role in the destined future of the new nation.

Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi had learnt to read and write Urdu at his first village school. Literacy in Urdu was a practical thing to acquire through most of the nineteenth century in the United Provinces, since Urdu was declared the court language in 1837. Learning Urdu in this period meant learning the Persian script; in other aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar and literary expression, differentiation between Urdu and Hindi had developed, but had not yet deepened. The battle for installing Hindi in the court and in government offices, which began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and succeeded in 1901, was fought specifically on the matter of script. This is why the institution which led the battle for Hindi called itself 'Nagari Pracharini Sabha', literally, the 'Conference for the Propagation of Devanagari' script. It is hard to find a parallel for the attention and symbolic value that the graphology of the language acquired in this battle. Apparently, the Persian script of Urdu was a concrete reminder to the literate upper castes, particularly

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the Brahmans and Kayasthas of the United Provinces, of their subservient status vis-à-vis the Muslim aristocracy.

The task of propagating the Nagari script and Hindi in the last years of the nineteenth century was linked with the Arya Samaj movement. A biographer of Shyam Sunder Das, the founder-secretary of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, has recorded that the idea of starting the sabha had come from a speech delivered by Arya Samajist preacher, Shankarlal (Pande 1978). The idea of using Hindi as the medium for the propagation of religious and social reform was first given to Dayanand Saraswati by Keshub Chandra Sen, the Brahmo Samaj leader, in 1872 during their meeting in Calcutta (Jordens 1978). Also during this visit to Calcutta, Dayanand was exposed to the early nationalist thought of Bengali intellectuals, such as Bhudev Mukhopadhyay and Rajendralal Mitra, who regarded the adoption of Hindi as an important preparation for India's reconstruction. Dayanand gave his first ever lecture in Hindi two years later at Banaras. In this lecture, writes his biographer Lekhram, 'hundreds of words, and even sentences still came out in Sankskrit' (Seal 1978). Hindi soon acquired the title of 'Aryabhasha' in Arya Samaj parlance, and its Sanskritized form became a part and parcel of the movement's vision of a reformed Hindu society in which Vedic ideals would be practised. Arya Samaj leaders took an active part in the campaign for the popularization of the Devanagari script and its acceptance for official use. Running schools was a major part of the Arya Samaj programme of social reform. These schools imparted literacy in the Devanagari script, which was something altogether new in many district towns and villages of Punjab. So far, literacy in this region had been confined to the reading and writing of Persian and Urdu, and English since the middle of the nineteenth century. Urdu was not altogether dropped until much later, but it developed the image of being a 'foreign' language. The important work of Arya Samaj for the education of girls bears the best testimony of this image. Whereas boys' schools had facilities for the teaching of Urdu, girls' schools provided for Hindi alone—a differentiation that was consistent with the concept of women being the bulwark of the purity of Hindu society.[12] The creation of the Banaras Hindu University

[12] Madhu Kishwar has analysed the ideas involved in the Arya Samaj movement in the context of girls' education in 'Arya Samaj and Women's Education' (1986).

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(BHU) as a modern institution with a religio-cultural agenda gave considerable strength to the self-image of the Hindi literati and its reading public. Efforts to create the BHU had started as early as 1905, and money had been collected over the years with the help of a large network of upper-caste, landed and feudal interests which were spread over districts throughout the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and Bihar (Dar 1968). The location of the only 'Hindu university of the country' in the heart of the Hindi region had its obvious symbolic significance. It complemented the process whereby significant geographical symbols such as the Ganga, the Himalayas and the Vindhyachal had been appropriated in literary writings to project a hegemonic destiny for the Hindi region. The BHU was a community project, not a gift of the administration as Allahabad was. It quickly became the mint where the modern cultural coinage of the north Indian plains was stamped and approved for circulation. To have been educated at Banaras became symbolic of a new status, that of a 'modern' Indian with a cultural consciousness which no other university could supposedly give. It was supposed to wash away the associations of Macaulay and his legacy from one's education. Together with Allahabad, Banaras produced the overwhelming majority of literary writers and critics of Hindi, and a large number of the trained teachers who worked at schools all over the Hindi region—from Rajasthan to Bihar and southwards in the Central Provinces. It was largely at BHU that codification of 'worthwhile' knowledge of Hindi literature and language in the shape of syllabi, textbooks and teacher education took place.

Hindi Curriculum and Texts

The teaching of Hindi at college level, and the subsequent starting of Hindi departments in universities in the first quarter of this century made a major contribution towards the success of the Hindi literati's cultural agenda. Syllabi and anthologies were required to teach Hindi in colleges. Preparation of a syllabus meant the systematization of available knowledge and its codification in a formal way. Once codified as a syllabus, the knowledge would gain legitimacy from the university's name and from the rigour and reputation

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of its examination. No one contributed more towards the codification of Hindi-related knowledge than Acharya Ramchandra Shukla who started teaching Hindi at the Banaras Hindu University in 1919. A man of extraordinary talent and energy, Shukla shaped not only the format that the syllabi of Hindi in colleges continue to follow to a great extent to this day; he also defined the heritage of Hindi language and literature in a manner that few have dared to quarrel with.

This he did in his famous *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas* which was first published in 1929. It was a work of enormous and painstaking research, and it immediately gained a halo of authority in Hindi academic circles because no work of its calibre had existed before it. Shukla went well beyond the territory of the literary historian and took a strong ideological position indicating the irrelevance of the Urdu–Persian tradition for the development of modern Hindi. He ignored major Urdu poets of the eighteenth century in his otherwise meticulous chronology. This was indeed a rather strange response from a prolific reader of literature to a genuine part of the Hindi tradition. In an autobiographical essay, Shukla had written that his father had good knowledge of Persian and used to enjoy mixing lines of Persian poetry with lines written by Hindi poets.[13] Ramchandra Shukla gave no sign, either in his history or in his other prolific works of literary criticism, of having either taste or tolerance for this kind of mixture. By denying the literary works written in the mixed Hindi–Urdu tradition a valid place and status in Hindi's literary history, he performed a decisive symbolic act in shaping the cultural identity of college-educated men and women for generations. The identity Shukla gave to the Hindi heritage was a distinctly Hindu one. His appreciation of a Muslim poet like Jaisi, and his acknowledgement of the achievement of Premchand, who symbolized the confluence of Hindi and Urdu at a time when the two had travelled far apart, made little difference to this.

Ramchandra Shukla also edited a school textbook of Hindi for the higher primary grades (Shukla 1932). Published in 1932, this textbook was the prescribed literary reading in vernacular schools of the United Provinces. At the time, the basic Hindi readers were composed in Hindustani, which was a mixed code of Hindi and Urdu (Premchand 1967). These readers were available in both Devanagari and Arabic scripts. Premchand mentions how both Hindi and Urdu

[13] See the essay entitled 'Premdhan ki chhaya-smriti', in Shukla (1983).

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supporters had started to complain that instruction in a mixed language gave no literary knowledge to the student. Associates of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha voiced the perspective of Hindi supporters, and the Anjuman Tarakkiye Urdu represented the supporters of Urdu. Men like Pandit Roopnarayan Tripathi and Pandit Sitaram Chaturvedi stood for the cause of Hindi in this campaign over primary level textbooks, and Hasrat Mohani led the cause of Urdu.[14] In response to these complaints, the government prescribed a literary reader (in addition to the basic reader) for the higher primary grades. The literary reader that was prescribed for Hindi was Ramchandra Shukla's *Hindi Sahitya*. It offers us an instance of the manner in which the process of text creation for the school system contributed to the crystallization of the educated Hindi speaker's identity. It also shows that school texts belong, as much as any literature does, to the socio-political ethos of their time. The 1930s are widely regarded as the crucible of modern Indian history, holding the key to our understanding of the final phase and outcome of India's independence struggle. From our perspective the changes that were taking place in education at this time are worth probing for two reasons. One, they may help us grasp better how educational data reflect the socio-political milieu; and two, they may tell us how education contributes to the formation of a political atmosphere.

In order to examine *Hindi Sahitya* from this point of view, we need to remember that one of the ways in which education shapes the learners' identity is through the organization of knowledge in the curriculum. What is considered worth teaching to the young is selected out of the available body of knowledge and then represented in teaching materials, such as texbooks. In the Indian context, textbooks are not just one of the materials used for teaching; most of the time, they have been the only material that the teacher could use. Hence, the importance of how knowledge is represented in textbooks. In the context of language teaching, the textbook is all that children are expected to be able to read. What is regarded as knowledge in a language textbook consists of different kinds of linguistic and literary items. Grammar, vocabulary and comprehension form the main instructional content of typical Hindi readers. A literary reader, such as the one Ramchandra Shukla had prepared,

[14] This information is based on a letter, dated 22 May 1988, that I received from Pandit Sitaram Chaturvedi.

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was not intended to give primary attention to grammar and vocabulary. Comprehension of literary pieces in prose and verse was its focus and, as the editor pointed out in the preface, the purpose was to 'show boys the path of Hindi literature'.

Let us now look at Ramchandra Shukla's *Hindi Sahitya* as a piecing together of symbolic material. The portion of *Hindi Sahitya* for grade 3 has twenty-four lessons, and the portion for grade 4 has twenty-three. In both sections, one-third of the lessons consists of literary materials that symbolize a Hindu configuration. The configuration consists of mythology and symbols derived from religious practices and from history, projecting a specific religo-cultural identity. This identity is embedded in the manner in which the book recognizes its readership. In the lesson 'Twelve Months', for example, the author says: 'In the Pitrapaksha of Ashwin *we* Hindus remember our ancestors'. Vijayadahni reminds us, says he, that 'our country was also victorious once'. The concept of the 'country' is obviously associated here with pre-Moghul times. This reference to a distant past as part of one's search for a happier, prideworthy period in the life of the 'mother country' (*matribhoomi*) is a prominent motif which appears in several different forms throughout the book. In the story of Shatmanyu, the motif we are referring to surfaces in the shape of an argument against European Indologists:

> Some foreign scholars think that although [the idea of] universal love was common in India, love for one's country has come from Europe. But this is not so. Patriotism existed here even at the time of the Puranas. Little boys used to go around risking their lives in the interest of their country.

In the lesson on the 'Kumbh Fair of Prayag', the motif takes the form of nostalgia and longing:

> In olden times these fairs (like kumbh) were very useful. Sadhus and sages from all over the country used to assemble, discussing religion and knowledge, benefiting others, staying at the bank of Ganga–Yamuna, in the open for a month; breathing fresh air, bathing daily in the clean water of Ganga and Yamuna, and to be in the good company of wise sages—these things kept the people of our country in good health and they also enhanced their knowledge .... Now we neither have true sages,

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> nor do people have that kind of desire to acquire knowledge. All that is now left to do is to bathe at the Triveni for two or four days a month, to have one's meals, and to go off home. Let us hope that when better days will again return to our country, the real face of the kumbh fair will come back too (Shukla 1932: 65–66).

The hope that India's mythologized past will return is elsewhere expressed in the form of a question, asking whether a woman like Sita will be born again in our country.

It is within this wistful mood of the book that we ought to interpret the recurring reference to India as a nation. The idea, or rather the vision, is of a community of people who have won the freedom to return to what they regard as their glorious, unmuddied past. The process of return involves the spread of knowledge about the religion and traditions of the community. It is clearly identified as a Hindu community. The process of return to its bright past also involves the dissemination of Hindi. Though it is never labelled as a language of Hindus, its symbolic association with the religion and traditions of the community makes for such a label. The poem *Matribhoomi* (motherland) sharply brings out this linkage when it says: 'One who has no thought for one's own language, nor has a knowledge of one's community (*jati*) and religion; who feels no pride for his country—such a person is dead even though he lives.' In another poem, the 'nation' is projected as a cluster of symbols including religion, cultural norms, language and dress. Here, too, the reader is left in no doubt that the religion to which the poet refers is Hinduism.

It is interesting to see how and in what measure this text, which addresses its audience as 'we Hindus', recognizes the presence of Muslims. The grade 3 section, which consists of seventy-six pages, makes no mention anywhere of Muslims. The grade 4 section has two lessons where the existence of Muslims is acknowledged, and in the second of these two lessons we find the acknowledgement that a conflict exists between Hindus and Muslims. The first lesson is based on Akbar's life and rule. It starts with praise for Akbar's qualities (he was 'wise, patient, brave and generous'). Then the story of Bairam Khan is briefly narrated, ending with a reference to his poet-son, Rahim. The writer says that Rahim has a high place among the poets. In the next paragraph the author talks about Akbar's relations with Rajputs, and mentions how Rana Pratap continued to

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struggle and suffer throughout his life for he chose not to accept Akbar's domination. Thus, a lesson on the Moghul emperor turns into one on the restoration of the glory and manliness of Rana Pratap. The other lesson which has a reference to Muslims is about Nanak. It says that Nanak did not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims, and therefore became the object of worship in both these *jati*s (perhaps meaning communities). In order to make the point that Nanak was above religious differences, the lesson presents one episode illustrating Nanak's indifference towards Hindu ritual, and two episodes of the attempts made by Islamic believers to decry him.

One of the many thousand readers of Ramchandra Shukla's textbook was a child called Brijlal living in Mauranipur in Jhansi district of the United Provinces. On the blank side behind one of the illustration pages of the book Brijlal kept a neat copy of the draft application that he would need to send off some day to his school in order to seek leave. Brijlal's draft application read:

> गरीबपरवर सलामत
> जनाबआली
> गुजारिश है कि फिदवी को दो दिन से बुखार आ गया है इसलिए स्कूल में उपस्थित नहीं हो सकते लिहाजा दो दिन की रुखसत का सादिर हुक्म फरमाया जावे।
> अर्जी फिदवी
> ब्रजलाल

The contrast between the vocabulary of this application and that of the textbook prepared by Ramchandra Shukla which we have been discussing is striking. The rarity of non-Persian words marks this application as much as the rarity of Persian words marks the textbook. The lessons in the textbook are mostly composed in the organized, literary Hindi which Ramchandra Shukla preferred and wrote himself. He had explained his policy on the appropriate vocabulary for Hindi in a lecture on 'Hindi and Hindustani'delivered in Faizabad in 1932:

> Let us see what our Muslim brothers dislike in our language and literature. The articles, etc., coming from their side show that what they do not like in language are Sanskrit words, and in literature they do not like Indian scenes, Indian custom and ethics, and episodes of Indian history and mythology. In this context, we humbly submit that the literature of a country can hardly

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> stay away from that country's traditional language, natural forms, customs and ethics, narrative episodes, etc (Shukla 1932: 241).

The vocabulary used in Brijlal's draft application represents an institutional culture that Shukla's many-sided efforts were committed to changing. The Persianized diction of the application was obviously modelled on legal and administrative communication. The only non-Persian word used in the application is 'upasthit', meaning 'in attendance'. It was probably one of the first official expressions derived from Sanskrit to enter the school's daily routine, and it must have found its way first in the daily ritual of attendance taking where the Persian expression 'hazir hai' was popular earlier. The expression 'hazir hai' is used to this day in the courts of the Hindi region to verify the presence of a party or witness in the court's precincts. School texts such as *Hindi Sahitya* represented a cultural intervention which was consistent with the revivalist political forces active during the 1930s. This intervention contributed to the separation of the school as an institution from courts and offices in the matter of the language used for routine administrative functions. The school was both more open to such cultural intervention compared to courts, and more important too, in view of its role in socialization of the young.

School education became the means whereby the cultural agenda of the Hindi literati could advance without facing much resistance. Schools were a low-status institution of the colonial administration, and vernacular schools in particular mattered little as far as the content of their curriculum was concerned. In any case, the role of language teaching as a means of spreading religio-cultural consciousness was far too subtle a process to be acknowledged by the bureaucracy of the education department as a contradiction in its 'secular' policy. Much less subtle contradictions had become a part of policy: we have already noted the growth of Islamia schools and *maktab*s on the one hand, and *pathshala*s on the other.

Government Policy

The cultural agenda behind the transformation of Hindi at school also gained an advantage from the extremely slow rate of expansion of

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facilities for primary education in the Hindi region. During the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, primary education in the United Provinces remained a subject of decline unlike in other areas of British India where it registered consistent progress in terms of the number of children attending school. Commenting on this difference, the Director of Public Institutions, T.C. Lewis, wrote in 1897 that the 'true reason' of the difference 'lies in the fact that public and other monies are spent much more liberally on education in other parts of India than in the North-West Provinces and Oudh' (Rao 1916). There was no Bhaurao Patil[15] in these parts to establish hostels and schools for rural children. In contrast to western and southern India, education in the Hindi region thus remained a largely reproductive agency, transmitting the cultural heritage and visions of the literate upper castes to their own children.

The tendency towards revivalism was inherent among many writers and propagators of Hindi in the nineteenth century. It was fed by the Hindi–Urdu divide, and by the predisposition in colonial officers for underlining every possible basis of differentiation in the Indian population. As Amrit Rai points out, the tendency to 'purify' Urdu by dropping the vocabulary of Sanskrit–Prakrit lineage and incorporating a new Persian diction, had already set in during the eighteenth century (Rai 1984). This resulted in Urdu becoming a 'class dialect' of a nervous aristocracy and its identification with Islam, an association that the English administration showed no laziness in underlining. The reaction to this identification took the only available form of associating Hindi and the Nagari script with Hinduism, and of its 'purification' by the removal of words of Arabic–Persian lineage.

English, in the meanwhile, became entrenched as the language essential for upward mobility. An 1869 government report of Oudh noted that:

> The acquisition of English and the revival of Sankrit learning would seem to be the two lines along which Hindu civilization is likely to march. To foster Hindi in the masses and to encourage English and Sanskrit in the few would therefore be to fall in with the march of events (Government of India 1960: 537).

[15] For his life and work, see Kakrambe (1983).

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Howell, the Under-secretary for the Home Department, commented on this by saying: 'This is precisely what has not been done in Oudh, where Urdu and Persian have been everywhere cherished and Hindi and Sanskrit neglected (Government of India 1960: 537). In the following decades, the colonial administration did not merely 'fall in with the march of events', though this may well have been its self-perception, but strengthened the tendency of pupil differentiation on the basis of religion. In this matter, English policy hardly fulfilled the 'secularizing' role that some historians and sociologists have attributed to it.

The spread of Arya Samaj in the United Provinces and later on in the Central Provinces and Bihar fed the tendency which was already there among the Hindi literati to imbue didacticism with a revivalist view of history. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi's painstaking efforts to set the norms of good Hindi usage were matched by efforts to establish ethical norms, and in this latter effort the contribution of Arya Samaj was clearly visible in the early *Saraswati*. In this period, writing literature with a sense of moral responsibility was also meant to be a departure from the *riti* poetry of the post-*bhakti* era in which poets had directed their literary repertoire and their feudal patrons' attention to the marvels of the female body. The pathos of child marriage, widowhood and dowry became a frequent motif of poetry during Dwivedi's time under the influence of the Arya Samaj (cf. Sharma 1973; Suman 1970). These were evoked within a specific view of history—a view of Hindu society's moral decline under foreign influences over a thousand years. The writing of poetry and essays was perceived as a means to reawaken Hindu society. As Dwivedi said in one of his own poems:

धर्म के मग में अधर्मी से कभी डरना नहीं।
सोचकर चलना कुमारग में कदम धरना नहीं।
भव्य भावों में भयानक भावना भरना नहीं।
बुद्धिवर्धक लेख लिखने में कमी करना नहीं।

The literature written during the first two decades of the century with this kind of moral inspiration acquired a more specific educational function when Hindi was accepted in 1924 as an optional subject for the intermediate examination in the United Provinces (Bhargava 1958). Textbooks now became a major agency for the dissemination of the moral, revivalist consciousness of the Hindi

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literati. The form that the Hindi textbook inevitably took, following its counterpart in English, was that of an anthology of poems and essays. In the case of Hindi, textbooks provided an important outlet and motivation for the essay as a genre. The fact that the educational market was so important for writers of both prose and poetry accentuated the overtly didactic character of literary writing. In both prose and poetry, moralizing—within a revivalist frame of reference—became so well entrenched in school textbooks that the powerful movement of romantic liberationism, *Chhayavad*, made little impact on school learning when it swept the literary scene in the late 1920s. The lyricism of the greatest *Chhayavad* names like Prasad and Nirala failed to melt the reformist hearts of Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi and his influential contemporaries. Poetry and essays preaching a hundred lessons in moral behaviour and featuring meticulous attention to grammar and the purity of diction remained the staple of textbook anthologies.

The Indian Press emerged as a near-monopoly house of textbooks in Hindi, matching the monopolism that Macmillan was practising in English at this time. Harikeshav Ghosh, the owner of Indian Press, was an astute observer of the textbook scene all over northern India. An article written in tribute to him in the special issue of *Saraswati* on his death in 1953 said:

> He had complete information on [matters like] which textbooks have to be written for which province, lessons on which topics are essential for them, and where the source material is to be found .... He [always] had his accounts ready about which textbooks will be the right one to publish in which year and in how many copies.

As the publisher of *Saraswati*, the Indian Press had access to a vast resource of literary writings suitable for textbooks. The dominance which this publishing house had over both the literary and the educational markets undoubtedly strengthened the linkages between the literature appropriate for the two markets.

The association between literary and pedagogical writing became even stronger when the Indian Press started a monthly magazine for children called *Balsakha* in 1917. For nearly half a century, but particularly in the first forty years of its life, *Balsakha* provided to the educated, mostly urban parents of the Hindi region, a rich resource

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for acculturating their children. Brought out with great editorial and graphic care, it came out month after month as a symbolic exhortation to view the growing, struggling nation as a child. Nationalist dreams and visions found in the metaphor of the child an expression that conveyed both innocence and design. Inevitably, these dreams were rooted in a Hindu configuration of collective memory. Hindi language and Hindu beliefs and ethics were warmly intertwined in this memory.

From the 1930s onwards, the Hindi region received further impetus to nurture a distinct Hindu vision of India's future from a source that lay southwards of the region. This source was the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—a blossom of the vigorous seed of revivalist nationalism that Tilak had sown in western India.[16] By the early 1930s, the RSS leadership had started to cast its aspiring glance at the Hindi areas of the Central Provinces and further northwards, at the Gangetic plains. This was also when RSS leader Hedgewar was invited to Karachi by Bhai Parmanand, a prominent leader of the Arya Samaj, to attend the All India Young Men's Hindu Association. This visit gave the RSS leader his first opportunity to initiate RSS activities in areas where the Arya Samaj had found its lasting audience, namely the Punjab and the United Provinces. RSS *shakhas* (branches) multiplied at a rapid rate in the Hindi region during the 1930s. A measure of its increasing influence can be found in the notification issued by the government in the Central Provinces prohibiting its employees, including teachers, from being involved in RSS activities. The attraction of RSS ideology and its mode of functioning for teachers and students was obvious enough. Here was an articulate programme that promised to inspire youth with a sense of values and idealism with reference to the dramatic objective of sparking Hindu resurgence.

The atmosphere in which RSS influence could deepen already existed in the towns of the Central Provinces. Marathi landowners and professionals committed to Tilak's notion of Swaraj had given tough resistance in the 1920s to Gandhi's followers (Baker 1979), and the English administrators were only too eager to keep nationalist loyalties divided. The practical route for Hindi-speaking Congress politicians who wished to subdue their Marathi-speaking rivals,

[16] The discussion given here is based mainly on Andersen and Damle (1987).

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was to imitate the latter's aggressive stands in matters relating to religion, education and language. Broadmindedness or consideration in religio-cultural matters had no takers left by the early 1940s when nationalist consciousness spread wider than its original narrow base. In literary and educational matters, the Central Provinces provided an icier air than UP in terms of resistance to Hindu revivalism. The supremacy of the Congress before and after independence made no difference to this aspect of the political life of the Hindi region in central India. Here Congress leaders like Govindadas could freely propagate Hindi as the means of fulfilling India's cultural destiny and face even less questioning than Sampurnananda or Tandon had to face in the United Provinces.

New Hindi, Old Hindi

The great dream of the UP literati to provide the future nation with an indigenous lingua franca thus got overlaid with an association between religious revivalism and language. This association cast its shadow both on the nature of Hindi and on the identity consciousness it stood for. The impact on Hindi was mainly by way of Sanskritization and sharp dissociation of the written from the spoken form. The process had already begun with the Persianization of Urdu. As Bharatendu recorded, by mid-nineteenth century there had emerged two 'distinct' languages which had begun to be associated with two 'communities', namely, Hindus and Muslims. Still, until the end of the nineteenth century, no eminent writer of Hindi had written in a style entirely devoid of Urdu mannerisms. Bharatendu's prose, both in his essays and plays, had the vibrancy of a spoken language. Its syntax as well as its choice of words showed a sense of freedom to utilize the Urdu tradition and scholarly acquaintance with its Persian heritage. Even his contemporary, Pratap Narayan Mishra, who is accredited with the slogan 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan', gave evidence of the same sense of freedom vis-à-vis the Urdu tradition.

This freedom and the absence of prejudice towards Urdu that it implied, became inaccessible to the Hindi writer of the early twentieth century. The differentiation between Hindi and Urdu deepened as the two languages got increasingly associated with Hinduism

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and Islam, respectively. The attempt made by Arya Samaj to use Hindi to develop the self-perception of a Hindu community in the urban educated groups of Punjab and UP made a signal contribution to the formation of the Hindi–Hindu association. Lajpat Rai noted in his autobiography that the most powerful influence on his character was that of the Urdu–Hindi movement. 'This conflict taught me the first lesson of Hindu communality', he wrote (Rai 1951: 144).

When in the late 1920s Hindi was approved as a subject for the intermediate examination in the United Provinces, it had already become a language different from the one Bharatendu had used. It had become the chosen vehicle of an upper-caste literati's self-image in a fast-changing national scene. A new register was developing, that of studied complexity in syntax and a circumspection in the choice of words. This register was proposed to be especially suitable for educational purposes on the argument that educational or scholarly discourse by its nature requires a more complex register, that the language spoken by ordinary people cannot be used for serious dialogue. This argument was used as an answer to Gandhi's plea for the use of Hindustani—a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, or rather, the old Hindi–Urdu. Hindustani was referred to as a language of the bazaar which could hardly fulfil the requirements of a national language. Sampurnananda wrote: 'In any country, the dialect of the village and the bazaar cannot be adequate for the needs of civilized society' (1962: 135). Support for Hindustani among the Hindi literati was scarce, and Premchand was the only major writer who supported it (Premchand 1967b). The two powerful institutions working for the promotion of Hindi, namely, the Nagari Pracharini Sabha of Banaras and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, of Allahabad, vigorously opposed Hindustani. Gandhi's plea for Hindustani proved a straw in the wind. In his autobiography Govindadas wrote that Gandhi's plea was a political one (Seth Govindadas 1958). Of course it was. To challenge it, Hindi supporters used two arguments: one, that Hindustani, as a spoken idiom of the common man, is inadequate for serious discourse, as in education and parliament; and two, that it cannot promote national integration as Sanskritized Hindi can, for traces of Sanskrit are found in all Indian languages.

Neither of the two arguments revealed the core 'problem' of Hindustani and Urdu from the perspective of the supporters of Hindi, nor did the problem fully surface in the long debate on the national language question. This was nothing unusual, of course.

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Many premises remain buried in Indian political dialogue and are consistently denied by the very men who want these premises to become accepted by all. In the case of Hindustani, the hidden premise of Hindi supporters was that it was not purely Indian. They saw its Urdu legacy as a 'foreign' element, in line with perceptions that became popular in later nineteenth century. Govindadas gives us a tiny glimpse of this hidden premise. Referring to the two groups, one representing English imperialism and the other representing Mughal imperialism, he said: 'Due to the conspiracy of these two groups it was no easy matter to instal a purely Indian language as India's state language (Seth Govindadas 1958: 147).

The struggle for Hindi, in a form from which its Urdu heritage was separated, became a means for the upper-caste groups, some of whom had substantial landed interest, to establish political identity. Once established, this identity was used from the late thirties onwards to fulfil a hegemonic political agenda. This political use of Hindi speeded up its transformation from being a spoken language into becoming a narrow dialect of educational and political communication. This form of Hindi not only denied the Urdu heritage its share, but also closed itself vis-à-vis the powerful spoken varieties of the region including Awadhi, Bundeli, Chhattisgarhi, Bhojpuri and the several tribal languages of central India. The 'new' Hindi became the symbolic property of the college educated, and especially of those who had studied Hindi literature. Literary publications had to find their audience within this group. In a society where literacy was very narrowly spread, it meant a very restricted sphere indeed. The confinement of literate Hindi within this sphere meant an exacerbation of syntactical complexity and a Sanskritization of vocabulary.

These tendencies, in turn, strengthened the reproductive role of education. Only children of upper-caste backgrounds could feel at home in a school culture where the language used was so restrictive. Another implication of the Hindi taught at school had to do with the perception of Urdu and Muslims. Words of Urdu origin were labelled as 'foreign' in the classification taught as part of Hindi in secondary classes . This kind of labelling impelled the student to perceive the Muslim population as a 'foreign' and separate group. The average student had, of course, no access to the aesthetic patterns associated with Islam since the heritage he came to be acquainted with as part of his language education excluded the symbols of Islam and the literary patterns of Arabic–Persian traditions. The Muslim

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child, on the other hand, was unlikely to find any symbol of his home culture in the curriculum. His language and the cultural patterns associated with it were not recognized by the school. As a social institution, the school was unable to provide him with the feeling that he 'belonged'. To this aspect of the school's failure, the teacher made a vital contribution. Himself drawn from an upper-caste though low economic background, he received as part of his own education and training a social perspective which was consistent with the new Hindi of the urban educated groups. A textbook used in training colleges in the United and the Central Provinces since 1940 as a manual for Hindi teachers gives us ample evidence of this tendency. The first chapter of this book sets the tone by taking the position that 'only Sanskritic Nagari can become the national language' (Chaturvedi [1940] 1962: 18, translation mine).

The old Hindi—characterized by the presence of Urdu vocabulary and idiom—did not die out though it was discarded as being unfit for educational use. It found its place in another medium which was evolving in the 1930s. This was the medium of film which, after the production of *Alam Ara*, the first Hindi talkie, in 1931 grew at a rapid pace. This new medium had an audience far wider than that of the Hindi region alone and in any case, Bombay, where the film industry was centred, was not in the Hindi region. Moreover, this medium did not depend on literacy, hence the educated section of the population were not its main audience. In terms of language, this new medium of communication gave the joint Hindi–Urdu tradition a means to survive and perpetuate.

The growth of film as a medium of communication took place in the context of the rise of a modern concept of entertainment. The association between film and entertainment had a significant implication for education. If a language had proved suitable for film and was being used with great success in it, it was rational enough for a dissociation to develop between this language and education. This was because the classical, Brahmanical traditions of learning and teaching, which insisted on a distance between everyday life and learning, had remained intact despite the emergence of a bureaucratic system of education under colonial rule. As we saw in Chapter 2, this older tradition not only proved resilient, but in fact got a new lease of life when a homonymy developed between colonial and nationalist discourses during the later nineteenth century. The continuation of this tradition implied that a popular language could

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not become the medium of education. If social and political pressure forced the administration to let vernacular language be used for instruction, the classical tradition of learning would react by encouraging a special register of the vernacular to develop. Conditions prevailing in the political context concerning Hindu–Muslim relations had already created the ethos in which an exclusive language for education could develop. The rise of film as a medium of mass entertainment further assisted this process. The language of popular communication was appropriated by film, and the new Hindi, from which a major part of the composite heritage of Hindi–Urdu had been jettisoned, became the medium of education.

Sanskritization of Hindi received very substantial impetus from state policies followed after independence. The Constitution gave to Hindi, written in the Devanagari script and drawing upon Sanskrit as a resource for its new vocabulary, the status of the official language of the central government. It also granted a fifteen-year interim period for the displacement of English from the status of the 'associate official language'. This duality, which persisted after the fifteen-year interim was over, may have irked Hindi politicians, but it did not impede the Sanskritization of Hindi at the state's behest. Preparation of Hindi terminologies for scientific, social-scientific and technical subjects, and for administrative work was pursued as an official task with remarkable rigour. These terminologies influenced the Hindi used on radio and in the state's publishing ventures of an educational nature. By the mid-1960s, when the constitutional provision for the 'associate' status for English came up for renewal, the *etatiste* version of Hindi had been fully established.

But the enormous nationalist programme of the north Indian literati to provide independent India with a national language became a victim of the religious and cultural split in the Hindi heartland. In this process, a catalyst's role was played by the break-up of a joint language. The culturally separatist character of the champions of Hindi cut across political party lines. It became difficult to distinguish the supporters of Hindi who were in the Congress from the ones who were in the Hindu Mahasabha or the RSS. Both types of supporters labelled the cause of Hindi as a 'cultural' one, but the label was too thin to hide the anti-Muslim character of the argument underneath it. Tandon's argument in parliament is most instructive in this matter. He claimed that he was a lover of Urdu and Persian, but

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> to be fond of Persian is one thing, and what language the country should have is another. In our country there can be only one culture, the Indian culture—'Bharatiya Sanskriti'. The basis of that culture is our country's language, and our country's script (Tandon 1959: 115).

The tortuously conveyed message was that Persian and Urdu and their scripts were foreign to this country, and therefore these could not share the forming of Indian culture today. This position was poetically expressed in a poem published in *Balsakha* of February 1948 which exhorted children to give up Urdu on the ground that it was 'Pakistani':

> पाकिस्तानी उर्दू छोड़ो, हिन्दूस्तानी हिन्दी सीखो;
> अपनी भाषा, रीति–नीति को, अपनाओ हिन्दू से दीखो।

This history of the Hindi movement shows how the role of education in shaping a collective identity in the Gangetic–Vindhya region was intertwined with the character that Hindi acquired in the process of serving as a symbol of political mobilization. An important implication of this history is that the customary view of education under colonial rule as a secularizing influence needs to be questioned. Such a view can be sustained only if the inner workings of the education system, particularly curricula and textbooks, are ignored. British policy in curriculum did, of course, claim that the government would only approve secular courses of study. Avoiding the explicit teaching of religion was what this policy meant in a practical sense. But as we have seen in Chapter 2, the teaching of English literature was used as a quasi-moral course of study right from the beginning of colonial education. Under this approach, literary texts were chosen with a view to inculcate Christian ethics. Literary study provided the secret door through which Trevelyan's dream about the light of Christianity spreading in Asia could enter the Indian system of education. It is not surprising then, that school literature, a century after the inception of colonial education, should serve as a secret door for the propagation of a rather different kind of dream. This was the dream of assembling a hegemonic community out of the upper-caste, landed as well as urban, citizenry of the Hindi region. Hindi school literature became a 'secular' tool which would be used to consolidate the religious and cultural consciousness of this community,

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and to propagate it under the auspices of state-supported education. This enterprise was strongly linked to the nationalist struggle in the Hindi region, and it influenced to a considerable extent the value orientation of this larger struggle, marking its ambivalence on the question of secularism.

The determination reflected in the Nagari movement and the vehemence it was able to instill in the literary ethos at the turn of the century can be seen as outcomes of two powerful factors. One was the political factor introduced by the idea of representative governance at the municipal level, and the other was the economic message that new opportunities for government employment sent to the literate upper-caste society. In the context of both these factors, a competitive sense of insecurity gripped the upper strata of both Hindu and Muslim societies. Indeed, it was this insecurity, and the steps taken to mitigate it, that gave rise to a new kind of community building. Legitimate cultural descriptors were used to communicate to potential members of the emerging community and to English authorities emerged as impartial arbiters between rival groups, fully submerged in the fear of making mistakes and losing all. The memory of 1857—of how decisively it had shown British supremacy to be—sharpened the perception that an altogether new situation had come into being. In the Gangetic belt, the situation was deciphered in terms of religious separatism; to be labelled, in uniquely Indian usage, as communalism. In this region there were no third parties comparable to the lower caste reformers of western India. In the northern plains, the fear that representative institutions would favour the majority religion, and the parallel fear that competitive job opportunities would favour the entrenched language, triggered a long-term civil strife. As time went by and the new political institutions expanded their scope, the strife gathered momentum, and ultimately—with a series of fortuitous developments paving the way—led to India's partition half a century later.

This overarching summary may seem excessively and unwarrantably clear on the role of cultural factors like language and religion in the shaping of political outcomes. Certainly, when an outcome so momentous as partition is invoked, one needs a fuller picture of the terrain in which it became possible. Attempts to draw that picture have been made in abundance, and some of them to pay attention to language, literature and education. A common tendency is to perceive the role of religion as a negative or regressive force, capable

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of gathering power only in the context of illiteracy and poverty. From such a point of view, it looks logical to associate the vast illiteracy and poverty of the Vindhya–Gangetic belt with the violence of communalism. Seemingly plausible and attractive though such a model is, it fails to recognize that education does contribute to religious divisiveness under certain historical circumstances. We cannot blindly see education as a secularizing force, applying a general theory of modernization. The social character and consequences of education depend on what social forces are using it under given conditions. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the conditions shaped by colonial powers in the plains of the United Provinces were such that conservation and consolidation of religious identities gained predominance over the other social functions of education. This it did differently for the Muslim elite pursuing Sir Syed's dream of modernizing and liberalizing the Muslim mind, and for the upper-caste Hindu literati chasing away the ghost of Urdu.

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VII

Meanings of Progress

The concept of 'progress' as a forward movement against a static backdrop was a prominent motif in Victorian literature and thought.[1] In later nineteenth century, it frequently served intellectuals as a means through which concern for one's community, mother-tongue and nation could be expressed. In each case, it evoked the image of a contest in which victory meant getting ahead of others. The use of contest as a metaphor of progress provided Indian intellectuals the opportunity to place before their audience a community larger than that of caste, religion or language. This they did by permitting a comparison of Indian society with Europe as represented in India by English rulers. The view of India as an ancient and static society had already been established in early nineteenth century (Bearce 1961). The colonizer's presence symbolized a moving force in a static ethos, and anything that the native society did in response to the English presence became symbolic of progress.

A speech delivered by the Hindi writer Bharatendu at a fair in Balia in 1877 gives us a useful illustration of how 'progress' was represented as a value in the early phase of nationalist thought. As indicated by the title his pen-name implied—'the moon of India'—Bharatendu's fame as a dramatist and intellectual had been well established by now. His plays such as *Bharat Durdasha* and *Andher Nagari*, had been staged with great success in different towns of the United Provinces. The invitation to deliver a public speech at the fair in Balia was an acknowledgement of the popularity and respect he enjoyed. The title under which he published the text of his speech was 'how India's progress can occur'.[2] Although the speech began

[1] See Nisbet (1976) for elaboration on this point.

[2] This speech is included in Harishchandra (1987). All quotations from this speech are my translations.

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with a customary expression of pleasure over the fact that so many people had assembled at Balia, its second sentence was certainly not customary: 'Anything that might happen in this unfortunate country is good enough.' Bharatendu criticized the fact that nothing 'happens' in Banaras (his native town), and then revealed the reason for such an enthusiastic assembly taking place in Balia. The reason, according to him, was the presence of Mr Robert as the collector. This brought him to the first metaphorical expression in the speech, an expression that must have carried immediacy and appeal in that early period of the installation of railways:

> Our Indian people are like a rail vehicle. Although there are many good and expensive coaches such as First Class, Second Class, etc., attached to it, it cannot move without an engine. Similarly, if Indian people have someone to drive them, what can they not accomplish? (Das 1953: 895)

A little later, he used another metaphor—that of a horse race:

> It is the time of a kind of horse race of progress. American, English, French and Turkish—all are running smoothly. All have in the mind the desire to touch the line first. At such a time the Hindu horse is standing, scratching the soil with its hoof. Never mind the others, it does not feel ashamed to see [even] the Japanese ponies panting. It is a time when whoever is left behind will not be able to advance by any means. During this rain of loot, one who has the umbrella of sloth on his head and the bandage of foolishness around his eyes can only be said to be accursed by God (ibid.: 896–97).

Towards the end of his speech, Bharatendu invited the Muslims to 'run' along with the Hindus, casting aside their sloth and obstinacy. Many Muslims, he said, still thought that the kings of Delhi and Lucknow were well and safe.

Let us now consider what Bharatendu meant by 'running'; what precisely he wanted people to do instead of sitting lazily. He said that English rule had provided all the necessary material for making progress. A society that did not take advantage of this material ought to be described as 'suicidal'. He challenged the argument some people might have used, that we can hardly think of progress when

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all our energy goes into providing for our bellies. England too was in this state once, Bharatendu argued, but 'it filled its stomach with one hand and with the other it cleared the thorns (from the way) of progress'. 'Aren't there peasants, coach drivers, and labourers in England?' he asked. Of course there were, he told his audience. They too worked for their livelihood, and they also thought of 'what new machine or ingredient they must make in order to double their crop'. Moreover, in England even the coach drivers read newspapers, making use of the time when the master was visiting his friend. Our coach drivers, moaned Bharatendu, just gossiped and smoked.

The reference point for Bharatendu was the development of machinery, and he associated it with a certain kind of attitude and behaviour, and with literacy. In the rest of his speech, he spoke about the constraints that traditional ways of thinking imposed on the Hindus, disabling them from moving ahead on the road to progress. In his advice to the assembly at Balia, the emphasis on self-reliance and independence was mixed with exhortation to benefit from English rule. A key element in his programme for the achievement of self-reliance was reform in religion. To persuade his audience to accept religious reforms, he made a distinction between 'real religion' and 'social religion', and then asked people to view the latter as subject to change in accordance with circumstances. He explained how several religious practices had a rational basis, and concluded that no ritual needed to be seen as final or unalterable. The interesting point is that he derived his inspiration for 'progress of religion' from the English who, he said, amalgamated their religious policy with their politics. He suggested that this was something Indians needed to learn from the English. Once reformed and ready to move, Indian society could achieve self-reliance in all things and stop the drain of wealth to the West. Indians could then themselves manufacture the goods they were having to import.

The manner in which Bharatendu articulated his perspective on progress is fairly representative of the nationalist stance in later nineteenth-century northern India. We can read in his speech the major currents of thought of his day pertaining to India's subjugation and the possibility of her upliftment. His contemporary, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, made a far more elaborate and intricate articulation of the problem of discovering 'a cultural ideal which retained what was thought to be distinctively Indian, while subsuming what was valuable in the culture of the West' (Chatterjee 1986b: 125). Such

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an amalgamated cultural ideal was expected to place Indian society on the road to true progress and happiness of her people. That this progress could not be achieved without 'learning' from the West was certain, though 'learning' might range from 'being inspired' to actual transfer of knowledge. In the case of Bharatendu, the West's role was mainly that of inspiring Indian for action. His contemporary Bengali writer, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, suggested the alternative of the transfer of western knowledge to India (Chatterjee 1986b: 125). A fantasy Mukhopadhyay wrote in 1875 narrates how Indian rulers send 300 Indians to Europe to study European science, and an equal number of Europeans are employed to train Indians. The idea that the transfer of scientific knowledge and skill from Europe to India would result in the latter's transformation suggested a strategy similar to one adopted by the Meiji rulers in Japan.

The acknowledgement of Europe's superiority in scientific knowledge explains the ambivalence that we find in nationalist thought on education. We have seen in Chapter II how nationalist commentaries on education developed an idiom that was homo-nymous with the idiom used by colonial rulers. Such a homonymy was consistent with the ambivalence we will now examine. Apart from two major exceptions, namely, Gandhi and Tagore, we find that this ambivalence concerning the role of English education in India's progress continued throughout the struggle for independence. Few nationalist leaders failed to criticize the English system of education for its alien character (particularly as expressed in the use of English as a medium of instruction), its narrow curriculum and its very limited spread in the Indian population. These are familiar topics of criticism we find in the writings and speeches of nationalist leaders who took an interest in education. But along with a critical stand on these issues, we also find a subtle appreciation for the exposure that English education offered to western knowledge in science, political philosophy and economy. While rejecting English education and British rule, nationalist commentators seldom failed to express some satisfaction over the fact that British rule and its education system had provided a means for Indians to come in touch with a materially advanced culture. The assumption underlying this satisfaction was that the material advancement of Europe, as represented by the English in India, was based on Europe's scientific knowledge. This assumption seems to have remained untainted by the realization which was widely shared that England was responsible

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for plundering India's wealth. Superior knowledge and the behaviour (such as literacy, democratic spirit and industriousness) associated with it provided the overarching explanation of England's progress. Such an explanation made an appreciation, howsoever cautious, of English education in India a logical necessity. In his Balia speech, the only critical comment Bharatendu made on English education had to do with its potential impact on women.

Political biographies of major leaders present a range of intensity and styles in which their ambivalence towards English education found expression. In the case of Dayanand and Tilak, the initial acknowledgement of the advantages of English education later turned into a radical opposition to it. In the first edition of Dayanand's *Satyartha Prakash*, English education was appreciated for the opportunities it offered for employment. This was part of a six-page assessment of British rule, including an appreciation of the introduction of printing (Jordens 1978). The page containing the appreciative commentary was deleted in the later edition of the book. Dayanand's reconsidered judgement was that 'foreign rule cannot be fully conducive to happiness, even when it is conducted with mercy and justice and with personal solicitide for the people and is devoid of all racial and religious bigotry' (ibid.: 265). Tilak's career presents a similar story. In the beginning of his political life, he expressed a preference for the 'secular' knowledge that English education offered over the religious knowledge available in traditional institutions. He was party to the naming of the famous school in Poona as the 'New English School'. Later on, he adopted a sharply critical stand against English education. Following the efforts of Madan Mohan Malaviya to establish a Hindu university at Banaras, Tilak's vision of education as an agency for cultural revival became an important ingredient of his political aims.[3]

Gokhale and Lajpat Rai

In terms of the question of how English education might contribute to India's progress, the clearest stand was that of Gokhale, and the

[3] For an insightful account of Tilak's politics and ideology, see Wolpert (1962).

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most ambiguous was that of Lajpat Rai. Both these leaders found in education a major concern of their political careers, and both thought that a solution for a number of problems relating to India's subjugation lay in education. Gokhale's major complaint against the British education system was that it was so narrowly spread. The low rate of literacy in India was to Gokhale a sour reminder of India's backwardness compared to the countries of the West. He worked out the cause of India's poor literacy in terms of the low expenditure that the English government was making on education in India, particularly on elementary education. This was the thrust of his Elementary Education Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council which we have discussed earlier. He pointed out that compared to the American government that spent 16 shillings per head of the population for the development of primary education, the Swiss which spent nearly 14, the Australian which spent over 11, and the English government which spent 10, the British Government of India spent only one penny (Gokhale 1911: 313–19). If this deficiency of funds could be alleviated and primary education made compulsory for every child, Gokhale believed that a major obstacle would be removed from the path of India's progress. 'It is a smaller evil my countrymen should eat less salt', he said in a famous rhetorical plea for the increase of tax on salt to generate resources for education, 'than that their children should continue to grow up in ignorance and darkness and all the moral and material helplessness which at present characterizes their lives' (quoted in Maharashtra Information Centre 1966: 99).

Gokhale's fervent plea for the expansion of the education system makes it obvious that he viewed the overall effect of English education in a positive light even though he was aware and critical of its defects. His positive view was rooted in his indoctrination in liberal political thought which also led him to view the colonial state as being capable of bringing about India's advancement through rational policies in economy, social reform and education. When George Clarke, the Governor of Bombay, proposed to alter the status of the compulsory papers on British history and political economy in the B.A. curriculum of Bombay University, Gokhale opposed the move on the ground that it represented an interference in the university's autonomy. The real reason that he wanted the papers to be retained was the same that the governor had for wanting to make them optional. They both believed that the study of British history and

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political economy would arouse dissatisfaction among young students with the state of Indo-British relations, and inspire them to work for political independence. However, the argument Gokhale used to challenge the governor in the university's senate was that if the knowledge of Britain's past was the cause of radical political activity in India, why was such activity proliferating in Bengal when the Calcutta University had no compulsory paper on British history?[4]

Gokhale's contemporary in Punjab, Lajpat Rai pursued the problem of India's education throughout his political career and wrote extensively on it. Apart from his numerous speeches and essays on the subject, Lajpat Rai wrote a book entitled *The Problem of National Education in India* (Rai 1966) which was published in 1920 as a commentary on the efforts made since the Swadeshi movement to develop a 'national' model of education. He was involved in the founding and functioning of several institutions related to the Arya Samaj, particularly the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore, to the founding of which he donated a generous endowment from his private earnings as a lawyer. His visit to the United States in 1905 was partly inspired by his desire to study American education, and the impact that this visit had on his ideas about education was obvious in the book he wrote later. But even before this visit, Lajpat Rai had been influenced by American social thought, especially that of Herbert Spencer whose views on the evolution of societies and on social efficiency had impressed many Indian intellectuals who grew up during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Spencerian concepts formed the context in which the study of Dewey and his contemporaries encouraged Lajpat Rai to develop a fuller vision of an educational alternative for India. This is, of course, not to suggest that there was nothing original in Lajpat Rai's educational thought. The point is that the educational ideas associated with America's incipient capitalism found a ready and receptive soil in Lajpat Rai's own perceptions of the root cause of India's backwardness and foreign bondage. This complementarity led to an idiom in his educational writings which was remarkably 'modernist', particularly if we see it against the background of his involvement with the Arya Samaj and the positions which this involvement quite logically led him to adopt on issues like national self-identity and the Hindi–Urdu conflict. The 'modernism' of his educational ideas had to do

[4] For details see Pandit (1960) and Kamat (1966).

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with the central place that the concept of 'progress' had in his social and economic thought.

Lajpat Rai's view of 'progress' was grounded in his economic thought in a fairly direct sense. The growth of capital in Indian society, and the society's ability to harness capital for the exploitation of natural and human resources were the two major points, in his view, on which India's progress depended. 'It never occurred to us', he wrote in an early essay, 'that in these days of science and machinery a nation poor in economics and skill could never be politically great or free' (Rai 1907: 40). Why were the English able to subdue and exploit India? To this question, which confronted every leader of the early phase of the nationalist struggle, Lajpat Rai's answer was simply that India had lacked the ability to make industrial progress. Such an ability, he thought, could have been developed by means of education. This is where his critique of colonial education started, rather than in the cultural aspect of education which triggered the critiques of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore.

> Beyond providing some facilities for acquiring an elementary and mainly theoretical knowledge of modern sciences in connection with the Arts College, the Government has done practically nothing in the way of enabling or encouraging Indian youths to acquire mechanical skill with a view to the industrial development of the country (ibid.: 39).

But even in the context of general education, he felt, the colonial government had performed very poorly. In a long article titled 'Education in India', he argued in the same vein as Gokhale did in his speech in the Imperial Council, that the lack of educational opportunity was at the root of India's social and economic backwardness. In this article he described India as the country 'where the unlimited resources provided by a bountiful Providence are closed to the sons of the soil and are only accessible to clever, energetic, and enterprising foreigners'. In such a country, he argued, education is 'a question of life and death' (ibid.: 158).

With the development of his political career, Lajpat Rai's view of the problem of education in India became somewhat more complex. By the time his book on 'national' education was published, Rai had seen the growth of many Indian institutions started in the wake of the Swadeshi movement. He had studied several contemporary

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American educational writers and had acquired first-hand knowledge of American institutions. In his book, he expressed great dissatisfaction with some of the famous Indian experiments in 'national' education, including the one with which he was directly associated—the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore. He found it and some of the other institutions started by nationalist Indians to be examples of 'denominational nationalism'. The only exception to this kind of nationalism, he said, was the scheme prepared by Bengal's National Council of Education. The reason he approved of the National Council's effort was apparently its non-denominational character. He did not elaborate on the point, but the last part of the book's introductory chapter makes it clear that Lajpat Rai was critical of the untamed cultural revivalism of institutions like the Dayanand College, the Banaras Hindu University and the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental (MAO) College of Aligarh. In the chapter that follows, entitled 'National Ideals', Rai pursued the theme of secular national education.

The subtle balance of the argument hung here on the question of how Indians must relate to their past. Lajpat Rai was clear that they could not reject it, but he was not with those who felt that the solution to India's problems lay in reviving the past. He did not think that a resurgence of India's ancient epistomology, or that of the institutional organization of pedagogy practised in ancient days, could bring any advantage to Indian society in the context of the challenges it faced. The reason was that ancient Indian ideals involved a 'negation of life'. In a tortuous, page-long argument, Lajpat Rai showed how the ancient Hindu ideal of *mukti* (liberation) had led to 'a good part of the nation (sometimes estimated at one-fourth) having abandoned all productive economic work' (Rai 1966). He noted that all religions, including Christianity, have this tendency of glorifying the negation of life ('if the Christian nations had adhered to true Christianity, they would have made no progress at all'). The challenge was to build an educational system that would persuade people to accept life as an opportunity rather than as an evil.

Having rejected the revivalist alternative, Lajpat Rai was left with the problem of formulating an educational programme for India that differed from the colonial educational system. An apparent difficulty in making such a formulation was that he had already expressed his appreciation for colonial education: '... but for this education there might have been no awakening, or to be more accurate, the awakening

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might have been indefinitely delayed' (Rai 1966). Such an apprecia-tive view left him with little room to develop a radical alternative to the prevailing system. All he could demand was the expansion of the system, with a greater sense of responsibility showed by the state. This is precisely what he did, and justified his demand by referring to the British empire's own interests:

> Universal education of the modern type is, therefore, an absolute necessity for the future of the security of India, and *the best interests of the Empire require* that the human resources of the Indian Empire should be economized to the fullest extent (ibid.: 46, emphasis added).

This kind of argument could not fulfil the book's agenda to work out a 'national' model of education. So Rai turned to the question of curriculum and suggested, in addition to his old demand for technical education, a scheme to inspire young minds with patriotic thoughts and a programme of physical education. But even here, the justification came from the practical advantages of these schemes rather than from a critique of colonial education. The vocabulary of American pragmatism came in handy, and Lajpat Rai quoted Waldstein to justify patriotism for the contribution it makes to 'efficiency in the social life of man' (ibid.: 57).

Revivalist Option

It seems natural to assume that the revivalist perspective, which Lajpat Rai criticized in his book, offered an altogether different view of what might constitute India's 'progress'. Such an assumption is often made on the basis of the radical departures that revivalist institutions such as the Banaras Hindu University, the Gurukul Kangri and the Arya Kanya Vidyalaya promised to make from the prevail-ing system. To a certain extent, these institutions did depart from the prevailing system in constructing their courses. The Gurukul Kangri probably went farthest in reorganizing university-level curricula by incorporating indigenous traditions of knowledge. At the school level, the Arya Kanya Vidyalaya of Jalandhar made a spectacular effort

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under the leadership of Lala Hansraj to evolve a dynamic model of pedagogy, suited to the image of the enlightened woman projected by the Arya Samaj movement, while using cultural heritage as a focal point of the curriculum.[5] However, at the heart of these striking experiments, and of others not so striking, we cannot easily find a rejection of the concept of 'progress' that India's contact with England had impressed upon nationalist thought. At the same time we must acknowledge that revivalism led to some blossoming of originality in the limited sphere of content choices in the curriculum. Inevitably, this kind of originality proved shortlived, for the demands of examination and certification eventually overshadowed it. In the wider sphere of the role of education in India's economic and social reconstruction, revivalism offered no original critique or programme. It merely became a label with the help of which the political 'right'—as it grew from the 1920s onwards—could distinguish itself. In the context of an expanding industrial base in the economy, revivalism in culture and education did not present a critique of modernism; rather, it became another mask of modernism.[6] However, the political strategies that the modernists who wore this mask adopted did differ quite radically from the ones acceptable to the liberal adherents of modernism.

The educational institutions inspired by the two great spiritual leaders born in the latter half of the nineteenth century—Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo—provide us with a similar mix of modernism and revivalism. In terms of pedagogical practice, we find elements of a psychological approach in both, leading to a concern for the student's overall personality rather than merely his capacity to master the given curriculum. Indeed, in his 'system of national education' Sri Aurobindo gave an elaborate exposition of his theory of educational psychology which is closely linked with his 'integral yoga' (Sri Aurobindo 1924). Sri Aurobindo's associate, Mirra Alfassa, popularly known as the Mother, developed an institutionalized programme of education in Pondicherry, which combined physical, vital, psychic and spiritual training of children. Sri Aurobindo presented 'integral' education, constituted with these four aspects, as a theory of 'national' education in the context of his larger argument concerning India's cultural uniqueness. The basic assumption in

[5] For a comprehensive study of this venture, see Kishwar (1986).
[6] For an analysis of the rightist ideology in Indian politics, see Erdman (1967).

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this argument was that Indian civilization revolves around a 'spiritual conception of life'. Any educational reconstruction must start with this assumption and aim at the fulfilment of India's unique cultural destiny of being a spiritual leader of nations. Assimilation of some major western values 'such as social and political liberty, equality, and democracy' is permitted: 'If I accept any of these ideas it is not because they are modern or European, which is in itself no recommendation, but because they are human, because they present fruitful viewpoints to the spirit' (Sri Aurobindo 1959: 389).

At the same time, Sri Aurobindo had nothing but derision for western industrialism. He called it 'that terrible, monstrous and compelling thing, that giant Asuric creation' (ibid.: 388), and acknowledged the relationship between industrialization and the egalitarian values he recommended in politics. The key dichotomy in his thought, as also in that of Vivekananda, was between Indian 'spirituality' and western 'materialism'. This dichotomy provided the rationale for the educational and cultural orientation of the two philosophers. Beyond this basic similarity, however, they had rather different perceptions of the problem of India's progress. Sri Aurobindo presented it in terms of a civilization struggling for self-expression at a new stage of its evolution. The challenge consisted of readjusting its inner idiom so that India could confront the 'raw, new aggressive, powerful world with fresh, diviner creations of her own spirit, cast in the mould of her own spiritual ideals'. Vivekananda saw the challenge lying ahead for India in terms of alleviating the agony of oppressive physical and social conditions in which the majority of the population lived as well as in terms of the moral decadence of the entire social fabric. In his view, the formation of a trustworthy character among youth and the combination of western science with Vedanta were the tasks that education could accomplish to enable India to meet the challenge of social and material reconstruction.[7]

The spiritual–material dichotomy had originated in the nineteenth century as a reaction to colonization, particularly to the image of India that colonial intelligentsia had propagated. As a conceptual duality, it proved extremely persuasive; in fact, it has not quite stopped finding its clients to this day. The tradition–modernity duality took over some of the functions of the older spiritual–material

[7] See *Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems* (Advaita Ashrama 1963), especially the essay, 'Present Decadence'.

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division when it was coined and propagated by the post-war sociology of 'developing' societies. The main function of the two dualities was similar, namely, to make India's 'progress' appear like a struggle against herself, against something within the personality of her society. If 'progress' was to be seen inevitably in terms of the West's industrial advancement, then the spiritual–material dichotomy served to save India's progress from being a copy of the West. It invested the problem of India's industrial advancement with a cultural dimension. The major burden of looking after this cultural dimension fell on education, which was supposed to protect India's cultural uniqueness (which lay in her spirituality) while her economy fought with the compulsions of industrialization. Education could assist in industrialization to some extent, but its primary role was that of a painkiller that a supposedly spiritual society was recommended while undergoing an unpleasant experience. This role of education informed the thought of all major nationalist intellectuals of later nineteenth century, and it continued to find propagators in the twentieth. Only two significant exceptions can be cited, and these were Tagore and Gandhi. Both of them summarily rejected colonial education and advanced alternative systems that were essentially pedagogical schemes. These schemes were consistent with the needs of an industrializing society, but neither Tagore nor Gandhi explained them in terms of these needs. Tagore justified his experiment in terms of a universalistic model of man; Gandhi justified his in terms of a viable social and economic organization for India.

Tagore

Tagore and Gandhi present us with two contrasting positions in response to Europe's advancement in science and technology. Tagore was fascinated by the achievements of science, and by the variety of uses to which scientific discoveries had been put in Europe. He was equally attracted by the epistemology of science. The spirit of free and objective inquiry it represented appeared to him to be a great move forward from the limitations of convention and intuitive thought. To him, science represented nothing less than the pursuit of truth for its own sake, and such a pursuit, he believed, had

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deep implications for the awakening of human personality. It was also the secret of Europe's material progress, he felt, though he acknowledged that plunder of other nations had also contributed to it. He believed that the 'secret' of Europe's power lay in the 'integrity of its pursuit of truth':

> It has sternly controlled the easy temptation to accept what instinct urges man to believe. It has not tried to adapt truth to the needs of individual thinking. With stern avowal of reason, with freedom from personal bias, it has annexed new areas to its domain of knowledge, day by day (Tagore 1961a: 343).

It was only towards the end of his life, in the context of Fascist rule in Germany and the beginning of the Second World War, that Tagore's admiration for Europe and her modern technology was shaken. He wrote in one of his last essays: 'There was a time when I used to believe that the springs of a new civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. Today, as I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt' (ibid.: 359).

It is hard to guess what this mood of disillusionment in the final year of his life would have meant for Tagore's pedagogical creed. Had he lived longer, or if the disillusionment had come any earlier, would he have changed the central place that the spirit of free inquiry had been given in his pedagogical strategy? Equally relevant is the question of whether the end of the World War, the defeat of Germany and post-war reconstruction would have cheered Tagore to a certain extent, enabling him to retain his enthusiasm for science and for the role that machines could play in improving the conditions of human life. It is reasonable to ask these questions because the uneasiness that Tagore expressed with Europe and its modern civilization at the end of his life does not seem as deep as his earlier admiration. And it is hard to believe that Tagore had been unaware of the violent side of modern science and technology until, as if all of a sudden, the Second World War revealed it. The fact is that during the last quarter of his life, Tagore had in Gandhi a vigorous counterpoint in the dialogue on science, technology and the notion of modernity associated with them. The exchange of articles[8]

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[8] R.K. Prabhu and Ravindra Kelekar have edited these articles in *Truth Called Them Differently* (1961).

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that took place between the two around 1921–25 bears testimony to the point that Tagore had received from Gandhi ample encouragement to regard the western view of modernity with caution. In this exchange Tagore held on with remarkable tenacity to his position favouring the spirit of inquiry and the role of machines in cutting down the need for physical labour. The commitment Tagore expressed in this dialogue to the values associated with science leads one to interpret the harsh commentary Tagore made on western civilization in the context of the Second World War as an emotional and temporary reaction.

In terms of his educational theory, Tagore clearly belongs to the European tradition which started with Rousseau in mid-eighteenth century in the midst of a decaying feudal order. The advent of new means of production and that of a social order in which the individual's rights and welfare would become matters of valid concern had resulted in the advocacy of humane methods of child education in Europe. The concept of the child's autonomy, which extended to learning, was an important aspect of this advocacy. This concept was consistent with the spirit of science, and it was in the context of nature study that its practical, pedagogical implications surfaced most sharply. Thus, the European tradition of modern, humanistic education and pedagogy represented the developments that had taken place in political philosophy and science, and found persuasive expression in the works of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey and Montessori.

But apart from the pedagogical works of writers such as these, creative literature had also provided a powerful expression of the view of the child as an independent being deserving respect and social attention. Within English literature itself, there had been major writers, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Dickens, who had found in the concept of the autonomous child a potent metaphor of struggle against society and its conventions. In Tagore's literary works, too, this concept found similar metaphorical expression. In short stories such as *Homecoming* and *Kabuliwallah* and plays such as *Post Office*, Tagore created deeply emotive symbols of the oppression of children. He found the inspiration and resources for constructing such symbols within his own circumscribed and restless childhood. In addition to his reflection on the state of schools under colonial rule, his sharp memories of childhood provided the impetus to start his own school where he wanted a liberationist pedagogy to be practised. As

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many commentators have pointed out, 'nature' was the key resource of his pedagogical strategy, both as an open physical space and as a symbol of freedom. In Tagore's pedagogy, nature served the purpose Rousseau had associated with it, namely, that of liberating the child from the constraints put upon it by a callous, unjust civilization.

Tagore used 'nature' to combine his critique of colonial education with his search for a valid, universalist model of civilized man. The details of this search can be found in 'The Religion of Man', where Tagore proposed the awareness of love to be the essential or distinguishing quality of humans: 'we have our greatest delight when we realize ourselves in others, and this is the definition of love' (Tagore 2004: 37). English education had denied the Indian child the opportunity to learn through the 'natural' medium of his own mother tongue. Knowledge acquired through a foreign language, Tagore argued, could never become an organic part of the learner's personality. Indian students, he said, 'never see in the right perspective the environment and the process of growth of those thoughts which they are compelled to learn' (Tagore 1961a: 208). This was one of the reasons, Tagore thought, European ideas failed to trigger the spirit of inquiry in the Indian mind. Liberation of India's mind required a return to itself, to India's languages, folk cultures and aesthetic traditions. How would such a return take place? The path chosen by revivalist institutions could hardly statisfy Tagore, though he did support them once. Revivalist nationalism, he found later on, could not provide an alternative to colonial education. It only fed the entrenched tendency to glorify everything past, he thought.

He developed his own model by combining different elements. What he offered was hardly a 'system' of education, as Gandhi did, but was rather an example of how the concept of creative learning, based on a curriculum which treated artistic or aesthetic growth as a key resource of developmental energy, could be worked out in the Indian context. At the heart of this example lay a concept of childhood which was altogether fresh in the Indian socio-cultural context. Childhood, according to this concept, represented the urge to explore the world, to relate to it without fear, and to improvise. It was linked, on the one hand, to Tagore's own bitter memories of boyhood, and on the other, to the bourgeois-liberal idea of the rediscovery of nature represented in many classics of English children's literature. In the essay, 'A Poet's School', Tagore discussed the role played by these two resources in shaping the idea of Santiniketan

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in his mind. He referred to the first by talking about psychoanalysis, pre-empting a point his critics would surely have made had he himself not made it so lucidly:

> In these self-conscious days of psycho-analysis clever minds have discovered the secret spring of poetry in some obscure stratum of repressed freedom, in some constant fretfulness of thwarted self-realisation. Evidently in this instance they were right. The phantom of my long-ago boyhood did come to haunt its early beginning; it sought to live in the lives of other boys, and to build its missing paradise with ingredients which may not have any orthodox material, prescribed measure, or standard value (Tagore 1961a: 286).

He referred to the second source by remembering the delight that a reading of Robinson Crusoe in Bengali translation had given him during childhood. He said that 'it is one of the best books for boys ever written', and found its mood of 'the expansion of consciousness' as 'particularly Indian' (ibid.: 293). In its theme of 'harmony with nature attained through intelligent dealings' he found the essence of the West's adventurous, yet rationalist spirit which had enabled western humanity to unlock the 'inexhaustible generosity' of nature's heart. Tagore aimed at combining this spirit with the ethos of India's ancient *tapovana*s where students and teachers lived as a community.

Though Tagore evoked the symbol of ancient *tapovana*s, his actual agenda had nothing to do with the curriculum and practices which revivalist proponents of *ashram*-style education had proposed. Tagore's *ashram* was in fact meant to be a modern rural institute where liberationist pedagogy, which used art as the basis of education (Prasad 1998) could be practised along with co-operative economic activities based on modern scientific techniques of rural husbandry. As he wrote:

> Our centre of culture should not only be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of her economic life as well. It must cultivate land, breed cattle, to feed itself and its students, it must produce all necessaries, devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid (Tagore 1961a: 227).

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He wanted 'a western genius' for imparting to his educational ideal 'the strength of reality which knew how to achieve a definite end of practical good'. This need was fulfilled by Leonard Elmhirst, a Cambridge graduate in history who was teaching at Cornell University at the time of Tagore's visit to America in the early 1920s. It is to Elmhirst that we owe some vivid descriptions of life at Santiniketan, including the valuable record of Tagore's project to inspire the village community at Surul to overcome poverty through its own efforts (Elmhirst 1961). This was the ultimate purpose of setting up a rural boarding school which Tagore named 'Siksha–Satra'. The boys who attended this school took part in a variety of activities that sustained the institution, acquiring their academic learning in the context of these activities. As an outsider reading Elmhirst's memoirs of this experiment, one is reminded of Pestalozzi's schools at Stans and Yverdon. Of course, Tagore's work had the benefit of a century of pedagogical experimentation, but the key challenge was the same—that of nurturing the responsible citizen without sacrificing the natural man.

This was essentially the paradox that Rousseau had faced. Tagore inherited it as part of the European bourgeois vision in which human happiness could be achieved through the exercise of reason. The milieu under which Tagore confronted the paradox was not dissimilar to the one under which Rousseau's educational ideals had been put to practice by Pestalozzi. A decaying feudal order and an optimistic *bhadralok* were two aspects of the milieu surrounding Tagore's educational experiments.[9] True, the archetypal Bengali *bhadralok* was a product of colonial transactions; he lacked the drive as well as the capacity to dismantle feudal relations and attitudes.[10] But his faith in science and technology as instruments of happiness was as total and naïve as that of the European bourgeois at the end of the eighteenth century. In the Indian context, the educated political leadership, representing both the landed aristocracy and the new professional class, was far from willing to acknowledge the conflict that existed between its worldview and the reality of village life with its daily suffering of misery and oppression. Tagore was undoubtedly aware of this conflict, as several of his short stories and the novel *Home and the World* indicate, but Tagore remained an

[9] For a discussion on the *bhadralok*, see Broomfield (1968).

[10] See Sen (1977) for an insightful analysis of the economic behaviour of Bengal's propertied classes.

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outsider to the miserable Indian village. Unlike Gandhi, he believed that a change in the villager's cognition would enable him to alter his material condition. In a letter to Elmhirst, he wrote: 'Our people need more than anything else a real scientific training that can inspire in them the courage of experiment and the initiative of mind which we lack as a nation' (Elmhirst 1961: 216). This was written in December 1937.

By this time, Gandhi had announced his proposal for India's 'basic' education. Never before had anyone made so comprehensive and so radical a proposal in the context of Indian education. Tagore was now at the final stage of his life, which is unfortunate because a younger Tagore would have given a far richer commentary on Gandhi's proposal than any Indian was capable was giving at the time or has given it since. It is no exaggeration to say that no Indian intellectual confronted the problem of education with as much insight, rigour, and urgency as Tagore did. Had Gandhi's *nayee taalim* received his critical attention, the outcome could have been a crystallized version of this radical plan, purified of its misleading orthodoxy and simplicity. Gandhi's earthy sense of India's misery and his personal drive as a teacher would have complemented Tagore's intellectual awareness of poverty and his intuitive correctness in pedagogical matters. This kind of complementarity did not get a chance to be born, and so we must read Gandhi's writings on 'basic education' as best as we can in the context of his own plans for socio-economic reconstruction and the wider context of India at the threshold of freedom. Yet, the Tagore–Gandhi dialogue,[11] both as it took place in the 1920s and as we might imagine it in the late 1930s in the specific context of basic education, is of great use to us in our attempt to grasp the two meanings of progress which crystallized in a somewhat popular fashion in the final phase of the independence struggle. The urgency to unlock India's productive energies was commonly felt by both Tagore and Gandhi, and they were united in the belief that the unlocking should take an inventive course, rather than an imitative one which a lot of educated Indians thought to be the only alternative. Most importantly, both believed in the fundamental necessity of transcending nationalism as a point of reference for

[11] Marjorie Sykes and Jehangir P. Patel provide an extremely interesting personal account of Gandhi and Tagore in their book, *Gandhi, His Gift of the Fight* (1987). Also see Prabhu and Kelekar (1961).

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India's social transformation. In this context, Ashish Nandy makes a valid point at the end of his study on Tagore:

> Many years ago, at the time of World War I, a person as manifestly apolitical as Sigmund Freud claimed that the state had forbidden to the individual the practice of 'wrong-doing' not because of a desire to abolish it but because of a desire to monopolize it. Both Gandhi and Tagore may never have read Freud but they pushed this awareness into the political culture of India (Nandy 1994: 90).

Gandhi

Gandhi's response to colonial education constitutes one of the two major exceptions—the other being that of Tagore—in the nationalist movement. It is the totality of their rejection that makes them exceptions; other leaders usually mitigated their criticism by acknowledging the benefits of colonial education. Compared to Tagore, Gandhi's rejection had a sharper edge to it because his critique of colonial education was a part of his overall critique of western civilization. In Gandhi's case, one finds no admiration for European achievements in science and technology, or even in literature, to mitigate the bitterness with which he talked about English education. To Gandhi, western education, even in the emaciated form it had taken in India, was a negation of the principles of non-violence and truth, the two values he regarded as crucial. The fact that western men had spent 'all their energy, industry and enterprise in plundering and destroying other races' was evidence enough for Gandhi that western civilization was in a state of 'sorry mess' (Gandhi 1962: 164). Therefore, it could not possibly be a symbol of 'progress', or something worth imitating or transplanting in India.

It would be wrong to interpret this kind of response as some kind of xenophobia. It would be equally wrong to see it as a symptom of a subtle revivalist dogma. If Gandhi had ever had some kind of commitment to preserving the uniqueness of Indian civilization, he surely did not express it in his proposal for educational reconstruction. There is no trace of any kind of militant nationalism in this

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proposal, and there is surely no anti-westernism. If one were to read his plan as an anonymous text in the history of world education, one would conveniently classify it in the tradition of western radical humanists like Pestalozzi, Owen, Tolstoy and Dewey. It certainly does not permit us to read it in the context of the East–West civilizational dichotomy which Gandhi did talk about in some of his other writings. Yet, the fact remains that Gandhi wanted education—reconstructed along the lines he thought correct—to help India move away from the western concept of progress, towards an alternative form of development more suited to its nature (geographical and cultural) and needs and more viable for the world as a whole, than the western model of development was in his view.

He was able to initiate an educational discourse outside the familiar East–West dichotomy, yet as part of a critique of the West, by locating the problem of education in a different dialectic, that of man versus machine. In this dialectic, 'man' represented the whole of mankind, not just India, and 'machine' represented the industrialized West. By the late 1930s, when Gandhi wrote his proposal for basic education, the heyday of the 'national' education movement was long over, and the limited possibilities of that kind of reconstruction had been well revealed. Though Gandhi called his plan 'basic national education',[12] he had little interest in education for nationalism. And while India was the scene of his experiment, the issues involved in it were not confined to India. Throughout his life Gandhi had perceived his personal life and the causes he had fought for in a global context. This perception was no less operative in his final ten years. Indeed, he now saw the need to reiterate his old approach, possibly because he suspected that his partnership of two decades with many different kinds of people and causes had clouded the public view of the original agenda of his life. His assertion in the mid-1940s that he stood by every word of his *Hind Swaraj* (written in 1909) is a case in point. It was in this little book that Gandhi had put across in a deceptively simple form the essence of his critique of the industrial civilization of modern Europe. There is no reason to

[12] For a collection of Gandhi's speeches and articles on 'basic education', see Hindustani Talimi Sangh (1938). Also see Gandhi's speech at the Wardha Conference on 2 October 1937 in Avinashilingam (1960).

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doubt that the agenda outlined in *Hind Swaraj* was Gandhi's real mission. It was closer to his heart and certainly bigger than the agenda of political independence for India. It was a civilizational agenda for humanity; India was where it might be tried out first.

Hind Swaraj bears the same relation to Gandhi's other copious writings that a novelist's personal diary might have with his works of fiction. Here was recorded in absurdly stark terms Gandhi's perception of the basic problem facing humanity at the beginning of the twentieth century, namely, how to live with the machine. Colonial rule and exploitation, illiteracy, poverty, disharmony and war were all perceived in this pamphlet as outcomes of industrialization. Gandhi believed that the power of machinery over human affairs had trapped Europe in a cycle of greed and violence. European civilization was nothing but a tragic affliction, according to the imaginary 'editor' in *Hind Swaraj* who exposes the affliction in a half-mocking tone step by step, as for example:

> Formerly, when people wanted to fight with one another, they measured between them their bodily strength; now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill. This is civilization (Gandhi 1938: 36).

The message of *Hind Swaraj* is clear: if India copies the industrial civilization of the West, it will destroy itself. So India must return to its own 'pristine condition' and 'drive out Western civilization. All else will follow'. This is said in the chapter on education which ends with a plea for religious education, claiming that 'we cannot do without it' for 'India will never be godless' (ibid.: 92–93).

If ever one wanted to prove that Gandhi's proposal of 'basic education' had little to do with the course of action he had outlined in *Hind Swaraj*, this point concerning religious education would be adequate. The plan of 'basic education' made no reference to religious teaching, a point that the scheme's critics in the Muslim League chose to miss in order to pay misplaced and exaggerated attention to the name of Ravi Shankar Shukla's 'Vidya Mandir' scheme[13] in the Central Provinces which happened to coincide with Gandhi's plan. The critics charged this scheme as a Hindu ploy, and

[13] For details of the scheme, see *Shukla Abhinandan Granth* (1955).

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by metonymic logic brought the entire 'basic education' plan under this charge. They apparently found an audience which was wide enough to include the members of the committee appointed by the Central Advisory Board of Education to discuss basic education in the perspective of state policy (Bureau of Education 1944). Zakir Hussain, who was a member of this committee and also the chairman of the Wardha Committee, was hard pressed to defend 'basic education' against the charge made by certain Muslim leaders, but he succeeded in convincing the committee that basic education was a purely secular plan. However, the question of whether it had room for religious instruction remained a valid one, possibly because of the popular image of Gandhi as a man of religion. In June 1938, Gandhi had to explain the matter in some detail because a delegation sent by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh was anxious to know precisely what his thoughts were.

> We have left out the teaching of religion from the Wardha scheme of education because we are afraid that religions as they are taught and practised today lead to conflict rather than unity. But on the other hand, I hold that the truths that are common to all religions can and should be taught to all children. These truths cannot be taught through words or through books—the children can learn these truths only through the daily life of the teacher. If the teacher himself lives up to the tenets of truth and justice, then alone can the children learn that Truth and Justice are the basis of all religions (NCERT 1979: 41).

Gandhi's answer shows that he was reluctant to commit himself to a purely secular role of education even though he realized the danger that religious study in schools would invite in an atmosphere charged with communal tensions. He resolved the conflict between the religious role of education in which he believed and the secular programme of basic education by upholding the moral image of the teacher. In his argument that the teacher can convey the basic truths of all religions by practising them, Gandhi was surely making an extraordinary demand. Whether the practical impossibility of the demand bothered him or not is a secondary matter. Most probably it did not, for he was used to overlooking the limitations—physical, intellectual or moral—within which ordinary people worked. The important thing to notice is that by demanding the daily example of

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moral correctness in the teacher's conduct, Gandhi was opting for a religious as opposed to a professional role for the teacher. Also, he was using a familiar Indian motif, that of the guru who has moral authority in addition to knowledge. We have commented on the significance of this motif in the context of the homonymy that developed between colonial and nationalist discourses on education. The idea of a teacher's moral authority was associated with the image of an *ashram*. In the ideal *ashram* community, the teacher was supposed to set a daily example of the life worth living, and from this high pedestal of his everyday existence he was permitted to demand any conceivable form of sacrifice from the students. This quasi-mythologized image of the teacher was what Tagore had also evoked by describing his school as a *tapovana*. For both Tagore and Gandhi, the image seems to have served an important rhetorical function. It promised to give their ideas on education and pedagogy a halo of Indian tradition.

Other than this idealized image of the teacher, there was nothing else in Gandhi's scheme to link it with India's indigenous traditions of education, especially the Brahmanical tradition. Indeed, in a crucial dimension, it implied a violation of India's old concepts of learning. The epistemology of 'basic education' was thoroughly radical, and there is no way we can place it in the context of ancient Indian traditions of learning. The core of Gandhi's proposal was the introduction of a productive handicraft in the school curriculum. The idea was not simply to introduce a handicraft as a compulsory school subject, but to make the learning of a craft the axis of the entire teaching programme. Either way, it implied a radical restructuring of school knowledge. Productive handicrafts had been associated in Indian society with the lowest placed groups in the hierarchy of castes. Knowledge of production processes involved in crafts such as spinning, weaving, leather work, pottery, metal work, basket-making and book-binding had been the monopoly of specific caste groups in the lowest stratum of the traditional social hierarchy. Many of these groups belonged to the category of 'untouchables'. We do not know precisely what access these castes had to education in different parts of pre-colonial India. As far as the epistemology of education is concerned, there is simply no doubt that it favoured the skills and knowledge systems on which the upper castes had monopoly. As we have seen in Chapter III, literacy, literary knowledge and accounting procedures were the staple of pre-colonial education. Both

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the skills and the content associated with these basic features of the curriculum of indigenous education represented the material and cultural interests of the upper castes.

'Basic education' involved direct conflict with the indigenous tradition because it introduced into the school curriculum a form of knowledge on which low caste groups had monopoly. This kind of knowledge was not just given the status of a compulsory subject in the 'basic' plan; it was announced to be the core curriculum. In a school following this curriculum, a low-caste child would feel far more at home than an upper-caste child. Both in terms of worldview and functional skills, the curriculum of a 'basic' school favoured the child belonging to the lowest stratum of society. From this point of view, Gandhi's proposal intended to make the education system stand on its head. This was no Swadeshi plan to de-colonize the Indian system of education by evoking the collective unconscious memory of an ancient system. 'Basic education' was after something else: a transformation of the concept of worthwhile knowledge underlying education. In place of the forms of knowledge symbolizing the hegemony of the upper castes, it proposed to introduce in the school curriculum the forms of knowledge symbolizing the oppression of the lowest placed castes. Thus, it sought to alter the symbolic meaning of 'education' and thereby to damage the established structure of opportunities for education. Its inner logic was that if the character of school learning changed in favour of children of the lowest stratum of society, such children would 'succeed' in school more commonly.

This is, of course, an interpretive reading of Gandhi's proposal, for this is not how he justified his idea of introducing productive handicrafts in the school curriculum. The rationale he gave was that schools must be self-supporting as far as possible. There were two main reasons of Gandhi advocating self-sufficiency for educational institutions. One was purely financial: namely, a poor society could not provide education to all its children unless schools could generate the resources and money to run themselves. The other was a political reason which Gandhi did not articulate as clearly as the first. Financial self-sufficiency alone could protect schools from dependence on the state and from interference by it. As values, both self-sufficiency and autonomy were close to Gandhi's heart. They belonged to his vision of a society based on truth and non-violence—the two highest values in Gandhi's framework. Financial self-sufficiency was

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linked to truth, and autonomy to non-violence. Individuals or institutions that did not participate directly in the process of production could not afford 'truth' for long. It would have to depend on the state to an extent that would make violence, in one form or another, inevitable. For him, as for Tagore, a state system of education was a great contradiction. Tagore stuck to his concept of local voluntary initiative, but Gandhi attempted to follow a middle course: a *system* of schooling in which each school would be expected to develop the resources for its own maintenance.

The idea of such productive schools clearly came from the two communities he had established in South Africa. The Phoenix Farm, started in 1904, and the Tolstoy Farm, started in 1910, provided him a lasting interest and faith in the potential of life in a rural commune. The first of these experiments was apparently inspired by a reading of John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. Gandhi drew three lessons from this book; or rather, as Fischer (1982) has explained, he read three messages into the book. The first message was that the good of all is what a good economy is all about; the second was that manual work (as that of a barber) has the same value as mental work (such as a lawyer's); and the third was that the life worth living was that of a labourer or craftsman. Gandhi recalls in his autobiography that as soon as he had finished reading the book, he decided to put these messages into practice. The Phoenix Farm near Durban, which was born out of this decision, gave Gandhi his first and obviously formative experience of simple, self-reliant and purposive community living.

The kind of life that was symbolized as the 'good' life in his basic education programme was practised first-hand by Gandhi at Phoenix, and somewhat more rigorously and ambitiously at Tolstoy Farm which he set up six years later at Johannesburg. As the name indicates, by the time this latter experiment took place, Gandhi had read the works of, and had established contact with, the Russian literature and thinker Lev Tolstoy. The inspiration Gandhi received from Tolstoy spanned a wide range of interests and concerns. Prominent among these concerns was to fight the sources of violence in human society. Tolstoy's celebration of the individual's right to live in peace and freedom and his negation of all forms of oppression brought him close to Gandhi. Even though Gandhi did not read Tolstoy's articles on education in the journal *Yasnaya Polyana*, Tolstoy's view that 'education as a premeditated formation of men according to

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certain patterns is *sterile*, *unlawful*, and *impossible*' (Tolstoy 1967: 111) could well have been expressed by Gandhi.

The right to autonomy that Gandhi's educational plan assigns to the teacher in the context of the school's daily curriculum is consistent with the libertarian principles he shared with Tolstoy. Gandhi wanted to free the Indian teacher from the slavery of bureaucracy. As we saw in Chapter IV, the schoolteacher's job had come to be defined under colonial rule as one of transmitting and elucidating the forms and content of knowledge selected by bureaucratic authority for inclusion in the prescribed textbook. English administration had divested the teacher of all power to select or reshape knowledge. The administration had used the prescribed textbook and the examination system as two principal instruments to obtain a total subordination of the teacher. While the examination system had been frequently condemned by Indian nationalists, and even by several English officers, the use of textbooks under compulsion had not been criticized as sharply by anyone before Gandhi, particularly as it related to the teacher. Showing the link between the mandatory use of textbooks and the feeble position of the teacher, Gandhi wrote in an article in *Harijan*: 'If textbooks are treated as a vehicle for education, the living word of the teacher has very little value. A teacher who teaches from textbooks does not import originality to his pupils' (Gandhi 1939).

Gandhi's basic education plan implied the end of the teacher's subservience to the prescribed textbook and curriculum. For one thing, it presented a concept of learning that could not be fully implemented with the help of textbooks. More important, however, was the freedom and authority that the basic education plan gave to the teacher in matters concerning the school curriculum. It was a libertarian plan, similar to Tolstoy's and Tagore's inasmuch as it denied the state the power to decide what precisely the teacher must do in the classroom. Consistent with his wider philosophy of politics, this aspect of Gandhi's educational plan implied a dramatic narrowing of the state's sphere of authority.

Having assembled a conceptual outline of Gandhi's plan, we can now return to its core concern and probe it somewhat more deeply. Basic education was an embodiment of Gandhi's perception of an ideal society as one consisting of small, self-reliant communities. To him, Indian villages were capable of becoming such communities; indeed, he believed that Indian villages were historically self-reliant,

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and the great task now was to restore their autonomy and to create the conditions necessary for economic self-sufficiency and political dignity in village life. Colonial rule, he thought, had damaged village economy, subjecting it to exploitation by city dwellers. Freedom from colonial rule would mean empowerment of the village and its development as a viable community. The basic education plan was meant to develop the village along this line, by training children for productive work and by imparting to them attitudes and values conducive to living in a cooperative community.

This programme of development was rooted in Gandhi's view of industrialization as a threat to human sanity. Much debate has taken place about Gandhi's 'real' view of technology; indeed, there is a great deal to debate over between the extreme position he took in *Hind Swaraj* and the mellower words he wrote in many places during the 1930s. Also, it is not clear whether he was against the spirit of modern science and technology, or whether his opposition to western modernity was confined to the manner in which science and technology had been used to exploit non-European societies. In the vast body of responses that his collected works embody, one finds ample evidence for either side. Perhaps it is wrong to look for a this-or-that kind of position in Gandhi on this matter (and several others), for he was not so much a theorist of action as a man always ready to react and to engage in action. Preparing for action by developing a symbolic model first was not his style. In the context of science and industrialization, he appears to have worked for slowing down the march of capitalism and industrial development in India. He wanted India to develop socially and politically first, so as to be in a position of power to exercise options in the face of technological pressures coming from the industrialized West and from the capitalist lobby within Indian society.

His programme can be understood as a chronological ordering of priorities. In this ordering, the consolidation of a viable political system would come first, and the development of productive processes through careful and selective use of machines would come next. According to this, a viable political system for India had to be centred on village republics, organized like 'oceanic circles'. The metaphor was meant to convey the principle of local power in combination with commitment to the larger society. He wanted such a political system to develop before the modernization of the means of production so that the masses, who lived in villages, would not

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lack power to protect their interests under the imperatives of modernization. Under the prevailing circumstances they were powerless, and industrialization, he believed, could only exacerbate their powerlessness. Later on, that is after a village-centred political system had been developed, modern machines could have their turn:

> The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools they can make and can afford to use (Gandhi 1936).

No doubt Gandhi appears far less radical in this reading than in one that would assign him a Luddite role. In my reading, Gandhi takes the role of someone attempting to win time on behalf of a constituency he identified with and which he correctly thought to be in the danger of being crushed by the premature and necessarily chaotic advancement of industrialization in India. His educational plan fits nicely in this attempt. If the march of industrialization could be slowed down and shaped in consistency with a plan for social and political progress, 'basic education' could serve a definite purpose in such progress. More specifically, if purposive industrialization meant protecting the right of villages to produce what they could without competition with large-scale mechanized establishments, 'basic education' would enhance the productive capacities of village children under such a plan. In this interpretation, Gandhi does not appear to be against large-scale industrialization, a point he made in some desperation to a group of economists visiting him after a conference at Nagpur in 1938. When asked if he was 'against large-scale production', he said:

> I never said that. This belief is one of the many superstitions about me. Half of my time goes in 'answering' such things. But from scientists I expect better knowledge. Your question is based on loose newspaper reports and the like. What I am against is large-scale production of things villagers can produce without

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> difficulty ... key industries, industries which the nation needs, may be centralized. But then I would not choose anything as a 'key industry' that can be taken up by the villages with little organizing (Gandhi 1977a, vol. 68: 258).

So the paramount question was of the distribution of productive responsibilities between village-based, small-scale industries and city-based large-scale industries. Gandhi's concern was that the former ought not be destroyed by the advancement of the latter. The ideal citizen of Gandhi's utopia was an industrious, self-respecting, generous individual who lived in a small community. This is the image underlying his educational plan. This image of man and the production system sustaining it remind us of the American philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952). The resemblance between the educational theories of Gandhi and Dewey is striking, and if we probe the two theories we find a deeper similarity between the two men in their conceptions of democratic order.

Dewey grew up in an America whose frontier was still developing. The small community of skilled, hard-working men and women, whose individual personalities mattered to the community, seemed the ideal unit of a democratic order in Dewey's youth. The growing capitalist economy had not yet revealed the nature of politics and culture that it would demand. In his famous book, *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey had rooted his work-based model of teaching in the idealized small community of responsible individuals. Linking productive work with education was at the heart of Gandhi's model too, and it was rooted in the idealized village republic of his utopia which was not much different from Dewey's. Both Dewey and Gandhi sketched their small-scale utopias a bit late in terms of their countries' development along the path of capitalism, and both thought that there still was time to make choices. Dewey's plans were not as dependent on traditional craft-based production processes as Gandhi's were. Both, however, were products of the ethos of early capitalist development. In retrospect, Dewey's educational proposal reads like a plea for protecting a special space for children in the midst of rampant, dehumanizing capitalist advancement. Gandhi's proposal, on the other hand, is a plea for delaying the growth of capitalism, for buying time to strengthen the inner resources of men and women in the hope that they would ultimately succeed in taming capitalism and modern technology by adjusting

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these for a deeper humanist transformation of society than the West had been able to accomplish.

National Planning Committee

This is not a generous reading of Gandhi. But while it may not do justice to the purity of his hope and vision, it fits in with the march of events. The basic education proposal synchronized with the setting up of the National Planning Committee (NPC) by the Congress. The specific aim of this committee was to formulate a plan for India's industrialization with the aim of 'economic regeneration'. Although the scheme was expected to provide for small-scale and cottage industries as well as large-scale industries, the emphasis of its report was on the latter. Its chairman, Jawaharlal Nehru, had believed for a long time that large-scale industrialization alone could solve India's problems of poverty and unemployment. But apart from Nehru's own beliefs, the committee's report reflected the vision of a powerful and growing class of the owners of industries, their supporters in politics and intellectuals with high qualifications in different areas including science and technology. Though it was meant to be a socialist plan, the NPC's report bore a great deal of similarity to the Bombay Plan published a little later under the auspices of the Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The vision of India's progress reflected in these reports was apparently inspired by the popular view of industrial development in the countries of western Europe and in the United States. The only major difference was that in India's case, the state was expected to play a far greater role than it had played in the case of western industrial societies.

With its projection of a centrally controlled economy and rapid expansion of large-scale industries, the report of the NPC could not possibly please Gandhi. He had been unhappy with the news of its meetings and work, and had said so:

> I have never been able to understand or approach the labours of the Committee. I do not know that it is working within the four corners of the resolution creating the Committee. I do not know that the Working Committee (that is, of the Congress) is

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> being kept informed of its doings. I have never understood the purpose of the numerous sub-committees (Gandhi 1977a, vol. 70: 86).

The irritation expressed in these words, written in a letter to Nehru, makes sense if we consider Gandhi's plans for India's progress against the committee's. The conflict was not confined to the role and proportion of large-scale industries in the national economy; it extended to the rationale underlying industrial development. Apart from the material prosperity of India, the Committee's report also used India's security as a major rationale for the growth of heavy industries. Militarization and development were to go hand in hand, as in the West (the specific case cited was that of Russia). This aim could hardly have cheered Gandhi.

The NPC's sub-committee on general and technical education did not acknowledge this conflict, perhaps because it was not necessary to talk about larger conceptual issues in the context of education. But the sub-committee's report showed great reluctance in recommending a shift from the existing system to the one suggested by Gandhi. It argued that there had been a sudden increase since 1938 in the efficiency of primary schools under the Congress ministries (the data given in support of this claim was confined to Bombay):

> It would therefore, be wrong to displace the movement by one in favour of basic education. The introduction of basic education should be a process of grafting it on to the elementary education already in vogue, by stages, when and where this grafting is possible (NPC 1948: 58).

Obviously, the sub-committee saw serious problems in the Wardha scheme of 'basic education', the major one having to do with the importance given to the teaching of productive skills. The sub-committee's argument against this was that 'too much stress on vocation at such age is spiritually harmful and teaching of general subjects through such single narrow-down medium makes the knowledge of subject superficial and defective' (ibid.: 140). Related to this was another major objection. The idea that the output of children's work at school should financially sustain the school was unacceptable to the sub-committee. 'To a certain extent such a system will mean existence of child labour in schools,' the report said (ibid.: 142).

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These were familiar arguments, consistent with the general perspective adopted by the NPC. A broad, liberal curriculum for elementary education, and expansion of facilities for technical education were the main thrusts of the plan the NPC recommended. Financial responsibility for compulsory primary education was assigned to the state. This was indeed the staple of modernist thought, compared to which Gandhian ideas looked obsolete and conservative. In contrast to Gandhi's utopia of village republics enjoying considerable autonomy by offering a modest standard of life supported by rudimentary processes of production, the modernist utopia featured a strong centralized state with the responsibility of building an industrial infrastructure that would promise a high standard of life for all. The pedagogical strengths of a liberal modernist programme for children were indicated by Nehru in one of his few reflections on education which figured at the end of a sub-chapter entitled 'The Congress and Industry' in *The Discovery of India*:

> It is well recognized now that a child's education should be intimately associated with some craft or manual activity. The mind is stimulated thereby and there is a co-ordination between the activities of the mind and the hands. So also the mind of a growing boy or girl is stimulated by the machine. It grows under the machine's impact (under proper conditions, of course, and not as an exploited and unhappy worker in a factory) and opens out new horizons. Simple scientific experiments, peeps into the microscope, and an explanation of the ordinary phenomenon of nature bring excitement in their train, and understanding of some of life's processes, and a desire to experiment and find out instead of relying on set phrases and old formulae. Self-confidence and the co-operative spirit grow, and frustration, arising out of the miasma of the past, lessens. A civilization based on ever-changing and advancing mechanical techniques leads to this. Such a civilization is a marked change, a jump almost from the older type and is intimately connected with modern industrialization (Nehru [1946] 1960: 416).

There can be little doubt that while writing these words Nehru was engaging in a dialogue on Gandhi's 'basic education'. He starts by agreeing with the main pedagogical assumption underlying basic education, namely that a craft or manual activity stimulates the

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child's mind. Then, by the force of analogy between craft and machine, he goes off along an argument which challenges the main economic assumption underlying basic education without identifying it. The dialogue with Gandhi's proposal that he had started with turns, after two sentences, into a statement regarding the pedagogical value of scientific experiments and the relation such experiments have with an industrial civilization. Nehru was of course correct in pointing out this relationship, as also in stressing the enormous role that an experiment-based pedagogy of science could play in revitalizing education in India. He shared the hope of such revitalization with many Indian modernist intellectuals who found Gandhi's educational plan unacceptable. One of them was the well-known movelist Mulk Raj Anand, who wrote in his book, *On Education*, published at the time of independence:

> The dream of perfecting good little minds on the basis of Khadi and non-violence, so that these morons vegetate within the limits of their self-sufficient communities, is not only impossible in an India where every village is already inundated with cheap machine-made goods produced by foreign and indigenous capitalists, but is likely to bring about the very opposite of all those qualities which the Mahatma seeks to create in the average Indian (Anand 1947: 20).

'Progress' after Freedom

If we bear in mind Nehru's picture of appropriate pedagogy while looking at the progress of education in independent India, we come to the conclusion that Nehru's picture was unrelated to historical conditions. One is reminded of Kosambi's review (Kosambi 1986) of *The Discovery of India* where he had shown the absence in Nehru's thinking of any serious appreciation of the conflict of interests between the India of property-owners and the India of the poverty-striken masses. The state apparatus that Nehru came to head was unable to allocate sufficient funds to allow every Indian child a peep into the microscope as part of his primary education. It can be argued that the government could not afford to revitalize primary education

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with the meagre resources available to it, but the point remains that mass education did not get priority attention in Nehru's administration. In a sympathetically written biography of Nehru, Gopal (1984) acknowledges this. Indirectly, through the Community Development Programme and some other schemes of a similar nature, mass education received some attention, but this was not the same thing as building a credible and lasting base for the expansion of elementary education. This was no small neglect, and it is hard to find a parallel case among countries that gained their independence from colonial rule after the Second World War. There is no satisfactory explanation for it within the model of development that Nehru's government followed, for mass education and literacy had been assigned a major role in the theory of planned economy. It had also been given a high status by the NPC.

One explanation that seems valid is a political one. Its validity arises not merely out of the theoretical premises on which it is based, but also out of the style in which the structure of education in India developed after independence. The explanation is that the owners of capital and property in Indian society who had constituted the small 'civil society' since the beginning of the nineteenth century were not interested in the advancement of mass primary education. The masses were for them the source of cheap labour; they therefore did not feel any strong need to build an education system aimed at their intellectual progress. The Indian propertied classes also did not have a long-term view of industrial development. On the contrary, they were more interested in short-term survival and gains. Kosambi had sketched this narrow outlook of the Indian bourgeois classes a year before independence. Commenting on the rapid rise in share prices over the Second World War years, Kosambi said:

> Not only has Nehru neglected to take note of this accumulation, but he has also been unable to grasp just what this quantitative change has done qualitatively to the character of the Indian middle class, a class which may now be said to be firmly in the saddle. A few drops from the banquet (generally from the excess profits) have been scattered as a libation in the direction of education, scientific research, and charity; a considerable slackening of the ancient rigidity of manners, and unfortunately of morals also, is duly noticeable. Yet this is nothing

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> compared to the principal characteristic of this class, the ravening greed which is now so obvious in the black market, in enormous bribes spent in making still more enormous profits, in speculation in shares and an increasingly callous disregard for the misery and even the lives of their fellow Indians (Kosambi 1986: 14).

Under the hegemony of this kind of elite, progress in education took a different meaning altogether, and the state endorsed this meaning by following a *laissez faire* policy in the context of school education. Wealthy Indians had begun to invest in educational institutions during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The contributions made by Bengali landowners and industrialists to the national education movement of the early twentieth century are well recorded (cf. Sarkar 1973). In the last chapter we noted the collection drive that Madan Mohan Malaviya undertook among the landed upper castes of the Hindi region in order to provide the Banaras Hindu University with a sound financial footing. A qualitative change, however, came in role of private investment in education with the founding of the Doon School in 1935. This was the beginning of a sub-system which symbolized 'quality' within a democratic order. The Doon School was flaunted as being accessible to all, but in practice demanded fee-paying capacity and 'merit' or 'talent' (Singh 1985). The condition of paying capacity of parents was clear enough (though it was later obfuscated by a system of scholarships); the point about 'merit' served as a pedagogical device to uphold the claim to equal opportunity within an exclusive structure. A charmingly succinct explanation of how the idea of 'merit' served both equality and exclusiveness was given by India's Education Minister, M.C. Chagla, two years after the government started a merit scholarship scheme in 'public' schools like Doon:

> The equality that democracy contemplates is equality of opportunity, not equality of talent. There can never be equality of talent .... And the duty of the State is to find people who have got very fine talent and give them the opportunity to make the best use of their talents. Now that is the function of the public schools. To find the most gifted boys in our country and give them the best education that is possible and feasible .... I feel one of the functions of the public schools is to give our country

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> the leaders of the country ... and that is why the Ministry of Education gives merit scholarships to the public schools (Singh 1985: 109).

The point Chagla was making was not new, nor was it the first time that the person in charge of mass education was endorsing the role of an elite school. India's first Education Minister, Maulana Azad had made a similar statement in his speech at the Silver Jubilee ceremony of the Scindia School at Gwalior in 1949:

> The system of residential education with its emphasis on the growth of character and leadership has much to offer to India .... Whatever opinion we may have about their exclusive character, it cannot be denied that they that is, 'public' schools rendered a great service in introducing education of the British Public School type to India (Azad n.d.: 85).

In the same speech he declared with great pleasure that his ministry had 'thrown open to all' the Chiefs' colleges at Ajmer and Raipur and the European schools like Lovedale and Sanawar. The 'all' that Azad was referring to could hardly include the masses, but nevertheless, the legitimacy of Azad's point was going to be upheld by state-provided scholarships for the 'meritorious' but 'poor'.

The government could not, of course, abandon the rhetoric of free and compulsory elementary education for all. Mention of this aim in the Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy had made it an article of public faith. The government did nothing visible to undermine this faith, but it subtly accepted a change in the role of education. The constitutional position was that national development required the potential of every child to be nurtured. This position did not contradict the view common among propertied Indians, especially the urban bourgeoisie, that a select few institutions should deal only with 'talented' students. It was a matter of time, roughly forty years after independence, for this view to blossom into the opening of privileged schools for the 'meritorious' in the state sector—which is what the Navodaya Schools are.[14] The conceptual base of this critical development in state policy had been

[14] These schools were started as part of the 'new' education policy initiated by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986. For an overview of the policy, see my 'Safer Options' (Kumar 1989b).

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laid down in Azad's day by means of an accommodative rhetoric. Stressing equal right to education as the welfare state's ideology on the one hand, it upheld the right of the propertied classes to provide their children with privileged education on the other. The welfare state could prevent this latter right from looking too unseemly by providing scholarships for the 'poor' but 'talented' in elite schools.

The government's programme of 'basic education' could not possibly remain unaffected by the sharp conflict inherent in this accommodative rhetoric. Both as an ideology and as a pedagogy, 'basic education' soon withered away, leaving no trace of its vocabulary in the report of the Education Commission written in the mid-1960s. Many have pondered on the reasons responsible for the 'failure' of basic education. Administrative malfunctioning, financial contraints and resistance to innovation did play their role, but these can hardly be described as reasons for the failure of 'basic education'. Indeed, the existence and force of these factors calls for the presence of a climate congenial to failure. Such a climate was provided by the projection of a concept of progress which was hostile to any gradualist construction of a social base for the democratic order. The giant leap forward that 'progress' came to mean in the context of an impatient and ambitious agenda of industrialization had little room or concern for Gandhian ideals like recognition of the masses as distinct, individual faces. India was said to be in dire need of 'leaders' and 'talented' men and women; construction of literate, participatory communities could wait.

In the context of education, thus, state ideology went back soon after independence to the dominant views of late nineteenth century. Vivekananda had spoken of the need for 100,000 young men and women to transform the moral and material fibre of Indian society. Ranade was convinced of the role that an enlightened elite could play in India's development. Character and leadership were the twin concepts which educationally active political leaders of the early twentieth century had inherited from their predecessors. Gandhi's intervention in India's political life gave a new meaning to these terms. Both the content and the style of his politics conveyed the simple point that a few moral or talented men could not transform India, that there was no alternative to the construction of an enlightened and spirited mass base for a democratic polity. From the Gandhian viewpoint, any programme of progress that promoted the 'meritorious' at the expense of the common was a fallacy. It was

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precisely on the lines of this fallacy that educational development moved from the 1960s onwards. By now, educational planning had taken the full plunge towards realizing Nehru's dream of a system of advanced institutes of scientific and technological research and training. Major investments, mostly subsidized by foreign aid, were made in this direction, and they exacerbated the disbalance that already existed between mass illiteracy and cheap access to higher education. The government did open new primary schools at a rapid pace, but failed to care for the material and pedagogical conditions prevailing in them. Once the 'basic education' experiment was over in all but name in most states by the mid-1960s there was no perspective left in primary education to stop it from drifting. Expansion continued, for it testified to the government's commitment to the Constitution, but there was no idea or method to make universal elementary education a coherent project.

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VIII

Conclusion

We had started by examining the ideological roots of the colonial state and its policies in education. We then moved on to study the values that guided the educational thought and movements that were associated with the independence struggle. We will now conclude with an overview of the legacies of colonial rule and of the independence struggle. The system of education has lived with both these legacies since independence. Although this study was not intended to provide an assessment or critique of post-independence developments in education, it does offer some clues about the kind of tensions and challenges that education in India continues to face to this day. Some of the earlier chapters have already glanced at the post-independence phase, especially the 1950s. We cannot enlarge on these glimpses within the limits of this book, but our conclusion may provide the future researcher with a rough sketch of the ground which any ideological analysis of education in independent India will need to cover.

Both the legacies that we are about to summarize and reassess are ambivalent—in the sense that they consist of contrary ideas and forces at work. Let us look at the ambivalence inherent in the colonial legacy first. The terms 'colonial education' and 'English education' carry rather different connotations, and the choice between them is often indicative of the user's attitude towards the system of education initiated by the British in India. There is one thing common, however, in the meanings of these two terms, namely that the colonial system of education represented a radically fresh start. This idea is found in its most crystallized form in studies that show how the British government destroyed the indigenous system of education in order to establish a system suited to their interests. It makes little difference whether such a study bemoans the loss of indigenous education or welcomes the arrival of the system linked

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to colonial rule. The point is that the break between indigenous and colonial systems has been perceived as a sharp one by most students of Indian educational history. Nothing testifies better to this perception than the customary use of the term 'modern' for the system of education established by the British. The dichotomy between the 'old' or 'traditional' and the 'modern' systems is so widely accepted that it is considered undeserving of any further examination.

There are certain aspects in which the colonial system contrasted with the existing system of education. These aspects related mainly to administration and finance. The colonial government evolved a bureaucratic system of educational administration which did not exist earlier. The new system implied a high degree of centralization in decision making, both in employment-related matters (for example, rules of recruitment for teachers) and in academic matters such as curriculum, choice of textbooks, and examinations. While the existing system of education was dependent on local resources—both in terms of the person available for teaching children and the money or other material support required to sustain him—the new, colonial system depended on the provisions made by the government. In academic matters, the old system offered substantive freedom and autonomy to the teacher, in contrast to the new system which made the teacher a subordinate functionary of the superior officers of the education department.

Colonial policy succeeded in altering the material base of the schoolteacher's life but did not enhance his economic or social status. School teaching lost its traditional character but failed to become a profession in the modern sense. This is where we perceive a crucial continuity between the old and the new systems of education. This continuity lay in the role and the norms of behaviour teachers were supposed to practise in relation to the children they taught. The arrangements made by the colonial state to train schoolteachers in new methods of teaching and the use of new texts did not succeed in altering the established pedagogic creed. This creed demanded total submission of the student, and bestowed unquestioned authority upon the teacher. At the heart of this pedagogic relationship lay the Brahmanical ideal of the teacher's moral authority. The teacher was supposed to possess sacred knowledge which he knew best how to transfer to a student.

This aspect of the Brahmanical ideal was no longer valid under the new dispensation, for the new curriculum insisted on a secular

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basis for school knowledge. This problem, however, failed to pose a threat strong enough to dislodge the established quasi-magical role of the teacher. The poor quality of teacher training helped in permitting the traditional role to perpetuate itself. What helped in a more substantive way was the remarkably low salary that the colonial state determined for the schoolteacher. The salary, in combination with his powerless status in relation to inspectors and officers, ensured that school jobs would not attract the kind of young men who might perceive teaching children as a professional activity and who might consciously work to develop a pedagogic creed suited to the changing socio-economic milieu.

The major change in the socio-economic milieu had to do with the colonial government's agenda to put into practice the tenets of utilitarianism. The administrative and the judicial systems were shaped after the insights available in utilitarian thought to solve the problem of social disorder. Recognition of the individual's rights and freedoms was a major step in the construction of a utilitarian state. The purpose of such recognition was to encourage the enjoyment and demand of utilities. The individual whose happiness was guaranteed under such recognition, had to have unlimited desire for utilities as well as security for his unlimited freedom to appropriate the means of production. The increase of productivity and pleasure that utilitarianism promised was dependent on the acceptance of this concept of the individual citizen. It implied a strategy of capitalist growth, and in the circumstances prevailing in England, it did indeed lead to the construction of a capitalist political economy.

Expansion and growth of the industrial system of production in the nineteenth century brought several kinds of stress to bear on the model that utilitarian thought had constructed. The citizen came to be defined in terms somewhat broader than merely a holder of interests. The contradiction between the market model and the welfare model of the state remained unresolved,[1] but the basic idea of the individual's rights that utilitarianism had crudely projected gained strength and validity. The advancements made in pedagogy and child care during the early decades of the twentieth century were posited on this idea. The education system as a whole absorbed

[1] See Macpherson (1973). Also see Masao Maruyama's collection of essays, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics* (1963) for insights into this kind of contradiction in Japan's case.

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these advancements at a very slow pace, mainly because the system was sharply divided. Education for working-class children remained for long a means of teaching them a morality of obedience while education for children of propertied classes was a means of acquiring the symbolic repertoire consistent with leadership roles. Modern pedagogical methods acted as a slow but powerful antidote to this divisive character of the education system in England, leading to the situation that still prevails to a certain extent, in which schools for children of the elite are pedagogically least advanced.

Central to the new pedagogical methods was the idea of treating each child as a unique individual. Liberalism in its developed, post-utilitarian shape provided the philosophical basis for this idea. If we place the idea of every child's uniqueness in the context of the political economy of nineteenth-century liberalism, we notice how romantic it essentially was—a dream carrying the burden of bourgeois guilt for being so cruel to the millions of children who were working under sub-human conditions in factories. It may be interesting to speculate what social function the dream served. In reality, the philosophy of child-centred education acted in a paradoxical way. The emphasis it placed on the formation of dependable habits concerning the use of time and space was directly related to the demands of factory life. On the other hand, the insistence that every child deserves humane treatment at the hands of a well-trained teacher gradually succeeded in changing archaic and cruel classroom practices.

In India, under colonial conditions, the utilitarian dream met a rather different fate. It was no easy job for the colonizer to invent individuality in Indian society. Stereotypes of the Asiatic personality and evangelicist compulsions were serious emotive obstacles, and they were compounded by the prevalence of customs and beliefs about property that looked quite improper to the sons of the aristocracy and merchants negotiating British interests in India. Liberal doctrines of possessive individualism and the free market were put into operation, but at the same time old Brahmanical concepts regarding caste and family relations were given new validity (Washbrook 1981). The individual's rights were thus defined in mutually contradictory ways; he was supposed to harbour aspirations of personal gain and comfort, but he was also to be circumscribed by the ritual boundaries of the older way of life. The important point, however, is that this construction of the individual was applicable to

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a miniscule portion of the Indian population and mainly to men. The millions whose means of livelihood were to be destroyed, whose rights over land and forests were to be overridden, and whose capacities for physical labour were to be relentlessly exploited in the course of empire building, had neither rights nor redress. The utilitarian dream was not supposed to disturb the sacred works of empire building that required silent appropriation of the Indian masses.

The rhetoric of utilitarianism found expression in bold pronouncements about education for the people of India, but real progress in terms of expansion of elementary education remained miserably poor in most parts of India. It is in the development of higher education that the colonial administration could take some pride. Indeed, progress in higher education became the chief agency mystifying the political agenda of colonial education, which was to develop an educated citizenry sharing many crucial items of symbolic property with the colonizers. Language was the most overt of these items; less visible were meanings associated with 'knowledge', 'culture' and 'progress'. Higher education, which was by and large the monopoly of the higher castes and the wealthy, initiated the native mind into categories and values constructed by the colonizer. Nothing was politically more important than the initiation of the educated Indian into the Englishman's perception of the Indian masses. Both the descriptive and the diagnostic aspects of this perception were important. The descriptive aspect showed the masses as faceless millions, steeped in a poverty of their own making, superstitious and ignorant. The diagnostic aspect pointed out that education and moral upliftment alone could help the masses. Together, the two aspects endowed upon the educated native a deeply satisfying sense of intellectual and moral superiority over the illiterate masses, very similar to the superiority the colonizer felt towards Indian society as a whole.

In a parallel dynamic, colonization triggered in the masses in certain parts of India the urge for emancipation from Brahman dominance. One aspect of this urge was the demand for education, and this demand did force the English administration to put a semblance of substance in its rhetoric of mass education. But while this egalitarian pressure did lead to some expansion of elementary education in western and southern India, it stopped short of altering the pedagogical codes entrenched in the system. As we noted earlier, the teacher's role vis-à-vis the children, continued to follow the

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Brahmanical ideal. Provision for teacher training and the introduction of a new epistemology through the curriculum failed by themselves to create a new culture of pedagogy. Here there was no active supportive force in the shape of large-scale industrialization, and in any case the reform of education was too minor an issue in the rhetoric of imperial priorities.

The teacher as guru thus survived the onslaught of colonization. His moral authority over children remained unchallenged, and the child's need to be treated as an individual remained a foreign idea. In his new quasi-professional role with a low salary and subservient status in the system of education, the schoolteacher continued to perform an ancient political function, that of subduing the spirit of curiosity and questioning. This role was theoretically inimical to both the new epistemology underlying the new curriculum, and the political ideology of liberalism. But it had cultural roots that were much too deep, and it proved strong enough to undermine the curriculum, evolving what we have termed a 'textbook culture'. This 'culture' permitted the ordinary teacher to perform his ancient duties of transferring legitimate truths to the students without the interference of the student's questioning spirit. As the education system slowly expanded towards the final decades of British rule, the 'textbook culture' enabled the teacher to serve as a cheap yet trustworthy servant of the state which required its meanings and symbols to be conveyed untampered by pedagogical modernism.

Colonial policy thus failed to influence the old image and pedagogical function of the teacher. Where it did succeed was in altering the curriculum, but it was no more than a token success. The overarching role that prescribed textbooks assumed, and the demands made by a centralized examination system undermined the epistemology of the new curriculum. As it is, the new curriculum was associated with the foreign ruler, and it was introduced as a replacement to the older curriculum of indigenous schools. These elements combined with factors related to the teacher's status and the weak development of teacher training to ensure that school knowledge would remain unrelated to everyday knowledge. This was easily the most negative of all the consequences of colonial policy in education and, despite the formal end of colonial rule, there has been little success so far in mitigating it. The knowledge that schools and colleges dispense daily to millions of students continues to be perceived by them as useful mainly for success in examinations, rather

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than for intellectual satisfaction. On the other hand, the knowledge that they gain in everyday life, and what is conveyed to them by the cultural life of the family and the community is construed to have no relevance in school, and is therefore never subjected to the kind of reflection and inquiry that is associated with learning at school.

Let us now turn to the ambivalence inherent in the legacies of the struggle for independence. We have identified three value orientations or quests that underlay educational projects and debates from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. One was the quest for equality of educational opportunity which was historically related to the urge for justice that the downtrodden castes had expressed in many earlier periods. Under colonial rule, the expression of this urge was transmuted by the dominant idiom of utilitarian liberalism. What really was the dream of social transformation became a demand for avenues of upward mobility for individuals. The transformational force of the anti-Brahman movements in western and southern India was subtly neutralized by utilitarianism and channelized towards the task of creating a market society. The liberal dream that the market by itself would maximize collective good did not fully materialize even in England. In India the idea of the market served to legitimize colonial exploitation, and later on, the privileged position of native elites.

Distribution of educational opportunities among the lower strata proceeded side by side with the growth of an elite sub-system of schooling. While the demand for wider distribution of education was linked to the struggle for equality, the elite sub-system drew its legitimacy from the ideal of progress. The rhetoric of English 'public' schools was applied to justify similar institutions in the name of India's need for leaders in politics, administration, military, business and industry. Thus the drive for progress took the form of segregated socialization for the elite's children. The detailed methodology of this kind of socialization, and the terms that described it in socially acceptable ways were already available in England's famous 'public' schools. The methodology was based on Victorian ideals of manhood and roundness of personality.[2] Living in boarding houses, spreading one's energy over a wide sphere of activities and acting

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[2] For further discussions of Victorian ideals, see Rosenthal (1986) and Wilkinson (1966).

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with total loyalty to the school in all matters, constituted the operational part of the methodology. The terminology that upheld the 'public' school approach was derived from the popular psychology of character formation. This terminology required no indigenization in India since an old discourse already existed here which held moral improvement to be the supreme aim of education. Colonial rulers had revived this discourse, partly by posing as examples of moral uprightness in administrative and legal functions. The nationalist struggle did not have to construct its own educational idiom; it readily adopted the one that colonial masters had been using. By the time the native elite went about creating a sub-system of education for their children, 'formation of character' had become well established as a homonym, as is explained in Chapter II, which the English and the educated Indian could both use.

The phrase proved its final worth as a social microchip—holding different discourses together, yet neatly apart—when it served the revivalist streak of politics in the freedom struggle. We have probed this streak in some detail in the context of the quest for self-identity in the Hindi region. Two findings of our probe are worth recalling here. One was that cultural revivalism did not alter the concept of worthwhile knowledge entrenched in the curriculum of common schools. What it did alter was the nature of the lingua franca of the region. The use of cultural revivalism by the upper-caste literati and their supporters transformed Hindi into a class dialect of the educated. As a school language, this new Hindi further obstructed the spread of literacy in a region already lagging behind other regions in the spread of elementary education. The politics of self-identity, which used revivalism as a tool, thus strengthened the reproductionist role of education. More significantly, the new Hindi provided a subtle cover which revivalist forces could use to further their aims in the face of, and with financial assistance from, the apparently secular state.

This perspective enables us to notice a conflict between the quests of the independence movement for social equality on the one hand and self-identity on the other. The conflict did not subside with the arrival of independence, but took a more complex form as the quest for self-identity was partly co-opted by the state. Under Nehru's leadership, the state of independent India chose to pursue 'progress' as the supreme value. 'Progress' was defined in terms of industrialization and industrial growth and modernization of the means of production. In the context of 'self-identity', the state assumed the right

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to define national identity, and made an attempt to counter cultural revivalism by projecting secularism as the state's ethic. This effort did not succeed, and today we may feel that the state did not mean business. Such a feeling would be quite valid in the sphere of education, which offers far weightier evidence of neglect than of concern and actual reform. Primary schools remained bare and desolate, and little interest was shown in altering the epistemological basis of colonial education. Modernization and industrial growth became the high drama of the state while social life and culture continued to be shaped by widespread illiteracy and religious answers to basic questions concerning material life, such as 'Why am I poor?' and 'Why did my child die?'

The secular national identity that the state made an attempt to project received little substantive support from education. This was one of the many reasons why the endeavour did not get far, and why within less than half a century of acquiring independence, cultural revivalism has again surfaced as a major force in political life. Revivalism still has no answers to the basic questions of material progress other than those associated with industrial modernism. The danger that the resurgence of revivalism poses lies precisely in this unity of what are customarily seen as dichotomous forces, namely 'tradition' and 'modernity'. If all that the state has done since independence is to construct a modern industrial base, it now appears a real possibility that this modernized industrial base could serve cultural revivalism and the pursuit of power associated with it. This pursuit has never had much patience with the struggle for equality and justice. Unless these struggles find new leaders of the stature of Gandhi and Ambedkar, we could well be entering a long corridor of darkness. Perhaps it is not merely for the sake of nostalgia that we need to underline that had attempts to redefine modernity not been scoffed at, we might have had a somewhat different scene today. The challenge still remains and becomes bigger each day.

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