

New Lamps for Old

Colonial Experiments with Vernacular Education, Pre- and Post-1857

Education policy as it came to be elucidated over the 19th century was driven by colonial imperatives. The early 19th century was a time of experimentation, it was a period of acquaintance and also of open ideological debate. Barely a few decades later, however, and especially following the revolt of 1857, as the Raj asserted itself, and imperialism gained in zeal, some of this early experimentation was lost in the drive for more Anglicisation of education. The setting up of the universities in the three presidency towns reflected the growing assertiveness in colonial ideology. This article, however, looks at two experiments in education, located in the vernacular medium, that had their origins in the earlier period of new understanding, but were decisively affected by the events of 1857 and reactions to it.

ANU KUMAR

Early education policy was amorphous; the company men were mainly traders, while their Indian subordinates rendered vital assistance in matters of administration. There are no sustained accounts available of the trajectory of education in 19th century India, especially in its phase of transition and as merchant capitalism gave way to imperialism. In the late 18th century, from the details available in Calcutta, indigenous schools of elementary ('pathshalas') and higher learning, where education was imparted in Bengali, Sanskrit, and also in Arabic and Persian, existed along with largely missionary-run English schools.

It was left to Calcutta's elite to organise and reform the pathshalas. This began with the setting up of the Calcutta Book Society and Calcutta School Society in 1817 and 1818, respectively [Acharya 1990]. These societies brought various schools under its purview and also introduced printed textbooks and new subjects like geography. They arranged for training of the teachers and set up five model pathshalas. These societies sought to improve the quality of education without changing its indigenous character. Of the 78,500 books printed by the Calcutta Book Society, between 1817 and 1821, 48,750 were in Bengali and only 3,500 were in English (ibid). The rest were in Persian, Hindustani, Sanskrit, etc. Bengali was the main medium of instruction and sometimes the only language taught (ibid).

By the late 18th century, English pathshalas had mushroomed in Calcutta to meet the needs of indigent English-speaking people. The first Bengali-run English school in Calcutta was set up in 1774 – where students were charged Rs 4-16 depending on their means. More and more schools came up, for Indians as well as Anglo Indians sometimes introducing new subjects and new methods of teaching [Acharya 1990; Mazumdar 1996].

In its initial stages, English education in India was always a two-way process. David Hare was instrumental for the Calcutta School Society's model schools, especially the Arpuly school, and did much to influence their later growth. To meet the increasing demand for English education, parallel English classes were begun; but to guard against the neglect of vernacular studies, only students proficient in Bengali were granted admission to

the English classes and later of receiving higher English education at the society's expense. During Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's tenure as the principal of Sanskrit College (1851-58), a condensed course in Sanskrit was introduced along with some exposure to English language and literature (Acharya). Thus, a balance was sought between the claims of English and vernacular education. Other schools such as this came up, in the so-called Anglo vernacular model. The Tatwabodhini Pathshala was set up by Debendranath Tagore (Rabindranath's father) in 1840; his aim was to develop it into a model "national school". But this, as would be seen for most schools in the Anglo vernacular tradition, did not survive. Debendranath's school was abolished in 1848. The reason was the big demand for English education, chiefly for the purposes of serving the colonial bureaucracy. By 1830, Alexander Duff had already opened his General Assembly's Institution, where English was the only medium of instruction, with five pupils. Its swift success was a victory for Duff's zealous support for English education and paved the way for Macaulay and his by now famous minute of 1835. From the towns, this trend only spread to other provinces following the sway of colonial rule.

Colonial Education Policy

The colonial education policy could arguably be said to have begun with the observation made in 1792 by Charles Grant, adviser to Lord Cornwallis, then governor general. Grant advocated spreading the light of European knowledge through the medium of the English language. Macaulay's notions, coming some three decades later, derived much from Charles Grant. Up to the 1830s no uniform system of education existed. The function of the general committee of public instruction formed in 1823 was confined to funding and supervising government institutions. The general committee for its part was sharply divided into two groups – the Anglicists (who believed in the superiority of English and European knowledge) and the orientalist (who were keener on restoring and rejuvenating ancient knowledge and languages

of the orient). But neither showed any concern for vernacular education—even the orientalist chiefly favoured Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.

A report in 1822 of the proceedings of the parliamentary committee reveals the British government's anxiety to resolve this crisis over education policy. A majority in the committee was in favour of English education, with only James Mill recommending the translation of European books into Indian languages. The majority opinion prevailed and Macaulay was made the president of the general committee in 1834. His historic minute was issued on February 2, 1835.

A decade before this, in 1823, the general committee for public instruction had asked the local committees in Agra, Delhi and other north Indian towns to report on the condition of education within their province and to propose measures to raise standards. For Delhi, the picture was dismal. Although there were some madrasas, as the foundation and endowment of educational institutions was perceived as a good deed by pious Muslims, the number of students was small, as compared to the city's inhabitants. Attendance was tardy and quality of teaching was poor. The government sanctioned a grant of Rs 600 per month "for the instruction of Muhammadan youth" in Delhi and thus, the Delhi College began its existence. It commenced teaching in the Ghaziu'd-Din madrasa barely two years later [Pernau 2006].

Macaulay's minute of 1835 that enshrined English as the principle medium for effecting the progressive "westernisation" of "Indian" cultures and subjectivities and Charles Wood's despatch of 1854 are generally held as the two major milestones of colonial educational policy. Wood's despatch stressed the educational responsibility of the state and envisioned a complete and integrated system comprising primary, secondary and collegiate education. Oriental literature, it proposed, should not be neglected but European language should be cultivated. English should be the medium of higher studies for the few and the vernacular at a lower level for the many. Wood's despatch and subsequent state directives on educational policy urged the restriction of state investment to higher education and the upper classes (classes that upheld British interests) for they would purportedly disseminate "European knowledge" to the masses. Such a differential construction of the curriculum at the school and university level has been described as "functionalist" [Gauri Vishwanathan cited in Goswami 2004]. A system of "grants-in-aid" was also proposed to encourage vernacular education.

English medium instruction was the exclusive provenance of the first universities established in 1857. The universities established were based on the model of London University – not in teaching but examining and conferring degrees – and also for affiliated colleges of different kinds (ibid). The entrance examination and college teaching were conducted in English. In colleges, the vernacular soon came to be excluded from the first arts (FA) and BA courses in 1864. The Hindu College set the pattern in this respect. English not only had pride of place in the curriculum but overshadowed every other subject.

A process of downward filtration extended this English bias to school education as well, in spite of Wood's despatch. The model pathshalas of the Calcutta School Society for instance, became model primary schools – a component of the uniform system – where education was imparted in English as it was envisaged by the government. Like the indigenous elementary schools, vernacular missionary schools also turned into English schools or died away. The Bengal Auxiliary Missionary Society

gave the reason when it discontinued every vernacular society school, except one in Krishnapur – "the desire to obtain knowledge of the English language has been so great that a school in which this was not taught was sure to dwindle away" [Acharya 1990].

This article is a preliminary examination that looks at two institutions in the vernacular medium – in Delhi and the North West Provinces (NWP) that had their beginnings in the early stages of the colonial encounter. It was a time when experimentation was new and coexisted with the urge to understand, but experiments such as these had an untimely end, hastened arguably by the events of 1857 that led to a shift of priorities and the changing imperatives of empire.

Socio-Economic Impact on Education

In the NWP, educational policies were also influenced by the crisis of the Indian political system, brought on by the gradual, at times sudden, changes in society and economy.

In the early 19th century, the intermediate economy still flourished. As Chris Bayly (1998) explains, the company's revenue policy was relatively indulgent to the notables in the NWP whose pomp and display helped generate employment and sustain an intermediate economy based on military, artisan and transport services. From the 1830s a disruption set in of demand at both luxury and intermediate levels of the economy. The result of a complex set of changes were:

(i) The Gangetic area and the western areas suffered a depression deriving from the problems of liquidity. The acreage under cash crops, especially indigo, had been at artificially high levels for this served as a channel of remittance for Indian profits and salaries to Britain. The collapse of some European agency houses in 1827-28 disrupted the flow of cash and credit that affected the export sector and internal trade also.

(ii) British standardisation of the economy affected the local taxation, local mints and "idle consumption" that had been the hallmark of the small kingdoms and principalities besides enticing away the mercantile capital that supported them.

(iii) Between 1803 and 1830, there was also a substantial increase in the real revenue collected that reduced the disposable income of the rich zamindars and cut off the large variety of perquisites, which actually sustained the artisan economy [Bayly 1998].

(iv) The anti-talukdar settlements of Thomason and Bird also deprived the little kings of the locality of a large proportion of their revenue-engaging rights and put in their stead a variety of village magnates who were perceived as "ancient owners of the soil". The settlements (as Metcalfe says) did substantially alter the social map of the Gangetic valley and its western tracts. The landlords and large owners of Agra, Etawah and Mainpuri districts were permanently weakened. Over a period of 20 years, many notables spent large sums in fighting law suits. Some permanently lost a large part of their income. Besides the increase in revenue, a large number of old princely families (in Benares and Farukhabad) were pensioned off on allowances or fixed stipends. Within a generation, they had been minutely subdivided, among numerous descendants. By the 1830s, most of the government pensions were paid directly to mercantile creditors of the landed aristocracy. In the short run no prosperous or viable village landlord element emerged to fill the landlords' local economic and social role (ibid).

Eighteen Fiftyseven then appears to have been a belated response to the many political changes that gathered apace after

1825, that shook dignities and livelihoods throughout north India, without providing in turn the foundations of a strong new system as had emerged in Bengal and Punjab.

Delhi College

The Delhi College in its heyday 1840s-1860s symbolised an encounter between British and Indo-Muslim culture through the medium of Urdu. In the first half of the 19th century, there were already attempts in several madrassas in Delhi to reinterpret classical received knowledge and traditions. Endeavours to translate knowledge into a medium meaningful for the new circumstances had begun well before the British established their political and cultural supremacy over north India in the early 19th century.

The college contributed to the development of Urdu prose, was a nursery of science teaching, and served as a catalyst for major works on scientific subjects. Through its vernacular translation society, it mediated between eastern and western cultures, contributing to building an Urdu-speaking and reading public from different religious persuasions [Pernau 2006]. With its changes in the traditional academic curriculum, it also fostered a climate of liberal thought and the rational spirit.

The move to support the Delhi College, that came about in 1825 following the report of the general committee was a traditional gesture of patronage. But within a decade, this was translated into an altogether different idiom. In 1828, the English branch of the Delhi College commenced with a new course of study in English language, literature and modern European sciences. It offered a space where ambitious Indian students to “anglicise” in pursuit of advancement through service to the British. The older oriental branch continued to exist in which Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit were taught along with geography, mathematics and the sciences.

The setting up of the Delhi English College took place in the context of a new understanding – the British were trying to make sense of the country they had conquered and its culture. On the other hand, the conquered hoped to reinterpret the new learning in their own language and cultural framework. Translation stood at the centre of the Delhi College’s activities – most obviously in the Vernacular Translation Society. “The translations of the Delhi College translators show their cultural assumptions, their selections and choices and their reinterpretation of the British texts they imported into the Urdu language – they too did have an agenda of change, which they wanted to induce through translation” [ibid, p 18]. Men like master Ram Chandra, the science teacher and Maulvi Zakaullah, the historian and textbook writer, fearlessly set out to discover new knowledge and in the process, hoped to rejuvenate their own culture, guided and helped by a colonial power that in the beginning at least, was not yet intent on replacing oriental languages with English.

Margrit Pernau cites successive reports of the Delhi Gazette (D G) to bring this out. On April 25, 1838 the D G wrote that unlike in Bengal, in Delhi the debate on “native education” did not oppose the defenders of oriental and western knowledge so much as those who wanted to transmit the values of the west through English and those who claimed that the “paramount object (should be) to make the improvement and cultivation of the vernacular tongue go hand in hand with the promulgation of the thoughts and ideas, the solidity of reasoning and freedom of enquiry of the European world”. Teaching through Urdu, the argument ran, offered the possibility of impacting the Indian mind

to an extent (and at a price!) which English could not even begin to. It was not an appreciation for the beauty of the Urdu language and patronage for oriental learning that stood at the centre of the reform of Delhi College, but the belief that by inducing scholars to prepare translations, printing them, and introducing them into the schools, they would “gradually set the native mind in motion and open an era of intellectual activity such as India has never witnessed” (D G, December 10, 1842).

The situation changed from the 1830s onwards. This was not mainly because of policy debates on education, but also of the changing role of the British themselves, as they moved from being diplomats to administrators. In education, some of the imperatives of the new era manifested themselves.

As a member of the committee of public instruction, Charles Trevelyan strongly advocated in 1834, the abandonment of Persian language education and also the mandatory use of the Roman alphabet for all Indian languages. He stood as the central supporter in the overall drive for Anglicisation, that most starkly manifested itself in Macaulay’s famous minute, only a year later. From the 1830s members of the Delhi College committee headed by the same Charles Trevelyan also argued strenuously that only inter-communal education from “the pure fount of English literature” would enable India to make “headway against the impenetrable barrier of habit and prejudice backed by religious feeling” [Fisher 2006].

The Delhi College’s English courses initiated in 1828 on an experimental basis, struggled for educational material and other resources in its first years. The English courses had begun with “a few old fashioned English spelling books with difficulty procured from the neighbouring British stations”. But the college committee’s grand plan began with the elite of Delhi and hoped to effect the complete uplift and reformation of the “uneducated and half-barbarous people” of India generally. This plan once effected would form the basis of an India-wide new model educational system of preparatory schools in every district and a network of regional colleges. The committee envisioned [ibid 2006]:

Christian, Mohammedan and Hindu boys of every shade of colour, and variety of descent...standing side by side in the same class, engaged in the common pursuit of English literature, contending for the same honours, and forced to acknowledge the existence of superior merit in their comrades of the lowest as well as in those of the highest caste. This is a great point gained. The artificial institution of caste cannot long survive the period when the youth of India instead of being trained to observe it, shall be led by the daily habit of their lives to disregard it. All we have to do is to bring them together, to impress the same character on them, and to leave the yielding and affectionate mind of youth to its natural impulse. Habits of friendly communication will thus be established between all classes, they will insensibly become one people, and the process of enlightening our subjects will proceed simultaneously, with that of uniting them among themselves (Statement made in 1828 by Charles Trevelyan cited in Hasan 2006).

The college committee thus diverted funds from a Rs 1,70,000 endowment given by Nawab E’timadu’d-Daula of Awadh against the repeated protests of its donor who desired its use for traditional Persian and Arabic study. This money enabled the Delhi College to expand the experimental courses in English “for the formation of a separate institution on an enlarged scale, devoted to affording tuition in the English language, sciences and literature”. It now became known as the Delhi Institute or the Delhi English

Institution. Politically too, the situation was changing. As the British population, notably the army, increased in Delhi, they were no longer willing or able to integrate with the local population. The less they thought they had to learn from the orient, the more, however, the colonial officers found to teach [Dalrymple 2006]. The abolition of Persian as the official language of British rule in 1837 was followed by the decision of the Delhi residency to henceforth accept letters and petitions from their Indian allies only in English.

Transformed power relations permitted the colonial power to give way to new sensibilities and policies. "In the Delhi territory, rule by alliances was now replaced by rule by records – the supporters, the British now needed, were no longer the commanders of detachments of horses but those able to wield the pen in their service, no longer nobles, but members of middling groups who hoped to gain social status by serving the British" [Pernau 2006]. All this had an impact on the continued metamorphosis seen in the English branch of the Delhi College.

In 1842, the two branches of the college, the English and the oriental moved under the same roof, in the former residence of the British resident and once the library of Dara Shikoh. At the same time, the curricula of the two branches were integrated, the emphasis being on "useful knowledge" – natural sciences, mathematics, natural philosophy, economics, morals and history. The medium of instruction would be English at the Delhi Institute and Urdu at the Delhi College, which at the same time would continue the teaching of the classical Arabic and Persian books.

In the Persian and Arabic classes, the stress was on mastering the languages, law and the principles of jurisprudence and a bit of philosophy and logic. The classical books were after a while replaced by works of literature – such as *Arabian Nights* and the *Kalila Dimna*, a development that struck at the heart of the traditional concept of knowledge. Though much of the old curriculum was retained, the orientation towards religion and the intimate link that held the different fields of knowledge together was broken. It was a move that coincided with the religious disputations then taking place between adherents of different reformist Muslim schools of thought in Delhi [Hasan 2006].

At the oriental branch, however, translation and adaptation work of books in English continued. The list of books translated included algebra, geometry to revenue laws and MaNaughten's principles of Islamic criminal law, from English history to Smith's *Moral Sentiments* and from books on hydraulics to treatises on polarisation of light, a total of almost 130 books in the short span of 15 years between the reform of the college and the outbreak of the revolt (ibid).

The alumni of the branch were trained to become translators, whose familiarity with both cultures meant they would "use their knowledge of western scholarship to rethink and transform the canonic knowledge of the east and thus bring together both worlds". But it was a skewed process. After the changes (in curricula and focus) from 1835 onwards, Hindus always constituted about two-thirds of the student population, whereas the original aim in 1825 had been to assist Muhammedan youth in their education. It appears probable that the college was frequented more by those who profited from the upheaval brought about by the colonial power and for whom a career in the British service provided a means to upward social mobility. In 1854, it had 333 students, of whom 112 were Muslims.

More than the elite of Delhi, the college relied on colonial funding and patronage to survive. In the standards of the traditional

learned circles of Delhi, and even with regard to the other north Indian colleges, the Delhi College did not compare favourably and James Thomason as lieutenant governor of the NWP had to fight a hard battle with the committee for public instruction in Calcutta in order to have examination standards for scholarships lowered for Delhi and Agra for no student would then have a chance to secure a scholarship.

In 1857, when the revolt reached Delhi in May, the college was attacked, its rich collection of manuscripts burnt down, and the principal was killed. A revival occurred in 1864 and lasted till 1877 but it was short-lived. Suspicions between the new rulers and Delhi's old, largely Muslim elite, were too deep now to be ever bridged. The impact of the new learning engendered by the Delhi College was also short-lived and in the long run, much less far-reaching. Although the college blazed a trail in initiating a dual system of education, its merger with Lahore's Government College in April 1877, brought to an end the dream of its founders. "The flowering of science came to a standstill, while the liberal and rational spirit was overtaken by strident communitarian aspirations" [Hasan 2006; Pernau 2006]. Once Urdu, a major catalyst for Delhi's cultural and intellectual regeneration had ceased to be the medium of instruction or communication, its demise was only hastened.

The influence of its ideas was disappointingly small in relation to its possibilities. In Delhi, a great expansion of the scientific domain did not take place. It remained confined to the pages of Saiyyad Ahmed's *Tahzibu'l-akhlaq* or the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*. People like Zaka Ullah and Nazir Ahmed vanished into the mist. Zaka Ullah represented what was once the Delhi's multicultural and multireligious society. In Andrews' biography, he used Zaka Ullah to fortify the era's secular ideologies that were assailed by Hindu and Muslim revivalist movements [Hasan, introduction to Andrews 2003].

Hume's Initiatives in Education (1856-1867)

Allan Octavian (AO) Hume's experiments in vernacular education were preceded by the pioneering initiatives taken by James Thomason when the latter was the governor of NWP (1843-53). In 1849, the modern vernacular educational system began with funding the creation of 'tahsili' schools in eight districts of the north-west provinces that included Etawah. Thomason also supported the creation of modern village primary schools, where teaching was provided in the vernaculars and funded by voluntary tax contributions of local zamindars. Such schools began haltingly in Mathura in 1851 and in 1853, in Mainpuri and Etawah. These village primary schools were organised to serve groups of several villages and were called 'halkabandi schools'.

In early 1856, when A O Hume became district magistrate for Etawah, the educational system was far from satisfactory. With an estimated population of over 5,50,000, the district had seven government-supported tahsili schools (400 pupils) and 77 traditional indigenous schools with twice the number of students. The experiment in funding village primary schools (halkabandi schools) was evidently failing, as the voluntary funding principle was ignored and zamindars were forced to provide contributions [for details, see Mehrotra and Moulton 2004].

Hume had no complaints against the tahsili schools but his attitude towards the indigenous schools where education was provided in Arabic and Persian, was decidedly negative. He

characterised such an education as “generally most objectionable” and complained about the “lascivious stories” being imparted through Persian or Arabic. Modern education to him was also the very antithesis of these indigenous schools, and Hume was critical of the secretary of state for India for still wanting to utilise them.

Over these hedge schools and masters, no sort of control can be exercised; we cannot prescribe the course of studies in the former, nor can we furnish the latter when they are found wanting or permanently reward them when they excel. These masters are, too many of them, of doubtful character and extreme ignorance...able to teach most of their scholars only an imperfect smattering of Indian Persian or execrable Sanskrit, through the medium not infrequently of stories so indecent, that no English gentleman can hear him without a blush (ibid).

Hume’s efforts to rejuvenate the vernacular school system meant that by early 1856, 32 new vernacular schools had been established in Etawah pargana. By the beginning of 1857, a total of 181 modern vernacular schools had been established with an enrolment of some 5,000 pupils. The foundation of the central anglo-vernacular school in Etawah was laid in August 1, 1856, which was also locally funded and had some 100 scholars by the end of the year. Hume organised a scholarship scheme to enable 12 scholars, eight from halkabandi, tahsili and indigenous schools in the mufassal and four from Etawah town to complete their education at the central school. He also established a public library. He hoped the libraries would serve the needs of the local schools and also help improve the education of patwaris.

Hume’s Methods

In 1856, Lakshman Singh (the tahsildar serving under Hume) led Hume’s efforts in persuading the more prominent zamindars to support a second attempt towards rejuvenating the halkabandi school system. In keeping with the government guidelines, the local funding was equivalent to 1 per cent of the amount which the zamindars paid annually in land revenue. The involvement of Indian leaders in the establishment and management of schools was part of the overall promotion of the official plan, overseen by Lakshman Singh and Hume.

Hume also devoted much attention to improving the education of the patwaris and to enhancing the accuracy and efficient maintenance of their records. Hume believed that the welfare of the agricultural population depended on the ability and integrity of the patwari, i.e., the local officials responsible for records relating to landholdings, revenue and rental payments as well as for the maintenance of accounts and statistics. The libraries he helped establish, Hume hoped, would in turn, enable the elevation of the public mind and help advance “the cause of civilisation” in Etawah. In ensuring the well-being and support of the landed proprietors, Hume believed in the comparative lightness of the land revenue. Etawah, during the revolt, witnessed two major battles and the district was also close to the heart of some of the bitterest fighting in the entire revolt. But Hume retained the support of practically all his Indian officials and most of the influential zamindars. After hostilities had declined, Hume also argued for and made substantial remissions of land revenue. In his reports after the revolt, Hume expressed the view that the comparative “lightness” of land revenue assessment in Etawah district coupled with the more typical Anglo-Indian nostrums for governance, (had) assured the people’s loyalty to

the regime, with the exception of Dalelnagar Pargana where landed proprietors were reduced to indebtedness partly because of an overassessment of land revenue by the raj. “It is still to our own, mistakes our own want of foresight and appreciation of the native character and not to any special depravity of the people that the impartial historian will attribute the rebellion” [Hume in Mehrotra and Moulton ibid].

The experience of the rebellion made Hume more certain than ever of the urgency of extending and strengthening modern education. After all, he surmised, those Indians exposed to British introduced modern education had overwhelmingly supported the government during the disturbances. He believed there was a direct connection between Etawah’s recent “pre-eminent” development in elementary education and its evident loyalty during the rebellion. For Hume, the widespread dissemination of modern elementary education attuned to the socio-economic needs of an overwhelmingly agrarian district not noted for high levels of educational or cultural attainment, was the key to the people’s and the country’s moral advancement.

Give the rajputs and other fighting men reasonable means and happy homes, free from those instruments of torture, the civil courts and the native usurer, and they will fight for order and the government under whom they are well off. Make it easier for your gujjar, ahir and thief classes to grow rich by agriculture than crime and besides making criminal administration cheaper, most of these for their own sake will side with the government. Tax the baniahs, bankers who growing rich by the pen, oust their betters from their ancestral holdings, and then are too great cowards to wield a sword, either to protect their own acquisitions or aid the government that fostered their success (ibid).

As the rebellion waned, Hume encountered problems over the reimbursement by the government of certain items in the district treasury that had been looted during the disturbances. In August 1859, the government sanctioned the reimbursement of most claims submitted by Hume, but declined to repay funds raised by public subscription for education and public libraries. In September 2, Hume expressed his hurt at the government’s refusal to refund funds first obtained by inviting subscriptions to the public funds. He believed such funds for elementary schools were more vital than colleges.

The foundation of any healthy and comprehensive scheme of education must be laid amongst the masses, let but the root pierce deeply and spread widely through soil judiciously loosened and leaf, flower and fruit will burst out and bloom spontaneously in one season. Hitherto our great colleges have yielded little but disappointment...rootless hot house nurselings! Indian education, like French liberty and possibly from analogous causes, has ever been more of as show than a reality; in our haste for results we have ignored the means, we have tried the great Indian trick of developing in a single hour, the shoot, the plant, the flower and fruit and found alas! That we at least were no conjurers. First and foremost then I would entirely reverse the current practice, I would care less about the stately universities, empty halls of learning yet unborn, while I would devote our chief care, our last energies to sowing thickly, and widely through the land, good elementary schools for the people” [Hume, ibid].

Moreover, while he acknowledged the importance of the government’s role in education, Hume went out of his way to emphasise the crucial significance of directly involving an Indian popular element in the process. Failure to involve the people in the development of modern education had been the source, he believed, of the “misapprehension” which had existed in some

places over the government's intentions. Hume's concern over the involvement of the popular element also influenced his view that taxes, that were to be raised locally for new village and town schools, must be voluntary rather than compulsory.

In his report of September 2, 1859 to the education department, Hume outlined his philosophy of education. It was a system that provided for three basic categories of schools, village, town and central; school buildings needed to be sited in good substantial structures. He stressed the importance of kindred institutions, namely, public libraries and in the case of the central Anglo-vernacular school, a reading room and a museum intended primarily to illustrate the botany, natural history and industrial products of the province; a printing press was also a necessary adjunct to the educational establishment. The system of school management was one in which the practical control of district schools needed to be vested primarily in the district officer with the education department being responsible only for regular inspections designed to "test progress and see that the rules in force" were observed. Colleges funded by the state, controlled by the education department would be established in each administrative division. Training of teachers needed to be provided for at each divisional college and scholarships to support really clever pupils from the village school to the university.

Hume noted that as a result of the modern education initiatives of 1856, more than 7,000 students had been attending schools in May 1857, just prior to the outbreak of the rebellion. He reported in January 1858 that in 31 schools, teachers had remained throughout the disturbance at their posts. As regards the halkabandi schools, Hume provided figures between numbers of institutions, enrolment figures and levels of funding from the 1 per cent tax before and after the rebellion. By January 1859, the system had largely recovered except in student registrations which were 4,374 compared with 5,186 two years earlier. In the six years since he restarted the halkabandi schools in 1856, the people had voluntarily contributed Rs 72,000 in school taxes and more than Rs 50,000 in labour, land, materials and money, for school buildings, fittings, etc.

Post-revolt, Hume devoted great attention on reviving the central school that was at the apex of the new education system he envisioned for the district. It was a "stepping stone" for the best students of the halkabandi and tahsili schools to the "Agra College" and thus designed to put within the reach of every talented lad, however poor, the attainment of a first rate education. After the rebellion, the management of the school was transferred to a local committee (of local residents, elected to a certain extent by the parents of the pupils). The committee within the first six months of its operation raised the number of pupils from 70 to 250. Hume was seeking to introduce a limited but practical measure of self-government in the area of education and hoped thereby to strengthen support for modern elementary education within the Indian community. By January 1861, enrolment at the school had risen to 282 students and the curriculum in true Anglo-vernacular tradition consisted of courses in English, Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, mathematics, surveying, geography, history and natural science.

Conflict with Education Department

As the education department became more centralised, however, it did not welcome Hume's educational initiatives. The role of the district officer too changed – the officer was a vital adjunct

of the colonial administration, and education was left to the purview of the education department. Hume also admitted the fundamental philosophic differences that existed between him and the educational department over the appropriate curriculum for the village schools but he argued education had to suit the probable career of the student, and the overwhelmingly majority in an agricultural district such as Etawah did not need to learn "cube root in decimals" or other more advanced subjects promoted by the education department.

In 1862, management of the central school that had been vested in the local committee was placed under the control of the education department; The system of self-government Hume had laboured to initiate was abandoned. Post-1862 saw a centralised department control over the entire education scheme of the district. In an official communication of September 1865, Hume insisted that real popular education would not be realised until the government gave it a top priority and made its propagation a prime responsibility of district officers.

Hume had also started a printing press for books for the halkabandi schools, which was disrupted on account of the revolt of 1857. In 1863, the government's decision to centralise all official printing at the government press threatened the existence of the Etawah educational press that published the occasional journal *People's Friend* sent to all schools in the district and also zamindars and patwaris.

It soon became evident that when the elements of local involvement and support that had characterised Hume's educational system were lost, there was a gradual decline both in the number of schools and of students being educated in the district. This was also demonstrated in later annual reports on education in Etawah from 1863-64 to 1865-66.

In 1863-64, Etawah had 142 halkabandi schools with 3,958 students and six tahsili schools with an average enrolment of 86 students for a total of 516. In the next two years, tahsili schools had ceased to form a separate administrative category, in Etawah at least, for data gathering purposes, and statistics were available only for halkabandi schools. The halkabandi schools in 1864-65 numbered 137 with 3,597 students and in 1865-66, there were 133 schools and 3,531 students. A significant decline from 1861 when Hume reported that there were 185 schools (including seven tahsili) and some 8,700 students. The Etawah central school had fared better and grown from 282 students in 1861 to an average of 377 by early 1867. Hume obviously had a sound point when he emphasised the importance of involving the people and officials of the district in the overall development of modern education.

Post-1857

The constraints imposed by centralisation and the ideology of empire meant an expansion as well as a changing role for the bureaucracy. The district officer's role became largely administrative, and especially involved an oversight of revenue administration. The education department for every province was in turn responsible for educational initiatives. The emphasis on recruiting bureaucrats to serve the empire meant the stress on university education, and English and law were the most sought after subjects in colleges and at the university level.

At the ground level, an honoured place in the new educational curriculum accrued to land measurement and registration, but the old had now to give place to the new. Revenue administration,

a critical factor in reasons for the revolt, constituted an important aspect of the empire's new focus. In 1870, the establishment of revenue, agriculture and commerce at regional levels signalled the restructuring of land revenue bureaucracies as well as the beginning of a new round of rationalisation of systems of revenue settlement [Goswami 2004; Barrow 2003]. New techniques for rationalised mapping of land and revenue assessments spawned a "revolution" in the everyday operations of land surveys and settlement. The central organising principle of revenue assessment was based on a mathematically derived average rental rate determined by soil types. It displaced older systems recorded by the patwaris and especially the 'nikasi' – the roll of cultivators. The nikasi embedded within local complex social structures and agrarian practices reflected the reciprocal structure of dues and claims that defined the locally specific relations between landlords and peasants. Maps too came into increased circulation [Barrow *ibid*].

The education of the "masses" secured through vernacular education at the primary and secondary school level was oriented towards useful, practical knowledge. A crucial element in the restructuring of the educational curriculum was the centrality accorded to a vocational variant of "European" sciences. An official directive from the mid-1850s titled "reports on educational books in the vernacular" laid out the broad pattern of the educational curriculum of vernacular medium schools especially with regard to the "communication of European knowledge and science" [Goswami *op cit*].

This meant the decline and gradual oblivion of the use of Persian and Arabic as a medium of instruction. Already these languages had come under sustained criticism, as seen in Hume's reactions to the school textbooks used. Even Nazir Ahmed at the Delhi College found many of the texts which were a part of the traditional curriculum especially of Persian objectionable. For instance, *Gulistan* that constituted one of the core texts for Muslim education was removed from the curriculum as its contents in no way were related to the context of children's lives.

A massive programme commenced for the translation of English works into vernacular languages. The focus on translation was premised on the assumption that the "thinking native public are a small minority, but they are a most potent minority, and a minority for the most part, essentially hostile to European science

and literature, as well to Europeans and their governments" [Goswami 2004]. Educated native men were encouraged to write original works connected with the country, its history, productions, resources and geography, a subject which was growing in importance. The post-1857 colonial regime also reversed the earlier latitude towards indigenously produced works. From now on as it sought to develop the native mind, there would officially commissioned and subsidised works, financial grants were extended to government supported presses and there followed the incorporation of select local officials to the school book committees overseeing production of textbooks that were instituted in the late 1860s. **EPW**

Email: anu.epw@gmail.com

References

- Acharya, Poromesh (1990): 'Education in Early Calcutta' in Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed), *Calcutta: The Living City, Vol I, The Past*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Bayly, C A (1998): *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Barrow, Ian J (2003): *Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in India, c 1765-1905*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Goswami, Manu (2004): *Producing India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi.
- Dalrymple, William (2006): 'Transculturation, Assimilation and its Limits: The Rise and Fall of the Delhi White Mughals, 1805-57' in Pernau (ed), *The Delhi College Traditional Elites, the Colonial State and Education before 1857*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Fisher, Michael (2006): 'Mohan Lal Kashmiri (1812-1877): An Initial Student of Delhi English College' in Pernau (ed).
- Hasan (2003): 'Sharif Culture and Colonial Rule: A 'Maulvi' – Missionary Encounter' in C F Andrews Zakaullah of Delhi, 1919 with introductions by Mushirul Hasan and Margrit Pernau, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Hasan, Mushirul (2006): 'Maulawi Zakaullah: Sharif Culture and Colonial Rule' in Pernau (ed), *op cit*.
- Mazumdar, R C (1996): 'British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance' Part II, Volume IX of the series on *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai.
- Mehrotra, S R and Edward C Moulton (2004): *Selected Writings of Allan Octavian Hume*, Vol 1, pp 1856-67, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Pernau, Margrit (2006): (ed) *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State and Education before 1857*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

SPECIAL ISSUE

ASPECTS OF SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE

January 13, 2007

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Political Culture of Health in India: A Historical Perspective | – Sunil Amrith |
| Mal-areas of Health: Dispersed Histories of a Diagnostic Category | – Rohan Deb Roy |
| 'Parasites Lost and Parasites Regained':
Rockefeller Foundation's Anti-Hookworm Campaign in Madras Presidency | – Shirish N Kavadi |
| Maternal Health in Early Twentieth Century Bombay | – Mridula Ramanna |

For copies write to: Circulation Manager

Economic and Political Weekly,

Hitkari House, 6th Floor, 284, Shahid Bhagatsingh Road, Mumbai 400 001.

email: circulation@epw.org.in