3

British Language Policies and Imperialism

Language is an important tool of imperialism, defined as the domination of one collectivity over another (Galtung 1980: 107). The term 'linguistic imperialism', defined as the privileging or domination of one language over others, refers to its use by the elites of power, culture, and money in so many domains as to limit the access of speakers of other languages to positions of power and privilege. It also means that the dominant language is used to produce knowledge, cultural artefacts, and discourses which are privileged in a certain social setup. This kind of imperialism is related by Phillipson to social control as follows:

> Linguistic imperialism is also central to social imperialism, which relates to the transmission of the norms and behaviour of a model social structure, and these are embedded in language. This occurs whenever a socializing influence is exerted (Phillipson 1992: 54).

In the light of these insights let us see how imperialists, without distinguishing between those who settled down permanently in the lands they conquered and those who did not, used language.

When the English and Spanish-speaking peoples settled permanently in other parts of the world—the English in Australia, New Zealand, and parts of South Africa (the other settlers being Dutch-speakers); the Spanish and Portuguese in Latin America—and parts of North America they simply ignored the indigenous languages. If linguistic rights were recognized, as they were in North America, they were the rights of Europeans (Heath 1981: 13). In Australia (Ozolini 1985; Ingram 1988) and New Zealand up to the 1970s the dominant language was English. Recently, however, New Zealand's indigenous Maori language has been given some importance (Peddie 1991).

In Latin America, Spanish (or Portuguese in the case of Brazil) 'is both the vehicle of acculturation and the easily identifiable trait for maintaining prestige' (Hornberger 1988: 15). In South Africa, English and Afrikaans (a variant of Dutch) are the languages of power and privilege (Berghe 1968). This language policy kept power firmly in the hands of the European settlers till 1993, when the growing black power had to be accommodated.

Where the Europeans did not settle down permanently, they made language policies in their imperialist interests in order to rule foreign civilizations (Calvet 1974; Phillipson 1992). The French imposed their language on Algeria, Tunisia, and on the other African countries within the French Empire (Alexandre 1972: 77). By doing so, they created a native elite 'to satisfy the needs the colonies had for low-level functionaries and in some cases to satisfy European consciences about the ''mission'' to Africa' (Wardaugh 1987: 158). The Belgians were less hostile to the indigenous language, but they too used French in the Congo from 1877 onwards, because the area had over two hundred languages (Polome 1968: 296).

The British were apparently more tolerant of the indigenous languages but nevertheless spread English out of policy (Phillipson 1992: 102). That this tolerance too could be the result of certain political policies is illustrated by a study of the British language policies in India between 1780 and 1835 which is the subject of this chapter.

The period between 1820 and 1835 is known as the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy in writings on educational history (Mahmud 1895; Boman-Behram 1943; Nurullah and Naik 1943; Hampton 1947). But the controversy extended far beyond that period—it began in 1780 and, in a sense, has never ended. It was not only an educational matter, but was, indeed, connected with the political domination of India by the British (Spear 1938; Viswanathan 1987, 1989; Pachori 1990) and the philosophical justification of that domination (Majeed 1992).

This chapter argues that the Orientalists who believed that Indians should be educated through Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, as well as the Anglicists who wanted the Indian elite to be educated in English, both aimed at consolidating the empire. Their differences are traceable to a change in world view in Britain which made the Anglicists' views fashionable.

Orientalist and Anglicist World Views

Since the publication of Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism* (1978), it is generally acknowledged that Orientalism—the scholarly

study of the East by the West—created knowledge which contributed towards expanding and consolidating the empire. Indeed, as Said argues in his recent book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), given the pervasiveness of the imperial idea in the Western imagination, there is little in the realm of language and culture which did not contribute to it. This broad thesis will have to be modified in the light of the major intellectual movements and changes in England, if it is to provide insights about the relationship between imperialism and British language policies.

Briefly, the Orientalist world view was partly based upon late medieval and renaissance ideas about a 'mysterious East' with fabulous wealth and esoteric knowledge (Chamberlain 1974: 52; Inden 1990: 48). The German Romantic Movement saw India as the land of the 'origins' of civilization (Halbfass 1988: 435). This attitude changed as Europe's military and technological superiority grew and the Orientalists became convinced of European superiority. But they were not yet unconscious of the past glory of India; indeed, one of the rationales they offered for their own role as mediators and for imperialism itself was that their scholarly reconstruction of the Indian past could regenerate India (Colebrooke 1837: 1-3; for the Asiatic Society's views see Kejariwal 1988). Their leading figures, such as Sir William Jones (1746-1794) and Edmund Burke (1729-1797) were conservatives (Bearce 1961: 17, 11-20, 27-33). However, notwithstanding the political uses of their knowledge, they did produce an appreciation of things oriental. Thus, the historian William Robertson believed in the intrinsic worth of Hindu and Muslim classical languages (Bearce 1961: 20-6) and William Jones praised the Persian poet Jami (Cannon 1970: 85) and the Sanskrit language (Jones 1786: 19-34). This meant that the Orientalist policies, educational and linguistic, were less disruptive of the Indian intellectual tradition than those of the Anglicists.

The Anglicists belonged to an emerging world view in England to which the Evangelism of the 'Clapham Sect' of William Wilberforce, the utilitarianism of Bentham and the two Mills, and the political liberalism of Adam Smith, Ricardo, and Thomas Paine contributed (Stokes 1959: 58; Bearce 1961: 65-78). James Mill's *The History of British India* (1817), argues Javed Majeed, was a major text of the new world view. It was a part of the 'debates about the shape which British rule in India ought to take' (Majeed 1992: 2). This history, boasts its author, was written without any knowledge of Indian languages (1817: 10-23). This statement, even more than Mill's explicit assertion that

Indian civilization was at a lower level not only than the Victorian but even that of medieval Europe (1817: 246-8), indicates how worthless India and its learning were in the Anglicist world view. Equally worthless, because 'romantic', was the Orientalist discourse, with its emphasis on, and worse still, its high valuation of things Indian (Chamberlain 68; Mukherjee 1968: 111). Here then was an imperialism which regarded imposing British culture as part of its moral duty—the 'White Man's Burden' as Kipling was to call it later.

This change in perception about India which took place in England from the 1780s onwards is documented in a number of studies: Stokes (1-47); Chamberlain (66); Bearce (20-35); Kopff; (1969: 236-52) and more recently in Majeed (1992). The change from Orientalist to Anglicist linguistic and educational policies reflects a change in the dominant ideology of British society, a change from 'revitalized conservatism' which 'was itself a response to the threat of the French Revolution' to utilitarianism (Majeed 1992: 2). So, unless all British perceptions of India are subsumed under 'Orientalism', Said's theory will have to take into account the fact that Orientalist discourses about India, although 'constructions', were less contemptuous of India than Anglicist ones. As Girish Chandra Ghosh, a Calcutta journalist, remarked:

> Jones, Colebrooke, Wilson . . . respected our fathers and looked upon us hopefully at least with interest, as you would look on the heir of a ruined noble. But to the great unwashed abroad today, we are simply niggers without a past; perhaps, without a future (in Ghose 1912: 434).

The Orientalist Phase

Warren Hastings, Governor of India from 1774 to 1785, had Orientalist views and favoured indigenization as a means of governance (Mukherjee 79-80; Spear 1958: 513; Davies 1935: 340-1; Pachori 1990). The cultivation of the Indian classical languages, so as to conciliate the established indigenous elites of culture and learning, was part of this political strategy. Along with this went the idea that the British themselves should learn the Indian vernaculars, so as to control the 'natives' more efficiently. Both policies were political, their ultimate purpose being to help consolidate the empire.

To conciliate the natives, Hastings established the Calcutta Madrassah for Muslims (Hastings 1781; Fisher 1832: 1-10). Lord Minto established the Hindu colleges of Nuddea and Tirhoot (Basu, 1952: 12-13); and the Benares and Calcutta colleges were established. The avowed aim of these seminaries—one which is mentioned again

and again in their defence—is that they would win the loyalty of the Muslim *maulvis* and the Hindu *pundits*. Any change in the precarious balance of power could be dangerous. Indeed, the rebellion in Vellore in 1806 was blamed by conservative Orientalists on undue interference with Indian culture in the 'pamphlet war'—the first instance of the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy which came to a head later (Philips 1961: 164).

The directors of the Company kept political expediency in mind when they agreed with the Orientalists, despite mounting Anglicist pressure for change at home. In a policy letter of 3 June 1814, they said:

> We have kept in view the peculiar circumstances of our political relation with India which, having necessarily transferred all power and pre-eminence from native to European agency, have rendered it incumbent upon us, from motives of policy as well as from a principle of justice, to consult the feelings, and even to yield to the prejudices, of the natives (in Basu 1952: 149).

This became the standard defence of the Orientalists in the General Committee of Public Instruction (GCPI) where the last battle between the Orientalists and the Anglicists was fought. In a letter of 18 August 1824, the GCPI warned the Directors, who were now pressing for change, that the prejudices of the natives 'might very easily be roused by any abrupt and injudicious attempt at innovation' (GCPI 1832: 72 IOL). But this defence was soon to lose conviction when the Indians themselves started learning English.

The policy of learning the vernaculars in order to understand and control the natives was never abandoned. The first link in this chain was Warren Hastings' proposal in 1773 for the establishment of a Chair of Persian at the University of Oxford, so that future bureaucrats could learn Persian and Hindustani before coming to India (Dittmer 1972: 60). The second and more important link was the establishment of the famous Fort William College in Calcutta by Lord Wellesley (Wellesley 1800 IOL). The third was the establishment of a system of language proficiency examinations for both civil and military officers, which continued until the end of the *raj*. So seriously were these examinations taken that the suggestion of the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Roberts, that army officers should be allowed to write Hindi in Roman rather than Devanagari letters was not accepted by the Secretary of the Board of Examiners (see letters No. 2523 of 27 August 1886 and No. 390 of 1 November

1886 IOL). Consequently, British officers, especially the district officers who represented the government (*sarkar*) for the common people, used the indigenous languages to win their confidence. Thus, the wife of Colonel David Lorimer, political agent in Gilgit, writes that he 'gave pleasure and evoked confidence' when he questioned petitioners in their mother tongue. The following account which she gives of her husband's use of Burushaski illustrates the point clearly.

> Sitting on the dais behind him I saw with amusement an electric shock go through the Hunza Nagir ranks in the usual place of honour on the right of the large audience: bodies tautened and leaned forward, eyes brightened, faces smiled; there was no mistaking the amazement and delight with which the Burushaski speakers heard their language for the first time on the lips of a white man (Lorimer, E.O 1938: 22).

The Fort William College and the Asiatic Society of Bengal gave modern shape to the vernaculars. The college standardized a variety of a vernacular and fixed it in print. In doing so, it gave it a supra-local name and made it an officially recognized language. This created the possibility of transcending local affiliations which we shall examine later. For the British, this knowledge helped them to 'understand' India, however reductively or negatively, and to control it. It is why Wellesley wrote in a letter to David Scott (12 Aug 1802): 'the college must stand—or the Empire must fall' (Pearce 1846: 212). His opponents, the Anglicists, did not quite see why Orientalist scholarship created in the college was necessary though even they did not dispute the necessity of learning the native languages for command.

Anglicist Pressure

The first pressure against the prevailing political conservatism came from the Evangelists. Charles Grant (1746-1823), an admirer of William Wilberforce and a Director in the East India Company, attacked the prevalent ethos through his *Observations* (1792). Dismissing Indian civilization and learning, he advocated the imposition of English as follows:

> The first communication [of light] and the instrument of introducing the rest, must be the English language; this is the key which will open to them a world of new ideas, and policy alone might have impelled us, long since, to put it into their hands (Grant 1792: 77).

Grant was writing in response to Orientalist works, such as Crafurd (1790) and Robertson (1791), which suggested that 'the Indian people had a way of life that was valid for them, however different it might be from Western civilization' (Embree 1962: 148).

This was anathema for Grant but he did give thought to the danger of Indians learning British political values and desiring 'English liberty and the English form of government' (Grant 92). He hoped, however, that they would become anglicized as English literature undermined their beliefs.

Grant's peers, however, did not take the risk. When Wilberforce, at the instigation of Grant, forwarded a Bill in 1793, suggesting that schoolmasters and missionaries should be sent to India (the 'pious clause' text in Wilberforce and Wilberforce 1838 vol. 11: 392), members of parliament opposed him. Sir Stephen Lushington and Randle Jackson pointed out that education would give modern ideas—the ideas of the French Revolution—to Indians and that would be the end of the empire in India, as it had been in America (debates in Woodfall 1793: 129-37. Also see Embree 154-55). Grant was defeated although he did manage to get the Haileybury College established in 1905. This was another institution for the training of civil servants, but it was in England, not in India. From now on, young civil servants would be anglicized before they left for India. The Anglicists grew stronger and the directors of the Company grew more and more impatient with Orientalist policies in India.

In 1819, James Mill became the Assistant Examiner of Correspondence at India House, and hence a powerful, practical influence on Indian policy (Stokes 1959:48). As his *History* was already compulsory reading at the Haileybury College, his intellectual influence was great. In India too, the 'westernizing' interlude of Lord Cornwallis, Governor-General between 1786 and 1793, had strengthened the Anglicists. The Directors' letter of 18 February 1824 to the GCPI, attributed to Mill by some scholars, shows this influence. Openly critical of the Orientalist policies, it stated with some acerbity:

> In professing, on the other hand, to establish seminaries for the purpose of teaching mere Hindoo, or mere Mahomedan literature, you bound to yourself to teach a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was mischievous, and a small remainder indeed in which utility was in any way concerned (in Basu 1952: 153).

In another letter dated 29 September 1830 to the Bengal government, the Directors said that the natives were to be 'imbued with the ideas and feelings of civilized Europe' (in Basu 1952: 303. See another letter, ibid., 303-6). The pressure was mounting and it was the pressure of modernity in both England and India, to which utilitarianism contributed.

Indian Initiatives for Acquiring English

For Indians, the advent of modernity meant that traditional ways of exercising power and obtaining wealth would change. Now power could be obtained by becoming junior partners of the British and for this English was a great advantage. In 1791 the Native Exclusion Act had excluded Indians 'from all higher government posts' (Spear 1958: 532), but a parliamentary committee of 1832 recommended that Indians should be employed in the civil service and taught English (Minutes 1832 in Basu). Thus Indian efforts for learning English, though confined initially to the Bengali Hindus, should be seen in the light of the advent of modernity and the new patterns of power distribution which it brought with it.

In 1774 the Supreme Court was established at Calcutta. This, according to Hampton, was 'the first real stimulus to the acquisition of the languages of the new rulers' (1947: 83). In 1816 the 'native gentlemen of Calcutta' subscribed Rs 113,179 to establish a Vidalaya or Anglo-Indian College (Fisher in Basu 1952: 27). At this college, 'Tytler's *Elements of General History*, Russell's *Modern Europe*, Milton, and Shakespeare were taught' (Fisher 67). This college had been made possible through the efforts of David Hare (1775-1852) and Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), both reformers with Anglicist ideas (Hampton 1947: 73).

For Indians, the greatest inducement for obtaining a Western education appears to have been upward social and economic mobility, which came through employment with the new rulers. In 1820, for instance, the inhabitants of the town of Panswell wrote to the Governor of Bombay expressing their desire 'to learn English that we may be employed in your service and maintain ourselves' (Parulekar 1955: 133). In a Minute of 13 December 1823, Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, noted that:

> A man with such knowledge of English as we require, would easily get 150 or 200 rupees as a Clerk to a merchant (in Basu 1952: 203).

Thus, it is understandable that Raja Ram Mohan Roy addressed a petition to the Governor-General on 11 December 1823, requesting that modern rather than only traditional subjects be taught in the Calcutta Sanskrit College. Expressing himself rather strongly at places, he said:

> The Sangscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature (in Sharp 1920: 101; for details about Roy, see Hampton 1947).

In 1827, native princes, chieftains and gentlemen of the western part of India subscribed Rs 2,15,000 for 'founding one or more Professorship for teaching the languages, literature, sciences and moral philosophy of Europe' (Parulekar 1955: 107). There was so much demand for English in the Punjab, which was not yet under British rule, that a schoolmaster had to be attached to the camp for this purpose (Trevelyan 1838: 167). Most of these demands came from Hindus, because the Muslims were still anti-British. The Muslim intelligentsia was probably influenced by a misinterpretation of Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824) who, though allowing its study, added that: 'it was abhorrent and, therefore, improper to learn English', either for a better relationship with the English or for employment under them (Mujeeb 1967: 398). In 1872, when Sir Syed conducted a survey of Muslim opinion, he found that English was still considered inimical to Islam by some orthodox Muslims (Khan, S. A. 1872). Even so, as early as 1814 there were Muslim students at Chinsura (Hampton 1947: 35). In fact, in 1835 the local Educational Committee of the Delhi College noted that Persian and Arabic were not regarded as qualifications for employment (Haq 1945: 37). Thus, at least the Muslim students of this college must have started realizing the importance of English. In 1835 according to Trevelyan, the number of schoolbooks written in English sold was 31,649, whereas the number for Persian was only 1,454. The number for Urdu (or Hindustani) was larger, being 3,384, as was that for Bengali (5,754), while the number sold in classical languages was very low indeed: 36 in Arabic and 16 in Sanskrit (1838: 69).

The Anglicist Campaign in India

In 1828 Lord William Bentinck came to India as Governor-General. He is alleged to have said to James Mill before leaving England: 'I am going to British India, but I shall not be Governor-General. It is

you that will be Governor-General' (Bentham to Colonel Young, 28 December 1827. Quoted in Stokes 51).

Bentinck was receptive to the ideas of the champions of Anglicism. Among these were Francis Warden (see his 'Minute' of 1828 in favour of English in Basu 1952: 221), Alexander Duff, a Scottish missionary in the Evangelist tradition of Grant (Kopff 259-62), and the civil servant Charles Trevelyan. Trevelyan battled hard for the supremacy of Anglicism, and even before Macaulay came to India, he seems to have influenced William Bentinck significantly.

Writing on the political aspects of language and literature teaching, Trevelyan argued that writings in the indigenous Indian languages were likely to be anti-imperialistic. For Hindus, the British were unclean and for Muslims, they were 'infidel usurpers of some of the fairest realms of the Faithful' (Trevelyan 1838: 189). Those who read literature in English, on the other hand, 'almost cease to regard us as foreigners' (ibid., 189-90). English literature was, indeed, one of the most effective means of imperialist control over native thoughts, as Viswanathan points out (1989: 87). For these Anglicized Indians, reasoned Trevelyan, the British would be 'thoroughly necessary'. Thus it was politically expedient to support English and the Western sciences.

It appears that, far from being a passive recipient of other people's views, Lord William Bentinck had a 'system of education' for India (Trevelyan's letter to Bentinck, 18 March 1832 in Philips 1977: 777). This system was Anglicist as other letters suggest. Thus, the debate in the GCPI between the Anglicists and the Orientalists was reported in Manichean terms by Trevelyan to Bentinck. In his letter of 9 April 1838 he tells Bentinck:

> In the Committee [GCPI] the advocates of the old and new system are almost equally balanced. Sometimes Victory is on the side of darkness and at other times light prevails (Philips 1977: 1238-9).

He also tells Bentinck that the Committees of Public Instruction both at Delhi and Agra Colleges are of Anglicist views, as are people outside the GCPI (ibid. 1239).

In his letter of 30 April 1834, Trevelyan informs Bentinck that 'the liberal party has obtained a decided majority' in the GCPI and thus 'the last stronghold of the old system' has fallen (ibid. 1261). He also tells him that the Anglicists sought the help of the Press to defeat the Orientalists:

> For nine months we laboured, as it were, under-ground in the general committee and tho' minds of many of the members were no doubt impressed with our arguments and prepared for the coming change, yet we were still in a minority, and it was only when we began to have recourse to the press and to apply a new power to the committee from without, that anything effectual was accomplished (ibid. 1262).

He proudly adds that now the way has been 'completely prepared for the introduction' of Bentinck's 'plan of national education', first mentioned in the 18 March 1832 letter.

The Advent of Macaulay

Before Macaulay was sent to India, Charles Grant in his letter of 23 December 1833 recommended him highly to Bentinck, saying, 'I anticipate great results from his appointment' (in Philips 1977: 1177). When he arrived in India, he became a member of the Executive Council of the Governor-General and the President of the GCPI. Meanwhile, differences about the expenditure of educational funds split the GCPI. On 21 January 1834, J. C. C. Sutherland, the Secretary of the GCPI, sent the views of the Anglicists (Bird, Saunders, Bushby, Colvin, and Trevelyan) to the Government (letter no. 2093 in Sharp 1920: 104). The next day he also sent his own views and those of other Orientalists (Shakespeare, H. T. Prinsep, J. Prinsep, and Macnaughten) to the Government (letter no. 2094, ibid. 106).

It was at this point that Macaulay wrote his pro-Anglicist 'Minute' of 2 February 1835. Macaulay's 'Minute' does not present any argument which had not earlier been presented by Francis Warden or Trevelyan. It asserts the supremacy of English and Western culture, holds oriental learning in contempt, hopes for the creation of an anglicized Indian elite, which would uphold imperialist interests, and recommends the use of vernacular languages for the education of the masses. Its virulent tone and the fact that Lord William Bentinck gave his verdict in favour of the Anglicists after having read it, have annoyed generations of Indians, who have quoted it so often that uninformed people consider it the mouthpiece of all Englishmen. Macaulay was forthright about recommending English and prognosticated that the natives would welcome the change if it led to increased employment. However, he cautioned:

> All the murmuring will come from the oriental interest which we have, by artificial means, called into being and nursed into strength (in Sharp 114).

Even so, he recommended that Arabic and Sanskrit books should cease publication, the Madrassah and the Sanskrit College of Calcutta be abolished, and no stipends be given for the study of oriental subjects (ibid. 116).

It has been proved that Macaulay's 'Minute' did not suddenly bring about the change from Orientalism to Anglicism (Mayhew 1926, Clive 1973) although some writers hold this highly simplistic view (Nurullah and Naik 1943: 95; Abdullah 1976: 6). Even H. T. Prinsep, Macaulay's main opponent, wrote in his diary that the Anglicists 'entertained high hopes that his influence and authority would turn the scale against me and my supporters' (in Sharp 133). As we have seen, however, Lord William Bentinck's mind was already made up and there were more Anglicists than Orientalists outside the GCPI.

The Orientalist Response to Macaulay

According to H. T. Prinsep's *Diary*, Macaulay's 'Minute' was sent to him by the Governor-General, as education was one of his secretarial departments. He circulated it among the concerned officials in due course. As none of the officials responded immediately, he wrote a memorandum, dated 15 February 1835, refuting Macaulay's arguments (in Sharp 1920: 117-29). To Prinsep's annoyance, Lord William Bentinck 'would not even allow my memorandum to be placed on record. He said it was quite absurd that secretaries should take upon themselves to write memorandums' (Prinsep's *Diary* in Sharp 134). Later, 'there was a very hot argument' between Prinsep and Macaulay (ibid. 134). This unpleasantness probably increased because of the response of Indians, who stood to lose their income or social importance as a result of this change. The change from Orientalist to Anglicist language policy came through the Governor-General-in-Council's resolution of 7 March 1835 which said that:

> The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone (Sharp 130).

The Orientalists did not take this order lying down. H. T. Prinsep opposed it in his 'Minute' of 20 May 1835, citing the memorandums

of W. H. Macnaughten and Colonel Morrison in support (in Sharp 134-9). Brian Hodgson, a student of William Carey, who had died on 9 June 1834, wrote a series of letters in *The Friends of India* advocating the cause of the vernaculars (Kopff 251-2). This position, also favoured by Macnaughten, was against the 'high' Orientalism of those who favoured the classical languages, but opposed Anglicism.

A Despatch prepared by an unknown person at India House on 5 October 1836 (HM 723), but never sent to India, tells us that Macnaughten and James Prinsep retired from the GCPI 'in consequence'. The Asiatic Society called the changes 'destructive, unjust, unpopular and impolitic' (Hampton 101, 99). The India Office Despatch (HM 723) was alarmist, fearing that the changes would alienate the Indian elite from British rule, as were many Orientalists. The Indian response, however, proved that these alarms were exaggerated.

The Indian Response to Macaulay

According to Prinsep's *Diary*:

> In three days a petition was got up signed by no less than 30,000 people on behalf of the Madrassa and another by the Hindus for the Sanskrit College. T. B. Macaulay took it into his head that this agitation was excited and even got up by me (in Sharp 133-4).

On 18 July 1853, H. H. Wilson commented before a select committee of the House of Commons that the *maulvis* held the view that the Government 'wanted to induce the people to become Christians' by discouraging their indigenous studies (SRSC 1852: 12). The Despatch of 5 October 1836 also attributed the Muslim agitation to extremism and proselytism (HM 723). The fact, however, appears to be that only those Muslims who felt they would suffer if the Calcutta Madrassa was abolished seem to have taken alarm. The agitation had the effect of saving the existing institutions of Oriental learning, though the Anglicist educational policy remained unchanged (Prinsep's *Diary* in Sharp 134).

The Hindu Bengali response was sharply divided between those who approved of westernization and the traditionalists. The traditionalists finally did become articulate and organized enough to get together in the *Dharma Sabha*. However, the immediate reason for this was the abolition of *suttee* (burning of widows) rather than the

abolition of Sanskrit (Kopff 266-72). Throughout the British period, the Indian response to Macaulay remained ambivalent and divided, those who approved of modernization, especially those employed by the British, considered Orientalist policies ghettoizing (see Sir Syed's views in Panipati 1962: 29) but even such people condemned the ego-deflating language of Macaulay's Minute (Bose 1960: 66).

The Death of Persian

The Anglicist policy of increasing the use of English in all domains of power led to its use at the highest level in the judiciary. However, at the lower level the British were concerned with eliminating the use of Persian which had been prevalent in all the courts under Muslim rule. As usual, the Company asked a number of people, most of whom had either served in India or had detailed knowledge of it, for their opinion. The extracts from the proceedings of a parliamentary committee suggest that the main concerns were administrative convenience, convenience for the Indians themselves, and, above all, political expediency. James Mill, when asked whether English could replace Persian, replied:

> There is no doubt that might be done, but I should consider it nearly as great an impropriety as the other. It appears to me, that not only ought the proceedings themselves to be in the language of the parties and their witnesses, but that the record ought to be in that language (Basu 1952: 272).

Most of the respondents did not think that the change would lead to political antagonism though Mackenzie did point out that if many people were deprived of their livelihood as a consequence, there could be discontent (Basu 1952: 280).

Such assurances of practical and political utility made the directors decide on the replacement of Persian. In their letter of 29 September 1830, they recommended that justice should be administered in the languages which people understand (Basu 1952: 170).

It appears that the Anglicists, or at least the more ardent amongst them, wanted to replace Persian with English and not the Indian vernaculars. Trevelyan notes that the Governor-General wanted English 'eventually to be the language of public business throughout the country' (1838: 146). In his letter of 9 April 1834 to William Bentinck, Trevelyan clearly relates the abolition of Persian with the triumph of British imperialism:

> The abolition of the exclusive privileges which the Persian language has in the courts and affairs of court will form the crowning stroke which will shake Hinduism and Mohammadanism to their centre and firmly establish our language, our learning and ultimately our religion in India (Philips 1977: 1239).

For Trevelyan, India was 'merely the stepping stone to the rest of Asia' (ibid. 1239), but this ambitious aspiration—which he wanted Bentinck to keep secret—is a fantasy about which no official response is available.

In the same year, Lord William Bentinck seems to have realized the political inexpediency of imposing English alone in India. In a memorandum on 'Reform in India' dated 1 June 1834 he wrote:

> The substitution of the English language for all the local dialects [is] very desirable, but would be an act of arbitrary power, and quite impossible (in Philips 1977: 1288).

Thus, the Resolution of the Governor-General-in-Council, dated 4 September 1837, replaced Persian with the Indian vernaculars:

> His Lordship in Council strongly feels it to be just and reasonable that those judicial and fiscal proceedings on which the dearest interests of the Indian people depend, should be conducted in a language which they understand (in Malaviya 1897: 3, Appendix 49).

This change too was resented by the Orientalists who saw it as an Anglicist victory. H. T. Prinsep commented thus upon it in his *Diary*.

> It had been yielded to this party [the Anglicist or English lobby] during Lord Bentinck's administration to require the law courts proceedings to be recorded in the vernacular language of the several districts instead of uniformly in Persian in all districts (in Sharp 1920: 132-3).

The Anglicists, of course, celebrated their triumph. Trevelyan, for instance, wrote that Persian had 'disappeared from the collector's office [in Bengal] at the end of a month almost as completely as if it had never been used. It melted away like snow' (1838: 144).

Along with Persian, the cultural ascendancy of the Muslims too melted away. This is why Pakistani writers regard this step as a British conspiracy to do away with the last symbol of Muslim rule (Abdullah 1976: 6; Naushahi 1988:8). However, because Persian was replaced not by English but by the vernacular languages, the vernaculars were

officially recognized and strengthened. This means that the groups which spoke these vernaculars could begin to see themselves as nationalities. Whether this was part of a deliberate British policy of divide and rule cannot be ascertained, though individual British officers did suggest that a deliberate policy of creating ethno-nationalism be adopted. Raverty, for instance, suggests that Pashto-speaking people be recruited in all the regiments of the army:

> What would be better still, as tending to secure a praiseworthy emulation and rivalry, and, in case of accident, enabling us to employ one race against the other, and prevent combination—we should form them into distinct corps, according to their nationality (Raverty 1860: IV).

Whether such policies were followed, and if so, to what extent, does not concern us here. What is relevant is that the British policy towards the vernaculars did create identities and mobilization which were partly language-based, as we shall see later.

The results of the changes discussed above were revolutionary. The replacement of the classical languages of India with English symbolized the death of the old order in both England and India. In England conservatism died; in India Orientalist policies came to an end and a new aggressive imperialism began. For the new imperialists (Anglicists), India was not a place of mystery or wisdom, but a backward, ignorant, and superstitious country which they would reform through modernization, for which the English language was a major vehicle. The Indian elite, which the Anglicist policies created, did indeed become the junior partners of their imperialist masters as the Anglicists had predicted. Among them, however, were people who opposed imperialism on the strength of Western ideas, as the Orientalists had predicted.