

## **English Education in India Hindu Anamnesis versus Muslim Torpor**

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*English education was introduced by the British with the twin purpose of impressing upon the natives the value of western thought and of preparing them for taking up jobs to assist in the administration of the country. The first protégés were Hindus and there developed a Hindu middle class which began to demand concessions from the government without offering subservience in return. The British then began to encourage the Muslims to adopt English education in order to develop a counterpoise to Hindu middle class assertiveness. But among both communities English education was strictly an upper class affair in which the lower castes had no role.*

A FIVE STAR hotel built at Bangalore after four decades of independence carries the name Windsor Manor is a tourist shop that has been given the name East India Company. For the class of people that goes to luxury hotels, East India Company does not connote economic drain and social strain. Instead it is a rather cute name that smells of mulligatawny, bungalow and 'koi hai'!

The British rule over India was quite unlike any other that India had seen. Earlier invaders who came or short visits could lay their hands only on the accumulated wealth of a part of the country. The British had access to the whole country and were in no hurry. Earlier rulers even when they came from outside made India their home and spent all their revenue collection within the country. The British rulers in contrast had no stake in the well being and prosperity of their subjects. When the colonization of India began, England was already on the verge of industrial revolution. India now provided the capital as well as the market for the new inventions. In the process, the agricultural classes were impoverished and the traditional manufacturing base destroyed, resulting in permanent annihilation of the artisan classes [1]

Economic drain was accompanied by social strain. In the past the struggle for the throne was settled by the contenders among themselves by using short and effective methods like assassination and warfare. The common man was irrelevant in the power game and was left alone. But now that the rulers were foreigners who wanted to remain that way, the rules of the game changed.

Apart from taking care of the outgoing rulers, the British had to take the people also into account. It was thus essential to acquire legitimacy and to build a constituency among people even if they were perceived as racially inferior. The British, having already dealt with Indians for 150 years, knew the importance of legitimacy. Accordingly Robert Clive, the hero of Plassey who was made a baron by his own king and an honorary doctor of literature by the Oxford University, extracted from the Mughal emperor the rather ironic title of Sabat Jung, proven in war! In the same spirit, the company got an official status in 1765 by its appointment as diwan of Bengal. In 1818 the nawab of Oudh was persuaded to disown Delhi and declare himself the king. And finally in 1857 the Mughal dynasty whose empire had already vanished was physically brought to an end. The old emperor was exiled and all male descendants of the family were killed to bring the once famed Mughal bloodline to an end. The exercise in succeeding to the Mughal empire was completed by shifting the imperial capital from Calcutta to New Delhi, even if more years were spent building it than ruling from it. (Ironically, the British desire to capture Khyber Pass, the land gate of India, could never be fulfilled.)

The British attempts at political legitimacy in India were no substitute to building a support base among the people. Towards this end, the British very carefully studied the complexity of Indian social structure, formalized its various inherent contradictions by theorizing, and gave them a permanence by putting them in writing, all the time con-

scientifically accentuating them with a view to entrenching themselves in a setting they did not belong to. Indians had never bothered about their sociology before. But now their leading classes, seeking new equations with the new rulers, dutifully read what was written about them and decided to live up to it by thinking and acting the way the British analysts said they did! The pre-British India can be compared to a chemical solution in which positive and negative solution in which positive and negative ions intermingled and coexisted unselfconsciously. The British rule was like passing a strong current which brought about decomposition and permanent polarization.

The population profile of India, derived from the 1881 census is given in Table 1. Muslims numbered 34 billion, or about 24 per cent of the total population. As expected they are non-uniformly distributed. It is noteworthy that a majority of Indian Muslims are non-Urdu speaking.

Table 1: PROFILE OF MUSLIM POPULATION IN INDIA, 1881

	Total Population	Muslims (Millions)	Muslims/total X 100	Muslim in Prov/Muslim in India x 100
India	190	45	23.7	100
Punjab	18	11	60	23
NWP + Oudh	44	6	13	13
Bengal	67	22	32	48
Assam	4.4	1.3	31	3
CP	7.6	0.3	3.6	0.6
Madras	30	2	6.3	4.4
Bombay	15	3	20	6.7

## HINDU ANAMNESIS

The British conquest of, and rule over, India would not have been possible without the harnessing of the natives. We may straight away distinguish between two phases in the use of the natives, which we may call the ‘moonshee’ phase and the ‘baboo’ phase, advisedly using the old spellings to underline the intended meaning [4]. In the moonshee phase, the natives were employed as informers and non-English knowing petty officials to acquaint the new rulers with the lay of the land and with its customs and laws. The term moonshee was used by the British for Muslim harkaras; Hindu harkaras irrespective of their caste were called pandits. It is appropriate to name this phase after moonshee, because the Muslims generally kept away from the next, better known, baboo phase in which the natives were given English education and hired as administrative assistants.

The British rule meant different things to Hindus and Muslims. The British had their memories of the historical crusades against Muslims and were self-conscious about dethroning them in India. In the same spirit, to the Muslims the British symbolized Muslim defeat and humiliation. Accordingly they went into a sulk (that lasted 100 years). The Hindus felt relieved for the same reason. To them, the new rulers meant their own dekafrisation. The Hindus therefore made a beeline for the new jobs and the new opportunities.

Within 10 years the Muslim leaders were complaining of their being left out. Accordingly a ‘Muhammadan madrasa’ was opened at Calcutta in 1781 and endowed with lands that brought it an annual income of Rs. 29,000 [2, p 18]. Its aim was “to qualify the sons of Muhammadan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the state, even at that largely monopolized by the Hindus” [3, p 7].

The madrasa was the first British-sponsored educational institution in India. This is ironical in view of the fact that it remained a dead end. Muslims kept away from later developments on the educational front, while the Hindus moved from strength to strength.

By the Regulating Act of 1773, the East India Company's administration was placed under the British parliamentary control, and the following year a Supreme Court of justice was established at Calcutta. This was a revolutionary concept for the Indians. It was the first time that an objective, formal legal framework became available, which did not depend on the personality of the ruler or on divine mumbo-jumbo. Legal training gave Indians the courage to look the empire in the eye. Indeed inherent in the British rule was the slow preparation of the Indians to eventually overthrow that rule. Legal profession provided valuable leadership, and the Indian fascination for law and legal rigmarole has outlasted British rule.

The off-shoot of the introduction of the judiciary was even more momentous. It led to the revival of Sanskrit. It was essential for company law officers to acquaint themselves with the customary laws of Hindus and Muslims. Accordingly nine pandits were hired to compile a digest of Hindu law [5], but nobody could be found to translate it directly from Sanskrit into English. A Sanskrit-knowing Muslim first translated it into Persian, from where an English translation was prepared and published in 1776. This brought home the point that Sanskrit, though a dead language, was of importance. This also brought William Jones to Calcutta. Jones was a well-respected oriental scholar who was already a Fellow of the Royal Society of London and an unsuccessful candidate for Arabic professorship at Oxford. In 1784, Jones founded the Asiatic Society, which institutionalized studies into India's past.

A step in the same direction was the establishment in 1791 of a Sanskrit College at Benaras. Its aim was spelt out by the resident at Benaras in a letter to the governor general on January 1, 1792 "the preservation and cultivation of the laws, literature and religion of that nation, at this centre of their faith, and the common resort of all their tribes". Note the use of 'nation' and 'tribes' in relation to the Hindus. Interestingly, a memoir originally compiled in 1827 from the records at the East India House by Thomas Fischer, searcher of the records, simplifies the above quotation to "the preservation and cultivation of the laws, literature and religion of the Hindus" and still places it in quotes as if it were the original [3, p. 186]. Like the madrasa, this college was to train and supply native law officials, but this advantage was secondary. The first advantage as listed was "to the British name and nation in its tendency towards endearing our government to the native Hindoos.." [3, p. 10]

So far, matters pertaining to learning had been dealt with locally. In 1813 the company acquired an education policy, which was immediately geared towards the 'Asiatic Society' end. Since this aspect of the policy does not seem to have received much attention, it may be worthwhile to discuss it in some detail.

India was a nice country for the British to own, but its inhabitants could not be wished away. Every 20 years when the company charter came up for renewal, there was a discussion on the question of native education. In 1792, the question was summarily shot down with one of the company directors stating bluntly, "we had just lost America from our folly, in having allowed the establishment of schools and colleges, and that it would not do for us to repeat the same act of folly in regard to India". And adding that "if the Natives required anything in the way of education, they must come to England for it" [2,p 2].

The argument was still valid 20 years later, but the British parliament, as befit its station, took an exalted view. It however, had no intention of treading on the company's toes. Very cleverly, it pronounced its policy in such broad terms as to make it completely meaningless. The company was ordered to spend one lakh rupees (or more) on education every year. The sum was by no means large; it accounted for one part in 17,000 of the company's credit, it spent double the amount during 1813-30). Where the money was to be spent was also spelt out by the parliament:

- i) on "the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India", and

- ii) on “the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India”.

This is what the parliament said [2,p 22]. What the company thought of it is contained in the follow-up dispatch sent by the court of directors to governor-general on June 3, 1814. The dispatch makes no mention of science nor of any encouragement to natives, learned or not. This is not surprising. The trading company had no interest in science. Its hold over India was still not complete, nor was it sure that the natives were reconciled to its rule.

The company therefore decided to reach out to ‘the learned Hindus’. The dispatch noted

In a political point of view, considerable advantage might... be made to flow from the measure proposed, if it should be conducted with due attention to the usage and habits of the Natives. They are known to attach a notion of sanctity to the soil, the buildings, and other objects of devout resort, and particularly to that at Benaras, which is regarded as the central point of their religious worship, and as the great repository of their learning. The possession of this venerated city, to which every class and rank of the Hindoos is occasionally attracted, has placed in the hands of the British government a powerful instrument of connexion and reconciliation, especially with the Mahrattas, who are more strongly attached than any other to the supposed sanctity of Benaras. The court of directors therefore wanted to know “what ancient establishments are still existing for the diffusion of knowledge in that city” and “in what way their present establishments might be improved to most advantage”.

Significantly, the company was asked to identify “those natives....through whose instrumentality the liberal intentions of the legislature might most advantageously be advanced”.

Some material benefit was no doubt expected from this exploration of India’s past. Ancient tracts on plants and drugs and on their medicinal use might prove desirable to the European practitioners. But main benefit was strategic. A study of the pre-Islamic past will please the Hindus. As the dispatch noted, “there are treatises on Astronomy and Mathematics, including Geometry and Algebra, which though they may not add new lights to European science, might be made to form links of communication between the natives and the gentlemen in our service, who are attached to the Observatory<sup>1</sup> and to the department of engineers...”

The court of directors therefore directed [3, p. 23; 4p 23] that “due encouragement should be given to such of our servants. As may be disposed to apply themselves to the Sanskrit language, and we desire that the teachers may be selected from amongst the Natives and that their recompense Should be liberal”. Finally the directors noted [3, p. 23, 4 p23] that “we shall consider the money... beneficially employed, if it should prove the means, by an improved intercourse of the Europeans with the Natives, to produce those reciprocal feelings of regard and respect which are essential to the permanent interests of the British empire in India”

Table 2: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIMS AT RECOGNISED SCHOOLS. 1871-72

Province	Per Cent of Muslims in Population	Per Cent of Muslims at School
Punjab	51.6	34.9
NWP	13.5	17.8
Oudh	9.9	24.8
Bengal + Assam	32.3	14.4
Madras	6	4.4
Bombay	15.4	8.2
(Sindh)	(80)	(31.8)

	22.8	14.5
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Notes:

- Including Bihar and Orissa
- Including Sindh.

Source: See 3, p 148.

Note that native here means Hindu. The company's policy of cultivating the Hindus paid rich dividends. Even though the Asiatic Society did not admit Indians till 1829 and the first Indian president (Rajendra Lal Mitra) did not take office till 1885, researches into Indian antiquity had profound impact. Emphasising joint Indo-European origins, the British rulers successfully projected themselves as patrons of India's ancient culture, as if the Muslim rule was an aberration, and the British rule a continuation of the Hindu golden age. (A century later when Harappan civilization was excavated amidst rising Indian nationalism and Hitler's Aryanism in Europe, a theory was propounded that the native Indian civilization was destroyed by Aryan invasion, even though there was not evidence to suggest it.)

The Hindus felt galvanized. Vedic studies were liberated from the constraints of priestly families and even Sanskrit itself. Puranic religion as practiced was discounted and the Vedic religion now put down in black and white accepted as the ideal. Hindus in Mughal India had used Tulsidas' Ramayan as a tranquiliser. Hindus in British India could use Vedas, Upanishads and Gita as a stimulant. India's ancient scientific and literary achievements were brought home, and pre-Islamic history reconstructed. An old pillar near Allahabad, ignorantly described by the villagers as the danda used by Bhima to grind his bhang, was shown to be Ashoka's pillar. (Ashoka became a role model for Jawaharlal Nehru.)

Thus in the process of empire-building, the British discovered India's past not only for themselves but for the Indians also. This past glory, certified by the European masters themselves, transformed the Hindu psyche. It should be noted that this anamnesis, the recalling of things past, was strictly an upper-caste Hindu affair; the agricultural and artisan classes had no rule in it. It boosted the Hindu morale and gave them a sense of purpose. It also made Hindus revivalist, which in turn increased the gulf between Hindus and Muslims, who were still reeling under the loss of imperial and nawabi glory. (Incidentally anamnesis is also used in the technical sense of a patient's remembrance of the early stages of his illness.)

Earlier the Hindus had never felt any need to give themselves a collective name. They did now. It will be more appropriate to use a new word 'Hinduist' (or 'Hinduvadi') to refer to this self-conscious identity, while retaining the old word Hindu for use in its traditional sense of referring to the Hindu tradition or way of life. The British thus transformed Hindus into Hinduists.

The discovery of the past glory spurred Hindus to compete with Europeans in the scientific field. Mahendra Lal Sircar while setting up [1876] a scientific laboratory, oddly named<sup>2</sup> Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, believed that "the only method by which the Hindu mind could be developed to its full proportion, was by the cultivation of the Physical Sciences". "The object of Dr. Sircar was not to make his countrymen a nation of artisans and mechanics, but to diffuse among them the ascertained principles of Western Science in the hope that the Hindus might, in course of time, add their own discoveries to their fellow brethren of the West" [6, p 42].

Again, Sir P C Ray (who preferred to be called acharya) concluded his monumental two-volume History of Hindu Chemistry [1907] thus:

The Hindu Nation with its glorious past and vast latent potentialities may yet look forward to a still more glorious future, and if the perusal of these will have the effect of stimulating my countrymen to

strive for regaining their old position in the intellectual hierarchy of nations, I shall not have laboured in vain [6, p 145].

There was obviously no contradiction in seeking inspiration from the past glory and talking of a composite culture, as Ray did while addressing the 1923 convocation of Aligarh Muslim University:

Some of the greatest generals, greatest financiers, greatest ministers of the Muslim Kings and Emperors were Hindus. After a century and a half of British rule in India we were in ecstasies, why forsooth because a solitary Lord Sinha, Jasovanta Sinha, Jai Sinha, to mention only a few, were trusted with positions far more exalted and far more onerous? This Hindu-Muslim unity, this fusion in the ideas, the sentiments, the traditions of the two great races of India has not merely been confined to politics, it has filtered down to the inmost recesses of the social structure [ 6, p. 170]

A 1929 biography of Ray tells us, Welcoming the delegates to the Hindu Mahasabha at Calcutta in April 1925 Dr Ray exhorted the Sabha to confine its activities to the reform of internal abuses and to the consolidation of the different sections and castes of the Hindu society. He similarly advised the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others to have their own organisations and pursue their work of reform from within and to work with other communities in a broad liberal spirit, without hindering the growth of a united India". [ 6, p. 171].

The idea here is of a commonwealth of sub-nations, which generate their own individual momenta.

## **ENGLISH EDUCATION**

Once the Mahrattas were finally crushed in 1817 and the British grip on India became unassailable, the British could afford to relax. The governor-general (Lord Hastings) loftily announced that the government of India did not consider it necessary to keep the natives in a state of ignorance in order to retain its own power [ 2, p.3]. As a matter of fact, the services of Indians were now required in running the administration[4]. India was already a thickly populated country where permanent white settlements were not possible. Bringing in staff from Britain would not only have been killingly expensive, but also detrimental to manufacturing capabilities back home. And finally after the disastrous Portuguese experiment, producing a sub-nation of half-casters was not even an option. Additionally, there was an underlying element of cultural conquest. To the British, their control of an ancient fabled country was a proof of the superiority of the Western way of thinking. Indeed, a constant theme in the European scheme of things was 'improving the natives'.

As befits a cautious and clever ruler, the transition from the moonshee phase to the baboo phase was to be effected in an unobstrusive manner, and with the full and active support of the native leadership. Charles Grant's (1746-1823) well meaning treatise "Observations on the state of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals; and on the means of improving it" advocating the cause of missions and education and written during 1792-97 was ahead of its time and 'anticipatory'. It was only in 1830 that the court of directors wrote "we learn with extreme pleasure that 'the time has arrived when English tuition will be widely acceptable to the Natives in the Upper Provinces" [2, p 32]. It is tempting to reduce history to glorification or condemnation of individuals and events. Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay's (1800-59) flamboyant minute of February 2, 1835 belongs to this category. Crediting Macaulay with introducing English education in India will be like crediting victory in a cricket match to the batsman who scores the winning run.

TABLE 3: MUSLIM PERCENTAGE IN SCHOOLS IN 1881-82

	Punjab		NWP		Oudh		Bengal	
	V	E	V	E	V	E	V	E
Primary	40.1	31.1	13.3	20.5	20.5	30.0	24.6	--
Middle	34.5	26.3	20.2	16.3	25.0	18.0	13.7	13.2
High	48.4	20.0					--	8.7
College	58.1	12.6	3.8	13.0	45.1	5.5	99.9	3.8
Girls primary	46.7	1.4	26.9	0	62.7	44.5	8.9	--
Girls middle	--	0	--	--	--	--	1.1	--

Note: V=Vernacular, E=English  
Source: See 3, based on Ch 27.

The native initiative for English education came from Ram Mohun Roy (1772/74-1833). ‘a kulina brahmin’ whose great-grandfather (Krishna Chandra) served under the nawab of Bengal and was honoured with the title ‘Raya-Rayan’, later abbreviated to Roy and adopted as a family surname in preference to the caste name Bandhopadhyaya or Banerjee [6]. Ram Mohun’s patrimony included a rich post-Plassey zamindari which brought him a substantial net annual income of about Rs. 22,000 (on his two brothers’ death their share also came to him). Ram Mohun added to his fortunes by lending money at high interest to the spendthrift company officials.

Ram Mohun was a crusader against Hindu orthodoxy and proponent of “higher or purer dogmas of Vedantism”, for his views he was turned out of his home first by his father and later by his widowed mother. He studied Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, and learnt English during 1805-14, when he served the company first as a clerk and then as a dewan, “the principle native officer in the collectorate of revenue”. “His good English, good sense, and forcible arguments” were patronizingly complimented by Bishop Heber as “a real curiosity as coming from an Asiatic” [2, p 28]. In 1830, Ram Mohun was given the title of raja by the luckless Mughal emperor Akbar II so that the raja would plead the emperor’s case before the overseas masters [7]. (Incidentally, the surname Roy is also a derivative of raja!

Following a May 1816 meeting of ‘English gentlemen and influential natives’ a substantial sum of Rs. 113,179 was collected and an Anglo-Indian College or vidyalaya opened on January 27, 1817 with less than 20 students [2, p 25; 8, p 476]. The college (more accurately still a school) had a precarious existence for six or seven years and would have closed down but for the efforts of David Hare, an illiterate watch maker turned social activists, who was later appointed a judge of Calcutta Court of Requests [7, p 476]. The college became established when it started receiving government grant. Finally in 1854 its senior department was taken over by the government and made into Presidency College. Earlier, Hindu and Muslim boys were hired by the British to learn traditional things from their elders and pas them on to the company. Now, Hindu boys from upper classes paid money from their own pocket to receive English education.

Two points need to be noted here. First, the native initiative was made possible by the availability of English patronage. In the case of vidyalaya, the chief justice Sir Hyde East and David Hare acted as patrons. Six decades later Mahendra Lal Sircar’s Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science enlisted the support of the Lt.-Governor Sir Richard Temple, because, as a 1929 account noted unselfconsciously, “the merchant princes and landed aristocrats, hungry for title and fame, would slavishly follow the footprints of the official head of the province” [6, p 32].

The second point is even more important. It is significant that the first government funded native institution for English education was named Hindu. The British sponsored Indian middle class was an all-Hindu affair, and an upper-caste affair at that. There is in fact no reason to expect that all castes should be represented in education in proportion to their

numbers in the general population. If all castes were to feel equally motivated towards any goal, they will not have been different to begin with.

It is customary to describe the role of education in exalted terms. But the fact remains that the main expectation from education is that it will equip a person for earning his livelihood [9]. Thus class-room education had been of no interest to caste groups engaged in agriculture, manufacture, and menial service. It attracted only those castes that had traditionally been associated with learning, commerce, or penmanship. Accordingly, Brahmins learnt Sanskrit, banyas their secret script, and kayasthas and khatris Persian. The British found the Hindu love for Persian rather disconcerting. It was noted in 1827 about a school at Bareilly that “Hindus and Musalmans have no scruples about reading together” [2, p 186]. In the Punjab of 1856 “The Persian schools are of course invariably kept by Muslim teachers” and “generally held in or just outside the mosque.; yet they are attended largely by Hindus more attracted largely by Hindus more attracted by the Persian language than repelled by the Muhammadan religion” [8, p 290].

One can sense a certain feeling of regret at the absence of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. The British took immediate steps to remedy the situation by removing their ‘ignorance’ about each other. The 1858 report of the Punjab Director of Public Instruction describes the situation prevailing before the British annexation, and how it was remedied. “We found a people ignorant of the geography of their own province, ignorant that there was such a science as geography” This blissful ignorance was removed within two years. “The progress made is this in every Tehseele school there are boys able to give an intelligent account of the early Muhammadan invasions of India...”[8, p 302].

Indoctrination apart, the main aim of English education was to prepare Indians for government jobs. The British were no social reformers; upliftment of the downtrodden was not on their agenda. They would rather exploit the status quo for their own benefit than change it. The response to English education therefore was on predictable caste lines. For the upper castes that had traditionally depended on government jobs and patronage, English was the new bread and butter language in place of Persian; they therefore filled the new class-rooms with alacrity. At Cawnpore of 1820 “the native children flocked to the school in pursuit of the English language” [2, p 188]. Thirty years later, “In Lahore as well as Umritsur, the anxiety to acquire English is remarkable” “Many natives of Bengal who possess a smattering of English find employment as teachers of that language” [8, p 280].

TABLE 4: ATTENDANCE OF MUSLIM IN THE VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNMENT AIDED AND UNAIDED AS COMPARED WITH THE TOTAL ATTENDANCE IN 1881-82

Provinces	Class of Institution	Total number of students	Muslims	Percentage
Madras	Colleges, 1669	30	1.7	
	High Schools	4,836	117	2.4
	Middle Schools	18,553	723	3.8
	Total	25,058	870	3.4
Bombay	Colleges	475	7	1.4
	High Schools	5,731	118	2.0
	Middle Schools	14,257	781	5.4
	Total	20,463	906	4.4
Bengal	Colleges	2,738	106	3.8
	High Schools	43,747	3,831	8.7
	Middle Schools	37,959	5,032	1.32
	Total	84,444	8,969	10.6
NW Provinces	Colleges	223	29	13.0
	High Schools			

	Middle Schools	4,273	697	16.3
	Total	4,496	726	16.3
Oudh	Colleges	126	7	5.5
	High Schools			
	Middle Schools	1,081	195	18.0
	Total	1,207	202	16.7
Punjab	Colleges	103	13	12.6
	High Schools	453	91	20.0
	Middle Schools	2,671	703	26.3
	Total	3,227	807	25.0
All the above provinces	Colleges	5,334	192	3.6
	High & Middle Schools	1,33,561	12,288	9.2
	Grand total	1,38,895	12,480	8.9

The lower castes on the other hand cannot have benefited from English education as far as their traditional bread earning was concerned. The number of new jobs was very small, and in any case the social structure so rigid that shift from traditional occupation was well nigh impossible. These castes therefore kept out. They could neither have expected nor got any leadership from the upper castes. (Probably the first and the only leader to take note of their plight was Mahatma Gandhi whose symbolic use of Charkha was no more than a dirge; and even this soon degenerated into an empty ritual.)

During the first 100 years of their lordship over India, the British introduced upper class Hindus to the English, language and literature, to western thought, to India's glorious past, and to modern science and education. There thus emerged a new Hindu middle class entry into which was independent of the old caste structure and which could demand concessions from the government without offering subservience in return. The Hindus could now look the empire in the eye and ask for a system that was "more acceptable to the governed". They now wanted a share in running the administration of their own country. It has been one thing for the British to deal with the demands of landed class. The assertiveness of the intelligentsia was an altogether different, more serious, matter and had to be tackled.

Earlier the British had assiduously cultivated the Hindus as a counterpoise to real or perceived Muslim hostility. Now, the Muslims were to be developed as a counter-poise to Hindu middle-class assertiveness.

### MUSLIM TORPOR

While the Hindu upper classes were adopting English, Muslims did not want to have anything to do with the British. "In 1825 government sanctioned the establishment of an institution at Murshidabad for the education of the Nizam family...". In 1826 it was reported that the members of the family of the Nizam "not consenting to embrace the opportunity of entering the institutions, the Resident filed up the number of 50 students, on which six were to attend the college, 44 the school" [3,p 190]

When in 1835, the government decided to spend its funds exclusively on English education, "there was a petition from the Muhammadans of Calcutta, signed by about 8,000 people, including all the most respectable Maulavis and native gentlemen of that city. After objecting to it upon general principles, they said that the evident object of the government was the conversion of the Natives" [2, p 53]

This fear of conversion in the minds of Muslims stands in sharp contrast to the self-confidence of the Hindus who had not only taken initiative in asking for English education, but were also striving to discover a meeting ground between their own religion and that of their masters, who themselves had attested to the greatness of the former. One wonders

whether behind the Muslim fear of conversion to the religion of the new rulers were the memories of their own earlier conversion to Islam for the same reasons. It is also noteworthy that the British foothold in Bengal became possible because of its large distance from the Mughal seat of power. This also meant a corresponding lack of self-confidence among Muslims in Bengal.

The initiative to end the torpor came from Delhi. The end of the Mughal dynasty made it easy for the Muslims to reconcile to the British rule. Lal Qila was no more a seat of power. It was now merely a historical monument. The new leadership persuaded the Muslims that mattered to shift the gaze from Lal Qila and set sights on the capital of the new empire. Leaving the field to the Hindus was counter-productive. An important development was the emergence of the Ram Mohun Roy of the Muslims, that is Maulavi Sayyid (later Sir Syed) Ahmad Khan (1817-98) whose ancestor had come to India from Herat [10]. Having observed the powerless pomp of the Mughal nobility from close quarters, he declined the hollow offer of his own grandfather's title and a position at the last Mughal emperor's court, and instead took up a job as a 'serishtadar', or a reader in a court, in the East India Company's service. He steadily rose in the hierarchy and during the 1857 revolt saved the lives of a number of English men, women and children, for which "he earned a pension for life from the government" and acknowledgement as a leader of the Muslims. Syed Ahmad received a copy of Macaulay's work from the viceroy in 1866, and in 1869 visited England, where he met a number of Englishmen "known to be keenly interested in the welfare of Muslims". Incidentally, Sir Syed did not know English [11, p 105].

**TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS IN 1881-82 (ENGLISH EDUCATION)**

	Punjab	NWP + Oudh		Bengal	CP	Madras	Bombay*
Percentage of Muslims in total population	59.6	13.4		32.3	3.6	6.3	19.7
Primary	31.1	20.5	30.0		--	7.8	--
Middle	26.3			13.2	--	3.8	5.4
		10.3	18.0				
High	20.0			8.7	--	2.4	2.0
College	12.6	13.0	5.5	3.8	7.7	1.7	1.4

Note: \*50 percent of Bombay Muslims were from Sind.

Source: [See 3, based on Ch 27]

**TABLE 6: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS IN 1891-92**

	Punjab	NWP + Oudh	Bengal	CP	Madras	Bombay
Percentage of Muslims in total population	55.8	13.4	32.3	3.6	6.3	19.7
Percentage of Muslims in Urban population	50.8	33.9	27.5	16.0	14.2	17.8
Secondary School	33.1	21.9	13.5	9.3	5.3	4.9
Arts college	18.2	19.0	5.7	5.6	1.5	2.6
Prof. college	19.6	17.7	3.5	4.9	1.7	1.8

Source: [See 3, p 181]

**TABLE 7: MUSLIMS AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF EDUCATION 1891-92**

Exam	Total	Muslims*	Percentage
Entrance	6545	419	6.3
FA	2695	120	4.4
BA,BSc, BOL	905	51	5.7
MA, MOL	80	2	2.5
BL	147	7	4.7
Medical	264	8	3.4
Engg	47	0	0

Note:\*Percentage of Muslims in total population is = 21.8

Source: [See 3, p 179]

In 1871 the government of India took note of the educational backwardness of the Muslims and passed a resolution with a view to remedying the situation, noting that “it is much to be regretted that so large and important a class should stand aloof from active co-operation with own educational system and should lose the advantages both material and social, which others enjoy” [2, p 148]. Note that 60 years previously ‘natives’ had been used as a synonym for Hindus as if there were no Muslims; now Hindus were the ‘others’.

A Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College Fund was started in 1872, “Princes and Nobles, Musalman and Hindu alike offered munificent endowments to the contemplated college. Nor was liberality altogether wanting on the part of Englishmen”. School classes started in June 1875 with 66 students, all Muslim boarders. The next year 30 day scholars joined, including six Hindus [11]. The next year, on January 8, 1877, the viceroy laid the foundation stone for the college.

A wealth of data on education among Muslims is available from the 1882 report of the Education Commission and the 1895 book [2] A History of English Education in India by Syed Mahmud (son of Sir Syed Ahmad), which gives lengthy quotations from government documents and statistical data. The picture that emerges is simply told. Muslims generally did not like English education, especially college education (Tables 2-9). For example, in 1881 Muslims were 22.8 per cent of the population of the provinces. Yet only 9.2 per cent of high and middle school students were Muslims. At the college level, the percentage fell to a lowly 3.6 per cent. As expected, there was a slight improvement with time. In 1892, Muslim percentage at school had gone up to 14, and at college to 5.9 (Table 8). Still, the figures remained disappointing.

These bland all-India figures however are not very educative. It is necessary to break them up region-wise for a better comprehension of the phenomenon. Muslim response to education was not uniform throughout the country. It is only in north-west provinces and Oudh, corresponding to UP of today, that the percentage of Muslims in schools and colleges was higher than it was in the total population. Elsewhere Muslims were under-represented in education. In 1891-92, in NWP and Oudh, Muslim percentage in total population was 13.4 in secondary schools 21.9 in arts colleges 19 and in professional colleges 17.7. In Bengal, Muslim percentage in total population was 32.3 in secondary schools 9.3, arts colleges 5.6, and in professional colleges 3.5 (Note that Bengal includes Orissa and Bihar. It will be more meaningful to look at Bihar data separately and in relation to NWP and Oudh.) In Madras, percentage at school 5.3 was consistent with the percentage in total population 6.3, but the percentage of Muslims at college was a dismal 1.7 per cent (Table 6). There is in fact no basis for supposing that Muslims should have responded as a body to English education [2]. It is easy to understand this differential response when it comes to Hindus, because their society is well known to be intricately structured. That the same general principle applies in the case of Muslims also is a little difficult to comprehend because of the well-entrenched, but mistaken, notion that Muslims are Muslims and nothing else. There are upper class Muslims, and there are lower class Muslims [13].

The British deliberately emphasized the caste hierarchy among Hindus, and at the same time underlined the foreign origin of Islam. Keen observers as they were, the British administrator-scholars did not fail to notice the capacity of the Hindu caste system to influence other religions and in particular the presence of caste structure among Muslims. Advertising this fact however will have made nonsense of the two population theory whereby the Hindus and Muslims were constantly referred to as two distinct races or tribes. Accordingly, Muslims in India were represented as a structure less society of foreign origin, which by implication had no right to be on good terms with and acceptable to the Hindus.

The Muslim social structure is characterised by 'ethnicity' and caste. There was a small influx of Muslims from central Asia, who occupied high positions in Mughal India and considered themselves to be superior. At the 1891 census, about 55 per cent of the Muslims claimed to be holders of foreign titles, Syed Sheikh, Mughal, Pathan, Arab, Blooch and Turk [2, p. 210]. There can be no doubt that actual percentage of Muslims of foreign origin must be much smaller, and that most of the claimants were pretenders. (The Hindi word sheikhi is used in the sense of boasting as in 'sheikhi maarana' or 'sheikhi baghaarana'. It is likely that the reference here is to the self consciousness of a newly acquired sheikh-hood.) This however does show the importance which foreign descent held among the upper class Muslims [13]. Obviously, the common man did not approve of this constant reference to the extra-territorial affiliation as can be seen from the old Punjabi saying "Jo sukh chhaju de chabaare, o Balkh na Bukhare" (The pleasure that you get at Chiajju's balcony, you cannot get at Balkh or Bukhara.)

Pride in foreign descent, or the pretension of it, arrogance of imperial glory, power and pelf were confined to the upper echelons of the Muslim society, which flourished in Mughal Delhi's zone of influence. Most Indian Muslim are however descendants of converts from Hinduism, who generally came from the lower castes. They were too poor and too unambitious to pretend to have a foreign bloodline. It is not clear what self-image they formed on conversion or what their Hindu brethren thought of their action. In any case, for these converts change of religion did not mean change of profession. Their social status and weltanschauung continued to be determined by their hereditary occupation and pre-conversion norms. This is best seen in south Indian rather than in the north. South Indian peninsula, protected by the oceans on two sides and shielded by north India from outside influences, is an excellent laboratory for studying social phenomena in their uncomplicated form. Central Asian connection is so far-fetched as to be non-existent in south India, and Delhi so far away that the Mughal grandeur did not give south Indian Muslims any sense of personal or collective fulfillment. Most south Indian Muslims have retained their caste customs and rituals, and till recently even caste names, especially when they denoted high rank. Although conversions from individual castes were not large enough to make the groups endogamous, Muslims have retained their separate linguistic identity. Tamil-speaking Muslims, for example, consider themselves different from Urdu-speaking Muslims and generally do not intermarry. It

is as if the south Indian Muslims were afraid of being disowned by their own castes and tended to subordinate, at least till recently, their religious identity to their caste identity.

**Table 8: INCREASE WITH TIME, 1882-92**

Province	Percentage of Muslims in Population 1891	Percentage of Muslim Students in Population 1891					
		School			Arts College		
		1882	1887	1892	1882	1887	1892
Punjab	55.8	20.0	31.4	33.1	12.6	17.2	18.2
NWP+Oudh	13.5	16.3	21.6	21.9	13.0	13.2	19.0
Bengal	32.9	8.7	12.1	13.5	3.8	4.3	5.7
Madras	6.3	2.4	5.2	5.3	1.7	1.6	1.5
Bombay	16.3	2.0	4.4	4.9	1.4	2.6	2.6
Total	21.8	9.2	13.7	14.0	3.6	4.2	5.9

Source: [See 3, pp 201,203]

**Table 9: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES, 1858-93**

University	Arts	Law	Medical	Engineering
Punjab	21.9	19.0	17.1	-
Allahabad(NWP+Oudh+CP)	15.5	10.4	-	*
Calcutta(Ben+Assam+Burma)	3.9	2.8	1.4	0.6
Madras (Mds+Coorg)	0.9	1.1	3.3	-
Bombay(Bom+Berar)	1.8	0.9	2.0	0.6
Total	3.9	3.02	0.7	0.5
Average per year	11	3	1	0.1

Note: Roorkee Engineering College was under PWD

Another way of learning about the Muslim attitudes is to see how Hindus reacted to them. It is thus noteworthy that south India's lord Rama is different from north India's. In the south, he is Maryada Purushortam, a role model for all human beings. On the other hand his role in the north is more matter of fact; he is the hero of the street play Ramlila. It is in fact generally true that Hindu festivals in north and south India though falling on the same tithes are celebrated differently. Hindu festivals in south India are pooja room-oriented, while in the north they are street-oriented. The reason is not difficult to discern. Conscious of their low-caste, non-imperial origins south Indian Muslims have been self-effacing. In return Hindus have not reacted to them; the Hindu festivals therefore have retained their traditional piety. The situation in north India stands in sharp contrast. Here Hindus responded to the Muslim power and assertiveness by bringing their festivities out on the streets. (Later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Bal Gangadhar Tilak did the same to Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra.)

There is a fundamental difference between the attitudes of Muslims who converted from lower castes of Hindus and of those who claimed foreign descent by virtue of foreign bloodline, Hindu upper caste background, or simple wealth. The lower caste Muslims, for the same reasons as were applicable in the case of their Hindu counterparts, kept themselves out of the catchment area of English education [ 12,14,15]. This phenomenon was noted as early as 1871 when the various local governments and administrations were asked to comment on the backward condition of education among Muslims. "Thus, while the Musalmans of Bengal were 32.3 per cent of the total population, their total proportion to the total number in schools known to the department was only 14.4 per cent. The situation was worse at college level, where out of 1,287 students only 52 or 4.04 per cent., "belonged to that race". "During the last five years, out of 3,499 candidates who passed the Entrance Examination from these provinces, 132, or 3.8 per cent only were Musalmans. They ought to have been tenfold more numerous". Out of 900 passed for the First Arts, only 11, or 1.2 per cent were Muslims. Out of 429 passes for BA, only 5 or 1.1 per cent were Muslims. "This painful inferiority that steadily increases in the Higher examinations was attributed "above all" to "the depressed condition of the bulk of Bengali-Musalman, Musalmans in the first instance by conversion only and not by descent" [2, p 159].

The same refrain is found in the report from Bombay. Though the Musalmans in the Bombay presidency were reckoned in the census of 1872 at 2.5 million or 15.4 per cent of the total, half of them were from Sind alone. Excluding this division the percentage falls to 7.1 "Sind no doubt was in a very backward state, and the feelings of the Musalman Community there were strongly against the study of English". Of the total number at school, only 31.8 per cent were Muslims, although they were 80 per cent of the population [3, p 157]. The DPI wrote: "The Muhammadans avail themselves of our lower schools, but do not rise to the higher schools and colleges. In the list of University graduates there are one Musalman MA and two Bas. I think the reason is to be found not in the poverty of the Muhammadan community (for beggar Brahmins abound in the high school), but in their poverty and depressed social status combined. In this matter the Brahmin and Musalman are at opposite poles. Thus we have in Gujarat 10 Brahmins in the colleges and 20 in the high schools for every Musalman, but only 3 Brahmins for every Musalman in the lower class schools" [2, p 157]

Not surprisingly the Education Commission of 1882 in its summary considered it hazardous to attempt generalizations about "the wide differences in the circumstances of the Musalmans in the three presidencies". Very wisely it chose to gloss over "the social and historical conditions of the Muhammadan Community in India" and instead concentrate on "causes of strictly educational nature" [2 p 169]. It is easy to see why numbers fell off rapidly at higher educational levels. For most students, belonging to lower social strata aiming too high would be *chhota moonh barhi baat*. With each occupation, with each caste, was associated a certain social status. In principle, English education provided an opportunity for improvement in status. In practice a member of a lower caste group could not go up on his own. He needed positive exhortation from the state, or the upper castes, a booster rocket so to say, to impart him the escape velocity that would free him from the downward pull of tradition and deposit him in a higher orbit. In the absence of such a boost, the new opportunities were suitably truncated, so as to conform to the social status already assigned. In short, you could climb up the new ladder, but according to the old rules. As soon as you reached a level consistent with your caste and social status, you dropped out, leaving the higher echelons for those who were entitled to it on non-academic grounds.

In Delhi's zone of influence, 'social and historical factors' worked in favour of Muslim education. Punjab in fact provides an interesting case study of how interest in education dwindled as one moved away from Delhi. The 1871 data set reveals the following: " In many of the districts of the Delhi, Hissar, Ambala and Amritsar Divisions the percentage in schools of all classes was considerably above the ratio which the Musalmans bore to the total population. In the districts east of the river Jhelum the number of Musalman students was almost in exact proportion to the total Musalman population. On the other hand, in the Derajat and Preshawar Divisions, where the Muslims formed more than 90 per cent of the whole population, their proportion to the total number at schools was only 55 per cent" [2, p 164]

The same point is more forcefully made by data from North West Provinces and Oudh, the heartland of Muslim upper classes. Even in 1871, before Aligarh appeared on the education map the proportion of Musalmans in recognized school in NWP was 17.8 per cent as against their percentage of 13.5 in the total population (Table 2). In the entrance examination of 1870, 21 out of 175, or 12 per cent were Muslims. In 1881, out of 223 students at English college, 29, or 13 per cent were Muslims. (Interestingly, oriental colleges had 444 students on their rolls, out of which only 17 or 3.8 per cent were Muslims. (Interestingly, oriental colleges had 444 students on their rolls, out of which only 17, or 3.8 per cent were Muslims) [2, p 161].

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A point about girls' education may be made here. In 1881-82 in NWP English schools for girls had 664 students at the primary level and 62 in the secondary schools. None of these were Muslims. Apparently, Muslims did not believe in English education for girls. Vernacular primary schools for girls had 5990 girls, out of which 1616 or 26.9 per cent were Muslims, but the corresponding secondary schools had only six girls, all non-Muslims. It is thus clear that education for girls ended with puberty [2, p 162].

The 1882 report of the Education Commission said about the Aligarh College. "The importance of the college, however, is not confined to the special nature of the education it affords. Politically its influence is great and will be greater; for it is the first expression of independent Musalman effort which the country has witnessed since it came under British rule" [2, p 164]

M J Akbar [16] has suggested that Muslim minorityism began with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. This is not quite correct. Muslim minorityism began in 1757 itself when the nawab of Murshidabad was defeated at Plassey. It was then accentuated at every step: when the Rohilla chieftain Ghulam Qadir Khan marched into the imperial palace and blinded the Mughal emperor (1788); when Tipu Sultan of Mysore was destroyed (1799); when the company troops marched into Delhi (1802); when the nawab of Oudh disowned the Mughal emperor (1818); and finally when the Mughal dynasty itself ceased to exist (1857). Sir Syed Ahmad's contribution lies in the fact that he converted this minorityism into an asset.

Syed Ahmad's efforts no doubt accelerated the pace of development; they, however, did not reverse any trends. In any case his consistency remained confined to the upper class Urdu-speaking Muslims. In the 10 year period 1882-92, the percentage of Muslims at school in Punjab went up from 20 to 33, and at college from 12.6 to 18. In the same period, North West Provinces and Oudh saw an increase in Muslim percentages at school level from 16 to 22 and at college from 13 to 19. Other provinces also witnessed an improvement but only marginally. In 1892, Muslims made up 18 per cent of the population of Bengal, Madras and Bombay taken up together, but their percentage at school was only 8 and at college a lowlier 31/4 (See Table 8) Muslims who had not been enriched by the Mughal empire were not enriched by English education either. At the time of partition, most educated Muslims opted for Pakistan, leaving Indian Muslims more or less where they were before the arrival of Sir Syed Ahmad on the scene.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have discussed the development of English education in India upto the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. English education, was introduced by the British with the twin purpose of impressing upon the natives the value of western thought and of preparing them for taking up jobs to assist in the administration of the country. The first protégés were the Hindus, who were fortified by the European discovery of their glorious pre-Islamic past. They had a headstart of two generations over Muslims in matters of education; during this period the Hindus had exclusive right to the British patronage.

Muslims entered the field much later. As against the Calcutta Hindu College which was set up in 1817, Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental School at Aligarh came up in 1875. What helped Muslims to come out of the post-Plassey sulk was the

realization that Hindu intelligentsia was becoming powerful by default, the support available from the British who were now feeling uneasy with Hindu assertiveness, and the fact of the physical demise of the Mughal dynasty.

Certain features of the 19<sup>th</sup> century English education deserve to be noticed. First, actual number of educated persons was very small. In the 35 year period 1858-93, the five Indian universities produced a total of only 15,081 graduates of all types [2, p 186]. Secondly, the Hindus dominated. Except for North Western Provinces and Oudh and to a lesser extent Punjab, Muslims generally kept away. Each year on an average 419 Hindus graduated as against only 15 Muslims [2, p 186]. Thirdly and most importantly in the case of Hindus and Muslims alike, English education was strictly an upper class affair, in which lower castes had no role.

This is significant, because the biggest losers under the British rule were the artisan classes, whose means of livelihood were destroyed by the colonial rulers as part of their contribution towards industrialization back home. At the 1891 census a total of 80 million people were classified as 'artisans and village menials'. The largest single group in this category was the rather vague "village watchmen and menials" who numbered 12 million, or 15 per cent. In contrast the number of "iron smelters and gold wasters" was a minuscule 25,000 [2, p 209]. One can therefore guess that many persons listed euphemistically as watchmen and menials had lost their livelihood after the destruction of the traditional village economy.

While the upper classes made no effort to provide leadership to the lower classes, they indulged in a clever numerological sleight of hand. Suppose x per cent of the total population is Muslim. Then it is assumed that the ends of justice will be met if x per cent of the students are Muslims, even if all of them come from the upper classes. The same is of course true of Hindu percentages. The understanding seems to be this: lower classes will contribute to the general population, while the upper classes will make up the percentage at educational institutions.

A word about the present may not be out of place here. The wrongs done by the colonial rule should have been set right by India's own government. The dispossessed artisan classes should have been rehabilitated in new manufacturing activities. But the Indians instead of doing what the British were doing in their own country continued what the British had been doing in this country. The educated middle class was therefore swelled. It was assumed that what had earlier made this class obnoxious was its knowledge of English. English therefore was banished. As the next step, educational standards were continuously lowered so as to make education as irrelevant as the middle class had become.

In the Indian society, the more vital a person's role in the well-being of the society, the lower he ranks in the caste hierarchy. Thus, the castes engaged in production or maintenance are called backward castes. Using this definition in the modern context, we can say that a prosperous nation is one which consists almost entirely of backward castes. The solution to India's problems does not lie in transferring a handful of people from the traditional lower strata to the new middle class. Instead, the problems can only be solved by converting people from forward castes to backward castes.

## Notes

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1. Pondicherry based, former director of Madras Observatory (John Warren) started work in 1811 on sough Indian methods of time keeping. The work started on "call of personal friendship" was later purchased by the government, as it would be "of service to gentlemen employed in the revenue and judicial departments". The work, completed in 1825 "was denominated by some learned friends 'Kala Sankalita', Sanskrit word signifying doctrine of times". Warren was so popular that when his daughter got married, the Hindus wanted to pay the expenses of the

- festivities. See R K Kochhar [1991], 'French Astronomers in India during 17-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries', J British Astronomical Association, 101, 95.
2. The rather odd name for what was meant to be a research laboratory is explained by the fact that an Indian Association was set up the same year, 1876, by Surendra Nath Banerjee to protect the employment interests of educated Indians.
  3. Ramayana is in a way the Picture of Dorian Gray of the Hindus. If, as the Puranas say, Rama is a historical figure, then as per archaeological evidence, he cannot have lived east of Yamuna. (R K Kochhar [1991], 'Looking at the History of Indo Aryans', Mainstream, November 30). The geographical setting later assigned to the story corresponds to the spread of the Indo Aryans. Addition of details to the story (like Rama's killing an achhoot for studying Vedas) reflects the growth of Brahminism, and its public performance symbolizes its use as a shield against Islam.

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*(Source: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.27, 28 November 1992; 2609-2616)*