I

The English East India Company’s Language Policy and the Encounter with Persian

Introduction

It is possible to imagine colonial language policy generally as a net supported by four poles. Of these, the first pole can be conceptualized as the status of a colony within a capitalist system. The second pole comprises the discourses such as Anglicism with their insistence on the European need to bring civilization to the world through English. The third pole that determined language policy was that of the local configuration of class, ethnicity, race and economic status that dictated the distinctive development of each colony; and fourth, those stands of Orientalism with insisted on exotic histories, traditions and nations in decline.\footnote{Alastair Pennycook, 'Language, Ideology and Hindsight: Lesson from Colonial Language Policies' \textit{Ideology, Politics, and Language Policies: Focus on English}, ed., Thomas Ricento, John Benjamins Publishing Co. Amsterdam, 2000, p. 49.} It is useful to remember that language policies are located at the intersection of past traditions with present needs. It has also been suggested that apparently competing or oppositional policies may nevertheless on another level be complementary with each other and complicit with the larger forms of cultural and political control.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p. 50.}

In the Indian context, the argument to provide education for colonized populations was framed within competing as well as complementary discourses. This chapter locates the East India Company’s language policy in India within the context of colonial power and politics. Some of the terms which are essential in understanding this theme ought to be defined here. The term language policy covers many activities involving language. Certain languages were used in formal institutions, or by the state apparatus, which are termed ‘domains of power’. The domains of power are the networks
of administration, judiciary, military, education, media, etc. Once it has been decided which language will be used within the domains of power that language has to be given uniformity and has to be standardized. ‘Linguistic imperialism’ refers to the process by which one language is privileged over others. Although at the beginning of colonial rule the British were apparently tolerant of the indigenous languages, their policy underwent a number of shifts, the end result of which was the privileging of English. It is the history of these shifts between 1780 and 1835 that this chapter attempts to explore. We will also discuss the controversy between the group of scholars and policy-makers known as Orientalists and Anglicists. The Orientalists believed that Indians should be educated through the medium of Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, and who were keen on restoring and rejuvenating ancient knowledge and languages of the Orient. The Anglicists wanted the Indian elite to be educated in English, and who believed in the superiority of European knowledge.

With regard to language, Bernard Cohn has traced three projects and forms of colonial domination: its first and the most important from was the objectification and use of Indian language as instruments of rule to better understand the ‘peculiar’ manners, customs, and prejudices of Indians, and to carry out enquiries to gather information necessary to conciliate and control the people of India. For this purpose, colonial officials and scholars produced educational materials: grammars, dictionaries, treatises, text books and translations about and from the languages of India (to be discussed in Chapter II). The second project entailed research into the past of India so as to classify and order and locate their civilizations on an evaluative scale of progress and decay (discussed further in Chapter VI). The third project involved the patronage of religious and literary scholars who maintained and transmitted—through texts, writing, recitations, painting and sculptures, rituals and performances—that which the British conquerors defined as the traditions of the conquered. To appear legitimate in the eyes of Indians the British

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63 Kumkum Chatterjee has shown how the British were interested in compiling judicial codes, and translating cultural texts, but also in the purely political and governmental dimensions of India’s past. She has shown how Orme, Dow, Bolts, and others produced narratives about India’s Mughal past with a view to using such information as ammunition to formulate arguments and view about the nature and future course of the East India Company in Bengal. At the same time, they located Mughal rule in India as part of the wider story of the expansion of Islam. *Cultures of History in Early Modern India*, pp. 207-209.
thought they had to demonstrate respect and interest in those Indians and institutions that were the carriers of traditions. 64

Prior to 1780, the education policy of the East India Company was amorphous. There are no detailed accounts available of the trajectory of education in nineteenth century India, especially in its phase of transition and as merchant capitalism gave way to imperialism. The main aim of the Company was trade and they did not have a clear policy about language till 1783 when the British parliament proclaimed its engagement with education and research in Indian language for the Company’s scholars. In keeping with the concern for ‘classical’ languages, Warren Hastings proposed in 1773 the establishment of a Chair of Persian at the University of Oxford, so that future bureaucrats could learn the language before coming to India. A landmark in the history of the Company’s education policy was the observation made in 1792 by Charles Grant, adviser to Lord Cornwallis, then Governor General of India. Grant advocated spreading the light of European knowledge through the medium of the English language: The foundation of Calcutta Madrasa (1781), the Oriental Seminary (1798), and later, Fort William College (1800) were also important. Despite these attempts to give colonial educational policy a clear direction and institutional footing, till the 1830s no uniform system of education existed. The function of the General Committee of Public Instruction formed in 1823 was confined to funding and supervising government institutions. It was this General Committee that was divided sharply among the Orientalists and the Anglicists. It is important to note that neither showed any concern for vernacular education – even the Orientalists chiefly favoured Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. 65

Persian and Orientalism

The publication in 1978 of Edward Said’s influential and controversial work, Orientalism, gave a new direction to the study of colonial intellectual activity. Said took up as his subject of exploration Europeans’ research into the ‘Orient’. He claimed that ‘the West

64 Cohn, ‘Command of Language and the Language of Command’, p. 316.
has produced and managed—through a long history of literary production, academic
scholarship, ethnography, and stereotyping—an image of the non-Western world as
degenerate, exotic, despotic, essentially religious, effeminate, and weak’. Said’s theory,
though widely critiqued, has, however, ‘served to displace imperial histories based in
high political narrative, social structures, and economic change’. In this chapter, we use
the term ‘Orientalist’ not in the Saidian sense of the term, but as a descriptive term to
describe that group among colonial scholars and policy-makers that supported
government patronage of traditional knowledge. At the same time, this chapter is written
with full awareness of the Saidian meaning of the term, and also explores the ways in
which both the ‘Orientalists’ and the ‘Anglicists’ were involved in the project of
Orientalism.

The use of Persian in the domains of power was part of the Orientalist language
policy. The East India Company’s modest patronage of traditional Oriental studies was
one manifestation of the prevailing policy of Orientalism, which was the official ideology
of British India from the time of Warren Hastings (1773–85) until the arrival of the
liberal reformer William Bentinck (1828–35), whose Governor- Generalship witnessed a
decisive shift towards Anglicism in official circles. In the context of colonial Africa, it
has been argued that that one of the ‘preconditions for establishing regimes of colonial
power’ was communication with the colonized, and control of communication would,
therefore, be one of the first expressions of colonial authority. The policy of
Orientalism interwove the company’s political need to reconcile Indians to the emerging
British Raj with the scholarly interest of individual British officials in Indian languages
and culture. Orientalists in India used material both in Sanskrit and in Persian to access
India’s textual traditions. According to Gauri Viswanathan, Orientalism was adopted as

66 For critic of ‘Orientalism’, see: Dodson, Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture, pp. 2-6.
67 Tariq Rahman, Language, Ideology and Power: Language-Learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and
68 Stephen Evans, ‘Macaulay’s Minute Revisited: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth-century India’
69 Johannes Fabian, Language and Colonial Power: The Appropriation of Swahili in the Former Belgian
Congo, 1880-1938 (Cambridge, 1983). Cited in P. Sudhir ‘Colonialism and the Vocabularies of
Dominance’ in Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India, eds., Tejaswini Niranjana, P.
an official policy because the British had a political sense that an efficient India administration rested on an understanding of ‘Indian culture’. The Orientalist position was that a Western political tradition could be successfully grafted upon Indian society without having to direct itself toward the transformation of that society along Western lines. Thus, the convergence of British political and intellectual interests is revealed in the establishment of the Calcutta Madrasa, to which Hastings contributed personally, and the Sanskrit College at Benares, which owed its foundation to the initiative of the Company official Jonathan Duncan. For the first two decades of nineteenth century, the British education policy in India retained a predominantly Orientalist character. At the forefront of the campaign to anglicize Indian education and society was the Evangelical movement, followers of which believed that the introduction of Western education and Christianity would transform a morally decadent society.

One of the best-known Orientalist scholars, Sir William Jones, described his impression in 1798 in the following terms:

...India lay before us, and Persia on our left, whilst a breeze from Arabia blew nearly on our stern...It gave me inexpressible pleasure to find my self in the midst of so noble an amphitheatre, almost encircled by the vast regions of Asia, which has ever been esteemed the nurse of sciences, the inventors of delightful and useful arts, the scene of glorious actions, fertile in the productions of human genius, abounding in natural wonders, and infinitely diversified in the forms of religion and government, in the law, manners, customs, and languages, as well as in the features and complexions, of men....I have ever considered languages as the mere instruments of real learning, and think them improperly confounded with learning itself: the attainment of them is, however, indispensably necessary.

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71 Ibid, p. 35.
72 Evans, 'Macaulay’s Minute Revisited, p. 262.
From this passage, it becomes clear to us that a sound knowledge of Persian was essential to be recognized as an Orientalist in the fields of Indian history and literature. Thanks to his mastery of Persian, the magnificent of Persian literature (Hafiz and Sa'di) was introduced to the west by Jones. He also published *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) with *Kitāb-e shakarestān dar nahl-i zabān-i pārsī tasnīf-i Yunus-i Oksfordi* inscribed in Persian on its title page. According to Michael J. Franklin, ‘Its publication effectively marked the birth of Romantic Orientalism, revealing Jones’s awareness of the reciprocal relationship of knowledge and power...As Persian was the official language of the courts of India, Empire might become the vehicle of Orientalism’. In other words, Oriental literature was to be engraved upon the hearts of East India Company employees even before they arrived in India.

It has recently been argued that it was the centrality of the Persian language in diplomacy and war which could attract the British ‘scholarly curiosity concerning Muslim history which was to help educate the East India Company in its roles of administrator and revenue collector.’ Persian, thus, had a utilitarian function insofar as ‘it engendered a fuller understanding of the nuances of Mughal etiquette, and the key areas of Mughal history and the written record. It was proficiency in Persian that distinguished the careers of men such as Alexander Dow, Francis Gladwin, Charles Hamilton, and David Anderson; William Davy and Jonathan Scott combined work on Mughal history with the office of private Persian translator to the Governor-General.’

Thus, intellectual and functional interest in Persian worked together writing of texts. Warren Hastings, to quote one example, patronized texts reflecting Hindu tradition and Mughal culture to foster reconciliation and mutual respect.

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76 Ibid, pp. viii-ix.
In the next section of this chapter, we discuss how Persian print was used in shaping ‘colonial knowledge’ which ‘was derived to a considerable extent from indigenous knowledge’. Recent works have emphasized that colonial knowledge was produced through a complex form of collaboration between colonizers and colonized. Thus, Indians were active agents in the process of the creation of colonial knowledge. The indigenous knowledge was provided by munshis (letter-writers cum scribes) who formed the link between statecraft and knowledge. Another important point to note is that colonial officials who wrote histories or narratives of India explicitly acknowledged their debt to Persian language materials in composing these works. Kumkum Chatterjee has discussed in detail how some of these narratives were direct translations from Persian material (for example Alexander Dow’s History of Hindostan, of which the first and second volumes were supposed to be a direct translation of Firishta’s history). Chatterjee states that narratives which are direct translations from Persian materials are nevertheless extremely significant because of the valuable commentaries made by the English authors/translators about their understanding of history as well as about the historical value of the Persian materials they used as sources and authorities. Most importantly, colonial officials used the term ‘history’—and not fable or myth—to describe these works they translated. This observation indicates that these Persian histories were considered valid according to modern standards of historiography. This theme of historiography will be studied in more detail in Chapter IV.

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77 Colonial Knowledge has been defined as those forms and bodies of knowledge that enabled European colonizers to achieve domination over their colonized subjects around the globe. Some postcolonial historians have highlighted the circular, reciprocal relationship between colonial knowledge and conquest: knowledge enables conquest, and this in turn enables the production of more knowledge, leading to consolidation of political power. These historians argue that knowledge is power, and it plays a fundamental role in the consolidation of colonial rule. See, Wagoner, ‘Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge’, pp. 783-814.
78 Bayly, Empire and Information, p. 7.
79 Wagoner, ‘Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge’, pp. 783-814
80 ‘Letter-composer’, it became a general term for the class of professional who were well-versed in the art of writing letter or documents.
81 Bayly, Empire and Information, p. 74.
82 Chatterjee, History in Early Modern India, pp. 207-209.
Writing letters and drafting documents was an important business of the state administration in the Mughal state. This was taken care of by Darul Insha. *Ilm al-insha* refers to the art of drafting letters and documents and also means the creation and construction of letters, documents and state papers. It has been a part of Muslim literary and politico-diplomatic world from the very beginning.\(^8\) The term is also applied to the writings of a refined prose style. According to one scholar, 'the final aim of insha is to acquire a knowledge of the virtues and faults (*muhasin wa ma'āib*) of prose composition, but the principal forms involved in the study of insha are *khutab* (sermons) and *rasa'il* (epistles). *Insha* in this respect takes two forms: one is addressed to the general reader (without specifying any name) and can be called individual style; the other is addressed to a specific person can be named as chancellery style.\(^8\)

Amongst the *Munsha’at* (anthologies) which were prescribed or read were the *Ruqa’at-i-Jami, Bada’ i al-isha, Mukatabat-i- ‘Allami or Insha’i- Abu’l Fazl, Sahifa-ishahi* and the *Nami-i-nami*. All the rules and conditions related to the art of epistolary composition, and the manners of writing and composing (*a’in-i-kitabat wa a’i-n-i-’ibarat*) as formulated by the great exponents of the art, were thoroughly dwelt upon before a munshi could enter the service in that capacity.\(^8\) Thus, the process involved considerable training over a long period of time, and apprenticeship had an elaborate code of conduct and learning. Even Hindu munshis were trained and educated in the ethos of Persianized composite culture.\(^8\)

During the Mughal rule, and subsequently right up to the full establishment of British rule, Persian was widely adopted by the Bengali elite as the language of administration and high culture. Members of families of the landed classes who had dealings with the Mughal court and desired to positions in administration studied Persian.

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\(^8\) Mohiuddin, *Chancellery and Persian epistolography under the Mughals*, p. 16.
\(^8\) Ibid, pp. 43 -44.
\(^8\) Alam and Subrahmanyam, ‘Making of a Munshi’, p. 60.
The richer people among the Hindus who did not like to send their boys to maktabs and madrasas run by Muslims called akhwund, mostly in the mosques with a strong theological bias, would set up schools for Persian studies in their own homes, run by Hindu scholars of Persian (of whom there was a growing number) known as munshis. In other cases, boys were taught by Muslim teachers known as maulavis, who got their salaries and perquisites from the founders of the household schools for the boys of the family. Through these reading and writing exercises, students were able to acquire a knowledge of letters and a good vocabulary, and came to be known as amukhta.87 A calligraphic hand was looked upon as an additional qualification of a munshi, besides beauty of style. The pupils spent a few years studying works on Persian literature, after which the teacher recommended the works of the masters to be studied under him and this included the famous text books on insha. These genres provided a fertile ground for the cultivation of refined prose and the secretarial art.

Persian learning was attractive for those who were aspiring to be employed as munshis. The prime qualification for appointment as a munshi was knowledge of the Persianate conventions of India, still nominally under Mughal rule until 1858. Munshis were both learned scholars and well versed in statecraft; they used the pen as an instrument and a means of displaying their erudition. According to Alam and Subrahmanyam, the munshi was both mediator and agent (vakil), and also a key personage who could both read and draft materials in Persian, and who had a grasp over the realities of politics. Apart from Persian, munshis were also required to acquire some technical skills. These included epistolography, accountancy, and methods of fiscal management.88

Official correspondence (insha); in Persian, was the specialty of the Kayasths, Khatris and Brahmins in the eighteenth century, as the immigration of Iranian munshis had ceased long ago. In the period of chaos that engulfed the Mughal and the Safavid empires, the tradition of Kayastha Persian epistolography which had begun with insha-i

87 Mohiuddin, Chancellery and Persian epistolography under the Mughals. p. 41.
Harkaran (see below) and continued through Chandra Bhan had already achieved classical status in the insha of Madho Ram during the reign of Aurangzeb. A number of words and phrases peculiar to Indian usage (istimal hind), as distinct from that of Iran (istamal fars) were a distinct feature of this period. Such changes in spelling, form, expression, and construction (taṣarrafāt) contributed to the development of a characteristic Indian prose style.

**Persian in Fort William College**

Under the English East India Company's rule the main function of munshis was to provide 'the link between the Residency and the Ruler and his court on the one hand, and between the Residents and the Residency establishment on the other'. Till 1800, the British were entirely dependent on the Indian munshis for record keeping and writing letters of administration and court correspondence. In 1800, the British started training munshis at colleges of Fort William in Calcutta and Haileybury in Britain. Later, between 1820 and 1850, a new generation of munshis appeared who were educated in English in addition to vernacular languages. The British also realized that even their English employees needed to have a working knowledge of the Persian language. The prestige of Persian as the best language for an ambitious British cadet or junior writer continued into the early nineteenth century. Hastings, who had lobbied unsuccessfully in 1765 for the establishment of a Chair in Persian at Oxford, vigorously argued that Persian and Arabic should be the keystone of curriculum at the newly established Company's College at Fort William. When Lord Wellesley opened the College at Fort William in 1801, he expressed the opinion that no civil servant should be nominated to certain offices of trust and responsibility until it was ascertained that he was sufficiently acquainted with the laws and regulations of the government, and the language of the country. He allowed the young men two years to acquire these qualification and fixed January 1801 as the period

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92 Cohn, 'Command of Language and the Language of Command', p. 287.
after which no appointment would be given except to those who had passed an examination in the native languages. 93

On the account of the great amount of business in the political Department, Wellesley also established in 1801 a distinct Persian branch in the office of Secretary to Government in the Secret, Political and Foreign Departments. In 1804, John Adam (who later rose to Council and acted as Governor-General on Moira’s departure in 1823) was the first Deputy Secretary appointed to this Department. It was later separated in 1806 and placed under the independent charge of a Secretary. 94 The function of the Department was to translate into English all letters and documents received from the rulers of India. Dispatches addressed to regional India governments were likewise translated into Persian which then constituted the medium of official communication. There was also a French and Dutch translator for the translation of French and Dutch communications into English. With the expansion of political activities under Wellesley the office of the Persian translator was placed under a regular Secretary to Government in that Department. This arrangement operated till 1830-1, when it was annexed to the Secret and Political departments. 95 A covenanted servant of the Company was appointed translator, with a number of assistants, for the purpose of translating into Persian the substance of the orders issued to the Collectors by the Board of Revenue. His duty was to attend with such translations on the Superintending Member who took to see that they were dispatched to the diwans under the public seal of the diwani. 96

During the early years of Fort William College the Persian Department was the most prestigious and best supported. The young officials who did well in Persian were frequently slated for the best jobs, which frequently led to lucrative and influential positions in the Central Secretariat in Calcutta. 97 There were scholarships for encouraging the men to learn the Oriental languages. According to one scholar,

94 B. B. Misra, The Central Administration of the East India Company 1773-1834, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1959, p. 82.
95 Ibid., p. 104.
96 Ibid., pp. 116-17.
97 Cohn, ‘Command of Language and the Language of Command’, p. 287.
There was ample measure of incentive for studying oriental language and law. Any student joining the college with some proficiency in Sanskrit or Persian would be given one thousand rupees provided he could pass an examination either in Hindi or Islamic law. Scholarships of one thousand rupees and five hundred rupees were promised for showing ‘high proficiency’ and ‘simple proficiency’ respectively in any oriental language.\(^9^8\)

In the eighteenth, there were caste-like groups of munshis who wrote in Persian and who were employed by Indian rulers, nobility, and Europeans.\(^9^9\) However, when the patrons of this educated class changed, so did their tasks. The intentions of their English and European patrons were different from those of their pre-colonial patrons. Other authors have emphasized elements of continuity between the East India Company’s model of administration and what it was replacing. According to Mohiuddin, the East India Company did not long feel inclined to change the prevailing model of administration of the Mughals, not to speak of the local states which were modelled their administration on the Mughal government. He notes the similarity in the literary structure and chancery practices of the East India Company and the Afghan rulers outside India in the eighteenth century.\(^1^0^0\)

The ‘Persian Moonshee’ is the title of Francis Gladwin’s book which was written to train a new generation of munshis who would serve the British. Before 1800, only a few British such as the Kirkpatrick brothers, Elphinstone and Edmonstone, appear to have mastered the art of reading cursive Persian (shikast) and become acquainted with the intricate forms of Persian letter-writing. Francis Balfour’s *Forms of Herkern* and Francis Gladwin’s *Persian Moonshee* were two elementary books that provided a basis for the teaching of new skills to the next generation (Fort William’s contribution in

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\(^1^0^0\) Mohiuddin, *Chancery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals*, p. 238.
Persian printing had been discussed in chapter II). On the front page of *Persian Guide* Gladwin wrote the following by way of introduction:

The following compilation is primarily intended for the assistance of young students in the college at Fort William in Bengal, founded under the patronage of Marquis Wellesley. The general design is to exhibit at one view, along with the English and Persian, such Arabic primitives and their derivatives as are in familiar use in the latter language. No other attempt having been made in the present from, I experienced some difficulty and labour in arranging the materials, collected from printed books and from manuscripts; but must in justice acknowledge myself principally indebted to the learned industry of Mowlawee Ameer Hyder for the Arabic derivatives.\(^{101}\)

Thus, by the 1840s a new generation European had emerged, which Christopher Bayly refers to as people who 'had been subjected to European disciplines.'\(^{102}\)

**Insha-i Har Karan: A Case Study**

Writing prose in Persian was fashionable under Jahāngīr and Shah Jahān. The Munshies enriched the Persian language with Indian vocabulary, homely metaphors, and imagery drawn from indigenous life. The *Insha-i Har Karan* is a significant work for the history of Persian print culture in India. It was the first published work of Indian Persian and also the first published English translation of an Indian Persian work in which the text and translation were printed together. *Insha-i Har Karan* was published during the East India Company's regime, to provide a knowledge of the clerical style, correspondence and drafting of legal and civil documents. This classic text was produced during the reign of Jahangir (1605-28) by Harkaran Das Kambo of Multan, who belonged to a scribal family in Mughal administration. The book's significance lay in the fact that the author was the

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\(^{102}\) Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 373.
first Hindu author of a Persian work as well as the first Hindu munshi known to historians.103

The book contained models of epistolary composition. It was written to be used as a text book by the students of the art of insha. In this context, the book has been called more appropriately as Irshad-al-Talibin. It must also be pointed out that the Insha-i-Har karan is useful as a treatise, 'in so far as it illustrated closely the office draftsmanship as practiced in the Mughal Chancellery.104 The author had relied on official and family archives available and accessible to him. This work became as a model text for East India Company's early administration in dealing with inheritance issues and the associated terminology. Although first published in English in 1781 in Calcutta as The Forms of Harkaran (also including the Persian text) with the encouragement of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal it was reproduced again in 1831. It was lithographed at Lahore in 1286/1869, and again in 1288/1871. According to Bayly, Balfour's translation of Insha-i-Hari Karan sought to convey the key features of Indo-Islamic written correspondence within the state and the family.

The English translator of Insha-i Har Karan, Francis Balfour wrote that he wanted to put the art of insha into 'the hands of almost every beginner' as it 'contains the common forms of business and correspondence; ... being more immediately useful to a stranger.' 105 He also claimed that his endeavour was 'to supply, in some measure, the defects of Moonshies and Manuscripts; and the want of a proper medium of communication between the Instructor and the Student, at a period when he is unable to converse; and when he ought not to meet with any cause of discouragement.' 106

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103 Mohiuddin, Chancellery and Persian epistolography under the Mughals. According to Mohiuddin, Hindus opened the history of their authorship with insha-writing and ended it with that subject. 'Such was their affinity with that art, that since the 19th century, every educated Hindu has earned the title of munshi while even the ordinary Hindu clerks have been designed as sahib-i-qalam.'

104 Ibid, p. 216.

105 Insha-i-Hari Karan, ed and tr. Francis Balfour, The Forms of Herkern corrected from a variety of manuscripts supplied.... Calcutta, 1781, preface.

106 Ibid.
Thus, it is possible to argue that the *insha* commanded a large portion of Persian printing from the late eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century. It was the most demanded genre of books, published by private and government publishers. Books published on *insha* in mid nineteenth century included both editions of authorized sources as well as those newly written.

It is also useful to trace changes in the *insha* literature from the nineteenth century. However, it would also be correct to say that most new *insha* books were printed as Persian school texts. Although *insha* was still one of the most popular subjects that was printed in the nineteenth century, within *insha* literature the tradition of individual *insha* style (as opposed to the chancellery style) became prominent. There were many literary and linguistic controversies and *insha* was deeply involved in these. To take an example, even the pre-eminent Urdu-Persian poet, Ghalib, who printed a book in this genre titled *Panj Ahang* in the mid-nineteenth century, wrote in a very ornate style. It was published initially in 1849 and again in an expanded edition in 1853. As its name implies, it comprises five topics: (1) suggestions on letter writing; (2) Persian infinitives, technical terms, and glossary; (3) a selection of the poet’s Persian verses which might be quoted in conversation or in letters; (4) reviews and miscellaneous writings; and (5) Ghalib’s own Persian letters.

Another author whose books fall in the tradition of individual *insha* style is Sahba’i, who was a prolific writer of thirty-four titles, all in Persian except for three Urdu books that he prepared at the request of Felix Boutros. Most of the books were published in Sahba’i’s life—some, like commentaries or *shuruh*, more than once—and also remained available for several years after his death, since many were used as textbooks. Eventually, a need was felt by some of his former students to bring them all back into print. One of these students, Munshi Din Dayal, Head Munshi in the Agent’s Office at Bhopal, collected Sahba’i’s published and unpublished writings, including his letters.107 Other students, including Muhammad Husain Hijri, and Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan

107 These include *Shuruh* (Seh Nasr-i Zuhuri, Mina Bazar, Panj Ruga, Shabnam-i Shadab, Husn wa Ishq, Mu’amma ye Nasirani, Mu’amma ye Jami), Risala-i Munagishat-i Sukhan, Risala-i Qaul-i Faysol, Risala-i Sarf wa Nahw, Qawa’id Urdu wa tarjuma-i Hadaiq-ul Balaghat
edited and annotated them. The collection was brought out by the Nizami Press of Kanpur in 1879.\textsuperscript{108}

Sahba’i’s \textit{shuru\f{h} or commentaries on several Persian prose texts were the main reading for those who wanted a career in formal or official writing of any kind. In fact, they were also a part of the Persian syllabus at the Delhi College for a long time. For example, \textit{Mina Bazaar} was a book prescribed at the Delhi College; its title refers to a bazaar that the emperor Akbar reportedly, used to organize exclusively for the ladies of the harem, in which all shops were kept by women.\textsuperscript{109} Sahbai’s comments were on the etymology of words, and various grammatical topics. His aim was ‘primarily to aid his sons, and then to help those others too who wished to be educated but were forced to seek help here and there.’ Another book of his, titled \textit{Qaul- i Faisal} (The Decisive Word), is a significant contribution to the literary/linguistic controversy that arose in Delhi in the first half of the eighteenth century and kept many prominent literati of north India engaged in heated debate for the next several decades. It was published only posthumously through the efforts of Pandit Dharm Narain in Kanpur’s Nizami Press in 1826.\textsuperscript{110} The following table lists some of the major \textit{insha} printed books, along with their year and place of publication.

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\textbf{Book Title} & \textbf{Year} & \textbf{Place of Publication} \\
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\textsuperscript{109} Sahba’i Dehlavi, \textit{Sharh-i Mina Bazar}, Nawal Kishore, Kanpur, 1878, pp. 2-3. The nine shopkeepers praised by the writer are: jeweller [\textit{jauhari}]; cloth-merchant [\textit{bazaz}]; florist [\textit{gul-farosh}]; sweet-seller [\textit{halwai}]; perfumer [\textit{attar}]; fruit-seller [\textit{miva-farosh}]; tobacco-seller [\textit{tanbaku-farosh}]; the betel-leaf-seller [\textit{tanboli}]; and vegetable-seller [\textit{subzi-farosh}]. The detailed description of each shop and its owner, filled with conceits and word-plays, is couched in a language that exploits the vocabulary associated with that particular trade.
\textsuperscript{110} Naim, ‘Shaik Imam Bakhsh Sahba’, p. 170.
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<th>No.</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Muhammad Qasim Ali Kalimi</td>
<td>Maktubat-i-Kalimi</td>
<td>Delhi, 1801</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Inayat-ul Allah</td>
<td>Bahar-i-Danish</td>
<td>Calcutta, 1827, 1849; Kanpur, 1854</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Muhammad Faiq</td>
<td>Dastur-ul Insha</td>
<td>Calcutta, 1828</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Ghulam Makhdum</td>
<td>Ma’ada-ul Fawaid (Sharh-i-Waqai Nimat Khan-i Ali)</td>
<td>Hughli, 1839</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Hussain-i-Vaiz-i-Kashifi</td>
<td>Sahifah-i-Shahi</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1844</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Muhammad Hifzullah</td>
<td>Insha-i-Faiz Rasam</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1845, 1846</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Abdul Qadir Bedil</td>
<td>Ruqa’at-i-Bedil</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1845</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Amanullah Hussaini</td>
<td>Ruqa’at-i-Amanullah Hussaini</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1846</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Madhoram</td>
<td>Insha-i-Madhoram</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1847</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Mirza Muhammad Hussain Qatil</td>
<td>Nahr-ul Fasahat</td>
<td>Madras, 1848; Lucknow, 1874; Kanpur, 1862</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Abul Fazl Allamī</td>
<td>Har Sih Daftār Abul Fazl</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1851; Kanpur, 1852</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Hamid Abu Bakr Qazi</td>
<td>Maqamat-i-Hamidi</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1851, Kitihi Kalan, 1851</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Abdul Rahman Jami</td>
<td>Ruqa’at-i-Jami</td>
<td>Calcutta, 1853</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Mohammad Razi Mullah Tabrizi</td>
<td>Hadaiq-ul Ushshaq</td>
<td>Kanpur, 1853</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Hussain Shah Saiyid</td>
<td>Khazinat-ul Amthal</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1853, 1872 (2 volumes)</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Nithar Ali</td>
<td>Char Gulzar</td>
<td>Kanpur, 1858, 1877; Lucknow, 1863</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Mohammad Zahidi</td>
<td>Mufid Nama</td>
<td>Kanpur, 1859; Lucknow, 1875</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>Mohammad Jafar ibn Muhammad Fazil</td>
<td>Insha-i-Ajeeb</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1861</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Muhammad Tahir Vahid</td>
<td>Insha-i-Tahir Vahid</td>
<td>Kanpur, 1861; Lucknow, 1873</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Nithar Ali</td>
<td>Insha-i-Dilkusha</td>
<td>Lucknow, 1863</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Muhammad Shah Khalifa</td>
<td>Insha-i-Khalifa</td>
<td>Kanpur, 1863</td>
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The British first used the Persian language in the commercial arena. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the English trading company was politically responsible for the administration of the territories in the sub-continent where Persian was the lingua franca of administration, commerce, and diplomacy. The Company already had trade relations with the Persian Gulf and their operations in this connection were conducted from its factories in western India. Naturally, they needed information and knowledge to carry out their commercial ventures. In 1731 when the Company wished to obtain a farman (royal order) from the Mughal emperor to reduce taxes on their internal trade in India and for other privileges, they had no one in their Bengal establishment who knew sufficient Persian to carry out the negotiations. They thus had to depend on an Armenian merchant for this vital function. As early as 1757, before acquiring territorial sovereignty over Bengal, the Court had issued an order which provided for sending five servants to Basra and two others annually 'to study Persian and nothing else' in order to come back to Bengal 'and take their standing according to their rank at service'.

The pressure was...
building on the Company officials. James Fraser, an employee of the Company at Surat for nineteen years, learned Persian well enough to write a contemporary history of the court of Nadir Shah, based on a Persian accounts and ‘constant correspondence’ between Iranians and Mughals. He learned Persian from a Parsi, and studied with a scholar at Company who was famous for his knowledge of Muslim law. 112

After the battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764), the East India Company attained legal rights in 1765 from the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa as Diwan or Official Controller of the administration of the province in 1765. By 1813, they had control over most parts of north, central and south India, including Awadh, Mysore, and Peshawar. When the English were firmly established on the saddle of the Government of Bengal after 1765, they began for their own convenience to bring in English for administrative purposes, side by side with Persian. All state documents would for decades after this still would be in Persian, with English translations. 113

Macaulay’s Minute and the Charter of 1835: Persian versus English and Vernaculars

With the renewal of the Company’s Charter in 1813, the Company was obliged by the British Parliament to encourage Indian languages and to allow the activity of Christian missionaries by paying them one lakh rupees. At the same time in Calcutta, Anglophilia was increasing. Centres like the Calcutta School Book Society (1817) and Calcutta School Society (1819) were established for the purpose of spreading English education. In the years between 1813 and 1857 the East India Company was obliged to make—and state—a clear policy for Persian. With the establishment of a General Committee of Public Instruction (henceforth GCPI) in 1823; the task at hand, pertaining to educational institutions and grants became clearer. In accordance with this policy, the GCPI in Bengal introduced modern science and English established new colleges at Calcutta,

113 This was also true of the Supreme Court of Law in its two sections of the Civil and the Criminal known respectively as the Sadar Diwan ‘Adalat and the Sadar Nizamat ‘Adalat.
Agra and Delhi whose curricula were intended to blend Indian and Western learning. In 1829 Lord William Bentinck, wrote to the GCPI that ‘to promote the great object of improving India by spreading abroad the lights of European knowledge, morals, and civilization....it is the wish and admitted policy of the British Government to render its own language gradually and eventually the language of public business throughout the country.’ The last phase of such a policy started in 1837 with the replacement of Persian. In this and subsequent sections we will discuss the struggle between the supporters of education in Indian languages and in English, and how this struggle culminated in the removal of Persian as an official language in 1837.

The period between 1820 and 1835 is known as the period of the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy...in writings on educational history. The Orientalists, like Colebrooke (himself a former Persian Secretary), sided instinctively with men of traditional Arabic and Sanskrit learning and the wealthy and distinguished families who patronized them. The Anglicists, on the other hand, Trevelyan and Macaulay being the foremost among them, proclaimed their desire to let the light of Western knowledge flood in upon all Indians, without regard to cast or creed. In particular they hoped to break the stranglehold of Brahmans on government-backed education. The Orientalists were to remain the dominant influence on education policy in Bengal until 1833, when Bentinck appointed Charles Trevelyan to the General Committee of Public Instruction in place of Wilson. Trevelyan immediately set about attacking the Oriental colleges and at the same time initiated a vigorous campaign in support of the Anglicist cause in the press, in which he publicised his controversial scheme to romanise the Indian vernaculars. In his private correspondence with he wrote the following to Governor General, Lord Bentinck in 1934:

It cannot be concealed that India is on the eve of a great moral change. The indications of it are perceptible in every part of the country. Every where the same

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114 Evans, 'Macaulay's Minute Revisited', pp. 262-63
decided rejection of antiquated system prevails—every where the same craving for instruction in a better system is to be perceived and the abolition of the exclusive privileges which the Persian language has in the Court and offices of Government will form the crowning stroke which will shake Hinduism and Mahomedanism to their centre and firmly establish our language, our learning and ultimately our religion in India.\textsuperscript{117}

Trevelyan’s influence in 1833–1834 meant that the ‘battle’ between the Anglicists and Orientalists had largely been ‘fought’ and ‘won’ before Macaulay set foot in India. Thus, it is argued that ‘Bentinck’s scheme to make greater use of Indians in the public sector was inextricably linked to his policy to adopt English as the official language in place of Persian.’\textsuperscript{118}

The Orientalist–Anglicist controversy finally came to a head in 1834, when Trevelyan and other reformers on the GCPI proposed replacing Sanskrit and Arabic studies with English-language instruction at Agra College. This school of thought considered Persian, the administrative and literary language under the Mughals (see below),\textsuperscript{119}

The change from Orientalist to Anglicist language policy came through the Governor-General-in-Council’s resolution of 7 March 1835 which stated that:

The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the native of India; and that all funds appropriate for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.\textsuperscript{120}


\textsuperscript{118}Evans, ‘Macaulay’s Minute Revisited’, p. 268.

\textsuperscript{119}Prior, ‘Bad Language’, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{120}Rahman, \textit{Language and Politics in Pakistan}, p. 34.
The roots of this resolution lay in 'Macaulay's Minute', which is an oft-quoted and cited example of colonial British attitude to education and language policy. Its importance means that to make English the medium of higher education was announced in a brief resolution on 7 March 1835. Through the resolution mentioned above, this minute was transformed into law. In his minute, Macaulay had also stated that

We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language...In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East...The English tongue is that which would be the most useful to native subjects. 121

Macaulay's minute – pertaining to a cultural-technical argument for the substitution of Persian by English – has a position of importance in the history of education in India, as well as an illustration of the British attitude of superiority. In his minute he completely, devalued Indian languages in terms of literary or scientific information. Although in his minute he does not mention Persian but to him, Oriental languages such as Sanskrit and Arabic were 'less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory school in England.' 122 To him, English was the only language which could connect closely the two great European communities, South Africa and Australasia, with the Indian Empire. As Macaulay put it,

The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach system which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse; and whether, when can patronize sound philosophy and true history, we shall

122 Edwardes, British India 1772-1947, p. 123.
countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier—astronomy, which would move laughter in the girls at an English boarding school—history, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long—and geography made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.... The language of Western Europe civilized Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do far the Hindoo what have done for the Tartar. 123

In other words, modern European science could only be transmitted through a modern European language. Moreover, Macaulay’s educational minute alongside his other speeches and letters on providing Western education had many motivations. Although the economic motive was undoubtedly of prime importance, his policy had moral, political and commercial dimensions. overtones as well. 124 Evans states that although the Evangelical movement provided the initial anglicizing impulse, pressure for the introduction of Western education in India came from other British groups during the 1820s. The most influential of these were the advocates of free trade and utilitarianism, whose views on the need to transform a static, degraded society through the infusion of European ideas and practices echoed those of Grant and others in the Evangelical movement. 125

The proposal to substitute Persian by a vernacular language was discussed at different levels of Government, as the Supreme Courts in Bengal and the North-Western Provinces were asked for their opinion on the matter. In the Bengal court, 30 out of 63 officers consulted were opposed to the change. The court at Agra had a similar response. There were some who opposed Macaulay by stating that the improvement of Indian minds was not connected in any way with the medium of instruction. 126 However, Lord Macaulay and Lord Auckland, the Governor General, were all in favour of the change. 127 Thus, it is quite clear that within the British official establishment there was no consensus.

123 Trevelyan, Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, pp. 91-2.
127 Howell, Education in British India, p. 39.
on this issue, and there was certainly a section of officials who were opposed to the substitution of Persian. Those who opposed the abolition did so on the grounds that the introduction of another language would slow down judicial functioning and increase expenditure (on translation, for example).

At this stage, it would be useful to discuss in some detail some of the official views on the subject of substituting Persian either with English or with a vernacular language, as gauged from the minutes of the meetings. One official, F. Dick, was of the opinion that if the change had to be made, it should be drawnen considerations such as improving the native intellect rather than financial considerations. Overall, he expressed his opposition to the change anticipating negative local reaction:

In the western Provinces such a measure would at present excite great dissatisfaction among all classes of natives; and very justly; the evils and disadvantages would be striking and daily felt, and what benefit could they hope to derive from the introduction into all the Courts of a language of which not one native in a thousand understand a syllable. These Western Provinces will not be prepared for such a measure before the expiration of half a century.\(^{128}\)

The demand for using the vernacular tongue in Court has been mentioned in most Minutes, but the disadvantages of it along with higher expenses went in favour of Persian. The letter of G. I. Morris, Judge of the Patna city Court, addresses the point:

If the Persian were to be done away to-morrow in these provinces, we should have to make our choice between Oordoo or Hindustani in the Persian character and the Hindeewee in the Devangari or the Kaithee character. As to the former, we might for all practical purposes, keep up the Persian as the language of records, for in drawing up the Minute of proceeding, the technical modes of expression and the phraseology to be adopted almost necessarily will have to

follow the Persian idiom, so that the only gain by the change introduced will be
difference in the inflections, and the making sentences terminate with a
Hindustani verb instead of with a Persian. On the other hand if the Hindeeewee
were to be adopted in the Nagree character, the business of the Court would have
to remain at a standstill until it was acquired. The Devanagari character is almost
unknown except to Pundits and those who have studied it in printed books...It is
hardly going too far to assert that the people have become attached from long use
to the Persian as the language of business—there is no occasion to shut our eyes
to the advantage which it assuredly possesses merely because it is thought an
anomalous thing to administer to affairs of the country in a language foreign to
the people at large.\footnote{129}

In 1837 the Deputy Governor of Bengal supported the continuation of Persian by
reiterating the point that people were habituated to it, and its sudden removal would cause
inconvenience. He concluded that Persian should be substituted with vernacular
languages in legal and revenue proceedings, so that most people could understand
them.\footnote{130}

In 1838, the Sadar Diwani Adalat at Fort William ordered Civil and Criminal
authorities under their jurisdiction to take immediate measures for substituting Persian
with English. Court proceedings were to be conducted in these languages, and
subordinate courts were also to be instructed to do the same.\footnote{131} The aim of the Anglicist
policy lay in promoting the use of English in all domains of power and at the highest
level in the judiciary. Trevelyan notes that the Governor-General wanted English
'eventually to be the language of public business throughout the country'.\footnote{132} A
Resolution of the Governor-General-in-Council, dated 4 September 1837, replaced
Persian with the Indian vernacular (read English). Trevelyan, among others, celebrated
this triumph and stated that, 'Persian had disappeared from the collector's office [in

\footnote{130} Howell, \textit{Education in British India}, pp. 39-40.
\footnote{131} Majumdar, 'Abolition of Persian as Court Language in British India', p. 135.
\footnote{132} Trevelyan, \textit{On the Education of the People of India}, p. 144.
Bengal] at the end of a month almost as completely as if it had never been used. It melted away like snow'.

According to Tariq Rahman, not only was Persian replaced but along with Persian 'the cultural ascendancy of the Muslims too melted away'. The abolition of Persian, as J. K. Majumdar says 'had been done more on political grounds than on the alleged economic one'. The Friend of India had already predicted in their article that:

This course, in twenty or thirty years, would bring several thousand of the most intelligent and best informed native of India acquainted with the English language, as well as provide for a succession of them which would increase with every succeeding generation, as long as the British power shall remain established in India

The abolition of Persian drew protests that continued for a few years. The District Judge of Dacca, in Eastern Bengal, forwarded a petition to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal in 1839, from 481 inhabitants of the Dacca District (of whom 199 were Hindus), urging the continuance of the Persian language in conducting public business. This petition is of great interest to us as the petitioners provided details of the disadvantage of the use of Bengali and the advantage of the use of Persian. The Government of India also received a petition in Persian in 1839, from some of the zamindars and wakils of Tirhut, remonstrating against the introduction of the Nagri character in the proceedings of Courts; in conclusion they demanded 'the use of Persian language may be continued as formerly'. One can argue that although after 1837, Persian lost its place as an official language and for carrying on the business of the empire, it was still considered politically

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133 Ibid.
135 Majumdar, 'Abolition of Persian as Court Language in British India', p. 130.
136 'On the Introduction of the English Language instead of the Persian, as the Judicial Language throughout the British Dominions in India' Friend of India, No. xiii (Quarterly Series), Serampor Mission Press, 1825, p. 180.
137 Majumdar, 'Abolition of Persian as Court Language in British India', pp. 137-38
important from two viewpoints: one was the politically important position of Iran, and the other was its use by the educated Muslims of Afghanistan and India.139

Our discussion of the process that led to the replacement of Persian confirms Christopher King’s remark that the ‘British attitudes towards Indian languages did not form a monolithic whole, but rather, often showed ignorance, inconsistencies, and contradictions’.140 As we described in this chapter, there were various shades of opinion among British officials themselves on the issue, and the policy was not one that was implemented in a day without debate. In chapter VI, we will discuss ways in which Persian lost its place as a language of communication to Urdu.

Language in Transition: Persian vs. English

According to P. Sudhir, of the many ways in which colonialism manifests its power and entangles the colonized people in webs of coercion and domination, the most insidious—because not often perceived as a tool of conquest—is the superimposition of the colonial language over the language(s) of the subject people.141 The introduction of the English language into India was a part of this process, simultaneously producing and co-opting an Indian intelligentsia increasingly ensured by the lure of an overwhelming Western culture signified and interpreted both by the language of the colonizers and their literature.142 Sudhir also argues that because all languages have a specific history and carry cultural meaning, for the British who came from a different cultural background, the learning of Indian languages was not an easy task.143 Yet, they compiled vocabularies, composed grammars of Indian languages, translated texts, and produced dictionaries. These activities as well as the introduction of English were a ‘colonial process of transformation’. Whereas the introduction of English led to the decline of classical

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140 Christopher R. King, One language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1994, p. 54.
141 Sudhir, ‘Colonialism and the Vocabularies of Dominance’, p. 334.
142 Ibid, pp. 334-35.
143 Ibid, p. 335.
languages such as Persian and Sanskrit, the British involvement with other Indian languages also led to their revival. Thus, as Sudhir insightfully puts it, colonialism had both a destructive and regenerative role as far as Indian languages were concerned.\footnote{Ibid.}

As it has been mentioned the British language policy was the result of a series of debates and not the imposition of the ideas of one person or one school of thought without contestation. Arguments about language were an important feature of the educational history of period. While some senior officials including Warren Hastings\footnote{Warren Hastings, Governor of India from 1774 to 1785, supported the Orientalist view and favoured indigenization as a means of governance. The cultivation of Indian classical languages, so as to conciliate the established indigenous elites of culture and learning, was part of this political strategy. For more details, see Rahman, language and Politics in Pakistan, p. 26.} and Minto emphasized the importance of traditional Indian learning through the media of the Oriental classical languages, Charles Grant stressed the need to introduce western science and Christian culture.\footnote{M. A. Laird, Missionaries and education in Bengal 1793-1837, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, p. 94} As member of the Board of Trade, he understood the necessity of using English as the medium of instruction due to the long connection between the Indians and Europeans in Bengal. He was part of the first group of Company servant who ‘urged’ the substitution of ‘English’ for Persian as ‘the official language, because that would induce the Indian to learn it’.\footnote{D. P. Sinha, The Educational Policy of the East India Company in Bengal to 1854, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1964, p. 6.}

The nature of Persian’s place in India, indeed even whether it could be considered a foreign language, was much discussed in the years just before the debate over education policy.\footnote{William Adam’s Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835-1838), ed., Anathnath Basu, University of Calcutta, 1941, p. 99.} Some of the critiques of Persian were made on ideological grounds as well. For many British reformers, Persian was the language associated with Mughal despotism.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 99-100.} Many senior Company servants saw it as the supreme official language, the one most literate people could read and the closest India came to having a national language. In sharp contrast, junior officials who were working in small towns and the mofussil areas saw it as too unfathomable and argued that its usage led to miscarriage of justice. Some scholars have taken the difference of views arising from generational difference as
evidence that perhaps Indian officials' knowledge of Persian was not as good as it used to be in an earlier period.\textsuperscript{150}

Thus, the 1820s and 1830s were the transitional period for the replacement of Persian by English, and young people from 'respectable families' who had previously wanted to learn Persian now wanted to learn English.\textsuperscript{151} On the other hand the missionaries also realized the possibilities of English, and it was the Anglicans who in 1818-19 formulated what was to be the predominant linguistic pattern for education in the province for the next century and more. Rahman argues that the 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. Language, therefore, is implicated in power relations in a number of ways.

Indians themselves were actively participating in matters relating to educational policy as well as practical matters relating to education. In 1815, Rammohan Roy (who was a retired revenue officer of the Company) opened a school, later called Anglo-Indian College with 20 scholars receiving tuition in English, Bengali and Persian. In the North Western Provinces, Joy Narain Ghoshal, one of the leading residents of Benaras, opened a school in July 1818 under the management of Revd. D. Corrie, Corresponding Member of the Calcutta Church Missionary Society. In this institution arrangements were made for tuition in English, Persian, Hindustani and Bengali.\textsuperscript{152} Later, in 1813-1821 the Company's educational policy became clearer with the establishment of the Calcutta School Book Society in 1817 to induce the future development of English Education in Bengal.

\textsuperscript{150}Ibid, p. 100. The authors of article give two interesting examples: In Lucknow Captain Paton complained that the pensions paid out on behalf of various begams were beyond accountability because neither the begams, nor their pensioners, nor the accountant nor even the treasurer who authorized payments could read Persian, the language in which the pension records were kept. In Calcutta, English-language students from the Hindu College complained that the retention of Persian as the official language was prejudicial to the advance of Bengali and the accountability of government.

\textsuperscript{151}Laird, Missionaries and education in Bengal 1793-1837, p. 100.

\textsuperscript{152}Sinha, Educational Policy, pp. 38-40.
The difficulty of teaching European science through the English language under the existing condition soon became obvious to the GCPI. The Company paid attention to the policy of developing English education in the North Western Provinces as early as 1822. Taylor, the agent of the Government at Delhi, reported that most of the educational institutions there were private, teaching Persian and Arabic traditions of Muhammad, Muhammadan Law and Oriental classics; the chief public institutions were the College of Ghaziuddin Khan, Kashmere Masjid College, the Masjid of Nawab Roshan-ud-Daulah and the madrasa of Itradatmand Khan. Taylor reported that '...any attempt at the introduction of an acquaintance with the European science and literature will most probably prove useless and abortive, so long as its advantages are not rendered in a very sensible and obvious manner...

The policy of Anglo-Indian College in experimenting with English education was adopted in the North Western provinces, with Agra College becoming a field for experimenting with vernacular education policy. In fact, Benaras and Agra College were founded basically as Oriental Seminaries. In a later period, on account of changes in education policy, they were converted to Anglo-Vernacular Institutions and 'latterly even the separate study of Oriental classics has been found to stand in the way of more liberal education suited to modern wants.' All the same, Persian language was in demand because of its position as a language of law courts and business in general. In 1827, of the 210 students in the Agra College, 143 attended the Persian class, 27 the Hindi Class and 23 studied Arabic. At the same time at Delhi College while only 28 student attended English class, 146 attended Persian class. The domination of Persian in education was

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153 General Committee of Public Instruction was established by Holt Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government in the Territorial Department, in establishing new institutions for the instruction of Natives in the learning of the East and of the West together. Ibid, p. 63.
154 Ibid, pp. 89-90.
156 Sinha, Educational Policy, pp. 103-108. In a slightly earlier period, government reports for the years 1822-33 cited by Sinha indicate that two-thirds of the total number of Agra College students in 1832 belonged to the Persian Departments and one-third to the Hindi Department; the English class consisted of 52 students, taken in equal proportion from each department. There were also 31 students studying Arabic and 32 Sanskrit. By 1834 the total number increased to 354. Of these 224 were in the Persian and Arabic Departments and 134 in Hindi and Sanskrit Departments.
the same in the entire North-Western Provinces. Even in Benares, Thoreby, Superintendent of the College there, suggested the formation of a seminary for the study of Arabic and Persian and of one or two classes for the cultivation of English. This was done in order to promote the learning of English. For persuading the people of Benares to join the College the ‘local Committee proposed to establish, experimentally, a class for Persian, so that the student might study English and Persian together.’\textsuperscript{157} In 1831 in Allahabad School (which had been established by voluntary contribution, but later become entirely dependent on Government) there were 84 students. Of these 53 studied Persian and 31 Hindustani; besides there were 40 part-time students.\textsuperscript{158} Thus, there is no doubt that even when the British official policy had changed its direction, at the level of people themselves, Persian retained a certain prestige and there was demand for Persian education more than for education in any other language.

In the next section, we will go beyond ‘Macaulay’s Minute’, or rather, through it, in order to understand the British attitude to Persian and the assumptions – correct or incorrect – that they held about it. We will also examine how opponents of the official use of Persian termed it a language foreign to India, and therefore denied it the status as a language used by Indians. Strangely, the same argument was not applied to English!

**Classical language to ‘Foreign’ Language: Change in the Status of Persian**

By 1830 the Court of Directors in London had lost ‘their old respect for Indian learning and were pressing Government towards the use of the English language and the concept of education as an acquisition of useful knowledge’.\textsuperscript{159} According to the viewpoint adopted by British administration, extension of the English language among Indians would lead to more general identification of the rulers with the ruled. The British wanted to portray Persian as a language that was as foreign to Indians as English itself was. The *Friend of India*, a journal published by the Serampore Mission, came out in full support

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{159} Clark, ‘Language of Calcutta 1760-1840’, p. 472.
of this policy in 1825. It referred to the importance of justice in the administration of Indian affairs, and stated that the use of a language foreign to both the judge as well as a majority to those subject to laws was a matter of great concern.\textsuperscript{160} At the same time, the article argued that vernacular languages were not suitable as the medium of judicial proceedings because there were several local dialects, and this would lead to confusion. An important cultural argument made by the article was that Persian was associated with Muslim rulers, and therefore Muslims of the present day would have an advantage in understanding and administering laws. Thus, judicial power was still controlled by Muslims on account of the language and this was 'prolonging at least the shadow of their triumph over the Hindoo nation, which can scarcely fail to distress them, if it does not depress their minds.'\textsuperscript{161}

There were some Indian intellectuals as well who were in favour of using English. The most prominent among them was Raja Rammohan Roy. In fact, according to RK Dasgupta, what 'Macaulay said about the role of English in Indian education was for long the considered opinion of most educated Indians on the subject for which Rammohan Roy and Derozio had prepared the ground.'\textsuperscript{162} When asked for his opinion on the matter of the substitution of English for Persian as the language of the court, he accepted that both were foreign languages but still he supported English because 'it would help to diffuse the light and knowledge of the West and be conducive to the amelioration of the intellectual and moral condition of the British subject.'\textsuperscript{163}

In fact, a social historian of Bengal has argued that a significant result of the growth of education among Bengali Hindus was their own demand for the replacement of Persian by English or Bengali in the law courts outside Calcutta. They did so on the basis of the assumption that the continued use of Persian as the judicial language in Bengal was a legacy of Muslim rule, and therefore, had to be removed. The Bengal press also questioned the use of Persian. The influential newspaper \textit{Samachar Darpan} (which was a

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{160} "On the Introduction of the English Language instead of the Persian", p. 157.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{163} Majumdar, 'Abolition of Persian as Court Language in British India', p. 130.
\end{footnotesize}
missionary journal but to some extent reflected reformist Hindu opinion) argued, in an editorial dated January 26, 1828, that Persian should not be used in law courts as it was not the language of any of the concerned parties. If a foreign language at all had to be used, it was better if that be English. The editor suggested that Bengalis themselves should take the initiative towards making English the official language in the courts by submitting a petition to the Government. Another newspaper, The Reformer, in one of its early issue also demanded the abolition of Persian. The underlying assumptions of these demands are interesting. It was argued, for example, that when the Muslims had conquered India, they had abolished the use of Sanskrit language from Indian courts as they did not understand it. Thus, it was not necessary to use a language that was understood neither by subjects nor by their rulers. Another newspaper, the Samachar Chandrika hailed Governor General Bentinck by prognosticating that the

haughtiness of these Juvuns [Yavana a term of contempt by which a non-Hindu, particularly a Muslim was designated by orthodox Hindus] will be brought low, which will be much service to us...When the Bengalee language is brought into use, all the native, besides Moosoolmans, may be employed in the public service. The Moosoolmans will be driven out, and never will be able to read and write Bengalee.

It was not only in newspapers that such campaigns were carried out. In February 1835, a memorial signed by 6,945 Hindu inhabitants of Calcutta, including the manager of the Hindu College, parents and guardians of the students of English, and the students themselves was presented to Lord William Bentinck. It pointed out that Persian was 'as foreign to the natives of Bengal as to their rulers', and referred to the advantages which English language possessed over Persian. The memorialists concluded with a moderate request that they did not seek any preference for English. They only wanted that people

164 Salahuddin, Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, p. 148.
166 Ibid, p. 149, quoted in Alexander's East India Magazine (London), September 1831.i, 10, 278.
167 Ibid, quoted in the India Gazette 26 December 1831.
who knew English should enjoy the same privileges as people who knew Persian.\textsuperscript{168} Thus, it is significant to note that the pressure for the removal of Persian came as much from Bengali reformers themselves (or at least a certain section of Indians) as it did from the British.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Persian print was used by the East India Company in a very effective way, so as to acquire knowledge of Indian customs and usages. Persian texts – specifically \textit{insha} – were used to improve the administration of India; they were printed in book form so that these skills from India’s past rulers could be taught to India’s future rulers. This can be traced with colonial educational policy in India in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The ideological differences between the two schools of Orientalism and Anglicism that we discussed may have obscured the fact that they also shared certain common objectives. Both groups favoured the introduction and spread of European literature and science. Secondly, both believed that the ultimate objective of British policy should be the development of vernacular education for the masses, based on a vernacular literature enriched by the infusion of Western knowledge and ideas. Both groups agreed that the Indian vernacular languages, in their present condition, were inadequate media for the teaching of modern subjects. Agreeing on these points, they still disagreed on the medium of instruction. By the middle of the century, however, and especially following the revolt of 1857, as the Raj asserted itself, and imperialism gained vigour, some of this early experimentation was lost in the drive for more Anglicization of education.

\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Ibid}, p. 150. India. Public Consultation 10 February 1835, nos.27. 28.