Part II

Enter the Colony
Chapter Three

Illustrating the Social:

The Pedagogical Networks of Vernacularization

AN OFFICIAL DISCONTENT WITH THE DISCIPLINE

On 27 January 1902, by a Resolution in the Home Department, the Government of India decided to appoint a Commission for making enquiry into the condition and prospects of the universities established in British India.\(^1\) Apart from preparing an official history of university education in India and laying down its constitutional structure, the seven-member Commission headed by Thomas Raleigh, member of the Executive Council of the Governor General Lord Curzon, was tasked to probe into the standard of teaching and practical relevance of the courses taught in different Arts and Science departments.\(^2\) Speaking of the courses in History at various levels of education, it observed that the “opportunities for an intelligent study of History are frequently absent.”\(^3\) It suggested introducing a coursework involving exposure to original documents in place of rote

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\(^2\) The other members of the commission were Syed Hossain Bilgrami, Nawab I mad-ul-Mulk Bahadur; J. P. Hewett, Secretary to the Govt. of India, Home Dept.; A Pedler, Director of Public Instructions, Bengal; A. G. Bourne, Acting Principal of the Madras Presidency College; Reverend D. Mackichan, Principal of the Wilson College, Bombay; and Justice Gooroo Dass Banerjee. The local members were T. C. Lewis, Director of Public Instructions, United Province, (Allahabad); Justice N. G. Chandravarkar (Bombay); Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay (Calcutta); W. Bell, Director of Public Instructions, Punjab (Lahore); and C. Sankaran Nayar (Madras). It also admitted temporarily one local member from each university centre in the country. The Commission visited the five university towns, namely Allahabad, Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore, and Madras, and held public sittings there and in three other towns as well – Poona, Benares, and Lucknow. With the help of the sub-committees in Agra, Ahmedabad, Aligarh, Bangalore, Jubbulpore, Kurseong, Patna and Nagpur, it managed to obtain depositions from one hundred and fifty-six witnesses and examined them thoroughly, and after much reflection, contemplation, and deliberation, submitted its report on the 9th of June in the same year. *[Ibid.]*

learning. Although there had been grumbles amongst the students about the courses being needlessly congested, the Commission did not renounce the standard practice of teaching Political Economy as a part of the History course and approved its continuation. One particular criticism, however, did not escape its attention. “Some teachers complain,” the report observed, “that they are restricted to the abstract doctrines of certain European and American economists and that the students learn the subject matter of the books without grasping the theories or comprehending the illustrations.”

To bridge the ever widening gap between theory and illustration, a simple solution was recommended:

The study might be made more interesting and more instructive if attention were directed to the economic conditions with which the students are familiar, and if they were encouraged to investigate in a scientific manner the economic conditions of India.

Notwithstanding the slight tinge of hesitation in the language, the proposal was significant, primarily because of its insinuation that the method of imbibing the doctrinal truth of political economy must be, hereafter, grounded in the domain of familiarity and experience. Familiarity itself was taken to be an evidence of the concrete. The basic assumption was that the economic conditions of India were self-present and immediate to the Indian students, even before the investigations in a “scientific manner” could begin to organize them.

The disillusionment with the discipline was not exactly unanticipated in the history of colonialism in India. Although classical political economy and British colonial policies shared a candidly proximate relationship, the latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed a decline in the faith in the usefulness of textbook wisdom. S. Ambirajan’s study of the influences of political economy on British imperial policies in India contends that the principal appeal of the tenets of classical political economy to the British policymakers lay in their capacity of providing an “ideal” impetus for administrative reform. Ambirajan argues that the ubiquitous logic of colonization unfolded in the wishful motivation of achieving a “free flow of resources without any impediments and for India to form part of a system of international division of labor.” The famine management policies were designed in order to reassert the omnipotence of market mechanism to evenly allocate scarce food resources; the land

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
7 Ibid, 269.
revenue programs were meant to absorb the rent defined in terms of Ricardian and Malthusian principles without interrupting the circulation of private capital. But soon, some of the more perceptive administrators “began to show awareness of the folly of trying to translate English theories into Indian economic policies without any modification.”

In 1853, Henry Green of Bombay Education Service told his students to remember that often the analysis of economic actions begged consideration of theories other than those found in the tracts of political economy.

Ambirajan’s explanation of this visible indifference points to the unavailability of a functional alternative to political economy which would readily provide the same justificatory framework for progressive colonization. Hastily functionalist as it may seem, but his is one of the very few works which mention this point of disillusionment. The other noted texts on the relationship between political economy and colonial policies are conveniently silent on this issue. Ranajit Guha emphasizes on the location of political economy within the intellectual tradition of Scottish Enlightenment and explores its critical career in the late-eighteenth-century East India Company policy.

Eric Stokes, on the other hand, puts his money on the establishment of the College at Haileybury for the future Company officials and the involvement of Thomas Malthus and other major political economists of that time. Both works trace out the connections between doctrinal principles and British policy, but there remains a great lacuna which impedes our understanding of the mechanisms through which these connections came to be and stayed on, or were contested and obliterated for good. There is no easy way to explicate the vastly spread and intricate networks of the British empire in India and how the career of a discipline would take shape within its extensive reach. But an attempt can be made to at least point out where certain displacements in terms of its transmission are taking place, how, and, if possible, why. It is unfortunate that such scholarly endeavors miss the chance to trace any sign of discontent with the discipline in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

There are three reasons of it. First of all, both Guha and Stokes follow a route often traversed by the historians of ideas who imagine a unity of disciplinary oeuvre across universal space-time and focus exclusively on the transmission of any form of knowledge from canonical texts composed by great thinkers to the anonymous readers without having to explain the forms and technologies of

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid, 270.
10 Ibid, 273.
11 Guha, Rule of Property, 96-143.
12 Stokes. Malthus taught at Haileybury until his in 1834.
mediations, and also the displacements and disfigurations that might have happened in between. As a result, they tend to overlook not only the historical disarticulation of the discipline’s career, but also the shifts in ideational plane itself. The emphasis on only the canonical texts makes them miss the importance of other forms of popularization of any discipline. Secondly and more importantly, in case of Stokes and Guha whose works deal with the colonial situation, the tendency of not exploring these other modes of popularization, especially the institutional sites of translation and transmission of the canonical texts as well as little-known works to the present researchers, accepts the questions of colonial difference without much qualification in spite of all the promises of doing exactly so. The third point refers to the popularity of these so-called “obscure” texts among the readers in the colony. Without studying the modalities of analysis in these vernacular works, one cannot possibly locate the specificity of the displacements that were supposed to have happened amidst the colony’s various moments of engagement and disengagement with the empire. The results of this historicist negligence are even graver. By offering readings of only canonical texts, both Guha’s and Stokes’ analyses of the influence of political economy on colonial administrators emulate the logic of the discipline’s own autobiography and contextualize only partially the politics of its reception. On the other hand, by restricting their studies to only one source of influence on the state, both works imagine the colonial state as a monolithic entity from where all the forces, energies, and ambitions flow downward to the non-intending and non-participating multitude of faceless natives.

Even in a contemporary and refreshingly argued work like Manu Goswami’s *Producing India*, which focuses on the other side of the spectrum – the influence of alternative schools of political economy on the Indian nationalists – the discussion of the sources of influence and the ensuing anxieties and desires of subversion finds its protagonist in the canonized figure of the German thinker Friedrich List. What is unfortunate is that, even though Goswami is aware of the importance of networks of translation in shaping the spatial imaginaries of Indian nationalism and excavates a rich archive of vernacular texts of geography and history, her study of the bound space of an Indian economy submits to a framework of easy connections where certain famous Indian thinkers conversed only with their more famous metropolitan inspirations. My contention in this chapter is this that


14 In Goswami’s book, the concerns with the applicability of a “foreign” economic discipline were articulated by the noted Marathi intellectual Mahadev Govind Ranade who was severely influenced by List. In a lecture at the Deccan College, Poona in 1892, Ranade spoke with force and conviction, “If in politics and social science time and place
without exploring the global networks of translation and vernacularization of the economic discipline in the non-metropolitan parts of the world, any study on the relationships between political economy and the colonial government in India would remain incomplete and partial, and more importantly, de-contextualized. It is, therefore, absolutely imperative to discuss the contesting claims on the pedagogical value of the discipline within and without the ideological impetuses of empire-building and show how different modalities of translation practices were inextricably linked to the political rationality of the colonial government in India.

Before I begin to explore and analyze the modalities of translation in Colonial India, it needs to be emphasized that the politics of “vernacularization” of political economy did not unfold in a locally delimited space of unilateral reception. This is a global story which has to be told and located within a complex network of dissemination of political economy in the British colonies. To give an example, Jane Marcet’s textbook *Conversations on Political Economy* was followed by schoolchildren in America, England, and India.\(^{15}\) We have already encountered Henry Green’s name. One year after telling his students not to take political economy at its face-value, Green supervised the translation of Mrs. Marcet’s *Conversations* in Marathi.\(^{16}\) In 1862, in a vernacular textbook of political economy in Bengali, the author wrote his preface imbibing the spirit of Marcet’s opinion on the ideal subject matter of a textbook for children.\(^{17}\) Around the same time in Ireland, a Dublin merchant named Jonathan Pim said that, after the foundation of the Dublin Statistical Society in 1847, they were not told anymore “that the rules of political economy may be very good.”\(^{18}\) The discipline was so

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\(^{15}\) Eva V. Armstrong, Jane Marcet and Her “Conversations on Chemistry”, *Journal of Chemistry Education* 15, no. 2 (1938), 53. She wrote a number of highly popular books on chemistry and botany. It is believed that a young boy named Michael Faraday was inspired by Marcet’s work while binding it in a small shop in London (ibid).

\(^{16}\) Neeraj Hatekar, “Empire and the Economist: Analysis of 19th Century Economic Writings in Maharashtra”, *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 2 (1-7 February 2003), 471.


“widely diffused” by that time that it might had already turned into a “popular science.”

The story in the metropolis was a little different. In 1833, in an article on the writings of Marcet and Harriet Martineau in the pages of *Edinburgh Review*, William Empson “lamented that political economy, ‘the science, which from its object ought to be pre-elementary the people’s science, has yet made but little way to popular power and favour.’”

But it is also crucial to etch out the specificity of the colony in the global networks of political economy’s reception as compared to the metropolitan centre. Elaine Freedgood has shown that one of the objects of popularization of political economy in Victorian England was to banish panic from public mind which stumbled upon this realization that industrial capitalism was inherently speculative. It was in this context, J. R. McCulloch assured that

> [b]y patient induction, by carefully observing the circumstances attending the operation of particular principles, [the economist] discovers the effects of which they are really productive, and how far they are liable to be modified by the operation of their principles.

By connecting the discipline with an overtly empiricist tradition, and articulating that the certainty in its conclusions was derived from “experience and observation,” McCulloch and others had tried to negotiate with the tension that was building up amidst the public and the government alike about how far the principles of political economy were to be trusted in matters of conducting everyday commercial transactions. The situation in the colonies was markedly distinct for one reason: the issue of popularization of the discipline in the multilingual context of South Asia was not only one of dissemination, but also one of translation. Therefore, the vernacular domain that came about as a result of negotiations by both the government and native citizens to come in terms with political economy was characterized by a double movement of socialization that acquired as its central problematic the question of translation.

This double movement was informed and sustained by, on the one hand, the instruments of pedagogical interventions, and on the other, by the technologies of mediation that were designed to address the concerns about the applicability of political economy in the Indian conditions. These

technologies contribute to the modalities of translation where a series of equivalence is produced in correspondence with the norms of socialization. This is an essentially tautological formation where the forms of translational strategies and the norms of socialization are co-constitutive. A history of this coconstitution, therefore, requires breaking up the modalities from their entanglements. In this chapter, I shall discuss two such modalities – the modality of linguistic equivalence and the modality of equivalence of illustration. In the former, the strategies of translation do not recognize the possibility of “exchange” of words in terms of their meaning-value and imposes a hierarchical framework of sociocultural ordering. In the second modality – the modality of equivalence of illustrations – the hierarchical framework is challenged by imagining a sociality which is projected as an autonomous context to all “exchanges” that may take place within a limit. It is true that these modalities do not exist in a linear series of historicism, but it is important to recognize that there are possibilities of historicizing when one of them dominates over the other.

This chapter attempts to do precisely so by admitting the global aspect of the politics of reception of political economy in India in the nineteenth century and maps its local specificities in consideration of that aspect. As we have stated already, locating the colony in a global network of dissemination is as important as pointing out the specific modes of vernacularization that became a part of its projected social reality. The objective of this chapter is to explore few moments of the convergence of these two registers in the context of vernacular textbooks of political economy in Bengali in the nineteenth century. During its course, we shall see how the economic vernacular emerged in colonial India through various moments of conflation, entanglement, and contestations between these two registers.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF VERNACULAR EDUCATION

The history of vernacular education in colonial India was not a comfortably linear narrative of clashes between opposing interests and antagonistic aspirations. The location of political economy in this complex and rich historiography is also an issue of diversity of claims on the definition of the subject and the feasibility of its application. In this section, therefore, my aim is to introduce a basic institutional history of vernacular education in India in the nineteenth century. This history is neither comprehensive, nor does it claim to give a full picture of the education policy regarding political economy adopted by the colonial government throughout the nineteenth century. The purpose of
this exercise is to situate the moments of vernacularization of political economy against a backdrop where different concerns and issues came together to determine the status of a discipline within various pedagogical sites.

In the beginning, there was no political economy in the colony. In the Charter Act of 1813 by which the “scientific” education of the natives was encouraged, political economy was not included in the definition of the sciences.23 The Calcutta School Book Society was established in 1817 comprising enthusiasts for vernacular education drawn from different walks of the colonial administration, evangelical missions, and native literati. It was first a private body, but from 1822, government grants started to come, and the sales of the books printed shot up from 15,513 copies in 1822 to a massive 51,373 in 1835, using a wide network of subscription and distribution across the mufassil towns within and beyond the Bengal Presidency. In spite of the predominant focus on Bengali, the society also printed books in Hindi, Urdu, Oriya, and at special requests from the missionaries, Santal and Khasia.24 The list of books commissioned and delivered by the society between 1821 and 1835 also did not include any text on political economy.25 It was a time when books on hands-on-skills and practical usage were considered more suited to the purpose of the education of the natives: Prosunno Coomar Tagore’s Bhubi Parimān or Elements of Land Surveying “was the first of its kind and proved to be very popular especially in the rural schools.”26 The importance of “useful” knowledge was also acknowledged by the government in a note by Holt Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government in the Territorial Department in 1823: “the Government should apply itself chiefly to the instruction of those who will themselves be teachers and to the translation, compilation and publication of useful works.”27 In 1828, William Bentinck who was known for his Utilitarian predilections became the Governor General of the East India Company. In the same year, a radical reform of syllabus directed at a more sophisticated level of education was suggested by Horace Hayman Wilson in Hindoo College. His scheme included instructions in Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations. But it was more an instance of stray curiosity in an elite institution than evidence of a systematic attempt to popularize political economy. With Bentinck’s description in 1829 of “the British language” as “the key of all improvements,” the focus in education policy of the government

25 Ibid, Appendix II to Chapter VI, pp. 186-188.
26 Ibid, 315.
27 Cited in Ghosh, History of Modern Education, 22
shifted from the earlier system of vernacular education to a more consolidated regime of instructions in English.\textsuperscript{28} It was further substantiated by Thomas Macaulay’s Minute on Education in 1835 which dismissed any positive value of the vernacular languages and declared emphatically that, unless they were “enriched from some other quarter, it [would] not be easy to translate any valuable work into them.”\textsuperscript{29} As Bentinck endorsed Macaulay’s Minute in the same year, the perception of the vernacular languages as lacking the strength, richness, and precision to disseminate scientific knowledge got an official recognition.

However, another concern about “translation” in a broader sense was palpable in the metropole around the same time. A tension was brewing among the British themselves about the applicability of the principles of political economy as a discipline in foreign conditions. In the Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 1832, the importance was placed on “Hindoo and Mahomedan codes” in terms of administering justice, but also a tempering of these codes was suggested whenever the native laws seemed “barbarous and cruel, by the mildness of British sentiments.”\textsuperscript{30} The Report also emphasized the need to “improve” these codes when dealing with “objects of political economy.”\textsuperscript{31} The rationale of this suggestion was explained by Charles Grant, the President of the Board of Directors of the Company, when he pointed out that the Hindoo code was “very defective” with respect to “subjects of political economy, such as cultivation of the soil, revenue, and commerce” and the Company should consider to “enact new regulations” in these contexts.\textsuperscript{32} The specificity of the discipline in relation to colonial rule was acknowledged by the Company in 1806 when they established a college at Haileybury to train the civil servants being sent to India with administrative duties and introduced a course on the subject under the supervision of Thomas Malthus. But the effectiveness of this course was already under suspicion.

In his evidence to the Select Committee, James Mill commented that, even after a training in political economy, the prospective administrators of justice would obtain any knowledge on the “peculiar nature of the unspeakably important, most peculiar, and difficult duties they will have to

\textsuperscript{28} Cited in Ghosh, History of Modern Education, 35. “His Lordship in Council is of opinion that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and Science amongst the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone” [Lord Bentinck’s Resolution, dated March 7, 1835, cited in J. Kerr, Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency, From 1835 to 1851, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1852), 7].

\textsuperscript{29} Cited in Ghosh, History of Modern Education, 31

\textsuperscript{30} Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company; with Minutes of Evidence in Six Parts and an Appendix and Index to Each (London: The House of Commons, 1832) 17.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 34.
Chapter Three

116

There were other opinions as well. John Sullivan, for example, when asked of the necessity of acquiring scientific knowledge in comparison with learning oriental languages, insisted on a training in political economy and dismissed the proposal of a deeper knowledge of the native tongues. The most ingenious critique of instructions in political economy for the civil servants came from Turner Macan who diagnosed the problem with the administrative service in India in its “mania for writing.” He identified the source of this mania in the preoccupation with “trifles or trite axioms on political economy or jurisprudence, either inapplicable or so well understood as not to require illustration.” Macan suspected that the preoccupation resulted from the opinion popular among the civil servants that, to attract attention from the government, one needed to produce each and every detail in writing. However, according to J. H. Batten, the future principal of the college at Haileybury, the study of political economy was mandatory for one practical reason: “In the universities themselves, the regular course of studies before the first degree did not embrace political economy, history and law.” The civil servants, he believed, should be trained in those subjects whose proper education was available only in England. The training in native languages could wait for later when they would reach the native country itself. The urgency with which these defenses of political economy were prepared referred to the conviction in the values of liberalism as the destiny of colonial rule in India. As part of the same destiny, a suggestion was made to include political economy in native educational institutions, although the “greatest difficulty” in imparting education in most of the subjects in native schools was described to be “the rarity of proper elementary books in Oriental languages.”

The observation about the “rarity of proper elementary books” presumes a modality of translation based on the principle of linguistic equivalence. The idea that the vernacular languages were not fit for translating scientific or theoretical texts in proper detail indicates that the insistence at that time was on a word-to-word translation. The Board of Education in the Bombay Presidency clearly expressed this idea in their 1840-41 Report: “In a word, knowledge must be drawn from the stores

James Mill cited in *ibid*, 54.
John Sullivan cited in *ibid*, 63.
T. Macan cited in *ibid*, 166.
*Ibid*.
J. H. Batten cited in *ibid*, 232.
*Ibid*.
N. B. Edminstone said in his evidence to the Committee that it “[had] appeared to [him] that the institution of the college [at Haileybury] afforded a security for their all being more or less qualified by a liberal education for the situations they were destined to fill” (*ibid*, 204).
of the English language, the vernaculars must be employed as the media of communicating it, and Sanskrit must be largely used to improve the vernaculars and make them suitable for the purpose.\textsuperscript{41}

But there were other opinions as well. Although education through English was the officially accepted position, there were always advocates for education in the vernacular, particularly in Madras and Bombay Presidencies. No one was a more energetic campaigner in favor of vernacular education than the Baptist missionary William Adam who prepared three large reports consecutively in 1835, in 1836, and in 1838, and submitted an elaborate scheme for improving vernacular education in Bengal Presidency. But it was rejected on grounds of impracticality and expense. However, in Madras and Bombay presidencies, and subsequently in the North Western Provinces, there was considerable resistance, even within the official circuits, to Macaulay’s scheme. Adam’s Report, quite ingeniously recommended a novel way of approaching the topic of vernacular education and the associated issues of translatability or the lack thereof. According to him, the aim of vernacular education should not be “to translate the words and idioms of the native languages but so to combine the substance of European knowledge with native forms of thought and sentiment as to render the school books useful and attractive.”\textsuperscript{42} It was perhaps the first time when someone tried to resolve the issue of translation, not in terms of linguistic equivalence, but as an opportunity to achieve a combination of Western and “native forms” of thought and recognized the potential of a useful and attractive means of imparting education through translation. Here the role of the vernacular was not relegated as subordinate to English as the official language of the colonial government, but imagined in a productive way to “bridge” “European theory to Indian experience.”\textsuperscript{43}

The missionaries in colonial India were always involved in the projects of spreading education and initiating practices of translation to transmit Christianity among the natives. But they showed consistently a tendency of reservation against the godless discipline of political economy in their school syllabi. One notable exception in this regard was Horace William Clift who published a

\textsuperscript{41} Cited in Ghosh, \textit{History of Modern Education}, 55
\textsuperscript{42} James Long (ed.), \textit{Adam’s Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar, submitted to Government in 1835, 1836 and 1838, with a brief view of its past and present condition} (Calcutta: Home Secretariat Press, 1868), 271-2.
\textsuperscript{43} B. H. Hodgson, Resident in Nepal, said in the Adam’s Report, “in the result [of the combinational mode of vernacular education] there might exist for the people at large the easy and obvious bridge of the vulgar tongue leading from exotic principles to local practices, from European theory to Indian experience” [B. H. Hodgson cited in James Long (ed.), \textit{Adam’s Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Bihar, submitted to Government in 1835, 1836 and 1838, with a brief view of its past and present condition} (Calcutta: Home Secretariat Press, 1868), 270-1].
monograph on political economy from the Baptist Mission Church in Calcutta in 1835. It was clear even from the title of his book – \textit{Elements of Political Economy: Designed as a Manual for Education} – that he believed quite firmly in the educational value of the discipline.\footnote{Horace William Clift, \textit{Elements of Political Economy: Designed as a Manual for Education}.} Clift’s confidence in the centrality of the postulates of political economy in human life was unparallel among his contemporary evangelists. He asserted in the preface to his book, “Every young man will be controlled by its principles, whether he learns them or not.”\footnote{Ibid, iv.} He was also convinced of the capacity of liberal education to redeem the people of India from the clutches of Hinduism. His equation was simple: “Christianity,” he wrote, “is essentially the religion of freedom; the only religion which secures freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, freedom of communication to all without distinction.”\footnote{Ibid, 43.} In contrast, Hinduism was characterized by discrimination of one group of people against another: “Hinduism maintains, that all the fruits of the earth are patrimony of the Brahmins.”\footnote{Ibid, 44.}

Clift emphasized that the Hindus themselves should come forward to achieve the ideals of “freedom” contained in the seminaries of Western education including the teachings of political economy.\footnote{Ibid, 46-47.} Subsequently, his text was translated into Marathi in 1854 along with Jane Marcet’s textbook by Gopal Hari Deshmukh.\footnote{Ibid, 46.} But, already in 1840, in an official letter dated 24 March, the Secretary of the Hindoo College, Luckynarain Mookherjee, mentioned a three-hundred page long elementary vernacular book of “Political Economy” along with twenty five other textbooks.\footnote{Neeraj Hatekar, “Empire and the Economist: Analysis of 19th Century Economic Writings in Maharashtra”, 470.} In 1848, with Lord Dalhousie’s appointment as the Governor General and his decision to extend Thomason’s Scheme of Vernacular Education to Bengal and the Punjab, the campaigns for vernacular education got stronger.\footnote{N. L. Basak, \textit{History of Vernacular Education in Bengal}, 172.} Three years later was established the Vernacular Literature Society which within seven years from its foundation published 22 different treatise in vernacular languages, including 17 translations.\footnote{Basak, \textit{History of Vernacular Education in Bengal}, 326.}

The Education Despatch of 1854 brought about fundamental reforms in colonial education policy. Driven by an impetus of spreading education over a wider social field through the grants-in-aid system and replacing the provincial boards and councils of education with new Departments of
Public Instruction in each of the five provinces of Bengal, Bombay, Madras, North Western Provinces, and the Punjab, it consolidated the governmental education system within a structure of hierarchy with clearly defined and closely monitored networks extended unilaterally from the district schools to through the central colleges to the provincial universities. Particular attention was paid to preparing school textbooks and appointing trained teachers based on the model of the Normal Schools in England. The Despatch emphasized that vernaculars should be cultivated in the Anglo-Vernacular colleges and English in the Vernacular and Oriental institutions. However, its suggestion regarding making the vernaculars the medium of instruction was eventually overturned. In 1859, even after the revolt that took place two years earlier, the Despatch was endorsed by the government.\(^{53}\)

By 1856, education in political economy in native languages was made part of the governmental policy.\(^{54}\) Even textbooks to be followed in these languages were prescribed in the Scheme of Studies for the Oordoo and Hindee departments in government schools.\(^{55}\) H. S. Reid, the Director of Public Instruction for the North Western Provinces, had already recommended appointment of a professor of political economy in 1855 for the colleges to be instituted in the presidency.\(^{56}\) These professors were also entrusted with the responsibility of teaching history and geography with the subject. The decision to include instructions in political economy in college curriculum was influenced by the popularity of vernacular textbooks and commendable performance by the young students in examinations on the subject: “Their answers in political economy were concise and well expressed, and free from the verbiage with which the native students too frequently attempt to conceal poverty of information.”\(^{57}\)

The scrutiny of the papers in political economy and the performance of the native students in acquiring the principles of the canonical doctrines was taken quite seriously at this time, as it was

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\(^{53}\) Ghosh, *History of Modern Education*, 83

\(^{54}\) “Instruction in arithmetic, mensuration, algebra, and geometry, as also in geography, history, and the elements of political economy, will be imparted through the medium of Oordoo or of Hindee” [H. S. Reid cited in 1859 *Session* 2 (186) *East India* (education). *Return to an address of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 10 February 1859;--for, return showing the total amount disbursed upon education in each presidency, with its percentage upon the revenue, in 1856-57; and, copy of correspondence with the Indian government, showing the progress of the measures adopted for carrying out the education despatch of the 19th day of July 1854 (in continuation of Parliamentary Paper, no. 72, of session 1858), 706].

\(^{55}\) In the Oordoo departments, for the 2\(^{nd}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) classes, the name of the textbook was *Dastoor-ool-Mash*: for the same classes in the Hindee departments, the prescribed textbook was *Jīvikā Paripātī* (ibid, 711).

\(^{56}\) Ibid, 155.

\(^{57}\) Ibid, 191.
evident from a fierce debate among the professors of the Presidency College, Madras, elicited by a report of the examiner of the paper on political economy on the poor performance by most of the students in the college. W. Holloway, the said examiner, wrote in a letter in 1857 to A. J. Arbuthnot, the Director of Public Instructions for the Madras Presidency:

No real knowledge of the subject matter has been obtained [by the students]. The slightest departure of the question from the language and order of the text book, suffices to elicit the strangest collection of crude notions and economic fallacies. A definition will be given in the language of the book, and the answer to a question requiring the simplest deduction, will deliver a doctrine, not only not derived from that definition, but in direct opposition to it. Every one defines capital with more or less accuracy, because Mrs. Marcet has defined it, but a glance over these answers will show that not a glimmering of the real import of that definition has been acquired. The same may be said of the doctrine of values.\(^{58}\)

Holloway’s indignation had one practice at its target – the practice of memorizing the principles of political economy without having any sense of its application in real contexts. Frustrated and angry, he added in his letter, “The memory will be better exercised on words more intrinsically beautiful than those of treatise on political economy.”\(^{59}\) In response to this allegation, a professor of history from the college complained to the principal that Holloway’s report was “utterly worthless, for it is not based upon facts, and it deals in groundless conjecture.”\(^{60}\) He assured that the students had “a very fair knowledge of the science” and Holloway’s methods of correcting the answers were replete with mistakes: “He assigns marks for answers which were not attempted, and he omits to award marks for answers which are in themselves good, and very much to the point.”\(^{61}\) Notwithstanding the merit of Holloway’s appraisal, his reaction to the existing practice of teaching political economy suggests that already there was a campaign to evaluate economic knowledge in terms of its practical usage and the method of its instruction was to be judged according to its realization in a domain of experience. It becomes clear from a report by H. Reeves, Revenue Commissioner of the Southern Division, in 1855, that the onus of economic rationality would now fall on the experience of “real men of practice.” Commenting on the state of education in the Bombay Presidency, he submitted, “Meanwhile, although not well read in political economy, history, or law, the mamludtars, mahalkurries, and carcoons of the districts are eminently practical men; their duties give them a

\(^{58}\) W. Holloway in \textit{ibid}, 332.
\(^{59}\) \textit{Ibid}.
\(^{60}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 323.
\(^{61}\) \textit{Ibid}.
knowledge of the details and machinery of revenue and magisterial duties, which is the more appreciated as it becomes better known to European officers."

Holloway’s letter mentioned Jane Marcet’s *Conversations on Political Economy* as one of the textbooks that were followed in the colleges. It was included in the syllabus for the Normal Class in the Bangalore Head Institution and the Cantonment Branch Schools. The text was translated in Marathi by Hari Keshvaji and Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik who, Neeraj Hatekar informs, also borrowed materials from John Stuart Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy*. With this book, Hatekar discusses Krishnashastri Chiplunkar’s *Arthaśāstra-paribhāṣā* which was a more or less literal translation of the “Production” part of Mill’s *Principles*. His article can be treated as a case study of the problems with any evolutionary history of ideas. He identifies Ramakrishna Vishwanath’s *Hindustān ci Prācin va samprat ci sthiti va pūde kay tyacha parinām honar yavishyai vicār* as the first vernacular Marathi text on political economy. In his analysis, Vishwanath’s book was the most “original” of all three of them because of the non-determinate relationship he had with the British empire; he welcomed industrialization and criticized the natives as inefficient, but also provides a “clear-cut statement of economic drain.” It allowed him a partially autonomous view of the exploitative nature of British rule. Then came in line Hari Keshvaji, the translator of Marcet, who was a “co-opted agent of empire” because he was commissioned by Henry Green from Bombay Education Service; Krishnashastri Chiplunkar was also not spared, as he engaged in a “mere translation” of Mill’s canonical text. This ridiculously reductionist analysis has at its heart a central assumption that the relationship between the empire and the native subjects was determined by how much “original” content a translator can add to his work. There is no attempt in Hatekar to interrogate the notion of “originality” in a proper historical context which would not only measure the degree of variation from the original text to its translation, but also situate the instances of displacements in relation to the various technologies of mediation between the state and its subjects. Hatekar treats translation as a given – a pre-meditative tool at the hand of an intending subject-agent who can use it to get implicated in the exploitative machineries of the state or not and which also has a conceptual autonomy unaffected by the history of vernacularization of the discipline.

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62 H. Reeves in *ibid*, 31.
65 *Ibid*.
most problematic part of his article is where he expresses his wonder as to why Gopal Hari Deshmukh – the translator of Clift’s *Elements of Political Economy* – since he was an “obscure” figure in the great tradition of Western economic thought. What he has missed entirely in his stock-taking of “Marathi economic thought” is that the unity of the oeuvre is not outside to the history of oeuvre formation and how the modalities of translation encounter and determine the tracks of vernacularization. In the following sections, I shall discuss some of the Bengali vernacular textbooks of political economy appearing in the 1870s in detail and examine how the vernacular pedagogy in colonial India intersect with a global network of dissemination of economic knowledge.

“MONEY MATTERS” – EVEN IN THE COLONY

Gopaul Chunder Dutt’s *Dhanabidhān*, a text prepared exclusively to introduce Bengali children to the science of wealth, described the enduring relationship between wealth and the world in a remarkably precise language:

In this world (*samsār*), wealth is a matter of great importance. Without it, no family person can be truly happy. When it becomes scarce, the whole world goes dark before his eyes. It is the chief source of earthly happiness.  

Published in 1862, Dutt claimed that this book was the first of its kind. Having felt himself the absence of such a text for children in Bengali, and at the request of some of his “reputed friends,” he undertook translation of an English primer called *Easy Lessons on Money Matters*. But, he immediately clarified, the Bengali text was not an identical translation of the original. “Some of the sections are omitted and some are added upon, when required. Especially, for better comprehension by the children, the examples are altered according to their familiar conditions.”

Jane Marcet, in the “Preface” to her *Conversations on Political Economy*, wrote:

It will immediately be perceived by those to whom the subject is not new, that a few of the most abstruse questions and controversies in Political Economy have been entirely omitted, and that others have been stated and discussed without any positive conclusion being

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70 Gopaul Chunder Dutt, *Dhanabidhān* [translation of “*Easy Lessons on Money Matters*”] (Calcutta: G. P. Roy & Co., 1862), i. All the following translations of Bengali texts, if not mentioned otherwise, are mine.
deduced. This is a defect unavoidably attached not only to the author’s limited knowledge, but also to the real difficulty of the science. In general, however, when the soundness of a doctrine has appeared well established, it has been stated conscientiously, without any excess of caution or reserve, and with the sole object of diffusing useful truths.\textsuperscript{72}

In her “Preface,” Marcet did not give any reason for omitting or avoiding definite conclusions. But, the second part of her textbook’s title – “In Which the Elements of that Science are Familiarly Explained” – demonstrated the objective her book clearly – which was to explain to her readers who were mostly school students the principles of political economy in a “familiar” way. I did not quote this long passage to argue that Gopaul Dutt copied Marcet in his textbook and did not give her credit. I am not engaging with these works to point out the clearly marked lines of conceptual or methodological inheritance premised on the concept of unity of authorship. If we get out of this hegemony of lineage in history of ideas, we encounter connections between ideas and frameworks which are impossible to imagine in a linear and evolutionary narrative. It is also necessary to locate these connections in the moments of their disentanglements so as to foreground the specificities undiluted even in the thickest of networks.

This drive to re-world the wisdom of political economy was shared by another author with the same intention of popularizing political economy among Bengali children. Rajkrishna Roychaudhury, in a brief preface written in English to his \textit{Artha Byabahâr} (1875, the twelfth edition), presented his work as a translation of Dr. Whately’s \textit{Money Matters}.\textsuperscript{73} “As it stands,” Roychaudhury repeated after Dutt in the English preface to his treatise, “the book has been wholly rewritten, and the entire subject, while adapted to the requirements of this country, has been kept within the capacity of the students of our Middle English and Vernacular Schools.”\textsuperscript{74} The treatise was considerably different from Dutt’s work in its ambition to be selected as a textbook in Middle English and Vernacular schools, where a scope of studying political economy in Bengali was available.\textsuperscript{75} In an extended Bengali version of the same preface, Roychaudhury complained that the government did not have a coherent policy as far as the

\textsuperscript{72} Jane Marcet, \textit{Conversations on Political Economy: In Which the Elements of that Science are Familiarly Explained} (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1824; fifth edition, revised and enlarged), v.

\textsuperscript{73} Rajkrishna Roychaudhury, \textit{Artha Byabahâr or Money Matters in Bengali} (Calcutta: J. G. Chatterjee & Co.’s Press, 1875), i.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75} Between 1854 and 1882, secondary education was imparted in (1) High Schools up to the Matriculation standard and (2) Middle Schools up to the Middle School Examination standard or slightly higher. There were two types of Middle Schools, English and Vernacular, distinct from each other on the basis of whether they offered a course in the English language. Roychaudhury’s book was aimed at both types of the Middle Schools. [F. W. Thomas, \textit{The History and Prospects of British Education in India} (Cambridge: Deighton Bell & Co., 1891), 73.]
education in political economy was concerned. The frustration was reasonable. Lieutenant Governor Richard Temple had recently withdrawn Roychaudhury’s textbook from the list of authorized books for the governmental schools.\footnote{Ibid, iii.} The new circular, Roychaudhury pointed out, did not name a single text of political economy to be followed for the Vernacular and Minor Scholarship Examinations. He insisted that studying the principles of the discipline from an early age was almost a moral obligation for the Indians. “Moreover,” he explained, “looking at the condition of our country, it is not illogical to say that every school should necessarily teach and discuss the science at least in parts.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Unlike Dutt, Roychaudhury stuffed his book with the names of eminent political economists, whose works, he wrote, had influenced his own. In the English preface, he mentioned John Stuart Mill and Millicent Fawcett as his major inspirations.\footnote{Ibid, i. In his preface, Roychaudhury mentioned only the surnames of his idols. One cannot rule out the possibility of James Mill being the author mentioned there as “Mill”, but from the content and the organization of the book, it may be presumed that it was his son John Stuart who was referred to in Roychaudhury’s preface. Similarly, it is only a hypothesis that the “Fawcett” mentioned in the same preface was Millicent Fawcett, and not her husband Henry, the blind author from Cambridge. Both Henry and Millicent brought out their works within a span of seven years – the husband’s Manual of Political Economy was published in 1863, and the wife’s Political Economy for Beginners in 1870. However, the latter work gained more popularity as a school textbook in English academic circles, and was closer to Roychaudhury’s work in treatment of the subject matter.} The third writer consulted was John Cairns of London University, who was no less famous for having admitted women to his classes on political economy than for having popularized Mill’s and Ricardo’s propositions in a series of influential essays. He was not alone in his studied assertion of influence. In 1875, Nrisinha Chandra Mukhurji, a professor of Presidency College and a member of the Board of Examiners at the University of Calcutta, brought out the second edition of his own textbook on political economy, *Arthanīti o Arthabyabāhār*.\footnote{Nrisinha Chandra Mukhurji, Arthanīti o Arthavyavahara or Elements of Political Economy and Money Matters in Bengali (Calcutta: New School-book Press, 1875).} In his preface, Mukhurji clarified that the goal of the discipline was to determine the definitions of wealth and money and to elaborate on the laws of production, distribution, and exchange of wealth. Dearth of proper textbooks hindered an accurate study of these principles. “To overcome this obstacle,” he assured, “I have prepared this small book based on the texts of Whately, Mill, Fawcett, Adam Smith, and other famous English and French authors.”\footnote{Ibid, i-ii.}

Although not as candidly as Roychaudhury and Mukhurji, Dutt acknowledged at least one unnamed author, whose *Easy Lessons on Money Matters* was the chief inspiration of his own book on wealth. On
the other hand, Roychaudhury too spoke of Whatley’s *Money Matters* as the primary text, of which his book was an inspired translation. It is reasonable to assume that both Dutt and Roychaudhury were talking about a book by Richard Whatley, the Drummond Professor of Political Economy at Oxford University in the eighteen thirties, who later became the archbishop of Dublin and took an effort to popularize political economy among the poor and children in Victorian England. The full title of the book that he wrote specifically for this purpose was *Easy Lessons on Money Matters for the Use of Young People*. First published in 1833, it became one of the most popular textbooks on political economy, and was included in school syllabuses, first in his native Ireland, and then in England and many of its colonies. The book happened to be a simplified version of his more academic *Introductory Lectures on Political Economy* (1831), which was, in its own right, a strange and unorthodox text on the subject.

Richard Whately was born in 1787. He was the youngest of the nine children of Reverend Joseph Whately, the vicar of Widford. In 1830, Richard was appointed as the Drummond Professor of Political Economy at the Oxford University, and the next year, he took over as the archbishop of Dublin. In the same year, he published a monograph containing his class lectures at Oxford, *Introductory Lectures on Political Economy*, “in compliance with the requisition of the Statute relative to the Professorship of Political-Economy, that one Lecture at least shall be published every year.” In 1833, Whately, now a commissioner of national education in Ireland, wished to write a book for children to disseminate the theories of political economy, which, for him, held a sacred position as a true doctrine of human emancipation. The book that came out of this desire was called *Easy Lessons on Money Matters for the Use of Young People* and became a vehicle of spreading simplified economic truth among the children, the colonized, and the colonized children. In the preface of the third edition of his textbook (1836), Whately explained that the lessons “were designed and have, on trial, been found adapted, for the instruction of young persons from about eight years of age, and upwards.” The training in political economy from such a tender age was absolutely essential, as:

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82 E. Jane Whately, *Life and Correspondence of Richard Whately*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866). 1. Ironically fitting for the author of a popular textbook, his was not a very happy childhood, as the memoir written by his daughter discloses: “In disposition he was shy, timid, and retiring; he knew little of the high spirits and playfulness of early childhood, and the society of children of his own age was actually distasteful for him” (Ibid, 4).
84 Goldstrom, “Richard Whately and Political Economy in Schoolbooks”, 133.
85 Whately, *Easy Lessons on Money Matters; For the Use of Young People, 3rd Edition* (London: John W. Parker, 1836), v.
Many, even of what are called the educated classes, grow up with indistinct, or erroneous, and practically mischievous views on these subjects; and the prejudices any one may have casually imbibed, are often hard to be removed, at a time of life when he imagines his education to be completed.  

Undoubtedly, Whatley’s motto of “catch them young” was enthusiastically shared by the authors of the Bengali textbooks, perhaps with different intellectual motivations and contrary political agendas. In the next section, we shall try to locate the marks of these displacements that might have informed the translations of Whately’s textbook. We shall delve into detailed reading of the works that claimed to have been inspired by Easy Lessons on Money Matters and see how the “indistinct, or erroneous, and practically mischievous views” on political economy were sought out and corrected in the context of nineteenth-century Bengal.

Dhanabidhān, the self-professedly original attempt at popularizing the science of political economy among Bengali children started with a proclamation of the importance of dhan in every aspect of life. For its author Gopaul Chunder Dutt, the Bengali word dhan simply referred to the accumulated stock of currency money that facilitated exchange and relieved people from the complications of barter. In the same breath, he also propagated the advantages of social division of labor, which was an indicator of progress for him. Had everybody started to produce everything they needed on their own, Dutt conjectured, they would have to incur great hardship. The only people who still practiced the vintage custom of barter were the savages, and they lived in dire poverty and distress:

For that, their condition is even worse than the poorest of the poor. They dress in animal-skin or bark. They live in tiny, ugly huts. Their empty boats are made of tree-trunks. Useless bows and arrows are their means of hunting.

Dutt’s description of the hapless savages came from Whately’s account of the same; there was also a hint of similarity with James Mill’s theory of progress as articulated in his Elements of Political Economy, which might have left a lasting influence on Whately. In Mill’s account, labor could not be conceived in isolation; it was always in conjunction with capital in real life. The “naked powers” of labor – the category in its state of nature – could only be traced back to the speculations about the origin of the

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86 Ibid, vi.
87 Dutt, Dhanabidhān, 1.
88 Ibid, 6.
society. Dutt’s chapter on wealth contained a weakness in the mercantile confusion between wealth (dhan) and money (artha). Rajkrishna Roychaudhury, in his Artha Byabahār, took great care to allay the same confusion by employing a more formal language of analysis: “Generally, people confuse between money and wealth. Wealth does not comprise only of money. Rice, flour, bed, chair, paper, book, rope, gold, jute, clothes, etc., whatever can be exchanged for another object is wealth.”

Exchangeability, according to Roychaudhury, was the most essential determinant of wealth. But this, he clarified, was a relative concept. There were things in this world, which might not be described as wealth, since they were available in abundance to be consumed by everybody; there was no need for participating in exchange to get them. But in certain situations, when they were short in supply, they would turn into wealth by being inducted in the mechanism of voluntary exchange.

The sections on mūhya or value in both Dutt’s and Roychaudhury’s textbooks exhibited a remarkable innovation. They started their discussions with the paradox of value: why some objects, quite useless in our everyday life, like the precious metals gold and silver, were perceived to be more valuable than the quintessentially useful objects like water. None of the authors addressed this question directly, or attempted to deduce a stable source of value in a commodity. Dutt explained that metals like gold or silver were more expensive than others, because, first of all, they were scarce in nature, and secondly, they were desired by us for their aesthetic appeal. Few pages later, he worked out a set of questions to elaborate on the subject. One of these questions read: “Why is a silver plate more valuable than a spade?” Dutt’s response to this apparently ordinary enquiry contained an ingenious example, which was also shared by Roychaudhury in his own chapter on value. While critiquing labor theory of value (without mentioning Ricardo’s name) based on the presumption that people worked harder knowing in advance that the produce of that labor would be compensated more liberally, Roychaudhury came up with an atypical explanation:

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89 “When the savage climbs a tree, and gathers the fruit; when he ensnares a wild beast, or beats it down with a club, he may be considered as operating with his naked powers, and without the aid of anything, to which the name of Capital can properly be annexed” [James Mill, Elements of Political Economy in Donald Winch (ed.), James Mill: Selected Economic Writings (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966), 213].
80 Roychaudhury, Artha Byabahār, 1.
81 “Those, who dive under water to collect pearls, have to rise up from time to time to take breath; if, by any means, they are provided with air under water, so that they can breathe even there, they will happily pay for it, no doubt” [ibid, 2].
82 Dutt, Dhanabidhān, 18.
83 Ibid, 21.
The fishermen take on a lot of trouble and hard work to catch fish; but, if working all night, a fisherman is able to catch only one fish, and somebody else, with same labor, catches a thousand of them, then the first person’s one fish cannot be sold at the price of the second person’s whole catch. In this case, both of them worked equally hard, but their fishes were not sold at the same price.94

“Therefore, it is settled,” he assured his readers, “that no object derives value, because it is produced by labor. People work hard to produce it, only because they know it is valuable.”95 The same principle was reiterated with a different example in Nrisinha Mukhurji’s *Arthanīti o Arthabyabahār*. Describing scarcity and desirability as the chief determinants of value, Mukhurji went on to correct the “inaccurate” view that “value in a commodity is an outcome of labor.”96 To prove his point, unlike Roychaudhury and Dutt, Mukhurji invoked the popular illustration of a pin factory managed by the principle of division of labor:

We have earlier determined what are the advantages of the division of labor; as a result of division of labor, in a pin factory, 500/600 pins are produced by a whole day’s labor of only one person. If somebody keeps on producing pins without taking anybody’s help, he will make only 10 pins by a whole day’s work. One person in the factory can produce 500/600 pins a day, and if he works without taking help, only 10 pins can be produced by a whole day’s labor. Equal labor is applied in both cases, but the value of 500 pins is never equal to the value of 10 pins.97

“If labor was a determinant of value, equal labor would have generated equal value in a commodity,” Mukhurji concluded.98 Both examples had an interesting implication. All the texts held pricing of the output of labor prior to the act of labor itself. By value, the three writers referred to exchange-value, since, in their definitions of wealth, exchange was the only condition required for its existence. What was novel in Mukhurji’s illustration was the way the principle of social division of labor was invoked and connected to the question of determination of value in a commodity. What was implicit in Dutt and Roychaudhury came to foreground in Mukhurji – the relation between the economic practice of exchange and the idea of the social generated in the division of labor: if pricing of a commodity was

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94 Roychaudhury, *Artha Byabahār*, 17. Both Dutt and Roychaudhury use almost identical language; it is evident that they have quoted from the same book.
95 Ibid., 18.
96 Mukhurji, *Arthanīti o Arthabyabahār*, 152.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
prior to its production, the coherence of the economic system depended on a fully formed theory of the social that would envelop the working of the system and ensure its internal stability. A significant point of departure from Dutt and Roychaudhury was that the example of the pin factory implied an industrial society, where the division of the workforce led to socialization of both labor and capital – a point missing in the example of the fishermen. The comparison, in that example, was between two individuals, each of whom had equal chance of catching more fish than the other. In case of the pin factory, a single worker could never match the productivity of a member of the workforce governed by the principle of division of labor. In correspondence, accumulation of capital as a precondition of industrial development would also be accelerated as compared to the attempts by the solitary worker outside the workforce, however earnest be those attempts. Whereas Dutt and Roychaudhury rested their faith in the definitive role played by division of labor in social progress, Mukhurji took one step ahead by forging a determinate relation between the two: unlike in the earlier accounts, the guarantee of progress would not be compromised by the uncertainty of labor in its state of nature. The savage, alone in his hunting, rowing, and climbing of trees, had to join the workforce in the pin factory, and work hand in hand with others, to manufacture as many pins as possible for the sake of civilization.

Both Dutt and Roychaudhury claimed to have translated the treatise for children written by Richard Whately. The example of the competing fishermen was also taken from the same source.99 Whately’s chapter in Easy Lessons also pointed to desirability and scarcity as the two determinants of value in an exchangeable commodity.100 Thomas Boylan and Timothy Foley argue in their work on the reception of political economy in colonial Ireland, “Whately did not subscribe to the conventional classical theories of value either in the ‘cost-of-production’ tradition of Adam Smith or in the ‘labour theory of value’ tradition of David Ricardo.”101 His view resembled the one “held by Whately’s friend and predecessor at Oxford, Nassau Senior,” who wanted to resolve the paradox of value in terms of the relationship between supply and demand.102 Whatley’s theoretical predilections seem to be consistent with this argument. His lectures at the Oxford University, which were later compiled

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99 Whately, Easy Lessons on Money Matters, 32. In fact, in Whately’s Introductory Lectures, a similar example was given to explain the difference between essential and accidental circumstances of an economic entity. “Now it is true,” he wrote, “it so happens, by the appointment of Providence, that valuable articles are, in almost all instances, obtained by Labour; but still this is an accidental, not an essential circumstance” (Whately, Introductory Lectures on Political Economy, 252; author’s emphasis). He tried to justify his argument by giving an example: “It is not that pearls fetch a high price because men have dived for them; but on the contrary, men dive for them because they fetch a high price” (Ibid, 253; author’s emphasis).
100 Whately, Easy Lessons on Money Matters, 29.
101 Boylan and Foley, Political Economy and Colonial Ireland, 82.
102 Ibid, 83.
and published as a monograph, *Introductory Lectures on Political Economy* (1831), were unique in many ways. In the very first of them, for example, Whately expressed with genuine intensity a desire for changing the name of the discipline from Political Economy to Catallactics, or the Science of Exchanges. In defense of his unique demand, he advanced his definition of man:

“An animal that makes *Exchanges*” no other, even of those animals which in other points make the nearest approach to rationality, having, to all appearance, the latest notion of bartering, or in any way exchanging one thing for another.

“And it is in this point of view alone that man is contemplated by Political-Economy,” he asserted at the end. It was not unusual to delineate the scope of the discipline around the notion of exchange. Millicent Fawcett’s *Political Economy for Beginners*, another influence for the nineteenth-century Bengali textbooks, defined political economy as “the science which investigates the nature of wealth, and the laws which govern its production, exchange and distribution.” Right away, in the next passage, she defined wealth as “anything which has an exchange value.” The distinctiveness of Whately’s appeal, however, could be sought in his conviction that, from the perspective of political economy, the core of humanity in itself should be postulated on the act of exchange alone. He believed that humanity without this core was rather dispensable from the universe of political economy. Had there been any other animal in the absence of humans with the same inclination towards exchange, Whately would not have hesitated to accept it as the most suitable protagonist of the economic discourse. But that animal too must never live alone in an island. A lonely soul was not good enough to receive political economy’s attention. “A man, for instance, in a desert island,” Whately wrote, “like Alex Selkirke, or the personage his adventures are supposed to have suggested, Robinson Crusoe, is in a situation of which Political-Economy takes no cognizance.”

Even if he was endowed with a lot of resources necessary for his own survival, until and unless there arrived more settlers, with whom he could engage in exchange activities, he should not be treated as a real subject of political economy. As a discipline that studied and analyzed the beings of exchange, political economy needed to locate those beings, human or nonhuman, within a social conglomerate.

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104 Ibid, 7. Author’s emphasis.
105 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
But a mere collective of people, without having no connection or association premised on exchange, did not constitute the society; it had to presuppose a properly structured mechanism of exchange.

The only question remained then was what happened to economic policy – the principles of taxation and governmental responsibilities of providing public goods, which were held to operate beyond the jurisdiction of exchange. Whately’s response was once again quite unique:

I had not thought it necessary to observe that, in speaking of exchanges, I did not mean to limit myself to voluntary exchanges; — those in which the whole transaction takes place with the full consent of both parties to all the terms of it. Most exchanges, indeed, are of this character; but the case of taxation, — the revenue levied from the subject in return for the protection afforded by the sovereign, constitutes a remarkable exception; the payment being compulsory, and not adjusted by agreement with the payer. Still, whether in any case it be fairly and reasonably adjusted, or the contrary, it is not the less an exchange. And it is worth remarking, that it is just so far forth as it is an exchange, — so far forth as protection, whether adequate or not, is afforded in exchange for this payment, — that the payment itself comes under the cognizance of this science.109

The chapter on taxes in Easy Lessons captured the essence of the same argument in a brief sentence: “Taxes are the price people pay to be governed and protected.”110 By appropriating the taxes levied by the government – the revenue that it collected by offering protection for life and property of the citizens – within the fold of an exchange regime governed by the mechanism of pricing, Whatley left no rational outside to his analytic system of mutually beneficial reciprocation. The government could no longer impose a sovereign claim on the life or the wealth of its citizens; it had to come up with a service in exchange. It was bound to be responsible for the benefit of the public by the same logic of exchange practices operating in the other parts of the economic domain. As a result, the question of political representation was incorporated within the domain of economic rationality. Roychaudhury’s Artha Byabahār took a clue from this argument to propose its own rationale of taxation:

The taxes we pay to the king can be considered a special type of wage. Like the worker helps with the production of wealth, the king sustains it by protecting our life and property. Taxes are paid as the wage or value [betan bā mūlya] of that service [sahāyatā].111

109 Ibid, 10n-11n.
110 Whately, Easy Lessons on Money Matters, 66.
111 Roychaudhury, Artha Byabahār, 113.
However, the discourse on socialization premised on exchangeability took a curious turn in the same chapter on taxation in *Artha Byabahār*. As we have seen earlier, in the textbooks inspired by Whately, the Bengali writers adopted a theory of value, which would presume that pricing of a commodity (or a service) took place before its production. If taxes were integrated within the same mechanism, the value of the protection offered by the government should be known in advance to its citizens. As in the former context, here also the valuation of the service would follow a logic of socialization, which was a necessary condition for any sort of exchange to take place. In the next section, I shall engage with the attempts by the Bengali writers to internalize this logic, and explore how they came up with various strategies to exploit the same to the effect of imagining a world of systemic interventions.

**FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATIONS, FAMILIAL ILLUSTRATIONS**

Roychaudhury divided his *Artha Byabahār* into two separate sections: the first explored the principles of production, and the second clarified the laws of distribution. Most probably, he was following the dictum by John Stuart Mill, who in his *Principles of Political Economy*, argued for a dissociation between the natural principles of production and the institutional laws of distribution. The first chapter in the second section in *Artha Byabahār*, which narrated the general principles of distribution or *dhanabistriti*, recapitulated the same rule of separation:

> The laws of distribution of wealth are considerably different in nature from those of its production. The laws of production depends on the natural [naisargik] mutual relationship between land, labor, and capital; if the relation remains constant, no change in the results can be observed. The laws of distribution are not governed by any natural relationship as such; it is established by the will of people.112

How the will was turned into practice was determined by human nature, the state of knowledge, and social bindings. “But how that will is controlled” Roychaudhury wrote with some caution, “does not fall under the purview of political economy; the task of the discipline is to explore the consequences of this will.”113 He concluded by proposing a distinction between practices governed by local customs (*deśācār*), and those by the spirit of competition (*pratiyogitā*). He added further, “If rent, wages, and profit are determined by customs, no general law of distribution can be obtained. Only

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competition induces general law.”\(^{114}\) In the following pages, he promised, only those practices that were governed by the spirit of competition would be considered.

But he could not keep his promise. In the section on wages, his focus remained on its determination within a competitive structure. Thus, he proposed to deduce the average rate of wage by dividing the portion of capital kept aside for payments to workers by the number of people seeking employment. The advantage of competition was described enthusiastically: “Suppose, the wage for a particular job is fixed at fifty rupees; when the number of workers suitable for the job increases, the competition among them enhances the chance of finding the best person.”\(^{115}\) It might bring down the rate of wage as well, Roychaudhury pointed out, as more people would now fight with each other for the same number of jobs. At this point, Roychaudhury, quite unexpectedly, filed a caveat. Faced by competition for acquiring a particular job, he observed, some people offered to work at a wage lower than the competitive rate. The employer might have profited from this, but the prestige of the occupation suffered and the quality of the workers went down. “The teaching job at many aided English and Vernacular schools has thus become disgraceful,” he lamented with some concern.\(^{116}\) “For one, the teachers of these schools work at very low wage,” he continued, “and then, the chances of getting a better job elsewhere are quite negligible. Hence, they lack all the qualities, by which one is supposed to enjoy occupational prestige.”\(^{117}\) In a footnote, he elaborated on the qualities that one should possess to enjoy such prestige:

> In the past, the teachers of this country used to teach free of cost. Knowledge was the indicator of prestige then. That time is gone now; now the high-low of wages is the only mark of honor. Even if a thousand rupee earning professor is less erudite than a vegetables eating teacher, he will be considered more honorable.\(^{118}\)

Although he assured his readers that he would concentrate on the naturally determined principles of distribution, Roychaudhury had to deviate from his original plan. But he did not actually criticize the law of competitive wage; it was rather the tendency of abusing the spirit of competition by accepting a wage lower than the natural rate, which lessened the social prestige of Bengali schoolteachers. The method of his argumentation deserves more attention. Roychaudhury began with explaining the law

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\(^{114}\) *Ibid*, 77.
\(^{115}\) *Ibid*, 92.
\(^{116}\) *Ibid*, 93.
\(^{117}\) *Ibid*.
\(^{118}\) *Ibid*.
of average wage as determined by dividing the “wage fund” – the capital kept aside for remuneration of the workers – by the total number of employees. Then he cited an aberration to that law from his own experience and pointed out the possibility of a misuse of the general principle in the quotidian, everyday context of prevalent customs (deśācār). Finally, he made a moral point in the footnote on the distressing condition, in which certain schoolteachers found themselves because of the misuse of the law. For Roychaudhury, hence, the relation between the universal principles of political economy and the local illustrations was one of contestation, but the premise of that contest was decided in the mediations between the “natural” determination of the equilibrium wage and its “social” application (aberration or assimilation, depending on the specific context) in the world of everyday transactions. The apparent anomaly in the system also arose from the discursive contradiction between Whatley’s insistence on defining political economy as a science of exchange and Mill’s advice on the separation between the principles of production and distribution. The specificity of Roychaudhury’s illustration, therefore, must be sought in the anxieties of influence – the contradictory impulses and meandering, nonlinear trajectories of the history of political economy in the colony – that informed and sustained these moments of mediations and translations.

In Roychaudhury’s appraisal of the law of competitive wage, we see an attempt to raise the question of discontent with the universal principles. Apart from the apparent inequality between erudite teachers and rich professors, he found out an instance of the same discontent in the private space of familial responsibility. In his chapter on taxes, Roychaudhury criticized income-tax as a flawed and unjust means of extracting money from the poor citizens. He reported that, normally, citizens with an annual income of five hundred rupees and more were taxed four percents of their total income. “But an annual income of five hundred rupees is not enough for our families,” Roychaudhury claimed in another footnote to his chapter:

In our country, a family does not merely consist of husband and wife with their little son and daughter. Father, mother, brother, sister, nephew, and their children, aunt, her husband and children, uncle and his children, and many more live with each other in the same family; and generally, they depend on the income of a single man. Hence, with only five hundred rupees, they spend their days in utter distress.

119 Roychaudhury, Artha Byabahār, 121-23.
120 Ibid., 121.
121 Ibid.
The same example of an Indian family, larger in size than its English counterpart and burdened with the obligation to provide sustenance to distant relations, appeared in Nrisinha Mukhurji’s chapter on taxes as well. Mukhurji offered a practical solution to this crisis: “It seems rational to exempt from taxes the average income, with which all families can make their necessary expenditures, and impose them on the rest of it.”

The entity of the family constituted a sign of difference in these books from the British conditions, on the basis of which, the authors suspected, such obtuse policies were designed. The familiar reality of the illustration was contrasted with the received wisdom of political economy, but not as radically as to reject the theory or to abdicate it from the domain of regular transactions. What was, however, apparent from Mukhurji’s argument in his chapter was that the intervention by the government must follow the logic of equilibrium in the goods market to its perfection: first, the average expenditure of an Indian family was calculated; then it was equated with the average income of a family person. The equilibrium of demand (expressed in expenditure) and supply (supported by average income) had to be linked with the law of progressive taxation, where the rate of income-tax would be determined in course of several voluntary and involuntary exchanges between the citizens themselves and the state. The mechanism of exchange was the omnipresent foundation of all economic activities. It extended its control to envelop the system in two ways: one, by encapsulating the logic of average income and expenditure, and two, by suggesting a true apparatus of governmental intervention in the form of an appropriate income-tax. It provided a context of socialization, which was embroiled in the notion of appropriateness of the taxes: the structure of taxation in India was supposed to be different from the one in England, as the social institution of family was construed differently in the two countries. The appropriate tax policy would have to incorporate the exchange mechanism and the sign of difference simultaneously, opening up the possibility of a translation. The translation was imperative, and was a political project as well, which sought to address and assuage the asymmetries between the languages of abstraction and dissemination.

Incidentally, the simultaneity of the attempts to acknowledge and resolve the moments of difference was well accounted in Gopa Chunder Dutt’s textbook. He also invoked the quintessential figure of the householder whose happiness in life would depend on his acquisition and management of wealth by receiving proper education in the principles of political economy. “Since all the children of today

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122 Mukhurji, Arthanīti o Arthavyavahara, 219.
123 Ibid, 220.
will be more or less caught up in family matters tomorrow,” Dutt repeated after Whately, “they must start learning the subject of such great importance from the very childhood.” At the same time, he introduced the term jagat-samsār [the universe] as the abstract universal space, where the principles of political economy would hold true in each instance of its application: “This universe can very well be described as an entity enmeshed in wealth.” The alternate use of the word “samsār” in both senses of the family and the universe permitted Dutt to shuttle back and forth between the concrete and the abstract, and to avail a sort of openness in the text. In Roychaudhury, the two domains were indeed spatially distributed across the page between the main text and the footnote: both the illustrations of the wise but poor teacher and the overpopulated family were placed in the footnotes, while the more stringent definitions and principles were laid out and discussed in the main text. Mukhuri’s textbook had the illustrations printed in a smaller font than the one used to narrate the abstract principles. All three of them, as we can see, adopted a range of textual and visual techniques to demarcate and flex the boundary between abstract principles and concrete illustrations, between the natural laws and the social exceptions. The mediations between these two domains produced a manual of socialization in the colony; the translation of the universal into the vernacular contributed to its complex designs. In the next section, therefore, we shall see how the resourceful deployment of translation delineated the socialization of political economy in the late decades of the nineteenth century.

EXCHANGING: WORDS AND THINGS

Although in this section, I plan to use the category of translation in a more specific, literal sense, it is difficult to overlook the potential, with which it can be used to demonstrate the workings of colonial power in general. Gyan Prakash argues quite effectively that “[t]ranslation in the colonial context meant trafficking between the alien and the indigenous, forcing negotiations between modernity and tradition, and rearranging power relations between the colonial and the colonized.” In a particular context of the translation of “Western sciences” into “indigenous languages,” Prakash wants to draw

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124 Dutt, Dhanabidhān, i.
125 Ibid.
attention to the “realignments of power, a renegotiation of the unequal relationship,” which existed between the two languages.\textsuperscript{127} He cites Rajendralal Mitra, the noted Bengali intellectual and one of the enthusiasts of translation of texts of science, who expressed his reservations against a “system of servile verbatim translation” in 1877.\textsuperscript{128} Mitra and many other middle-class intellectuals of his generation (like the translator-writers of textbooks of political economy) saw in it an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the colonial masters, but the dialogues and the ensuing dissemination of ideas and categories did not get reduced to a dialectic of mutual dismissing. Prakash informs that the main concern among the native intellectuals was to absorb the benefits of Western sciences without sacrificing the “integrity of the Indian languages.”\textsuperscript{129} As he rightly points out, the hybridization of the sciences led to “another history – a history that emerges from science’s authorization in the language of the other.”\textsuperscript{130} There remains, however, a chance of treating all forms of hybridity as similar, failing to make distinctions between different hybrids produced in course of various sporadic and nonlinear histories, some connected and some disconnected, and finally succumbing to the logic of singularity. “Viewed as a product of translation,” Prakash maintains, “the elite does not appear as a copy of the original, but as a ghostly double that resists identification as a copy by asserting difference.”\textsuperscript{131} In the “other” histories of these spectral assertions, therefore, an attempt should be made to recognize and explore the differences in manifold forms of hybridity, which resulted from these acts of translation. The translations of texts of political economy, for example, were perceptibly different from those of other scientific texts, primarily because there seemed to be an awareness among the translators of its discursive status as a “social science.” The acknowledgment and the assertion of difference from the original conditions were also molded according to manifestations of that awareness.

We can extend the logic of difference in hybridity further to the translated texts of political economy themselves. Gopaul Dutt’s \textit{Dhanabidhān} contained one exclusive feature in relation to the other texts. It was the only book that did not claim to have assembled materials from more than one source, and identified Whately’s \textit{Easy Lessons on Money Matters} as the sole inspiration. We have found in the earlier sections that he took the problematic of translation quite seriously. He came up with a non-identical translation of Whately’s book, and thought of including local illustrations for easy comprehension by children. Some of these illustrations reveal quite successfully the anxieties of influence that was

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Ibid}, 50.
\textsuperscript{128} Rajendralal Mitra cited in \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid}, 51.
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid}.
shared by the other translators as well. At the end of the first chapter in his *Easy Lessons*, Whately explained the advantage of dispensing money over specific goods in charitable enterprises:

> for a poor man may chance to be in want of something which I may not have to spare. But if I give him money, he can get just what he wants for that: whether bread, or cloths, or coals, or books.\(^{132}\)

To emphasize this point with an example, he referred to the scriptures and pointed out that it would have been quite difficult for the Greek Christians to help the saints in Judea during the great famine, if they had not decided to send money instead of corn.\(^{133}\) The same argument was repeated in Dutt’s translation, albeit accompanied with a different illustration. After explaining the advantage of sparing money instead of material goods to help the poor in the same language, Dutt got rid of the scriptural reference and replaced it with a recent incident in the history of his own country:

> After the mutiny of the sepoys, in the year 1267 [1860], when there was a great famine in the north-western part of India, our countrymen and people from Britain collected money from the public and sent it to the affected people for relief. Had they sent wheat instead of money, there would have been unnecessary difficulties. Apart from that, the people of Britain and we might have had to incur great trouble for scarcity of wheat. But sending money instead of wheat relieved them from all the pain and we too did not have to suffer from any trouble.\(^{134}\)

It was not the only instance of replacement. In the first lines of the same book, a similar replacement occurred when certain goods familiar in the British conditions like bread, meat, and beer were traded for those, which were held to be more recognizable by the Indian readers – wheat, wood, and salt.\(^{135}\) As it were, the specific passage and the household items in Whately were untranslatable, and had to be substituted by another passage describing a more familiar event from recent time and more easily identifiable objects respectively. By Dutt’s own admission, it was a strategy to familiarize the Bengali students with obscure principles of the discipline, to help them comprehend the true implications of the laws of political economy. Dutt imagined a positively direct relationship between familiarity and comprehension – a relationship that would be later cultivated in the textbooks by Roychaudhury and Mukhurji more candidly as well as confidently. Translation, the replacement of one word by another,


\(^{133}\) Ibid, 15-16.

\(^{134}\) Dutt, *Dhanabidhān*, 4.

equivalent and equally befitting the purpose of making meaning, was, in this story, a useful means to conceive and conduct this relationship.

In his famous essay ‘The Task of the Translator,’ Walter Benjamin contemplates on the impossibility of translation in a mournful language.\(^{136}\) “The traditional concepts in any discussion of translations,” Benjamin explains, “are fidelity and license.”\(^{137}\) To be in complete fidelity with the original, a work of translation needs to reproduce the same text word by word, leaving the syntax intact, only replacing the original words with equivalent words in the language of translation. However, Benjamin submits, “A literal rendering of the syntax completely demolishes the theory of reproduction of meaning and is a direct threat to comprehensibility.”\(^{138}\) If circulation of meaning happens to be the chief intention of the translator, she fails every time by being in fidelity with the original. On the other hand, a good translation will be that which is by definition a bad translation – a willful disregard of the principle of syntactic equivalence.\(^{139}\) In reality, no translator prefers fidelity over meaning; nobody will jeopardize the chain of thought that is supposed to be conveyed by adhering to the spirit of literalness. Instead, they try to maintain a balance – a state of equilibrium – between fidelity and meaning, a compromise that leans towards comprehensive understanding rather than literal perfection. In all this, the notion of meaning goes unnoticed, untroubled, unexplored. What is the standard of meaning? What are the rules which dictate that one set of meaning is more suitable or justified than the others? What is the economy of meaning? More importantly, what is its political economy? I suspect that without asking these questions one cannot possibly theorize the authorial impetus of “bad translation” – the license to change the original, to exchange it for something better, something more suited to the need of an interpretive cause.

An instructive approach in this regard may be the one adopted by Lydia Liu, who has worked on the translation practices in China in the early twentieth century. “The problem of translation has become increasingly central to critical reflections on modernity,” she comments in the introduction of Tokens of Exchange, a collection of essays by different authors exploring how the universalizing tendencies of


\(^{137}\) Ibid., 78.

\(^{138}\) Ibid.

\(^{139}\) “[N]o case for literalness can be based on a desire to retain the meaning.” Benjamin explicates. “Meaning is served far better – and literalness and language far worse – by the unrestrained license of bad translators” [ibid].
modernity translate and absorb difference “into its own orbit of antithesis and dialectic.”

In doing so, Liu and other contributors select an interdisciplinary approach, which concerns itself:

with the production and circulation of meaning as value across the realms of language, law, history, religion, media, and pedagogy and, in particular, with significant moments of translation of meaning-value from language to language and culture to culture.

The advantage of treating meaning as value is that, as Liu shows in her own essay, it allows us to get over the problematic of (in)commensurability and view translation as an exchange practice inscribed in the “political economy of the sign.” Thus, the question of translatability – the attainment (or its failure) of equivalence between languages – becomes analogous with that of exchangeability, seeking equivalence between commodities. The comparison between linguistic and economic exchanges has a history of its own, which chronicles the various attempts over time to situate a correlation between language and money.

However, it was Karl Marx who chose to use the analogy with some caution and incorporated translation as a more appropriate link between the two domains. Marc Shell points out that, in the pages of Grundrisse, Marx thought that it was equally “erroneous” to compare money with language as it was to compare it with blood and wrote:

Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign [fremde] language in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; but the analogy then lies not in language, but in the foreign quality [Fremdheit] of language.

“The foreign quality (Fremdheit) of language,” Liu notices in her essay, “describes a shared process of circulation in translation and in economic transactions, which produces meaning as it produces value

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141 Ibid, 2. Author’s emphasis.
143 The analogy was embraced by a great number of poets and philosophers, including Quintilian, Ovid, Nietzsche, and Saussure. “The metaphorical field circumscribing analogies between language and money is undoubtedly one of the most productive in all of Western culture” [Richard T. Grey, “Buying into Signs: Money and Semiosis in Eighteenth-century German Language Theory” in Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen (eds.), The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 95]. Grey narrates how Friedrich Gedike, one of the leading thinkers of Enlightenment in Germany, published an article in 1789 to propose a fascinating analogy between money and language (ibid, 96).
when a verbal sign or a commodity is exchanged with something foreign to itself.”\textsuperscript{145} The shift from the former analogy to a new, superior one was informed by the transition in political economy itself, which dumped the mercantile association between wealth and currency money, and favored a theory of exchange that would explain autonomously the nature and the causes of wealth.

Marx’s insistence on the foreign quality of language rather than language in itself, however, points to his intent of breaking away from the paradigm of representation. In mercantile thinking, the analogy between language and money was endorsed by the fact that they both capacitiated representation. If language represented thought, money represented accumulation of wealth. Marx, on the other hand, drew attention to the material conditions of circulation, where any form of exchange took place due to the foreignness of the other object – an intrinsic quality of the words or things to be exchanged – and not for the capacity of its representation. The act of translation, thus, involved realization of the same foreign quality in the other language, which would motivate replacements of the original words by the ones from the language of translation.\textsuperscript{146} If we now turn to the acts of translation in Dutt, we shall see that the issue at stake was the realization of the foreignness of illustrations from the original text, but more importantly, it was also a question of positing a theory of socialization, which allowed such realizations in the first place. Here the analogy between translation and exchange became more potent than it was in the case of other instances of translation of scientific texts. As we know, in Whately, and subsequently in Dutt and other translator-writers of Bengali textbooks, the exchange practices had to presuppose an already instituted social structure, which would decide the price of an object prior to its production. Hence, the social emerged as a domain of pre-valuation – a site, where the equilibrium received its stability. It was the same site, which actualized the norms of equivalence, both economic and linguistic, and reinstated the shared faith in the universality of political economy.

This point needs elaboration. The cultural specificity and the moral stigma attached to beer and meat prompted Dutt to replace them with salt and wood (\textit{laban} and \textit{kashtha} respectively in Bengali). Going by the typical logic of semantic equivalence, this was a disastrously bad translation – a blatant misuse of the so-called unrestrained license. But if we agree to consider the analogy between translation and exchange, the equivalence between these radically incommensurable words seemed to be established

\textsuperscript{145} Liu, “The Question of Meaning-Value in the Political Economy of the Sign”, 22.

\textsuperscript{146} In the passage cited above, Marx talked about translation from one’s mother tongue to a foreign language. In case of the Bengali textbooks, however, we witness just the opposite. The point about the foreign quality of the language is still there, and as he himself explained, the analogy must not be restricted to the question of language as such, but attention should be directed to the point of its foreignness and its realization in the circulation of ideas.
within the same framework of socialization that brought together a lot of people in one place, ready to engage in transactions with each other, and facilitated exchange of things. Hence, like in the cases of economic production, where the price of the commodity was already known to the producer, the meaning-value produced during translation was determined prior to the act of translation itself. The equivalence between beer and salt, whether in the economic or in the linguistic domain, was socially constituted; and the social in question was the network of individuals, objects, and relationships that the universally valid science of wealth deemed fit for its own sustenance. In this framework, the idea of familiarity did not have a conceptual autonomy; it depended on myriad negotiations and overlaps between the simultaneous processes of economic and linguistic transactions, which sought to realize the “foreignness” in the other. It was the co-incidence of translation and exchange, conceptually and in practice, which inaugurated the material dynamics of the vernacularization of political economy by staging a framework of equivalence of illustrations.

In the other translations by Roychaudhury and Mukhurji, we witness an extension of this framework being used to introduce the theory of intervention in the vernacular. The agency of intervention was rested on the government, but the norms of these interventions were spelt out in the language of the trusted science. In Gopaul Dutt’s textbook, the encounter we had with the colonial government was short-lived, explaining the advantage of charity in money instead of material goods. There we sense a hint of an argument, which loomed over the idea of governance based on the knowledge of political economy. In the original illustration from the New Testament, Whately tried to translate the wisdom of the church in the idioms of his science of exchange. In Dutt’s version, the spirit to reinterpret the events from the past in new light of an emerging discipline was retained, but the past itself had gone through a re-modeling, where the authority of the church was substituted by that of the government. The equivalence between the church and the government would not have happened, if there was no theory of socialization, which could encourage and empower Dutt to replace the Biblical fable with a factual, lived narrative of a recent political upheaval, although there was no evidence that he held any sympathy for it. In the later works, it became a common practice to follow up a principle of political economy with an example from the lived space of everyday transactions – sometimes to substantiate the principles, but often to suggest a few modifications as well. After Dutt, the family space became an increasingly common example, where such recommendations were expected to come alive, as it was the same space, where the negotiations between the abstract and the concrete obtained a discursive prestige in many intimate and intricate encounters between the samsār governed by the
logic of exchange and the *jagat-samsār* enmeshed in wealth. The householder was thus brought into the focus as the person in charge of the family, who would sought to translate the incongruities arising from these encounters with the government – the custodian of the life and property of the multitude – as signs of aberration which could be corrected, controlled, and brought to order by asking the other party in exchange to follow the rules of the game. The game was not played in silence, and as time progressed, the excitement in the crowd began to escalate. Finally, it snowballed into a huge commotion that would later be called the Swadeshi Movement, forging a connection between economic autonomy and national sovereignty.147

Riding on these observations, we can now come back to the question of “familiarity” in the University Commission’s Report cited in the beginning of this chapter. It was the precise moment of an interaction between the colonial state and the pedagogical sites of political economy. The urge to delimit and reform these sites was informed by an urgency to incorporate the logic of familiarity so that a proper training in the economic discipline could be mastered. One needs to situate this urgency in its historical context, given the contours of the vernacular intervention as discussed above. In a sense, this intervention was also in the field of experience, distributed over the longitude and the latitude of discursive contestations realized in terms of the distinctions between the concrete

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147 The crux of the Swadeshi movement was to boycott foreign goods for those produced within the country. Usually, the theoretical modality of the movement is understood as a breach from the materialism preached by political economy, which championed the logical consequence of free exchange and unrestricted circulation of private goods in the form of capitalist growth. Boycotting imported goods and choosing to consume indigenously produced, and mostly inferior in quality, articles provided an opportunity to “self-consciously supersede the doctrine of rational choice in the name of “national productivity. “Although in practice,” writes Andrew Sartori, “Swadeshi activism overwhelmingly took the form of a practice of consumption, it was a form of consumption that was self-consciously subordinated to the logic of national productivity and that eschewed luxuries in the name of simple necessities. The new freedom conceptualized by Swadeshi Extremism was grounded in a critique of consumption in the name of a political subject who renounced any desire for the fruit of his labor through the practice of nishkam karma (desireless action)” [Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 168]. I am not arguing that there was a historical continuity between the discourses of socialization and economic rationality as evinced in the textbooks that we have just discussed and the Swadeshi movement, although it can be said without much hesitation that the dissemination of political economy in the nineteenth century must have influenced the leaders of the movement in many ways. For one, even at the peak of the movement, some of its high priests refused to believe that the fault lay with the discipline itself, but in the wrongful appropriation of its principles. We have seen how Ranade chose List over the British political economists to affirm his own views about national well-being, and pointed to the fact that not all economists could be held responsible for making universal assumptions about different cultural and economic conditions across the globe. Similarly, while writing on the implications of boycotting of imported goods in a prestigious literary journal in 1907, Rajanikanta Guha observed that a critique of the trade monopoly of the British could be worked out from the texts of John Stuart Mill and Millicent Fawcett – both favorites of the textbook writers of the past century [Rajanikanta Guha, “Boycott”, *Prabāśi* 6, no. 12 (April, 1907), 644]. There was surely an academic interest among middle-class Bengalis about the discipline, which was fueled by these textbooks and many other tracts and essays, which came out in the previous decades.
and the abstract. Did the vernacular bring about a break in the field of experience as actualized by both the colonial state and the pedagogical sites? How was the trope of familiarity acknowledged and supplemented by the colonial state? What possible changes were occurring in the discursive terrains of the concrete and the abstract? 

In 1913, the Royal Commission on the Public Services in India started to gather evidences from senior members of the Indian Civil Service. They were asked to voice their opinions on the courses of studies prescribed for probationers in the civil service examinations and suggest recommendations in order to improve the prevalent courses. The focus was particularly put on the “desirability” of certain pedagogical practices such as attending law courts in England and reporting the cases, or teaching of grammar and textbooks of vernacular languages or Indian geographies and political economy. Most of the evidences endorsed the continuation of the practice of teaching political economy at the probationary level; some were indifferent to the inquiries; and some came up with diverse reasons as to why such a course was redundant or undesirable in the present conditions. C. Krishnaswami Rao, an Indian member of the service, for example, opposed the inclusion of political economy for the final examination, but favored its continuation for the “open competitive examination.” On the other hand, A. G. Cardew expressed his desire to have it as part of the curriculum as a compulsory subject for probationers of all ages. The reasons of including the discipline in the curriculum was as many as possible, including its role in making the aspiring civil servants “acquainted with English life and manners,” or its location in a corpus of liberal education which included English, History, and Jurisprudence. The reasons of excluding it were also quite diverse. While S. A. Smyth described it as a “cram” subject and suggested its absolute exclusion or changing the examination system in such a way that the mere “crammers” could not crack it, the absence of any reliable Indian political economy which could encompass the “special and peculiar” conditions of India was also cited as a valid reason for its abandonment. Bhupendra Nath Basu thought that, for the native members of the service, it was imperative to study political

148 C. Krishnaswami Rao cited in Royal Commission on the Public Services in India: Appendix to the Report of the Commissioners, Vol. II, Minutes of Evidence Relating to the Indian and Provincial Civil Services, Taken in Madras from 8th to the 17th January 1913 with Appendices (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1914), 68.
149 A. G. Cardew cited in ibid, 90.
150 Yakub Hassan cited in ibid, 302.
151 W. S. Marris cited in ibid, 119.
152 S. A. Smyth cited in ibid, 194. Cramming in colloquial English means learning “as much as possible in a short time just before” one takes an examination [Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary (New Delhi: Indus, 1994), 329].
153 Anonymous in cited ibid, 429.
economy, while instructions in Indian history, geography, or vernaculars were unnecessary.\textsuperscript{154} A. Kensington admitted that tests in political economy presupposed unqualified memorization of the subject.\textsuperscript{155} On the other hand, J. L. Strachan-Davidson told the commission that he was himself “fond” of the discipline, but, in its place, he would rather like to have an instruction in anthropology.\textsuperscript{156}

In many ways, these opinions seemed to replicate the concerns as to the relationship between the colonial state and the pedagogic status of political economy. But the modalities of this encounter had gone through an interesting shift. Previously, throughout the nineteenth century, the registers of the intervention in the field of experience by the state were premised on what Bernard Cohn called the “modalities of investigation” of colonialism.\textsuperscript{157} He has shown how, by means of certain technologies of accruing, organizing, and parading a body of information about the colonial subjects, led to the formation of colonial knowledge and its mechanisms of discipline. These modalities included historiographic reconstructions of the pre-colonial past, observational and travel narratives, surveys and censuses, archaeological excavations and techniques of surveillance. Taken together, these modalities exude a sense of centrifugal dispersion of power from the metropolitan centre to the margins of colonial rule. In case of colonialism’s relationship with political economy, we witness a tension between the gamut of textual representations and the body of knowledge gathered from the actual fields of experience with practical business. This tension also presupposed and was informed by the epistemic tension between the abstract principles of canonical texts and concrete situations encountered during administrative duties. The colonial state tried to resolve the same tension in two ways: first, by giving primacy to the experience narratives over the principles of the discipline and two, by constantly monitoring the pedagogical sites through examination protocols and syllabus reforms. As we have seen earlier, the tendency of memorizing the abstract definitions and principles was admonished ruthlessly and the role of the economic discipline was delimited in terms of its practical application in concrete situations.

The same emphasis on practical applicability and the inefficacy of disengaged memorizing was put in the evidences to the Royal Commission. However, some distinct shifts in the modalities of

\textsuperscript{154} Bhupendra Nath Basu cited in \textit{ibid}, 478.
\textsuperscript{155} A. Kensington cited in \textit{ibid}, 63.
\textsuperscript{156} J. L. Strachan-Davidson cited in \textit{ibid}, 158.
\textsuperscript{157} Bernard S. Cohn, \textit{Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India} (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).
knowledge formation could be observed in these accounts. The tension between the abstract and the concrete was still attempted to be resolved in terms of the intervention in the field of experience. But the strategies to conceptualize experience were now premised on the notion of familiarity. This was precisely the reason why the civil servants, well familiar with the socio-political conditions of the colony, were asked to give their opinion on the location of political economy in the administrative matrix of colonial power. This acknowledgement of familiarity as a valid trope of epistemic as well as governmental networks was a novel intervention in the field of experience, and, from our earlier account, we may argue that the vernacularization of political economy played an important role in its reconceptualization. The trope of familiarity, as we have noted, followed from a logic of managing the familial space. Family, acting as a site of recognizing and asserting difference in the vernacular domain, had another appeal to colonial governmentality as a unit of population management and the economy of statecraft. Familiarity thus operated as a constitutive logic in the dispersion of colonial governmentality beginning from the early decades of the twentieth century. How did the vernacular domain respond to these strategies of appropriation of familiarity within the fold of colonial power? In the next chapters, I shall explore these responses and see how the diverse strategies of negotiating with colonial power effected new discursive formations and modes of socialization. The most ingenious strategy was to bring forth a concept of “life” and through that locate the domain of experience at the heart of the category of population inherent in colonial governmentality. It pointed to another modality of equivalence quite different from the ones discussed in this chapter and proposed a critique of the liberal discourses of political economy with a very sharp twist from those conceived by the Bengali writers of textbooks in the nineteenth century.