
UNIT 2 MACAULAY, RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY AND CHARLES E TREVELYAN

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit is to give an outline of the specific debates in the early nineteenth century on the education of the Indian subjects of the British Empire. The three tracts that comprise this unit and encapsulate these debates have been discussed and their main arguments have been summarised. Another objective is to situate these debates in a larger historical context so that they do not appear to be products of certain intellectuals who discussed education as a purely academic matter. The historical context is one of imperialist domination and economic exploitation of India's resources by the **British East India Company**. At the same time the early nineteenth century was a witness to the growth of the social reform movements in India with the rise of some of the most dedicated crusaders against social maladies. The discussion of the three tracts, it is hoped, will show that the educational reforms instituted by the British government cannot be understood unless they are placed within the matrix of the larger socio-political forces.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

English Studies was introduced in India in the first half of the nineteenth century. The year 1835 can be taken as the official date of introduction in India, the date when the Teaching of English at all levels (primary, secondary and higher) was officially sanctioned by the British colonial government. However, the process for the education of Indians through the language of the colonisers was set into motion much before 1835. This process can be broadly classified into two parts. The first comprises a set of arguments and opinions advocating the study of English literature and European sciences through the medium of English. The second is the establishment of schools and colleges for the study of English as well as the setting up of institutional bodies for the formulation of educational policies on behalf of the colonial government. In this Unit we shall restrict our focus to the first half of the process.

2.1.1 The Introduction of English Studies in India

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It can be said that the new educational policy of 1835 officially announced in the **Governor General's Resolution** that:

The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and sciences among the natives of India [and that] all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would best be employed in English education alone

- This statement did not reflect a sudden shift in the educational policy of the colonial government.

Rather it was an outcome of a long debate/conflict between advocates of English education and those who favoured the study of classical Indian languages -- Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. **Macaulay's** *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) and **Trevelyan's** *On the Education of the People of India* (1838) incorporate all these debates along with a passionate plea for the introduction of English studies. However, it must be noted that as early as 1792 **Charles Grant**, an employee of the **East India Company** recommended the dissemination of European literature and sciences through the medium of English among the people of India. The reasons given by **Grant** for this extraordinary importance attached to the study of English literature are significant. They form the backbone of all later arguments demanding an official approval of English studies.

In his treatise *Observations on the State of Society among the Asian Subjects of Great Britain* **Grant** paints a grim picture of Indian society steeped in superstition, idolatry and immorality. These evils of Indian society he believed could only be removed by a system of western education that according to **Grant** possessed all the advantages of a superior civilisation. However, in **Grant's** opinion, English education would be highly beneficial to the colonialists. **Grant** was certain that the natives by acquiring western knowledge and gaining a command over the language of their rulers would be brought nearer to them. This reduction of distance between the natives and their governors would ensure the formers loyalty. **Grant** also postulates that it would be easier to trade with anglicised Indians and ensure their cooperation in the realm of commerce. Thus the original aim of the colonists – the extension of British commerce would be fulfilled.

It can be easily seen that **Grant's** educational scheme is not simply limited to the enlightenment of natives. It may be said that for **Grant**, educational instruction was also a strategy for political and economic consolidation of the British imperial power. Moreover, the question of the enlightenment of Indians also seems to be based on the assumption that native culture and civilisation is intrinsically inferior with no redeeming features. Aren't both these assumptions debatable and problematic? The solution offered by **Grant** is the imposition of an alien but superior culture. **Grant's** view is uncomfortably close to the formulation of the Christian missionaries in India who thought that the inherent barbarism of Hindustan could only be successfully countered by Christianising the whole country. In the next section we shall examine what we may call the new phase of imperialism.

2.2 THE NEW FACE OF IMPERIALISM

While **Grant** was thinking of anglicising the native, the British educational policy was running on completely different principles. Before the Anglicist viewpoint on education was realised in actual practice, the colonial system of education was guided primarily by pragmatic considerations. The encouragement of ancient and medieval Indian learning by the British was based on the policy of neutrality regarding

religious-cultural matters. The fear of rousing the religious sensitivities of the Indians precluded any attempt at conversion or indoctrination. In other words, the policy on non-interference in education was conditioned by the imperatives of socio-political control over the newly conquered territories. It will then be worthwhile to ask - what were the reasons for this crucial policy shift? What made the colonial masters think that the old policy of placating the native's cultural prejudices was outdated? Can we assume that the framers and supporters of the new educational policy of 1838 redefined British imperial domination?

A study of the various minutes and tracts of those who wanted to introduce English in India reveals that they differed from the old policy makers on the issue of controlling the socio-cultural life of their Indian subjects. They did not see imperialism as a purely political practice with minimum interference in the socio-cultural affairs of the colony. Imperialism was now constructed as a transcendent force sweeping the entire globe with a great burden of 'civilising' the natives. In other words **Macaulay**, **Trevelyan** and other anglicists represent imperialism as a benevolent political enterprise zealously working towards the improvement of less developed communities. The assumption, of course, is that these communities cannot improve on their own due to the innate depravity/ inferiority of their socio-cultural practices. Let us examine the new developments that were to take place in Indian society as a result of this grand assumption.

2.2.1 New Developments In Indian Society

From the previous discussion, we arrived at the conclusion that the assumption of the intellectual and moral leadership of the Indian people by the new batch of colonists represents a new phase of British imperialism. What was earlier seen as a politically dangerous and unpragmatic move (i.e. the introduction of English) now became a preferable course to follow. The representatives of the old educational policy like **H H Wilson** and **H T Prinsep** saw, (in this confidence of the new educationists), the inexperience of "individuals with manifestly strong prejudices," individuals who "knew nothing of the people and the country." However the confidence of a **Macaulay** or a **Trevelyan** was not merely the product of a new imperial mindset but had a solid basis in the socio-cultural developments in Indian society. These developments asserted themselves strongly in the Bengal Presidency where a new class of Bengali intellectuals had arisen. This class was extremely vocal in their support of English education. Many institutions for the spread of education through the medium of English were established by learned Bengali Hindus with the financial and moral support of the missionaries and sympathetic officials of the **East India Company**.

The intellectual ferment in middle class Hindu community of Bengal signalled the slow but sure growth of the social reform movement in India. This movement was a revolution in ideas with its trenchant criticism of the decadent and corrupt aspects of the Indian social system. These Bengali intellectuals fully supported the imperial diatribe against *Sattee*, *Child Marriage* and *Thuggery*. These intellectuals saw the colonial regime's critique of the inhuman social customs, as a much needed support to their own agenda. The *Letter* of **Raja Rammohun Roy**, the great Bengali social reformer addressed to the British **Governor-General Lord Amherst** reveals to us a process in which the indigenous impetus of reform oblivious of the new imperial agenda strengthened the arguments of the imperial ideologues and ultimately contributed to the implementation of their educational plans. In the next section we shall take a closer look at **Raja Ram Mohun Roy's Letter to Lord Amherst**.

2.3 RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY'S *LETTER TO LORD AMHERST*

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The *Letter* is the most significant indigenous contribution to the debate of education in the early nineteenth century. **Rammohun Roy** wrote this *Letter* in order to protest against the ruling regime's decision to open a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. It has been already pointed out that before the new educational policy was implemented, the government of India supported instruction in the classical Indian languages. It funded institutions involved in the spread of Hindu and Mohammedan learning and gave financial assistance to Sanskrit and Arabic scholars in order to encourage them to achieve distinction in their respective fields. The government also provided grants for the printing of ancient Sanskrit and Arabic texts in the original and in translation. The **Governor Generals** in the formative years of British rule were committed to the spread and encouragement of native learning. Both **Warren Hastings** and **Lord Minto** were instrumental in the establishment of many institutions where oriental literature was taught. By 1823 (the date of the *Letter*) this official policy of the government faced repeated assaults from a number of quarters. The attack primarily came from the missionaries, the Anglicists of the **East India Company** and the 'enlightened' Bengali elite. In spite of all these pressures, the colonial regime had decided to continue the policy of **Hastings** and **Minto**. The proposal for the establishment of a Sanskrit College at Calcutta was a part of this decision.

Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* locates a contradiction between the modern, scientific spirit of European civilisation and its educational policy in India. The proposal to establish the new Sanskrit College comes as a shock to **Roy** since, in his view, it does not conform to the liberal image of the British. It is clear from a careful perusal of the letter that **Ram Mohun Roy** expects the colonial power to be true to its liberal image and find ways and means to promote western sciences and arts for the benefit of its Indian subjects. **Ram Mohun Roy** finds the indigenous system of instruction outdated because it is medieval. It teaches systems which have no rational and scientific basis and are of little use in the modern world. **Roy** finds abstract metaphysical questions distasteful. These questions were central to the native educational system. Speculations like "in what manner is the soul absorbed into the Deity" or *Vedantic* belief that "visible things have no existence" would not, in **Roy's** view lead to the improvement of Indian society. Progress and modernisation was only possible if people were taught the modern sciences and literatures of the West.

Roy was also opposed to the teaching of Sanskrit grammar that embodied only tiresome subtleties. For **Roy**, Sanskrit was a language that due to its intrinsic difficulties acts as a barrier to the diffusion of useful knowledge. The students spend the best years of their lives learning to speak and write correct Sanskrit. **Roy** was against a mechanical kind of language teaching that treated language as an end in itself and not a means for conveying something useful. However, it is noteworthy that **Roy** makes no specific mention of the medium of instruction. Although he critiques the Sanskrit language for being an "impervious veil," it is the useless, metaphysical learning concealed under this veil that is the chief object of his attack.

The critique of the *Vedantic* beliefs does not necessarily mean that **Roy's** arguments like those of the colonialists embody a wholesale condemnation of Indian cultural practices and the assertion of the essential superiority of European socio-cultural structures. Although the comparison in **Roy's** *Letter* definitely puts Europe ahead of the Orient, this modernity of Europe does not constitute its essence but has been achieved after a long conflict with the medieval world-view. According to **Ram Mohun Roy**, Europeans have emerged from the medievalism of the scholastic philosophers by replacing scholasticism with the scientific spirit of **Baconian philosophy**. By analysing the march of European civilisation from the rational religiosity of the Middle Ages to the world of modern science, **Roy** was able to give a historical dimension to the pitiful ignorance of the Indian people. Within **Roy's**

analytic framework, the superstitious and essentially religious character of the native's world defines a historical epoch akin to the pre-Renaissance world of the schoolmen in Europe. **Roy's** historicisation of the social-cultural practices of the Indian masses subverts the idea of their inherent inferiority. It also ushers in the possibility of change as an intensive educational programme consisting of modern sciences and arts that could root out the decadent medieval ideas that in his view, hampered progress.

Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* is one of the most significant documents of Indian educational history. Its significance lies not only in its basic assumption of the superiority of the western system of instruction and of western sciences and literature but also in the fact that it strengthened the Anglicists' contention that a change in the educational field was desired by the natives themselves. Anglicists like **Macaulay** used **Ram Mohun Roy's** criticism of the absence of useful knowledge in the Sanskrit system of education to denigrate native culture and top suit their own imperialistic agendas. It is therefore, pertinent that we examine **Macaulay's** *Minute on Indian Education* next.

2.4 MACAULAY'S *MINUTE ON INDIAN EDUCATION*

T B Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education of 1835* is regarded by many as the most significant document in the history of Indian education. In fact its importance has been over-emphasised to an extent that it is sometimes held to be solely responsible for the introduction of English in British India.

It would be unfair to other workers in the field (e.g., **C E Trevelyan**) if we hold this view. However, the *Minute* can be seen as a watershed that not only governed the educational policy of the British administration after 1835 but also reflected a crucial change in the strategy of control and subjugation of the native population. On the face of it, the issue of control and repression appears to be wholly external to **Macaulay's** famous discussion on the benefits of giving English education to the natives of India. The discussion confronts us with 'facts' that are totally contrary to the idea of suppression of any potential dissatisfaction among the Indian masses. One of the most important 'facts' is that the Indians themselves prefer English education to native learning. **Macaulay**, the crusader for the "vast intellectual wealth" of Europe attacks the Orientalists, accusing them of bribing the Indian student to learn languages and literatures that in **Macaulay's** interpretive framework represent irrationality and barbarism. Thus he asserts, "the people should be left to make their own choice between the rival systems of education without being bribed."

But the most important 'fact' of **Macaulay** is the incontrovertible superiority of English literature language and sciences to Oriental learning. This conviction of **Macaulay** propels him to the swift conclusion that all the literatures of the East are not worth "a single shelf of a good European library." **Macaulay** finds the vernaculars so poor in their vocabulary that no useful instruction can be given in these languages. Thus the rejection of indigenous literatures and languages and their replacement by English is the only course available to the 'enlightened' colonial educationists. The *Minute* also encapsulates the concept of the White man's burden, the messianic responsibility of enlightened Europe to inculcate modern values among the less civilised communities. **Macaulay** predicts that this process of acculturation will make the natives forget their inferior cultural past and facilitate cultural assimilation. The new native who will emerge after receiving English education will be "Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." This cultural intolerance and the consequent plea for cultural subsumation are transmitted in the guise of imperial generosity. The assumption that the great wealth of the European intellectual heritage being offered to Indians is implicit in the

historical parallel that **Macaulay** draws between Renaissance England and nineteenth century India. He argues that the Englishmen of Renaissance England embraced the ancient Greek and Latin learning rejecting their medieval Anglo-Saxon culture. This analogy facilitates **Macaulay's** conclusion that "what Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of **More** and **Ascham**, our tongue is to the people of India."

Thus **Macaulay** in the *Minute* presents an image of an imperial policy devoted to the welfare of the Indian subjects of the British Empire. Firmly convinced of the civilising mission of the Empire's servants, he charges the Orientalists with not only a dereliction of their imperial duties but of erecting barriers in the way of progress and modernisation of Indian society. Let us now examine **Macaulay's Minute** critically in the light of postcolonial theory.

2.4.1 The Postcolonial Critique Of **Macaulay's Minute**

Macaulay was severely criticised by the English Orientalists for his rhetorical condemnation of Indian culture. **H H Wilson** and **W H Macnaughten**, two committed Orientalists of **Macaulay's** time were outraged at the negation of an entire cultural heritage as worthless by an individual who had spent only a few years in India and consequently in **Wilson's** view knew nothing of the country and the people. This outrage forms the basis of most postcolonial critiques of the hegemonic mode of imperial thinking. This kind of critique contains reflections on the arrogance of imperial ideological practices, the complete want of regard / ignorance of an entirely different culture, a refusal to understand cultural distinctiveness etc. **B Rajan's** view of **Macaulay's Minute** is one of the best instances of this kind of cultural critique. According to **Rajan**:

Understanding the subjected culture or even laying down the basis for a dialogue with it is not the primary objective . . . The Anglicist view based on imperial assumptions of superiority that in its nature cannot be dialogic, is less concerned with world understanding than with remaking the world in the western image.

It may be noted that the critique concentrates only on the discursive practices of imperial power. It does not focus upon the material benefits that this discourse confers upon the imperialists. The English Orientalists negated the idea of any practical utility of the new educational scheme. The question that confronts us now is, whether the new policy of devaluing native literatures and languages had any practical use or did it, as the Orientalists contended, endanger British interest in India? We shall discuss the attitude of the Orientalists towards the New Educational Policy in the next section.

2.5 THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE NEW EDUCATION POLICY

It has been already pointed out that the encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic learning by the **Company** officials was in consonance with the early colonial policy of religious neutrality. The colonised people were seen by the British as highly sensitive where their scriptural learning was concerned. Thus the new policy based on an explicit assertion of cultural superiority was seen by the Orientalists as not only a falsification of the true state of Indian learning but an unpragmatic political move. Most critiques of the Orientalist disagreement with the new policy are based on the assumption that the Orientalists were concerned less with politics than with an academic interest in eastern learning. For instance, **Kalyan K Chatterjee** in the book *English Education in India* sees the Orientalist emphasis on learning the classical Indian languages as "cosmopolitanism and intellectual curiosity of eighteenth century Enlightenment." Thus it becomes necessary for **Chatterjee** to

assert the Orientalist “enthusiasm for the Oriental languages and literatures transcended the *merely pragmatic need* for acculturating the British administrators in the Indian milieu (italics... the unit writers).

Therefore, it becomes necessary to clarify the Orientalist position vis-à-vis Indian education and its difference from the **Macaulay-Bentinck** group that was responsible for the promulgation of the new education policy of 1835. As we have already seen the oppositional relation between the two camps has led to an identification of imperial hegemonic thinking of the Anglicists and a liberal understanding of Indian culture with the Orientalists. **Percival Spear** has summarised this opinion succinctly when he says that the Anglicists argued that Indian civilisation had no value and had to be replaced by Western civilisation while the Orientalists were of the opinion that Indian civilisation was ripe for enrichment by Western knowledge. However, on a closer scrutiny, it can be seen that the Orientalists did not attack the fundamental assumption behind the Anglicist position – “the notion the unquestionable superiority of European literature and science.” In fact they un-hesitantly referred to “the direction to true science and good taste in literature which the superior lights of Europe ought to enable us bestow.” **John Fytler**, an Orientalist and a translator of books into Arabic pointed out that “Eastern sciences bear scarcely more proportion to those of Europe, than the first lisping of an infant to the ratiocinations of man.” It is easy to see the hierarchical nature of the discourse in which the child is to be taught/dominated by the man.

Therefore it cannot be said that the Orientalists had no links with a discourse designed to serve hegemonic ends. The disagreement with the Anglicists primarily lay in how these ends were to be achieved. The Orientalists favoured an alliance with the upper caste Indians that actually constituted the Indian ruling class. This alliance obviously excluded any attempt at direct indoctrination in Christianity or a criticism of native learning on the grounds of a want of a scientific attitude. The Orientalists felt that since European science and the natives held literature in low esteem, it was indeed not desirable that it was imposed upon them. **H H Wilson**, the great Oriental scholar pointed out that “a mere English scholar is not respected for his learning by the natives, they have no notion of English as learning but they have a high respect for a man who knows Sanskrit or who knows Arabic.” In **Wilson’s** view such prejudices would be difficult to eradicate in the near future and therefore “any attempt to enforce an acknowledgement of the superiority of intellectual produce amongst the natives of the West can only create dissatisfaction.”

Thus it is not surprising that **Macaulay’s Minute** not only struck the Orientalists as a product of a man not acquainted with ground realities but as a set of pronouncements fraught with grave political consequences. Was the *Minute* politically pragmatic is the question that arises now. Let us examine its validity in the next section.

2.5.1 The Political Pragmatism of Macaulay’s Minute

When **Macaulay** in the *Minute* harps on the native clamour for English education, he is responding to charge of being unpragmatic. The imperial hauteur apart, the reasons given in the *Minute* for teaching English literature and language are not solely dependent on the argument of their innate superiority to native learning. Thus the ‘intrinsic value’ of English literature is only one of the arguments for the imposition of English on the natives. Since the importance of this argument has been overemphasised by postcolonial criticism, it appears to constitute the entire thrust of **Macaulay’s** educational programme. **Macaulay**, in fact, works hard in the *Minute* to convey the impression that the Orientalist fear of the native backlash at the prospect of English education is illogical. He points out the dissatisfaction of the jobless ex-students of the Sanskrit College who wasted the best years of their lives in learning what according to **Macaulay** gave them neither bread nor respect. In **Macaulay’s** view the great enthusiasm of the learned natives for English instruction proves that hostility by the Indians towards the new policy only exist in the realm of imagination. He even brought out the details of the relative popularity of native and English texts.

There was no great demand for Arabic and Sanskrit books, which the *Committee of Public Instruction* had printed at so great a cost while the *Calcutta School Book Society* was selling a large number of English books at a profit. For **Macaulay**, as **John Clive** points out, 'the state of the market was the decisive test.'

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The *Minute* implies that the old policy of the appeasement of the natives and of yielding to their religious prejudices is of no further use and needs to be replaced by a new programme of instruction in English, which responds to the indigenous demand for improvement through the teaching of sciences, and the literatures of Europe. Thus **Macaulay's Minute** does not see English education as an imposition. As **Clive** points out "Macaulay was familiar with the feelings of liberal Hindus on the subject of education." It is also clear that **Macaulay** interpreted the Indian social scene as a site, which contained seeds of social transformation. No longer were the religious figureheads held as representatives of communities whose significance could not be ignored. The social reformers who battled against decadent social systems and values were fully supported in their work by **Bentinck** and **Macaulay**. The new tide of reform helped **Macaulay** to project his scheme as practical and worthy of implementation. He could also accuse his opponents of not conforming to the ostensible project of imperialism – the intellectual and moral improvement of the colonised peoples.

The *Minute* thus builds up an assurance that British imperial interests will not be harmed by the new educational scheme. Certain portions of **Macaulay's** tract implies that the new framework of education will only increase the efficiency of colonial administration and help in the growth of trade. As **Macaulay** points out, English "is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government and is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East." However the fact that the Indian class speaks English or that English is to become eventually, a language of trade does not confirm the political and commercial dominance of the British in India. What is needed is a class of Indians thoroughly bred in the literature and arts of the colonisers. It is quite clear that **Macaulay's** education system is designed to produce a native who faithfully imitates the habits, customs and values of his/ her master. It is also evident that an anglicised native intellectual taught to revere and identify him/her self with the coloniser's culture will not be sufficiently critical of the exploitative nature of the colonial regime. Thus any potential subversion will be kept in check.

Thus **Macaulay's** scheme of anglicisation was not politically unpragmatic but was specifically structured to meet the needs of British imperialism. Its results were visible in the next fifty years. It succeeded in creating a class of Indians who were well versed in the art of speaking and writing English, Indians who would eventually be absorbed into the lower rungs of British administration. The anglicised elite was alienated from the rural masses of India. The reason lay not only in an education in a foreign language but also in the fact that it occupied positions of power in the civil administration and thus became a part of the exploitative colonial structure. However English education also acquainted the Indian intelligentsia with the liberal thought of the West that greatly contributed to the development of the anti-colonial movements later. Having analysed **Macaulay's Minute** in detail let us now turn our attention to **C E Trevelyan** and study the implications of his work *On The Education Of The People Of India*.

2.6 C E TREVELYAN – ON THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

Charles E Trevelyan was one of the foremost crusaders for the establishment of English studies in India. Like his brother-in-law **T B Macaulay**, he had a firm conviction that education in India had to be built upon new foundations. He saw India and her inhabitants in an advanced state of moral and intellectual decay. This

depressing imperial view of the colony was counterpoised by his optimism that teaching of English literature and language could successfully rejuvenate the people of India and lead them away from the path of false beliefs, false religions and immoral behaviour.

Trevelyan's condemnation of Indian religions and their corrupting effect on the native psyche were comparable to the missionary view of native religions and the resulting attempts at conversion. In his letters to **Governor-General William Bentinck**, **Trevelyan** unravels a scheme of spreading English literature language and religion in India. His vision is, however, not limited to India alone. India according to **Trevelyan** is merely a stepping-stone to the anglicisation of the entire Asian continent. In his famous treatise *On the Education of the People of India* **Trevelyan** interprets education as a tool with which the conversion of the Indian people could be achieved. Conversion obviously involves a rejection of native religions and cultures by the natives/Indians themselves. Like the missionaries, **Trevelyan** is unable to see any redeeming feature in the native cultures. These cultures, in his view, have to be replaced by the advanced culture of the West represented by the English colonisers. The missionaries considered the non-idolatrous variant of Christianity as one of the primary factors responsible for the greatness of the western civilisation. Therefore, they insisted on the teaching of the Bible. **Trevelyan**, on the other hand, agreed with the dominant official opinion about the delicate sensitivities of Indians where religion was involved. Thus he does not view direct proselytisation as congenial to British rule in India. **Trevelyan** was of the opinion that English literature could act as a mediator between English culture and the natives. He concludes that the best possible way to convert Indians is to teach them this literature.

Trevelyan hardly makes a distinction between English culture and Christianity. The two are treated as inseparable. **Trevelyan** shares the religious zeal of the missionaries to propagate this Christian culture of the Englishmen in India. However, he differs from them by rejecting the direct indoctrination of Indians. English literature, in his view, can take the place of the Bible. It can be easily seen that **Trevelyan's** views on the subject of education were a combination of evangelist fervour and political pragmatism. His genuine hatred of indigenous Indian learning which was just "an ocean of words" with no "influx of ideas," made him a strong advocate of English education. His urge to awaken Indian society from its intellectual and moral stupor brought him into contact with the opinions of Bengali social reformers who also demanded a system of western education. The awareness of this indigenous demand strengthened **Trevelyan's** conviction. His cause was popular and radical while his opponents' (the Orientalists) schemes were anti-popular and conservative.

But the reasons for **Trevelyan's** rejection of Hindu and Mohammedan learning went beyond a simple cultural prejudice. The reasons were profoundly political and were central to the issue of domination and subjugation of the native people. As **Trevelyan** himself pointed out:

The spirit of English literature cannot but be favourable to the English connection. Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the Indian youth almost cease to regard us as foreigners. . . . Educated in the same way, interested in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindus. . . .

In other words, English education will erase the consciousness of foreign domination as it will produce natives who will be cut off from indigenous knowledge and totally identify themselves with the English colonisers. **Trevelyan** notes in his *Education* that Hindu and Muslim literature will maintain the awareness of the Englishman's foreign origins and will relegate him to the status of an outsider. Hindu scriptures teach that the English are "unclean beasts" while the literature of the Muslims

constructs them as infidels in the land of the faithful. Thus in the interests of British imperialism, it was imperative that such literatures were rejected and replaced by the literature of the colonists. Cultural subsumation will preclude any resistance or rebellion on the part of the Indian subjects of the British Empire.

Here a question might be raised in relation to the process through which cultural assimilation of the native takes place. **Trevelyan** visualised the process as a kind of displacement whereby the actual Englishman/woman is removed from the mental framework of the colonised subject by English literature that then becomes the only basis for an understanding of the coloniser and his/her culture. **Trevelyan** rightly recognises the advantages of the process. As the native converses with the best minds of England through English literature, s/he comes to form a much higher opinion of the English than by a normal daily interaction with actual English people. Does **Trevelyan** mean to say that the real face of the British Empire does not invite/deserve homage on the part of the colonised subject? What is however certain is the fact of conquest and domination and its removal from the sphere of reflection and criticism through the agency of English literature. **Trevelyan**, like **Macaulay** uses analogies from history to justify his thesis. But while **Macaulay** concentrates on the culture's potential of spreading civilisation in an alien land, **Trevelyan** notes in glee that the people of subjugated nations never revolted against their conquerors as they were taught to identify themselves with the invaders. This was achieved by a dissemination of the conqueror's culture. Speaking of the Romans he points out that:

Acquisitions made by superiority in war, were consolidated by superiority in the arts of peace; and the remembrance of the original violence was lost in that of the benefits which resulted from it. The provincials of Italy, Spain, Africa and Gaul having no ambitions except to imitate the Romans and to share their privileges with them, remained to the last faithful subjects of the empire.

Historical examples prove that imperialism has triumphed not by mere repression but by a destruction of the memory of the repression by projecting itself as the benefactor of the subjected people. As **Trevelyan** correctly notes, the benefits that accrue from such a relationship not only include the transference of a superior culture from the metropolis to the colony but also a certain sharing of power and privileges.

In the Indian context, this sharing would mean the absorption of the natives into the British administrative structure. **Trevelyan** agreed with **J S Mill** who advocated the appointment of Indians to the civil government posts "in proportion as the Native [became] trustworthy and qualified for high office." Thus while anglicisation, for **Trevelyan** ensures a cultural hegemony, it is also made a precondition for the opening up of employment opportunities. English education will produce natives "with enlightened views and integrity which distinguish European officers." These natives it was believed would make efficient administrators. It is not difficult to find reasons for this imperial generosity. As **Trevelyan** points out, it was the new policy of **Lord William Bentinck** that made government jobs available to the anglicised Indian. He tells us that the old policy of excluding Indians from the British civil administration was a product of the **Cornwallis** era. **Trevelyan** agrees with the assumptions on which **Cornwallis** based his policy. The assumption was of course, the vast superiority of the Europeans in administrative skills. **Cornwallis'** policy was shelved because "the public revenue did not admit of the employment of a sufficient number" of European officers. And **William Bentinck** who was in the words of **John Clive** "sent to economize" solved this problem by employing natives to transact public business.

However, it cannot be said that **Trevelyan's** support for **Bentinck-Macaulay** anglicisation policy was completely determined by a desire to ensure that the oppressive nature of British Empire was kept well hidden. He genuinely believed that India was in a need for social-cultural resurgence. He contended that this renaissance could be brought about by English education alone. He was against the

cultivation of Persian and Sanskrit learning which, in his view, could never enrich the vernaculars. By enrichment, **Trevelyan** meant the flow of modern ideas into the native Indian languages. These ideas would, in his opinion, lead to the growth of a rich indigenous vernacular literature. Since English literature and European sciences will be the source of inspiration for the literature in these diverse Indian languages there will develop, in **Trevelyan's** words "a common standard of taste, a common nomenclature." In other words, English will function as a uniting factor for all these literatures. This union will ultimately facilitate the emergence of a national literature. What **Trevelyan** had in mind was an image of a nation broken up into different linguistic groups and correspondingly, different cultures with English serving as a nodal language that unites these linguistic entities. The result will be "a united and enlightened nation."

Trevelyan believed that the growth of a national literature of India conformed to his disparaging view of native, or local cultural forms. The diversity among languages in India is seen by him not as an instance of a rich cultural plurality but as "one of the greatest existing obstacles to improvement in India." **Trevelyan's** *Education* encapsulates an entire gamut of arguments to justify the introduction of English studies in India. It encompasses several ideological terrains ranging from strong missionary fervour for the upliftment of the poor, benighted Asiatics to the plain **Machiavellian** desire to consolidate and strengthen British imperial interests. The tract reveals a highly self-conscious voice in complete harmony with the imperial ideology. Yet it is able to provide us with some glimpses of the real motives that lay behind the institutionalisation of English Studies in India.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

The views of **Macaulay** and **Trevelyan** played a decisive role in the growth of the opinion that political intervention in the realm of Indian culture was not inimical to British imperialism. The promotion of English literature and English language was seen as a measure intended to consolidate the gains made through conquest and suppression. A new interpretation of the causes of the disaffection and rebellion among the natives was also responsible for the growth of this opinion. Earlier the native was seen as volatile and murderous where his/her religion was concerned. Thus any attempt at cultural assimilation was seen as one that invited a negative response from the semi-barbaric Indian. This Indian, it was suspected, could sow seeds of revolt among other natives.

This traditional view of the native was contradicted by social reformers like **Ram Mohun Roy** who supported the introduction of liberal rational ideas of the West in India. Now the source of subversion was no longer a hostile Indian whose religious sensibility was hurt but a cultural gap between the Indians and their rulers. Native culture is interpreted as an agent that increases this gap. For **Macaulay** and his brother-in-law, **Trevelyan**, the function of English education was to close this gap by promoting a devaluation and eventual rejection of native cultures by the natives themselves and teaching them to imitate/respect the cultural values of Britain.

Although the socio-political control of the Indian masses was the aim of the new educational plan, it was masked by the ostensible project of the intellectual and moral regeneration of the colonised subject. This project also gave birth to the now familiar dichotomy of the backward Indian society and culture and the liberal civilisation of the West with English as its vehicle. This dichotomy exercised a tremendous sway over the mind of many Indians in the post-Independence era. English education is widely regarded as a symbol of power and prestige, of civilised attitudes and cultural superiority in contemporary India. In the next unit this continuing hegemony of

English studies as well as certain political strategies that were evolved by the political class in the post-1947 era to counteract it will be examined.

**Macaulay, Raja Ram
Mohun Roy and
Charles E. Trevelyan**

2.8 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the education policy in colonial India prior to the establishment of English Studies.
2. What is the contribution of the social reform movement in India to the institutionalisation of English Studies?
3. Examine Ram Mohun Roy's critique of Sanskrit learning keeping in mind his role as a social reformer.
4. What, in Ram Mohun's view is the role of English Studies in India?
5. Discuss the comparison that Ram Mohun makes between medieval scholasticism of Europe and the system of Sanskrit learning in India.
6. What are the arguments used by T B Macaulay in his *Minute on Indian Education* to advocate the introduction of English in India?
7. "Macaulay's plea for cultural assimilation of the natives is actually a new strategy of socio-political control." Examine the *Minute* in the light of the statement.
8. Critically analyse Macaulay's attack on the Orientalist position on Indian Education.
9. What were the similarities and differences between the views of C E Trevelyan and the missionaries on the question of Indian education?
10. What reasons does Trevelyan give for his rejection of indigenous Indian learning?

2.9 GLOSSARY

- Anglicists:** The group of company officials who pleaded for the teaching of European literature and sciences through the medium of English.
- Baconian:** From Francis Bacon (1561-1626) the great English humanist and philosopher. Bacon was the first philosopher who based his understanding of the world on rational, and scientific principles.
- Enlightenment:** An intellectual movement which developed in Western Europe in the 17th century and reached its zenith in the eighteenth. The movement expressed a trust in man's reason as adequate to solve all problems. It was against all forms of superstition, prejudice and irrational belief in tradition and authority.

Hegemony:	'hegemony' denotes a process in which domination is achieved through consent not force, i.e. by making the people agree with the ideas of their rulers.
Idolatory:	The worship of idols or images.
Imperialism:	The political and economic domination of one country by another.
Machiavellian:	From Machiavelli (1469-1527) the great Italian political thinker of the Renaissance period. Machiavelli developed the idea of politics as a game of power that remains uninfluenced by an "absolute moral law. The term 'Machiavellian' is nowadays used in a pejorative sense denoting the cynical manipulation of people in order to stay in power.
Metropolis:	The home country of the colonisers.
Native:	The original inhabitants of a country as opposed to the colonists who left their own land and lived in the land of the 'natives.'
Orientalists:	The group of company officials who were in favour of teaching classical Indian languages such as Sanskrit Arabic and Persian to the Indians.
Scholasticism:	The philosophy of the schoolman of medieval Europe. The speculations of the philosophers of the medieval era excluded man's earthly existence from their scope. Instead they discussed God, heave and hell.