CHAPTER 3
INTRODUCTION OF LIBERAL EDUCATION IN INDIA:
A SOLUTION TO MORAL LACK

Roughly about the same time as the debates on Bildung in Europe, education emerges as a central issue in colonial India. The debates on education in Europe were concerned with education as self-formation. In this process, questions such as what is the end of education, should we emphasize reason or sensibility in the process of formation, how does the pursuit of Wissenschaft form the character of the individual and how do we build institutions such that Bildung may take place unhindered were elaborated in a systematic manner. The historical actors in the debate in Europe were largely philosophers, some of whom were also theologians who drew from their traditions in a strong way. In contrast, the early nineteenth-century Indian educational debates were of a different order altogether. Largely conducted by the British administrators of the East India Company (hereafter EIC), missionaries and Orientalists, the discussion involved the education of a people from a cultural context alien from their own. These debates, I would like to argue, were focussed not on formation of the natives but largely on their moral reform.77

The distinction I make between formation and reform requires us to flesh the concepts out further. How might education as formation be similar to and different from reform? In his article, Education and the Educated Man, R. S. Peters contrasts the two terms in illuminating ways. He points out that both education and reform are evaluative terms indicating a positive appraisal of the process. There is a suggestion of a norm built into these concepts and they carry with them the judgement that the process of reform or education is a valuable and

77 “Reform” would emerge as the key word of nineteenth-century India, used by both the British and secular educated natives with equal fervour. In the rest of the chapter, I indirectly try to capture what this process involved.
desirable one. However, he distinguishes education from reform in three significant ways. Firstly, “reform” suggests that a person has lapsed from an approved standard of conduct while education would have no such assumptions. Secondly, unlike reform which is a restricted, narrow operation, education is not so limited and involves the transmission of the ultimate values of a community such that the individual can make them his/her own. Thirdly, education not only suggests that what develops in a person is valuable but that this development necessarily involves knowledge and understanding (Peters 1975, 3).

In the debates on education in early nineteenth century India we find that education functions more like reform. The British find the natives violating certain fundamental moral principles that regulate their own lives in Europe which they consider as universal. They, therefore, consider the natives as immoral and as having lapsed from an approved normative standard of morality. Modern education then becomes not about passing on the values of the community to the next generation or about creating a milieu of learning that enables reflection of our experience but about initiating the natives into a process through which they can acquire these normative principles of morality. Experience is now measured against these prior norms and therefore always already marked as incomplete and inferior, subject to correction. As a result, the idea of education largely remains embedded within the process of moral transformation of the “natives”78 at the expense of knowledge, discovery and understanding.

Scholarship on education in nineteenth-century India has shown us how the introduction of modern education was coeval with the colonization of India, with colonization being looked upon as essentially a pedagogic task. It has been observed that the Arnoldian curriculum with

78 I have retained the term “natives” without attaching any negative meaning to it. Since it is a term within the colonial discourse, it seems more accurate than the term “Indian” at this point in history.
its emphasis on classical languages and literature, classical history and mathematics\textsuperscript{79} aimed at initiating the natives into a new moral ethos, often captured by the phrase, the “civilising mission” of education (Viswanathan 1989; Tharu 1998). However, what precisely did this change involve? While we know that a transformation of the native character and society was attempted, we know less about the nature of this new moral ethos and the transformation that ensued.\textsuperscript{80} In this chapter, we turn to the debates accompanying the introduction of modern education in India in order to understand the nature of the educational debates in the early nineteenth century and the shift that ensued. How did the various participants – Anglicists, Orientalists, missionaries and colonial officials envisage the aims and goals of education during this period? What were the categorial structures within which they discussed and made sense of the activity of education in India? What were the horizons of expectations within which the actions in the domain were rendered coherent and what were the cognitive assumptions they shared? These are some of the questions addressed in this chapter.

We shall trace the encounter in terms of three central points. In the first section of the chapter, we shall see how liberal, secular education\textsuperscript{81} is envisaged partly as a solution to the problem of immorality in the natives, expressed as “want of truth,” “a fundamental virtue” which the British found lacking in them. In the second section, we shall trace the source of this perception of immorality to the construction of the entity called Hinduism in the late nineteenth century which, during the debates of the times, comes to be explicitly marked as a false religion. Thus, the early history of education was deeply tied to the debates on the truth value of religions and this had serious implications on the role of education in the sub-

\textsuperscript{79} Though the paucity of natural sciences courses in the nineteenth century educational curricula has been noted McDonald (1966), Chatterjee (1995), the examination of archives tells us that both humanistic studies and science as a mode of thinking were used together to inculcate the natives into this new moral ethos.

\textsuperscript{80} Gauri Viswanathan’s \textit{Masks of Conquest} (1989) is one of the earliest attempts to do so. However, while in Viswanathan’s account, the idea of a new moral order is tied to the political needs of the empire, my attempt is to see this transformation as a transition from one way of inhabiting the world to another.

\textsuperscript{81} Modern, Western, liberal and secular education are used interchangeably, based on what is emphasized by the participants of the debates and what seems the most appropriate use in a particular context.
continent in the nineteenth century. In the last section, we examine the leading participants of the period and show how — whether missionaries, Anglicists, Orientalists or colonial administrators — they hold the pre-supposition that the introduction of European science and literature and the very operations of modern knowledge will turn the natives away from their “false” traditions and orient them to the new norm of truth. The pedagogic task of colonization and education in particular therefore can be seen as an initiation into the truth norm. Consequently, the norm of every action appears to have been transformed into a truth norm and the practical domain of everyday life comes to be overwhelmingly looked upon as a domain of beliefs, involving an appraisal of them as true or false.

3.1 The Anglicist-Orientalist Debate

Scholars have noted that for the most of the eighteenth century, India was regarded as an ancient and a highly respectable civilization. This is evident even as late as the 1780s when in the famous trial of Warren Hastings, neither Edmund Burke nor Hastings disputed the fact that India should be governed according to her own traditions and customs, which were regarded by both as venerable and worthy of respect (Hutchins 1967; Mantena 2010; Whelan 1996). In keeping with this imperial vision, the East India Company (EIC), despite more than fifty years after its transformation from a trading post to a governing company, made no attempts to actively intervene in matters of education. Educational institutions were left largely undisturbed and new oriental institutions started in order to facilitate rule according to the “ancient constitution” and the “original laws” of India. Central to this process was

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82 See Mantena (2010, 25) for a recent recapturing of the shift - from a reverence for Indian antiquity to India as a “degenerate” society. Also see Boman-Behram (1943). The positive image of India during this period is usually credited to the work of Orientalists. Refer to P. J Marshall (1970) for the reception of Hinduism in the West in late-eighteenth century. Marshall notes that Edmund Burke who habitually spoke ‘of the piety of the Hindoos with admiration’ drew significantly from the Orientalists. However, it must be noted that despite the apparent differences between the Orientalists, Missionaries and Anglicists with regard to the description of the Indian society, there are deeper similarities that render these differences superficial. I deal with this point in greater detail a little later.
identifying and translating ancient texts which were seen as a source of the ancient law that regulated the actions and the customs of people. The new Oriental institutions, with the assistance of native scholars, focused on identifying and translating these texts in order to produce native legal codes and lawyers.\textsuperscript{83}

However, by the 1820s, as it is rather well-known now, it is this view that was attacked and reversed by Utilitarians like James Mill and T. B. Macaulay, and Evangelists like Charles Grant whose works and speeches exerted tremendous influence in the early half of the nineteenth century and would go on to frame the nineteenth-century debates. From being “a seat of learning,” India would by the turn of the century become the embodiment of backwardness, a “corrupt” civilization exhibiting the most subversive and dangerous forms of moral degeneration.\textsuperscript{84} A wave of missionary writings led by the Serampore Baptists, William Ward, William Carey and Joshua Marshman would add to the uncompromisingly harsh view of the native society. By 1820s, the generation of Macaulay, Grant and Mill would argue that British policy should systemically transform the morality of the Indian people as well as their customs and society in a progressive direction. Such an orientation towards traditions and customs of the land or towards its people would have been unthinkable for Burke and Hastings, just three decades before. The earlier criticisms of the fledgling empire voiced in the 1780s by Europeans like Burke, Herder and Adam Smith virtually disappear by 1820s to

\textsuperscript{83} This must not be taken to mean that there were no changes at all. As scholars have pointed out, the attempt to recover an “ancient Indian constitution” reconfigured Indian society and traditions to a significant extent, the effects of which we see even today. See for instance, Cohn (1996). The scholarship of Hastings era, as is well-known, was shaped significantly by the assumption that there was a separate religion called “Hinduism” that could be identified. The British conviction that all Indian traditions were based on texts, and there was a link between law, religion and society in the way it bore out in their own country reduced the “knowledge” on India to a variant of the West. On this point, refer to Metcalf (1994), Oddie (2006), Marshall (1970). These did not still constitute a change in British policy with regard to education of the land at large during this point. However, it should be noted that this scholarship played a significant role in creating the conditions for intervention in education, as the rest of the chapter shows.

\textsuperscript{84} Nicholas Dirks notes in passing that “scandal” and “corruption,” terms associated with the beginnings of the British Empire and their excesses in the late eighteenth-century, suddenly gets attached to Indian customs in the early decades of the nineteenth century (2006, 23).
give way to well-founded arguments, providing an ethical justification for the empire. A new attitude emerges in the Europeans that it was their duty as a just and moral empire to turn the Indians away from their traditions and help in their moral, intellectual, material and spiritual improvement. One of the crucial sites through which the moral transformation would be effected was education. What caused this dramatic reversal which established this sudden degeneracy of a civilization which was regarded largely in favourable terms in the eighteenth century? How is it that, education, a relatively unproblematic field of experience till the 1800s, emerges as a central problem, inciting the passions of the people, raising fresh discussions and debates?

The victory of the Anglicists over the Orientalists is considered as a significant moment in the modern educational history of India, signalling the beginning of liberal, secular education as part of colonial state policy. It almost has the status of an explanatory framework. At the heart of the controversy was what should be the nature of public education in India in the

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85 See Pitts (2005) who studies the attitudes of some of the major political thinkers in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Britain and France (Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Jeremy Bentham and Benjamin Constant) and compares them with the stance of two iconic liberal thinkers in the mid-nineteenth century in the two countries, J. S Mill and Alexis, de Tocqueville. She shows that while the earlier generation was mistrustful of the empire, critical of the violence and injustice involved, these voices disappear to give way to liberals who draw from these critics to produce an ethical justification of colonial rule which the earlier generation would have found unthinkable. Therefore, according to her the support for imperialism was not inherent to liberalism as Uday Mehta argues but due to changes in the view of the later thinkers because of a rise in cultural self-confidence and the triumph of the theories of human progress. It remains puzzling why Pitts does not see her explanation (triumph of theories of progress) as part of the framework of liberalism itself, rendering her explanation weak. In that sense, Uday Mehta who argues that imperialism is not antithetical to liberalism but stems from tensions within liberalism and its impoverished understanding of experience continues to have greater force (U. S. Mehta 1999).

86 This is not to say there were no attempts before the early nineteenth century to educate the natives. There exist several scholarly works on the missionary and educational activities of Catholics and Protestants in India, from the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth century. See Županov (2001, 2005), B. Singh (1999), N. N. Law and Firminger (1915), Laird (1972), all of which focus on the educational work by missionaries, among many others. However, these efforts remained largely outside the purview of the state and were individual attempts at initiating educational measures. It is only in the early nineteenth-century that education emerges as a significant project in which the colonial state, Orientalists, Anglicists, missionaries and the natives are all involved, with equal ardour.

87 The details of the debate have been amply covered. For a good introduction to the debate, see Moir and Zastoupil (2013) which also brings together a collection of primary sources on the debate. Also see Boman-Behram (1943) and Kopf (1969). For scholarship that is sensitive to the shared framework between Orientalists, Missionaries and Utilitarians, see Tharu (1998), Niranjana (1992), Mani (1998), Viswanathan (1989). For more recent studies that elaborate on this shared framework between the Orientalists and Anglicists, see Oddie (2006), Gelders and Derde (2003).
newly formed empire. Despite the differences in the debate, it is remarkable that the Orientalists, Anglicists and the missionaries shared a common description of the problem. All the three factions shared the assessment that the natives, particularly the Hindus and their society were degenerate and that Western education was required for “the moral, intellectual and spiritual improvement” of the natives. This was true even of the Orientalists (represented by H. H. Wilson, Holt Mackenzie and Henry Prinsep who continued the work started by the earlier generation of Orientalists that included William Jones, H. T. Colebrooke, Charles Wilkins and Nathaniel Halhed) who were in agreement with Mill and Macaulay that the Western systems of learning were far superior and must ultimately supplant the indigenous systems. However, a milieu had to be generated for a more favourable reception of Western systems such that the natives would recognize of their own accord that Western knowledge systems were superior, which the Orientalists claimed was not yet the case.

The source of moral lack was what they identified as the religion of the natives, “Hinduism.” However, there were internal differences between the various factions. The

88 In 1813, the Parliament included a clause in the EIC charter that not only made missionary activities legal in India but also for the first time set apart for education a sum of not less than Rs 100,000 for purposes of supporting educational activities in India (Moir and Zastoupil 2013, 90–91). Before any decision could be arrived at on how to spend this money, the nature of education that ought to be supported had to be better known. This forced EIC to focus on education which was till then not their object of priority or concern. The Act led to the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy with regard to how best to use the money. It also led to attempts to ascertain the state of indigenous education in India. See Chapter VI.

89 Trautmann makes a distinction between Orientalism 1 (knowledge produced by the early generations of Orientalists scholars who knew the Asian languages) and Orientalism 2 (knowledge produced by the Anglicists and others like Macaulay, Mill and Hegel who also took part in representing the Orient but neither knew an Indian language nor set foot in India. Instead they depended on the secondary sources produced by Orientalism 1). Orientalism 2 is both parasitic on and in opposition to Orientalism 1. For Edward Said whose thesis is about Orientalism 2, Trautmann points out, Orientalism 1 was part of Orientalism 2 and both were versions of Occidentalism (Trautmann 1997, 23). Trautmann’s distinction is in so far as Orientalism 1 took the trouble to know India, it must be taken more seriously than Orientalism 2. However, in so far as similar cognitive assumptions are to be found in both, I see them more in the Saidian sense.

90 That Hinduism was “put together”, “invented”, “imagined,” “constructed” in the late eighteenth-century has been noted by several scholars. See Smith (1991), Halbfass (1992), King (1999), Viswanathan (2003) for the problematization of the concept of Hinduism, and Staal (1990) for a persuasive account of why Hinduism cannot be seen as a religion. Also see Asad (1993), Mandair (2009) for the emergence of the concept of religion in the West. While there are important differences in their arguments, they all draw attention to the fact that the concept of religion evolved in the West and that before the European encounter with India, there was no entity called Hinduism and the category is largely a Western invention. The general consensus is that before the late eighteenth century, the term Hindu was used by the Muslim administrators to refer to the region beyond the
Orientalists believed that India was the cradle of Western civilization and once possessed a “pure”, monotheistic, “natural religion.” It was morally and intellectually excellent, based on the sound principles embodied in its ancient texts. However, subsequently the natives had become ignorant of this scriptural knowledge and the laws embodied in them, resulting in their current degenerate and immoral state. Consequently, various forms of incorrect practices such as idolatry, polytheism, rituals, superstitions and dependence on the Puranic tradition had proliferated. The task therefore was now to cleanse the native texts which had been corrupted by the priest-craft and the accretions of tradition, and give the natives their own laws back. The means to improve the society and reform the traditions of the land was therefore through a renewal of its ancient textual heritage in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.

The Anglicists and Utilitarians on the other hand believed that the ancient texts of the land were riddled with errors and that Hinduism was always a false religion with false gods and a corrupt priestly class. Forming the natives through initiation into their own classical texts was to be indifferent to truth and worse, encourage the cultivation of falsehood. These traditions and texts could not be reformed and purified but must be rejected as false. Instead, the natives

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91 In the second half of eighteenth century, several “ancient texts” of the Hindus had been discovered, fueling the idea of Indian origins of civilization. The idea of “natural religion,” underlying the “discovery” of all “religions,” was considered to be universal. It was assumed that beneath the plethora of beliefs and rites, lay a common, natural religion (with an esoteric, philosophical core), which was then corrupted by the priests leading to the core being eclipsed by superstition. While the Vedas were seen as the classical core, the puranas and other practices were seen to be part of the “corruption.” I deal with this in greater detail later. See Harrison (1990) for an excellent account of the development of the idea of natural religion.

92 The degeneration of India is often seen as a reason for justification of colonization, but it is likely that the discourse was not prior to the turn to the empire but co-terminus with it. See Pathan (2009, 234–39) for a discussion of the literature on the degeneration thesis. It does not seem off the mark to say that the narrative of degeneration of Indian society has its roots in the late eighteenth century and is linked to the invention of Hinduism by the Orientalists and missionaries. The constitution of an entity called Hinduism makes possible a comparison of “religions” and their “belief systems” embodied in the doctrines, leading to evaluation of doctrines of Hinduism as false.
should be formed through their education in English literature and sciences and introduced to “useful” knowledge. For Anglicists like Macaulay and Charles Trevelyan, there was an excellent precedent from their own cultural past that supported such a move. The introduction of the study of classical literature and sciences of ancient Greece and Rome in fifteenth and sixteenth century England served as an instance of “a great impulse given to the mind of a whole society, of prejudices overthrown, of knowledge diffused, of taste purified, of arts and sciences planted in countries which had recently been ignorant and barbarous” (Macaulay [1835]1999, 166).93 Just as this encounter with classical antiquity had triggered a creative revival in England, India’s encounter with the classical literature of England and its sciences would act as a stimulus for the growth of intellect and morals of Indians.94

Just for a brief moment, we have a glimpse of the beginnings of a conception of education as engagement with the ancient texts of one’s own culture emerge in opposition to education for utilitarian and “useful purposes” only for the former to recede into the background. In the debate on Bildung, one engaged with ancient Greek or Roman texts for purposes of self-formation. Their value precisely was that the classical texts were not for professional, vocational or administrative purposes. However, Macaulay’s argument for education through classical literature of England, we see, is collapsed with education for “useful” purposes, a distinction crucial to the idea of Bildung as self-formation.

Thus, a Judeo-Christian conception of a true, monotheistic natural religion based on universal reason which subsequently degenerated to heathen polytheism due to the machinations of the corrupt priestly class structured the European conception of non-Western societies like India.

93 See Trevelyan for an expression of a similar sentiment (1838, 195-97).
94 Like the Anglicists, the missionaries too held that the Hindu society had become degenerate due to the priestly class and education through vernacular would make them capable of reading these texts on their own without any mediation from the priests. However, since all factions agreed that the vernaculars were not yet developed to be used, education through the vernaculars was not part of the debate at all. However, the objective was that at some point in future the vernaculars would be developed enough and would supplant education through English.
However, between 1780 and 1820, an important shift would take place. If for the early generation of Orientalists like Colebrooke and Jones, truth and knowledge was “providential, unfragmented at the dawn of humankind and therefore something to be discovered” (Dodson 2002), for the Orientalists of 1830s, truth and revelation was conceptualized as a point in the future where other civilizations would have to be morally and intellectually prepared to receive the truth of Christianity. God’s revelation would be historically realized and was a manifestation of rationality. Thus the idea of one pure, ancient “natural” religion of the early generations of Orientalists would, by 1820s give way to the assumption that the whole world was one civilization, in different stages of development with Europe and Christianity at the apex of civilizational development (Mandair 2009).

The description of Indian society as degenerate or immoral was not restricted to the British but was shared by the German and French Orientalists alike. Spurred by the belief in Indian origins of civilization which helped destabilize orthodox Christianity back home, the Orientalists, especially the British and German, contributed significantly to the growth of Indology as a discipline during this period and put in place some of the initial structures to understand Indian society. In this process, the category of religion played a pivotal role (Balagangadhara 1994; King 1999 Mandair 2009; App 2010; McGetchin 2009) and set their

95 Lessing, in his “The Education of the Human Race” ([1780]1957) would bring reason itself into history. Or rather, history itself would be seen as part of the process of the development of reason. Human reason developed slowly and gradually across history, with the contents of rational religion (central to which were the concept of God, or “the true conception of the One,” the obligation to be good and be rewarded or punished in the after-world and the immortality of the soul) being revealed in stages (Yasukata 2002, 91). Similarly, Hegel would make revelation synonymous with the discovery of God’s nature and purpose by human reason in history. With this theoretical knowledge itself becomes one with knowing God in history, the unification of faith and rationality, of reason and revelation. For Hegel’s grand synthesis, see Berthold-Bond (1989). In the previous chapter, we saw these structures in Kant’s scheme for universal history as well.

96 Despite the fact that the Germans did not have any colonial interests, it is well-known today that German Orientalism shared many of the features of British Orientalism and played a crucial role in the beginnings and growth of Indology, from the late eighteenth century onwards. German universities like Berlin provided the infrastructure for Oriental studies and Indology (especially Sanskrit Philology) from its beginning days, with the Germans leading in their output with regard to their British and French counterparts to a considerable extent. See McGetchin (2009), Mandair (2009). Herder, Hegel, Humboldt and other German Romantics were deeply interested in India for India represented for them their own past.
cognitive limit in the understanding of the Indian society, resulting in similar descriptions of the Indian society and its traditions.

Much of the postcolonial scholarship, drawing from Edward Said, has attributed the negative representations of Indian culture by European Orientalists to be a result of a need to consolidate colonial interests and power. However, Said himself, at times, had a more nuanced understanding of Orientalism as a body of scholarship. In his famous *Orientalism* (1978), Said observed that “Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine. If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction” (Said 2001, 42). Thus, rather than reduce Orientalism to a body of “knowledge” that crudely serves imperial interests, one needs to ask what makes Europeans perceive the Orient the way they do and “what must be the elements structuring the cultural experiences of the West such that its self-description and other-description have those features” (Dhareshwar 2005, 198). Drawing from the work of scholars in religious studies like S. N. Balagangadhara (1994) who emphasize the role of religion in structuring the experience of Europeans, we could say that this “limitations of thought” that Said draws attention to, is constituted by the category of religion. It should be evident by now that the colonial framework to understand other cultures did not emerge in a vacuum or purely out of interaction with the colonized and the need to consolidate colonial rule, but was shaped by the larger history of religion in Europe.97

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97Mandair points out that the category of religion and its influence has been neglected by the postcolonial scholars who “made an overinvestment in historicism” and “never really touched the ground of theory, namely religion” Mandair (2009, 384). Urs App, similarly, observes that the role of colonialism and its economic and political interests dwindles in front of the role played by religion in the birth of Orientalism (App 2010, xi). He also notes that the framework for understanding Eastern cultures used by the early Orientalists came mainly from mission work of the earlier centuries and the framework to study other cultures remained over-determined by their influence.
All factions agreed on one aspect of the solution: the natives had to be improved morally, intellectually and spiritually and the means to do this was through Western education. However, *prima facie*, they differed on the nature of education and how the natives should be formed. The Anglicists and Utilitarians like Macaulay and Mill who were deeply critical of the learning traditions of India believed that secular English education which would orient them to “useful”, “secular” truth and knowledge was the solution. The Orientalists who were comparatively more appreciative of Indian traditions argued that the natives must be educated in their own ancient texts in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian and European learning must be gradually grafted onto them. The missionaries held that education in the vernacular with a thrust on religious education which would enable the Hindus to recognize the truth of Christianity on their own and reject their pagan traditions and practices as false was the solution. In this way, it was believed that the character of the natives would be transformed. Thus, right from the beginning of nineteenth century, education in India began by discrediting the larger society it was part of and the various traditions and intellectual inheritance that shaped the people of the land. *It created a particular kind of an ethos with an emphasis on reforming the natives.*

3.2 Nature of Moral Lack

What was the nature of the moral lack that the British had discovered in the natives? While the earlier generations of Europeans found in the Hindus a general absence of morality (they found the Hindus “deceitful”, “liars”, “cruel”, “licentious”, “cunning”, “fraudsters”, lacking in sincerity and so on), central to the British conception of moral lack, I would like to argue, was what they characterized as the Hindu’s lack of respect for veracity and truth, the absence of the “fundamental, moral principle.”

98 Many Europeans of notable repute despaired that

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98 The ubiquity of the discourse of native falsehood and deceit in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is striking. Five decades later, the question of whether secular education had improved the native’s respect for
“there was no virtue in which the natives are more universally deficient than in a regard for truth,” and that men do not even pretend to truth and honesty because the pretension is not necessary to their station in life:

There is no virtue in which the natives are more universally deficient than in a regard for truth. Veracity is, in fact, almost unknown. Falsehood pervades all the intercourse of private life, and is carried to such an extent in courts of law, as to render it almost impossible for the judges to exercise their duty in such a manner as to satisfy their consciences. False testimony is not an exception, but the rule; and it is delivered, and even preserved in, with a calmness, a self-possession, and air of sincerity which would disarm suspicion, were it not that two conflicting stories cannot both be true, and the character of Indian witnesses is tolerably appreciated by those most accustomed to them. Not only will two sets of witnesses give directly contrary testimony, but not infrequently will it turn out, upon investigation, that neither of them know anything of the matter in question. Even those who have a just cause will seek to defend by falsehood. It must be quite unnecessary to descant upon the low state of moral principle that must be prevalent where such things are of frequent occurrence. No virtue is more essential to the well-being of society than a general regard for truth. When this is wanting, all rights are insecure, and courts of law may be made the instruments of the grossest injustice.” (Thornton 1835, 122-23; italics mine)

The problem of truth was most keenly perceived in the judicial processes, where the frequency of perjury committed by the natives drove the judges of the newly established Supreme Court to exasperation and a considerable amount of moral confusion. William Jones, known for his Oriental sympathies, in his “Charge to the Grand Jury” (June 10, 1787) had noted that the natives committed perjury “with as little remorse as if it were a proof of truth and truthfulness, and whether they have become more trustworthy would figure in many session reports of the British Parliament. Well-known administrators and those concerned with education would depose in front of the Select Committees of the House of Lords on the subject of promotion of education in India in order to answer this question among others. I deal with this in the next chapter.

99 Thornton almost reproduces Charles Grant on the Hindus. See C. Grant (1813, 251–52). Also see Trevor (1799, 62) and First Report from Select Committee of House of Lords, GBPD (1852, 500–30). The discourse also makes its way into Law journals. See, for instance The Legal Observer (November 1830-April 1831, 1:41–44), which deals with Indian witnesses and their “total disregard for truth.” The quotes and reference can easily be multiplied.
ingenuity, or even a merit” (Jones 1807, VII: 28). He confessed to being most disturbed by this act of the natives since it rendered any act of justice and discharge of public duty impossible. As a solution to the problem, Jones had suggested that the Hindus swear in front of a consecrated fire and that the Hindu witnesses be reminded time and again that even by their own shastras, false evidence was a heinous crime. However, even he finally admitted that the only way was to make perjury punishable for the state of the erroneous religion of Hinduism was such that “if the most binding form on the consciences of good men could be known and established, there would be few consciences to be bound by it” (29). Jones, for all his admiration for the ancient Hindu civilization, regretfully seemed to be suggesting that the religion of the Hindus did not aim at moral cultivation at all.

One of the earlier articulations of the problem which also attempts to forward somewhat of an explanation for the “deceitful nature” of the natives is by Major Mark Wilks, acting resident at Mysore. In a Report on the Interior Administration, Resources and Expenditure of the Government of Mysoor (September 4, 1799) and addressed to William Bentinck, Wilks records the differences in the proceedings between the English and the indigenous systems of settling disputes and his evaluation is worth quoting at length:

103. But the object in which the principles of proceeding differ most essentially, from those of an English Court, is in the degree of credit which is given to the testimony upon Oath.

104. It appears to be in the spirit of English jurisprudence to receive as true, the testimony of a competent Witness until his credibility is impeached.

105. It is a fixed rule of evidence in Mysoor, to suspect as false the testimony of every Witness, until its truth is otherwise supported.

106. It follows as a consequence of this principle, that the Panchaets are anxious for the examination of collateral facts, of matters of general notoriety, and of all that enters into circumstantial evidence: and that their decisions are infinitely more influenced by that description of proof, than is consistent with
the received rules of evidence, to which we are accustomed, or could be tolerated in the practice of an
English Court.

107. I have frequently conversed with the Dewan, and with the most intelligent members of these
Panchaets, on the subject of this new principle in the reception of evidence: and none of these persons
have hesitated to defend the rule, and to avow, as an abstract proposition founded on experience, that
the presumption is infinitely stronger against the veracity, than in favor of the truth, of a witness.

108. The period is not very remote when the person who should have openly adverted to defective
veracity, as a general characteristic of the people of India, would have been considered in other
countries as the victim of an illiberal prejudice, or the author of an unmerited calumny. The translation
of their civil and religious institutes, has now laid open to the general reader, the apology or the
expiation of perjury in most of its forms: and the most enlightened authorities of the law, have
pronounced their practical conviction, that the natives of India are lamentably deficient in that ordinary
degree of veracity, which in other countries is cherished as the vital principle of moral conduct, and the
foundation of all the virtues.

109. On an abstract view of the principle which has been noticed, it would seem to be more consonant
to reason to receive testimony at the value which it probably possesses, than to accept it at a value,
which it probably does not possess; but it would be foreign to the object of this Report, and still more
remote from the competence of its author to discuss the practicability, or expedience of reconciling this
rule of evidence to any fixed principles of jurisprudence.

110. It would be more encouraging to the views of a benevolent legislator to attribute the defective
morals of the people, chiefly to the despotich Government, under which they have immemorially lived;
involving the habitual necessity of opposing fraud to force, and to conclude, that the evil would
gradually subside, on the establishment of a better order of things. (Wilks 1805, 25–28)

Wilks begins by observing the differences in the two forms of judicial proceedings –
indigenous and English – and noticeably ends not with a greater understanding of the way the
indigenous courts function but by concluding that their dealings were proof of the deficient
morality of the natives. Wilks singles out the manner in which the evidence of a witness is
treated. He observes that unlike in English jurisprudence where it is required to receive the
testimony of the witness as true unless its credibility is in some way shown to be suspect,
native courts suspect as false the evidence of all witnesses unless its truth is supported
otherwise. As a result of this feature, the Panchayats are anxious for the examination of
collateral facts and of all that enters into circumstantial evidence. A discussion with various
members of the Panchayats reveals that they were all of the opinion that the “presumption is
infinitely stronger against the veracity, than in favor of the truth, of a witness (27).” At this
point, the most logical way to proceed would have been to probe more into another way of
dealing with evidence, truth and judicial settlements in a culture different from his. Instead,
after noting the difference, Wilks concludes that the study of religious and civil institutions in
India furnishes further proof of the “defective veracity” of natives and characterizes the
natives as “lamentably deficient in that ordinary degree of veracity, which in other countries
is cherished as the vital principle of moral conduct, and the foundation of all the virtues.”

What allows Wilks to arrive at this moral judgement? Sufiya Pathan (2009, 154-56), in her
analysis of the text, points out that Wilks arrives at this judgement due to misunderstanding
the absence of the larger legal norm of testimonial truth among the natives,100 a notion central
to the idea of English Jurisprudence. The absence of this cardinal principle of the English
which according to him constitutes the “foundation of all virtues,” serves as an explanation

100 Testimonial truth developed as a legal principle in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, as part of the
legal culture of the times, with its emphasis on the concept of “matter of fact.” Sound judgement, it was
believed, could be arrived at by examining the testimony of those who had seen and heard about an event, even
if the event was not witnessed by the fact-finding committees or jurors. The credibility of the witness was of
utmost importance and institutional arrangements and procedures were developed in order to exclude witnesses
with interests in order to ensure determination of truth. The oath was to aid in this process and perjury was a
serious offence. The process rested on the belief that even “ephemeral” facts of human action could be
determined with impartiality and a high degree of certitude such that even ordinary persons could arrive at it.
Much of this epistemology and method was transferred from law to other sites of knowledge including the
sciences (Landau 2002, 194–95). The great chemist Robert Boyle compared the probative values of the
testimony of several witnesses in the court of law with the values of experiments repeated by other independent
scientists, increasing the probability of the truth of its results. See Berman (2003, 300). Shapin (1994) argues
that though seventeenth century scientists are seen as inaugurating an era where truth is guaranteed by direct
experience and individual reason while emphasizing the inadequacy of testimony, the social history of natural
science shows otherwise. Seventeenth century knowledge practices depended substantially on testimony of
“gentlemen,” with the very notion of a gentleman being linked to truth-speaking.
for native deceit. Pathan’s contention is that his judgement is an evaluation based not on observation and understanding of native practices but is an inference derived from within the normative framework which equates judgements derived from the absence of norms that regulates the life of Europeans with facts about the natives. Therefore it is not knowledge about the natives at all. The absence, or perhaps more accurately, the violation of the norm of testimonial truth, produces the “fact” of native depravity. It renders deceitfulness as an essential feature of native character, when it is in fact an evaluation that has resulted from the assumptions of a normative frame.

Wilks does not surmise that there could be a different logic at work and that there is perhaps incomprehension on his part. Perhaps there is a different conception of truth or a different kind of a practice of truth-telling? For example, Foucault has given us an account of another conception of truth-telling in his examination of the Greek notion of parrhesia (fearlessly speaking the truth). He shows us how the Greeks problematized truth-telling in different ways: Who are the candidates who can tell the truth, under what conditions can one tell the truth, how does one recognize a parrhesiastes (the one who speaks the truth), how does the parrhesiastes know that what he believes in is in fact the truth and so on. An act of truth-telling with the ancient Greeks is not merely a coincidence between one’s belief and

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101 The concept of truth, understood to be timeless and beyond any kind of history, sociology or genealogy, has recently been called into question. Besides Foucault’s fascinating work on this issue which I discuss, also see Shapin (1994) who makes a case for a social history of truth. For an account of the genealogy of truth or perhaps what Ian Hacking (2004) prefers to call truth-telling, see Bernard Williams (2002). Williams draws attention to a new form or practice of truth-telling which emerges with the Enlightenment, particularly the modern concept of truth-telling about the self. Confessing to God gives way to man confessing to himself, a heightened form of self-consciousness where one is not just writing about oneself but oneself as known to oneself. We can recall here the monastic practice of confession which I detailed in the previous chapter. The debates about the natives here can be linked to the absence of “one’s relationship to oneself” that Williams refers to.

102 Foucault contrasts the Greek conception with the Cartesian model where “the coincidence between belief and truth is obtained in a certain (mental) evidential experience” and without evidence, one is not certain that what one believes in is in fact true, with the Greek conception where “truth-having” is guaranteed by the possession of certain ethical qualities: “In the Greek conception of Parrhesia, however, there does not seem to be a problem about acquisition of truth since truth-having is guaranteed by the possession of certain moral qualities: when someone has certain moral qualities, then it is proof he has access to truth - and vice versa. The ‘Parrhesiastic game’ presupposes that the parrhesiastes is someone who has moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and, secondly, to convey such truth to others” (Foucault 2001, 15).
evidence or a correspondence between what a person believes to be true with how things really are (or the “fact of the matter”). Foucault gives the example of a grammar teacher who may tell his children the truth that he teaches and he may believe what he is teaching is true but from the ancient Greek perspective that does not make him a truth-teller or a *parrhesiastes*. Similarly, mere sincerity could not make someone a truth-teller. A person is a *parrhesiastes* when he knows the truth and risks the wrath of a superior by speaking it fearlessly at the right time. Thus, not everybody could be a *parrhesiastes*. Only a person who possesses certain personal, moral and social qualities is recognized as one. Thus, if slaves were less likely to tell the truth, it is because they were bound to men and were not free citizens. Here, the notion of truth-telling is tied to the features of social world and not reduced due to the deficient moral character of the person. Nor is it restricted to the idea of verisimilitude. Similarly, in Wilk’s account of indigenous dispute settling, we see that various kinds of subtle distinctions are made about who can speak the truth and who cannot. It is assumed that most people would say what they could, based on the circumstances they were in. Yet in such a culture, there were innumerable sayings and stories in praise of truth and upholding the importance of truth-telling. Someone who could “see” truth and would speak the truth was admirable, commanded immense respect and was sought after just as the *parrhesiastes* was in ancient Greece. This is in marked contrast to the idea of truth in testimonial truth, where if the witness swore the truth in the name of God, it meant that God is a witness to the truth or falsity of the statement. Any deviation was a sin that would impact the state of one’s conscience, which was ultimately indicative of the relation of one’s soul to God, and would act as the barometer measuring any deviation from the norm.
The “want of truth” in the natives was central in the passing of the Charter Act of 1813, which legalized missionary educational activity in India. Wilberforce, in his speech in favour of the propagation of Christianity, would list several practices as evidence of the immorality of Indians, dwelling at some length on the issue of perjury and the native disregard for truth. Citing the judgement and evidences of John Mackintosh, William Jones and other British judges and administrators as proof of “the feeble sense of moral obligation” and the absence of this “fundamental norm” in the natives, Wilberforce argued that even under the present British rule, this degradation persisted and that this feature was a crucial indicator of a general moral collapse:

The first witness whom I shall call in proof of the present depraved state of natives of India, is a gentleman well known in his house for his talents and his eloquence, and whom there is reason, I trust,

103 The Charter Act of 1813 signalled two shifts in British attitude to native society: a) They assumed a new responsibility towards natives b) They sanctioned missionary activity in India. Gauri Viswanathan notes that “One cannot fail to be struck by the peculiar irony of history in which England’s initial involvement with the education of natives derived not from a conviction of native immorality as the later discourse might lead us to believe, but from depravity of their own administrators and merchants” (Viswanathan 1988, 87). However, between 1780s (which was rocked by company scandals) and 1813, was the constitution of entity of Hinduism. A whole lot of “ethnographic” details about native immorality largely collected by missionaries was already available which Wilberforce uses forcefully in the Parliament before the Charter Act can be passed. As recent scholarship shows Charles Grant’s document about Hinduism was in circulation in the late eighteenth century. Thus, the discourse around the immorality of natives was already gaining in the last decade of eighteenth century as I have shown. Many in fact believed that the depravity of British administrators was the result of mingling with the immoral natives. However, some did object to such a characterization of the natives as immoral and drew attention to various immoral actions in England, as the debate on the Charter Act makes evident. It is against them that Wilberforce makes his case. See Wilberforce’s speech on “Propagation of Christianity in India” (GBPD 1813, XXVI: 827–73).

104 A native woman witness, who, after having “prevaricated shockingly” was asked if she did not think there was any harm in false swearing. She had answered “that she understood the English had a great horror of it, but there was no such horror in this country” (GBPD 1813, XXV I: 846). This story circulated in the parliamentary debates as evidence. Wilberforce’s “decisive proof” however, was contained in the answers to the interrogatories sent around by Governor General Lord Wellesley to a number of resident magistrates in 1802, wishing to obtain the most authentic account of “the moral state of the natives.” Report after report from various judges had despairs about perjury and the “barefaced disregard of truth which always characterized the natives of India.” They pointed out that as a result of the native character there was a “the total distrust of human testimony” rendering justice impossible, that “no rank, no caste is exempt from the contagion,” and that “even the honest men as well as the rogues were perjured.” This character of the natives made it almost impossible for chief justices and magistrates of India to arrive at the truth, rendering direct testimony from the natives almost useless. Often the judges received all oral testimony with distrust and scepticism and were “obliged to investigate the character of the witness more closely than that of the criminal” (846-49). What magnified the crime in the eyes of the Europeans was that the perjurers did not realize the enormity of lying under oath. Wilberforce stresses the fact that the judges who formed these opinions lived in India for long and had the “natives under their view” (850), unlike those who defended the natives as they had never been to India. Grant and Wilberforce’s account of the moral character of the natives as well a discussion of Wellesley’s interrogatories would appear in James Mill’s discussion of the moral character of the native (1817).
to believe, that we shall shortly have the honour of including in our number: I scarcely need explain, that I am speaking of Sir James Mackintosh. He, it is well-known, presided on the bench of justice in Bombay; and in a charge to the grand jury at Bombay, delivered in the year 1803, he thus expressed himself: “I observe that the accomplished and justly celebrated person, Sir William Jones, who carried with him to this country a prejudice in favour of the natives, which he naturally imbibed in the course of his studies…even he, after long judicial experience reluctantly confessed their general depravity. The prevalence of perjury which he strongly states, and which I have myself observed, is perhaps a more certain sign of the general dissolution than other more daring ferocious crimes, much more horrible to the imagination, and of which the immediate consequences are more destructive to society.

(GBPD 1813, XXVI: 846)

While the Europeans noted several moral deficiencies in Indians, many were variants of “wanting truth,” such as ‘of not being true to themselves’, of “going against a promise made” and lacking in sincerity. The natives were fraudsters, liars, deceitful, hypocritical, engaging in intrigue and perjury, falsehood, servility and hypocritical obsequiousness. What was most disturbing about this phenomenon for the British was that the fundamental moral lack rendered them completely unfit to be employed in territorial departments of the government either in the capacity as judges, magistrates or as administrators. This threatened the very existence of the fledgling empire; for unless the natives on whose help the Europeans depended were trustworthy, they would be unable to administer the country.105

If the problem of “want of truth,” rendered the natives unfit for employment, the solution could not be found in Law as the Utilitarians had argued. Law could only regulate life according to the morality of which it was an expression. Moreover, the very process of the legal system was being subverted by the natives. Nor could the solution be the setting up of

105 See Frykenberg (1986) who points out that of all reports of bizarre phenomena that flooded the British ears, none bothered the British more than issues of embezzlement, fraud and the loyalty of the natives. The “want of a common morality or a common humanity beyond loyalty to one's own community of kin and kind” raised the question “on what grounds could one build a system of basic authority on which to erect a common ethic of loyalty”? (38) It was education, Frykenberg notes, that would create this common morality.
the convention of testimonial truth in Law and other domains for even if such a principle is set up (as it indeed is likely to have happened), it need not bring about the required change in the natives. To cultivate the recognition and regard for “truth” in the natives required a fundamental change in the native character itself. The solution, according to Charles Grant, Trevelyan and many others lay in education.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, though modern education in India was largely to provide administrators and clerks, it was also to produce a certain kind of public officers, those with integrity and respect for truth. These qualities would enable one to discharge public duty satisfactorily, thereby making the native capable of administration and acts of justice.

Charles Grant would therefore argue that in order to employ natives in judicial and administrative posts, mere administrative and legal reforms would be insufficient. A fundamental change in their character has to be brought about through education, a conclusion that underpins his famous tract Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals; and on the means of improving it ([1792]1813; hereafter Observations). Grant notes that in Bengal, “a man of real veracity and integrity is a great phenomenon; one conscientious in the whole of his conduct, it is to be feared, is an unknown character.” He goes a step further; in his description of native immorality, he links this perceived absence of truth to suggest the absence of guilt and conscience:

They want truth, honesty, and good-faith, in an extreme, of which European society furnishes no example. In Europe those principles are the standard of character and credit; men who have them not are still felicitous to maintain the reputation of them, and those who are known to be devoid of them sink into contempt. It is not so in Bengal. The qualities themselves are so generally gone, that men do not found their pretension in society upon them; they take no pains to acquire or to keep up the credit

\textsuperscript{106} Education would come to displace law as a way to effect a larger moral transformation in the early nineteenth century.
of possessing them. Those virtues are not the tests by which connexions and associations are regulated; nor does the absence of them, however plain and notorious, greatly lower any one in public estimation, nor strip him of his acquaintance. Want of veracity especially, is so habitual, that if a man has truth to defend, he will hardly fail to recur to falsehood for its support. In matters of interest, the use of lying seems so natural, that it gives no provocation, it is treated as an excusable indulgence, a mode of proceeding from which general toleration has taken away offence, and the practice of cheating, pilfering, tricking, and imposing, in the ordinary transactions of life are so common, that the Hindoos seem to regard them as they do natural evils, against which they will defend themselves as well as they can, but at which it would be idle to be angry. Very flagrant breaches of truth and honesty pass without any deep or lasting stain. (C. Grant 1813, 26; italics mine) 107

Grant’s observations regarding the native are worth noting. The natives, he finds, do not display any mental anguish before lying. A mental anguish would at least be indicative of them being torn apart by two conflicting desires, pulling them in two opposite directions. Instead, their use of lying is “so natural,” almost an “indulgence.” They lie easily, without any provocation or any sign of internal conflict. Nor do they seem to experience any guilt or remorse on violating the norm. Of course, we must not to surmise these observations to mean that the natives were immoral or liars by nature. Our interest is in the framework that the Europeans bring to bear such that they perceived the natives in the ways they do.

Grant was not the only one to refer to the absence of conscience in the natives. William Ward notes that “not a single book on morals, on the duties of creatures towards each other, or their creator, is to be found in any of the common schools throughout India.” The Hindus, he therefore concluded, had no moral sense at all and it was only to be expected that the Indians would possess no word for conscience, the faculty that guided moral actions, in their language:

107 Stokes notes that Grant’s panacea for the Indian problem was an Indian counterpart to European Reformation which would liberate individual conscience from the tyranny of the priests and human traditions for the purposes of “inner life” and salvation. This, according to Grant, required an educative process (Stokes 1989, 28–30).
Falsehood is so common, that I never knew a Hindoo who felt the least scruple in his head, or the least
shame when violations of sincerity were brought to him. The Hindoos laugh at the English idea of
discovering truth in the court of judicature by the examination of witnesses; and the perjury may be
purchased at whatever price is offered; the false swearer is called a four annas man. The English judges
are often deeply embarrassed when they have to pronounce upon a cause in the examination of which
the witnesses on both sides have sworn in positive contradiction to each other. As these people have no
moral sense, it is not strange that the word conscience should not be found in their language. (Ward
1820, 143; italics mine)

This led some to assert that “the moral and intellectual atmosphere of Hindostan is so charged
with a moral miasma, the accumulation of ages, that no mere laws on paper, no mere
regulations, no mere proclamations will tell on this – you must to a certain extent “educate
the people into conscience” (“English Ideas and Indian Adaptations” 1858, 24). It would be
education, more than any other modern institution that would re-form the natives. It would
effect a new model of transformation and enable the formation of a moral subject. The role of
education, we see, is envisaged by the Europeans to be largely in the realm of morality.

The problem of truth surfaced in these debates in yet another way. If one dimension to the
problem was moral, the other appears to be in the realm of the cognitive. The British noted
that the native disregard for truth extended to indifference to truth claims in the domain of
practices. A missionary in the Foreign Missionary Chronicle observed: “It is hard to arouse
in the Hindu to desire the truth, or to feel, or to care, whether his religion is true or false,
reasonable or absurd. Often veneration for antiquity alone will remain when all attempts to
sustain its consistency and excellence are abandoned; and when nothing else can be said, he
will take refuge in the assumption that all are similar and alike true and that every man may
properly adhere to that in which he was born and educated” (Anon. 1836, IV:3). That this
native indifference to truth claims of religions caused considerable difficulty in the initial
days of the inter-cultural dialogue is made most evident in the debates between the natives
and the missionaries on the question of the truth of religions. Richard Fox Young is particularly illuminating on this issue. Drawing from his mentor Wilhelm Halbfass’ observation who points out that “India has discovered Europe and begun to respond to it in being overrun and objectified by it….There is no sign of active theoretical interest, no attempt to respond to the foreign challenge, no attempt to enter into a “dialogue” – up to the period around 1800” (Halbfass 1988, 437), Richard Fox Young sees this statement as suggestive of Benares in the early nineteenth century. Observing that various Christian missionaries “were active in the city, cruising its ghats, chowks and bazaars, talking up the Gospel and – more often than not - getting in the way,” the pundits, he noted, “were cool toward it” making no attempt to engage, and the relationship with the missionaries being “generally pacific and rarely adversarial” (Young 2005, 14).

Young notes a similar response from the Brahmins of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. When a young missionary, Daniel Poor, sought to know why the Brahmins studiously avoided public conversation on religion, the Vellalas offered the usual explanation that “the Brahmins of this place are ignorant of their religion; but some, who occasionally come from India, are able to explain and defend it.” Young comments on the various attempts made by the missionaries to draw the Brahmins of Jaffna into the arena of debate:

The missionaries attributed to them [Brahmins] a higher status than their actual status warranted...The failure of Brahmin-baiting predictably strained the patience of the eager but inexperienced missionaries. They had entered the field untrained and supposed the Brahmins to be to Hinduism what the clergy was to Christianity in Europe or America. The reality was different and offended their protestant standards. Brahmins were religious specialists but neither preached nor pastured; they had clients but not congregations; they had books they revered but did not disclose except to other Brahmins and a select Vellala elite; aloof and uncommunicative, they declined to become involved in

108 R. F. Young (1981) points out that it was only after 1840 that resistance to Christianity began to be expressed.
theological disputation. After an all too brief and initially enthusiastic openness, dampened by discourtesy and insult, it seemed the Brahmans had distanced themselves for good.” (R. F. Young and Jepančan 1995, 51–52)

What could explain their silence and refusal to debate? Young, while noting the reluctance of the pundits of Benares to enter into a debate, attributes their withdrawal to the nature of the vehement missionary presentation of Christianity. However, this would not sufficiently explain the indifference of the pundits because a few years later, we would see the rise of whom Fox calls “Hindu apologetics” who would be equally aggressive and vehement about Hinduism. Instead, Young (2005) directs us to the response of pundit Vitthal Sastri, who taught Samkya and Vedanta in the famous Benares Sanskrit College, established in late 18th century under British patronage:

> We (Pandits) admit that there is not an impossibility in concerning the wrongness in the Vedanta, and so do not disagree to listen to the argument intended to show its wrongness. But if our opponent will not accept the terms which occur in Vedanta books, in the same sense in which we use them when explaining the theory, he is not an opponent to us but to a man of straw formed by himself. Hence an imaginary refutation of the theory, in the shape in which we accept it, makes us indifferent about what he says of the Vedanta and does not raise a desire in us to hear what theory of religion he himself holds….Missionaries mistake our silence. When a reply which we think nonsense, or not applicable is offered to us, we think that to retire silently and civilly from such useless discussion is more meritorious than to continue it. But our silence is not a sign of our admission of defeat which the missionaries think to be so. (Ballantyne 1860, xli–xli)

Vitthal Sastri’s answer, though given later in the 1850s, seems to suggest that the silence was caused due to a conceptual dissonance when it came to debating and ascertaining the “truths” of religions; the Indians and the missionaries were not debating on the same terms. The
natives did *not know how* to debate the truth of religions. Thus, it is not surprising that what followed in the initial days of the encounter was mutual incomprehension.\footnote{See Sarah Claerhout’s “Creating the Conditions for Conversion: Secular Education, False Religion and Reform in British India,” in her unpublished thesis for a detailed reconstruction of the debate on religion and its truth claims that occurred in the early nineteenth century (2010, 325–85).}

Some accounts call attention to the similarity between the attitude of the natives and the ancient pagans in the way practices were not sought to be justified by truths of reason. It was pointed out that like the ancient pagans, the natives: a) believed in one God, worshipped the other gods but did not make the “one God, “the First Cause,” the object of worship b) they had two distinct divisions: philosophical disputations and traditional practices on the other. The former, surprisingly, did not provide reasons for the latter and the two domains were kept apart. Whether there existed a creator God who was responsible for the origins of the universe had more to do with philosophy and had as little to do with practice as Newton’s theory of gravity did:

They believed in one God, and they believed in a principle of worship, but they did not connect that Being with that principle, and make God the object of worship...We observe the coolness with which the ancient philosophers discussed the existence of a God. The Valeriuses, Balbas and Cottas met and argued, some for and some against it: they talked with pleasant unconcern, they criticized with literary courtesy the strong and weak points in each other’s arguments; the snuff-box, as it were, went around, and all was philosophical ease and good humour as the question, whether there was a God or whether there was not a God, trembled in balance. The truth is, that the question with them was entirely a philosophical as distinct from a religious question: it had nothing to do with practice; no one duty depended upon it; the idea of worshipping this First Cause never occurred for a moment to these men: it would have appeared a pure mistake, a simply absurd puzzleheaded confusion of two distinct departments. A theory of the origin of the universe was a branch of philosophy not of religion, and had as little to do with practice as a Newtonian theory of gravitation...it was not connected to the truths of reason...Exactly the same distinction forms the basis of, and gives the key to Brahminism. 

*(Miscellanea Critica: 1858, 3:185)*
To their puzzlement, the Europeans noted that the question of whether a certain practice was “true” or “false” based on the results of a philosophical disputation would be seen as “confusion of two distinct departments” as far as natives were concerned. Interestingly, in the way the natives keep the two domains separate, the account compares their response to the ancient skeptics. The ancient skeptics had contended that social existence or living in the world itself was a form of knowledge (Balagangadhara 1994, 435). They maintained that if traditions and other forms of knowledge that one lives by had developed over a period of time with their own methods, procedures and forms of transmission, then their existence did not need any theoretical justification. Their existence and continued sustenance as a form of human endeavour in itself was justification enough. Seeking rational justification for these practices meant that one necessarily had to subordinate the practical ways in which we relate to the world to theoretical arguments.

A similar observation with regard to the native’s attitude to practices is made by Alexander Duff. In his evidence to the SCIT, Duff recalls his earlier interactions with natives on the subject of indigenous education in Bengal:

“Nor have I ever found that they had the least objection, either to our knowing what was taught in their schools, or to our repeating it, or proclaiming it to the world…Upon this very subject of indigenous education, I have in Calcutta published statements expository of its sinister character, furnished by the Natives themselves; and given accounts of facts and scenes brought by their aid within the scope of my observation. I have never found the least objection taken to this course. They simply said,” It is the fact; it has been with us from time immemorial. (GBPP 1852-53, 25: 40-41)

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110 Recall Taylor (1975, 7). Bilgrami (2014) notes that Descartes drew the conclusion that “if one can doubt our knowledge of the external world, quite possibly the external world does not exist.” No skeptic in the tradition, he observes, ever drew this conclusion before Descartes: “The Ancients who formulated skeptical doctrines never concluded that the world may not exist from their assertion that there was no knowledge of it. Why not? Because they did not assume that the only way to relate to the world was via knowledge. They took it for granted that if one were to doubt the possibilities of knowledge that would do nothing wholesale to undermine the more ordinary relation we bear to it, of merely living in it.” At other places, Bilgrami refers to these as “knowledges to live by” (132-33).
Duff, we see, is perturbed by the fact that the stories of immoral gods and goddesses (which Duff expects the natives to be embarrassed about) are in fact transmitted through indigenous educational institutions. This could only corrupt native morals further. However, when confronted by Duff about the immoral nature of their gods, the natives themselves, surprisingly, made no secret of what was taught in indigenous institutions. They readily agreed with Duff and to his puzzlement even provided him the necessary aid to help him enlarge upon his point about the “sinister” character of indigenous education. Yet, Duff notes that none of this affects their practice. The natives display no curiosity to know if the practices they follow are expressions of true beliefs are not. Thus, Duff concluded that this was just another proof of the fact – “that in it (indigenous education) there is nothing to awaken the mind, nothing to expand, invigorate or healthfully direct the faculties, nothing to unchain the iron bands of mere custom and usage” (41-42).

We see here that the problem of truth surfaced in two significant ways in the cultural encounter between the Europeans and the natives: a) the natives, from the point of view of Europeans, did not hold truth-telling in high regard. They had no respect for truth and their actions did not correspond with what they “genuinely believed” or held to be true. Thus, they were “insincere”, “unprincipled”, “liars”, “deceitful,” “dishonest” and “hypocritical.”

b) They did not make truth claims about the realm of practices. In other words, they were insensitive to the truth claims of doctrines of Christianity or any other religion and the assessment of them as true and false. The native mind had to be prepared to recognize, make and accept the importance of the truth claims in the domain of practices.

We see that the moral problem of truth-telling noticed by administrators and judges as well as the missionary complaint about the lack of the ethos of truth-seeking and intellectual

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111 Even today the “schizophrenic” and “irrational” attitude of scientists, who in their private lives consult astrologers or perform rituals without qualms, comes under frequent mention as being contrary to the scientific temperament they are otherwise supposed to exhibit.
curiosity in the natives with regard to ascertaining the truth of practices both converge around the problem of truth. We can surmise that the following assumptions are necessary for the Europeans to condemn the natives as immoral: 1) The native ought to act according to the true beliefs/norms which is universal, applicable to all people, across time and place 2) The native possesses the ability to act in accordance with the norm but chooses not to 3) Therefore, the native has intentionally violated the universal norm. Alternatively, the native’s will has been misled in pursuit of false gods. Either way, the underlying assumption is that the native possesses “free will” and therefore chooses (by sheer volition) to act one way or the other. He is consequently responsible for the moral action and must experience guilt in case of violation. However, the native, according to the European observers, does not display any of this remorse or guilt upon violating the norm. Sometimes, from the perspective of the Europeans, it appears they have become blind to the norm itself. From the European account of the natives, we can surmise that the picture of man whose actions are understood in terms of a causal model involving his exercise of reason-will-conscience that the British employ in evaluating native actions seems to be break down in the Indian context. The natives do not seem to display a certain form of reflexivity, a relation of the self to itself that the Europeans expect to be universally present and this produces the perception of the immorality of the natives.

The inculcation of moral sense and ascertaining the truths of reason could only be achieved through the slow process of education. Secular education with its goal of liberal knowledge and truth would fundamentally change the character of the natives. It would inculcate in them the ability to scrutinize their beliefs as well as enable them to recognize the truth and falsity of truth claims based on historical and other evidences, especially in the domain of social practices. This is best articulated by Ernest Fiske, a decade after the introduction of liberal education:
In closing these few remarks upon the effect of Education, we are reminded that there is prevalent, amongst the Hindus, a mental defect, which Education, properly directed, might do much to remove. We allude to the slight impression which is made upon the mind of the Hindu by an argument drawn from History. The learned Hindu asserts that the Vedas are of Divine origin; his proof of that assertion is, human Tradition. He does not perceive the necessity of supporting such an assertion by Historical Evidence, with the value of which he is unacquainted. If then a power of appreciating such Evidence, as a Test of positive or objective Truth, shall be implanted, by Education, in the mind of the Hindu, doubtless, great progress will be made in preparing him, in the first place to question, and at length to reject, the authority of his religious books; since, in that case, he will not fail to perceive that, whilst a clear chain of Historical Evidence can be adduced in support of the genuineness and authenticity of the Christian Scriptures, there is no such historical proof to be found that the Vedas contain the message of God to men. (Fiske 1849, 126; italics mine)

The repeated observations of the Europeans and the distinctive native response make it clear that there are two notions of truth clashing here. The first represents a conception of truth expressed through propositions that attests to the accuracy, veracity and correctness of description. Here, truth or falsity can be ascertained by historical reasoning, providing logical, chronological and other kinds of evidences. The evidences, tests of coherence and non-contradiction function as “a test of positive or objective truth.” There seems another conception of truth, however vague it is for now, that is articulated by the natives as inhering in human traditions, in practice, experience and social existence. The natives had to be

112 The essay obtained Sir Peregrine Maitland’s prize for the year 1848.
113 We have so far been unable to flesh out what the idea of truth that inheres in human tradition and antiquity could possibly mean. However, that there is a different conception of truth which is not restricted to correspondence between belief and fact of the matter, (however difficult it is to imagine this) and that a form/practice of truth-telling central to which is the idea of testimony and an emphasis on the faithfulness to a fact/assertion, becomes a learning goal in India only in the early nineteenth century, seems safe to conclude. For attempts which examine alternative conceptions from our context, see Balagangadhar (2012b) who examines the role of truth and falsehood in the Western culture as opposed to Indian. He argues that in Indian culture, truth (sat) means the “real” or “permanent” while the word false connotes “transience.” Also see Bilgrami (2003) where he argues that for Gandhi, truth was not a cognitive notion at all (i.e. a property of sentences or propositions that describe the world) but an experiential, moral one, where when one is pursuing truth, one is pursuing a moral value. For a more recent article that elucidates the link between experience and truth, see Vivek Dhareshwar (2010) where he argues that “Experience or truth (Sat) is not an object” and that “Truth, in
taught to first see their traditions as religion, and second, master the process of debating and ascertaining the “truth” of religions based on evidences. Liberal education and its ways of ascertaining truth would aid in this process.

3.3 Source of Immorality: Hinduism

How did the early generations of Europeans understand this immorality of Hindus and the “lack of moral sense” in them? What were the explanations forwarded by them to understand the native “moral laxity” and their “want of truth”?

In the ubiquity of the discourse of native immorality, the construction of “Hinduism” in the late eighteenth century played an important role. Burke was one of the first to draw a systematic connection between the people and the institutions of Europe and Christianity, with the former breathing the moral spirit of the latter and being fundamentally shaped by it. Christianity, according to Burke, unified Europe. However, Burke does not make the leap to conclude that since other lands have “immoral” customs, this must in some way be tied to the religion of the land, which in itself then must be deficient, since religion and its doctrines are the source of morality. It was in the late decade of the eighteenth century that the important shift, linking the false religion of natives, their false morality and their false science would be made by Charles Grant.

We have noted earlier that the very concept of religion and further, the conception of “Hindooism” as a “religion” with a “system of doctrines” that could be compared with Christianity is a product of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Oddie 2006; Harrison 1990), gradually used with greater frequency in the decades thereafter. Geoffrey

the Gandhian sense, is neither a property of sentences nor of propositions...Literally truth-bearers are persons; more accurately, experience is the only truth-bearer” (56).
Oddie points out that Charles Grant in his essay *Observations* was among the first Europeans to use the term “Hindooism” both in his private and semi-official correspondence. The increased usage of the term after 1780 shows the beginning of the model which would be consolidated in the next two decades, though the initial period of the formulation of the idea of Hinduism as a religion was often marked by contestations and disagreements, with the model being far from clear (Oddie 2006). Charles Grant was one of the first to cast the issue of native character as immoral when he made the observation that a power entrusted in the hands of the native is quickly “perverted to the purposes of injustices” and that these acts of corruptions do not actually begin in the courts of law but has its origin in the “character” of the natives. Hence, Grant argued that no amount of administrative reforms or the best administration of law would “eradicate the internal principles of depravity” of the Hindus whose very character needed to be transformed by imparting instruction in “integrity, truth and faithfulness” (C. Grant, 1813, 46–47).

What, according to Grant, was the explanation for the natives’ “universal depravity”? Grant takes up three causes that could function as explanations for “the peculiar characters of different nations” – a) climate b) government and c) laws and religion. Grant rules out the first cause on the grounds that “in developing the causes of the Hindoo character, too much seems sometimes to have been imputed to the climate” than what a fair examination would confirm and provides examples of variation within native character which cannot be accounted for by climate as an explanation. With regard to the second cause, he admits that the despotic mode of government of the Hindus has had a considerable influence on the

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114 *Observations* was first written in 1792 to persuade Henry Dundas and other influential Europeans of the importance of the moral issue at hand and of the need to introduce Christianity and Western education as a solution to India’s “corruption,” an argument he also made in a letter to Wilberforce in 1787. While the immediate impact was limited to the Clapham sect and trusted friends including Wilberforce and Claudius Buchanan, the pamphlet was published for public scrutiny later in 1813, as a parliamentary paper on the eve of the EIC Charter debates of 1813, on the recommendation of Wilberforce. One of the important clauses for debate was the removal of restriction on missionary activities in India. See Oddie (2006, 70) for details.
character of the natives for a man dependent on the will and caprice of another, “thinks and acts as a degraded being.” Fear, in such a situation, becomes his “grand principle of action” with truth, justice, integrity and veracity taking a back seat, encouraging arts of deception. Thus, “every man is a slave to those above him, and a despot to those below him; the more he is oppressed, the more he oppresses” (40), with self-interest and exigencies of the present ruling all. Though little remains of native political despotism as a result of subsequent invasions, Grant notes, despotism is “not only the principle of the government of Hindostan, but an original, fundamental, and irreversible principle in the very frame of society” (44). It was embodied in the religion of Hinduism and its caste system, the whole fabric of which was “the work of a crafty and imperious priesthood, who feigned a divine revelation and appointment, to invest their own order, in perpetuity, with the most absolute empire over the civil state of Hindoos, as well as over their minds” (45). Thus, in Grant’s final analysis it was the study of Hindu law and religion that required “the most particular attention” since they are part of the “same complex system,” with “the Hindoo law standing upon the same authority as the Hindoo religion; both are parts of one system, which they believe to have been divinely revealed” (40-45):

But their religion and their laws, both parts of one complex system, still remain; the former in all its authority, the latter also, in its essence and in many of its branches, operative: and these, by the principles on which they are founded, and by the rules and precepts which they deliver, have given birth to that spirit, and those practices of oppression, injustice, corruption, in a word, those immoralities which incomparably more than every other cause, render the people base and miserable. (41)

In Grant’s analysis, “Hindu law” is seen as breathing the spirit of the immoral religion of Hinduism. Hinduism was equivalent to the caste system perpetuated by the corrupt Brahmans who kept the revealed Vedas to themselves. These priests had developed elaborate ways to keep the masses diverted from their religious and spiritual pursuit, thereby preventing them
from personal and spiritual conversion to God. Grant presents us with an elaborate list of how the Hindu law served the interests of the priestly class, sanctioning all kinds of cruelty and injustices, thereby perverting the native character. The elaborate ceremonies by the priests on how to expiate and atone for one’s sins were proof of native immorality since atonement was “reduced to certain external performances.” A true atonement would result in a genuine penitence and a moral change of heart. However, in this case it involved a mere performance of rituals and ceremonies rather than “real contrition and amendment, hatred of evil, and a respect to the holiness of the divine nature” (59). The doctrines related to transmigration weakened their sense of moral obligation and the immorality embodied by Hindu deities played a crucial role in corrupting native character. The deities, Grant argued, with their profane mythologies and the legends that surrounded them, violated all idea of morality and were patrons of all kinds of nefarious pursuits. Far from evoking any moral sentiment in those who worshipped them, they only provided them with models of cruelty, licentiousness and the worst forms of perversions. Grant thus concludes that “the morals of these people are therefore poisoned at the fountains and altars of religion” (65).

Grant makes the connection between religion and morality of the Hindus in reverse. If Burke sees Christianity the source of morals in Europe, then for Grant, the source of Hindu immorality could only be explained by locating it in its customs and practices which breathed the principles of its religion and were derived from its “false” doctrines. Thus, the idea of Hinduism as a “false religion” gains ground from early nineteenth century onwards, once religion emerges as an object of study in the late eighteenth century. With the work of the

\[^{115}\text{In this spiritual realm, only God was to be obeyed and not any form of human authority. Protestant Reformation was particularly critical of traditions, rituals and ceremonies since they were man-made and kept man diverted from the real pursuit of salvation. Conscience, which belonged to the spiritual and religious domain, was endangered if it obeyed human authorities instead of God. See Bainton (1950) which has a fascinating description of the series of spiritual crises that Luther goes through before his “conversion.”}\]
Orientalists, the “doctrines of the system of religion called “Hinduism” slowly begin to be available for comparison with the doctrines of the true religion.

The presupposition that religion is the source of morality is central to the way the problem of native immorality is diagnosed. Fundamental to this was the assumption that all forms of paganism were variants of natural religion, a term that gained in importance from the seventeenth century onwards in Europe. The idea of natural religion, with its origins in the seventeenth century, played a crucial role in the religious debates in Europe and was to a significant extent a deist contribution. The crisis of authority in the wake of the Protestant Reformation had resulted in an emphasis on comparison of the truth of beliefs and the need to assess various claims both from within and outside Christendom. The assumption that all actions were expressions of belief and that any belief was necessarily part of a system of related beliefs paved way for the science of religion which linked the various practices found in the world to a “belief system.”

The deists, who were rationalists and saw religion as primarily constituted by propositional knowledge whose truth value could be ascertained by reason, assumed the antiquity of natural religion, which was not only natural in the sense of being instinctual but also the basis of the first religion of mankind. To account for the corruption of natural religion, the deists posited two external features which they saw as features of all religions in the world – “all religions had priests, and in all religions they performed a similar function – that of maintaining the vulgar in their ignorance” (Harrison 1990, 83). Thus, Harrison points out that the record of history of not just religions but of

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116 See Harrison (1990) who traces this shift. Harrison traces the beginnings of comparative religion to the seventeenth century when the crisis of authority following Protestant Reformation required assessment of rival claims within Christianity and also the casting of other forms as rivals. The link between religion and “belief system” or even a “state of believing” has been explored by several other scholars as well. See Toulmin (1990), Balagangadharana (1994), Seth (2007), Smith (1979). Saveri points out that anthropologists such as Rodney Needham go as far as to say that the concept of belief, a specific mental state (which rules out doubt and aims at certainty), is far from “a universal concept,” is a product of a unique historical condition and “there is no such phenomenon as “believing” in many non-Western cultures. See Severi (2007, 21–30) for a discussion on the concept of belief and its link to the Western religious traditions.
society itself accordingly became not the narrative of how natural religion has been universal in all societies and in all times, *but the narrative of the corruption of a pure original religion by the priestly class which was deceitful and kept the laity buried in superstitions, drawn largely from their own cultural experience* (68). This deistic influence and its thesis of corrupted “original” doctrines looms large in all accounts of Hinduism and is a primary source for the diagnosis of immorality in India – beginning with the accounts of several Orientalists who were sympathetic to Hinduism. An understanding of a conception of a common human nature, central to which was a religious conception of man with an innate divinity in him made it possible for a universalist conception of human nature to emerge. Thus, even the liberals recognized religion and the sacred sphere as essential to human nature. However, this human nature which was essentially religious was diverted from its true path by a focus on temporal issues due to the corruption and machinations of the priestly class. This framework of reformation theology featured in the accounts of early Orientalists, Anglicists and Evangelists like Grant, Macaulay and Trevelyan alike.

In this way, a relation between the “false religion of the natives” and the native society is established where the former is posed as the source of both the corruption of the society and of native morals. It is important to note here that the entire structure and description of the native society along with the evaluation that accompanies it - the corrupt priestly class and laity, people steeped in idolatry, rituals and superstitions, the absence of a foundational, written text which revealed God’s Law to guide human action on earth - derives entirely from the framework of reformation theology and must not be mistaken to be a scientific description of the society.

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117 Refer to P J Marshall (1970) who draws attention to the deistic account. Whether Orientalists or Anglicists, this bipartite structure of society which comes from their own understanding of Christianity (which is then abstracted as a feature of all religions), is present. The Orientalists who approached the study of religion like science were distinctly deistic.
We have so far seen how the perception of “Hinduism,” a “false religion” came to be considered to be constitutive of the immorality of Indian society. Liberal, secular education was partly seen as a solution to this problem of immorality of natives. An initiation into liberal education is expected to induce in the educated native a certain form of scepticism with regard to native traditions. How is it that secular education, which we think would be neutral towards all religions and practices, performs this role?

3.4 Secular Education: “A Handmaiden for Religion”?

The relationship between the colonial state, missionaries and the secular educational project with its “civilising” mission has been a subject of elaborate debate in recent times. Till the early 1820s, contrary to the assumption that the colonial state and the missionaries must have worked in tandem towards the imperial project, we find that the colonial state curtailed the activities of missionaries in education. It restricted missionary activity on the grounds that any kind of overt interference in the religious beliefs and practices of Indians would affect their presence in India and that it was not business of the EIC to challenge or undermine the religious beliefs of the natives. It is only in 1813, after the EIC’s charter allowed greater freedom to missionary activity on the grounds of improving the morals of the land that missionaries could legitimately set up religious, educational institutions in India. The Government colleges, on the other hand, based on the policy of 1835 focused on transmitting secular, “useful knowledge” without imparting Christian, religious education, a policy that was reiterated in the Wood’s Despatch of 1854. While public Government schools and colleges would promote secular education, the promotion of religious education was left to private missionaries.

What precisely was the nature of the relation between missionary activity, the colonial state and imperialism? Did “the Bible and Flag” go hand in hand in the history of imperial expansion? Were they mutually supportive or oppositional? These are some of the questions that have been asked. See the introduction to Andrew Porter (2004, 1-14). Also see Stanley (1990, 2001) and Copland (2006). For an account of the relation between colonialism, secular education and religion, see Chapter Nine in Claerhout (2010).
However, as Sanjay Seth, in his illuminating study points out, there was some consensus among the missionaries and state officials, that secular education, rather than be antithetical to religion and the conversion of natives into Christianity, would be conducive to Christianization of India. Secular education, many believed, would inculcate in the natives a certain form of reasoning and the necessary orientation to truth and knowledge which would enable them to recognize the truth of Christianity, enabling the formation of a moral subject:

The historic controversies which had marked the advance of secular knowledges in the Christian West were never played out in colonial India. Missionaries and government officials alike shared the belief that modern science was a solvent of Indian religious beliefs...Those who played a leading role in the decision of 1835 to limit government patronage to western education, including Thomas Macaulay and Charles Trevelyan, had insisted that government-provided education must not allow any religious instruction and must not be associated with any attempts at conversion. Both advocated an official policy of religious neutrality. Nonetheless, they and many others anticipated that this education would be conductive to the Christianization of India. (Seth 2007, 49; italics mine)

Indeed a peculiar feature of the educational debates of the time is that while *prima facie* it appears that the dialectic between religious versus secular education drives the educational debate in the nineteenth century, this opposition between the two gives way to the articulation of a common goal at various points. While the colonial state actively took a stand against introducing religious education in Government colleges, the initiation to secular knowledge and truth is consistently envisaged as a step towards the recognition of religious truth, by not only the missionaries but also by several colonial officials and Orientalists. By enabling the natives to recognize the superior claim to truth of secular, western knowledge, the native

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119 That the history of education in India in the nineteenth century has been tied to religion and conversion has been emphasized by several scholars. See specifically Chapter 2, “Praeparatio Evangelica” in Viswanathan (1989) where she argues that Western science and literature, it was thought, would be corrosive of Hinduism, but expected to serve the cause of not just the colonial power but also of its religion. Also see Seth (2007), Bellenoit (2007), Sengupta (2011).
would intellectually and morally be prepared to recognize the truth of a religion with its basis in rationality.120 This is true of the Anglicist Macaulay, the Orientalist Ballantyne or the missionary Duff; all three of them concerned with transforming the domain of education saw the question of formation of the natives in similar ways. How did these colonial actors envisage the goal of liberal, secular education? How did they draw the boundaries as well as the relation between secular and religious truth? What according to them was the measure of the change expected?

**False History, False Astronomy, False Religion**

While Macaulay’s minute of February 2, 1835, has often been quoted as heralding the Anglicist victory over the Orientalists, containing the infamous dismissal of Oriental literature that inaugurated the era of English education in the Indian soil, it has been less analyzed for the link Macaulay makes between secular education and religion. We often tend to forget that most colonial officials and administrators, though asserting a policy of religious neutrality in the domain of governance, were explicitly Christian otherwise.121 There were genuine concerns at this historical point about what it meant for the empire to be ruled by a Christian sovereign and how to deal with occasions when heathen practices clashed with the morality of a Christian State. The Orientalists favoured the promotion of Sanskrit and Arabic on the grounds that they are the languages in which the sacred books of millions of Oriental people are written and the Government, by promoting these, would be true to its policy of religious neutrality. Macaulay builds his argument against this view of Orientalists by turning

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120 The Orientalists, John Muir and James Ballantyne, were both of the opinion that Reason was inseparable from the foundations of Western knowledge and Christianity. Thus, Ballantyne, who believed that the missionaries appealed too much to the heart and not the head, based his pedagogy on the belief that the natives should be able to determine for themselves the rationality of Christianity. His educational project aimed at inculcating in the natives the necessary prerequisites for the rational acceptance of historical and other forms of evidence upon which Christianity based its claims. Refer to Ballantyne (1859, vii–x). See Dodson (2002), for an analysis of the educational project of John Muir and James Ballantyne at Benares.

121 This should not be taken as a negative point about the colonizers. It helps us to recognize it so that we are able to understand their cognitive framework and know why they assessed the natives as they did.
the entire argument around the axis of truth and falsehood. His question is whether the colonial state was being moral by maintaining religious neutrality when it meant encouraging false science: “whether when we can patronise sound Philosophy and true history, [we] shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long and geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter” (Macaulay 1999, 166). To be religiously neutral was in this case to be indifferent to truth and worse, encourage falsehood: “But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is full of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false History, false Astronomy, false Medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion.” He ironically adds: “We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues of the state to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat?” (170)

Macaulay takes a double salvo at the Orientalists: Not only are they erasing the difference between the “true” religion of Christianity and the “false” heathen religions in the name of religious neutrality, they were also encouraging false sciences by promoting a false religion, thereby doing great injustice to the intellectual and moral improvement of the people.
Thus Macaulay redefines religious neutrality not as ruling the people according to their own customs and following a policy of non-interference in education as it was during Hastings’ rule, *but negatively*, as the Government refraining from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity and positively as necessary, active interference when “horrific practices” clashed with Christian morality.

That the colonial Government’s policy of religious neutrality did not imply that the Government could erase all differences between Christianity, the “true” religion and the other heathen, “false” religion is also articulated in a forceful speech of his “The Gates of Somnauth,” a speech delivered in the House of Commons (March 9, 1843). Arguing against Lord Ellenborough’s orders for sanctioning the restoration of the gates of Somnauth, Macaulay poses the troubling and difficult question of how a large multi-religious empire, a “larger heathen population than the world ever saw collected under the sceptre of a Christian sovereign since the days of the Emperor Theodosius” (Macaulay 1875, 231) should be ruled? This was a question that bothered several Europeans during this period. Macaulay’s comparison to the last emperor of the Roman Empire who put an end to the pagan practices is fitting. The European encounter with a largely non-Christian subcontinent was in many ways reminiscent of the Christianization of the pagan Roman Empire in the beginning of first millennium when similar questions were posed, with Christianity initially being a minority religion in pagan Rome (Markus 1990; Markus 2006; Balagangadhara 1994). Macaulay

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122 We must not underestimate the importance of this concern. By 1730s, the British Empire had to come to pride itself as “protestant, commercial, maritime and free.” It was, as Armitage points out, Protestant (despite innumerable Protestant denominations and not Catholic, despite the substantial presence of Catholics in Ireland and other pockets), it was commercial (therefore to be distinguished from universal monarchies like Spain and France which conquered people and territories through force resulting in subjection of alien people) and free, with freedom finding its institutional expression in Parliament, the law, property and rights. However, by 1760s EIC, a trading company which had strangely come to acquire state power in India posed a curious problem and a strong challenge to this ideal of the British empire: territorial acquisition through wars against native rulers and several other forms of injustices had made the empire appear more like an empire of conquest. Moreover, none of the new subjects were Protestants, most not even Christian, British and free. See Armitage (2000). Hence, the Christianization of Rome often became a pole of comparison and the means to guide them through this alien, pagan land.
drives home the similarity and frames the horizon of expectations within which the colonial state’s acts and policies could gain coherence. What should be the conduct of rulers under the present circumstances given that the British ruled hundreds of millions of people in Asia who do not profess Christianity, and when “the great majority of the population of India consists of idolaters, blindly attached to doctrines and rites which, considered merely with reference to the temporal interests of mankind, are in the highest degree pernicious” (Macaulay 1875, 231). Macaulay’s answer to the question he poses is revealing:

Now, Sir, it is a difficult matter to determine in what way Christian rulers ought to deal with such superstitions as these. We might have acted as the Spaniards acted in the New World. We might have attempted to introduce our own religion by force. We might have sent missionaries among the natives at the public charge. We might have held out hopes of public employment to converts, and have imposed civil disabilities on Mahometans and Pagans. But we did none of these things; and herein we judged wisely. Our duty, as rulers, was to preserve strict neutrality on all questions merely religious: and I am not aware that we have ever swerved from strict neutrality for the purpose of making proselytes to our own faith. But we have, I am sorry to say, sometimes deviated from the right path in the opposite direction. Some Englishmen, who have held high office in India, seem to have thought that the only religion which was not entitled to toleration and to respect was Christianity. They regarded every Christian missionary with extreme jealousy and disdain...We decorated the temples of the false gods. We provided the dancing girls. We gilded and painted the images to which our ignorant subjects bowed down. We repaired and embellished the car under the wheels of which crazy devotees flung themselves at every festival to be crushed to death.... All this was considered, and is still considered, by some prejudiced Anglo-Indians of the old school, as profound policy. I believe that there never was so shallow, so senseless a policy. We gained nothing by it. We lowered ourselves in the eyes of those whom we meant to flatter. We led them to believe that we attached no importance to the difference between Christianity and heathenism. Yet how vast that difference is! I altogether abstain from alluding to topics which belong to divines. I speak merely as a politician anxious for the morality and the temporal well-being of society. And, so speaking, I say that to countenance the Brahminical idolatry, and to discountenance that religion which has done so much to promote justice, and mercy, and
freedom, and arts, and sciences, and good government, and domestic happiness, which has struck off the chains of the slave, which has mitigated the horrors of war, which has raised women from servants and playthings into companions and friends, is to commit high treason against humanity and civilisation. (232; italics mine)

Macaulay here draws from Edmund Burke to distinguish British rule from an “empire of conquest.” His argument hinges on proving that the state of neutrality in matters of native superstitions is equal to the state giving up its religious identity of a Christian State and to disregard the role of the Christian religion in the improvement of sciences, governance, arts and morality. Contrary to how we understand superstitions today, superstitions were not opposed to science in general but to practices that deviated from the practices of a true religion or the worship of the one true God. It was not a category to capture a universal phenomenon but acquired its meaning from only within a religious, theological framework, especially within what were seen as inter-religious or doctrinal disputes. Macaulay seems to imply that the Christian State should affirm the truth of Christianity in order to be able to recognize and deal with superstitions such as idolatry and polytheism among the natives.

In his other writings, Macaulay would equate the goal of secular education with a certain form of reflexivity which was constitutive of religion, which he argued would render...
conversion itself unnecessary. In a letter to his father Zachary Macaulay (October 12, 1836), he wrote:

No Hindoo, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his own religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy; but many profess themselves pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. The case with Mahometans is very different. The best educated Mahometan often continues to be a Mahometan still. The reason is plain. The Hindoo religion is so extravagantly absurd that it is impossible to teach a boy astronomy, geography, natural history, without completely destroying the hold which that religion has on his mind. But the Mahometan religion belongs to a better family. It has very much in common with Christianity; and even where it is most absurd, it is reasonable when compared with Hindooism. It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any effort to proselytize; without the smallest intervention in their religious liberty; merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection.

(Macaulay 1976, III: 193; italics mine)

What was it about “the natural operation of knowledge and reflection” that according to Macaulay would result in the natives giving up idolatry? Macaulay here seems to be getting hold of the very nature of Western knowledge. The learning of scientific and historical reasoning was such that it cultivated a pre-disposition in the learner, “a theoretic attitude” such that the learner exposed to Western knowledge would seek justification for natural phenomenon as well as the existence of practices – foundations of natural phenomenon (the unerring laws of nature) as well as human actions (moral laws from which actions derived).

What kind of process would this involve? Macaulay elaborates on this in a response to a letter by John Tytler, an ardent Orientalist, who had written to Macaulay a week before his famous minutes. In his letter (January 26, 1835), Tytler had argued that ‘Eastern Science’ must be studied impartially. Not only would the British have to rationally argue with the natives so that one can help them distinguish truth from error clearly, it would also help ascertain the
various forms error can take before refuting them. Moreover, Tytler maintained, “all inferior considerations” aside, a “history of the successive systems of Science and philosophy though it may not teach the true nature of things will yet afford much valuable information of another kind. It will teach what mankind have thought and how they have reasoned about these things and the successive steps by which they have arrived at Truth” (Sirkin and Sirkin 1971, 425). Pointing out the needlessness of such an exercise, Macaulay, in his letter to Tytler (January 28, 1835), responds dismissively: “The same reasoning which establishes truth does ipso facto refute all possible errors which are opposed to that truth. If I prove that the earth is a sphere, I prove at the same time that it is not a cube, a cylinder, or a cone” (Macaulay 1976, III: 122). Thus once exposed to the truth of a scientific proposition/belief, one would “turn away” from one’s tradition and practices because of a consciousness that these traditions rest on false beliefs. This was because traditions and practices such as worshipping of gods were often ancestral practices which were handed down. They either had no justification or uncertain justification, mostly in the form of stories and legends which varied from region to region, often in contradiction to one another. Recognition of these as false also implied a thirst for truth. Thus, one turned towards traditions not in the sense of being formed through inserting oneself and partaking in its practices but with a critical attitude to determine its truth or falsity and see if they were amenable to the test of historical reason. Traditions then had to emerge as an object or as history, transposed into a set of rival beliefs or doctrines which could then be compared for their accuracy and truth value.124

About the same time as Macaulay, Alexander Duff, the Scottish missionary, too emphasized the “influence and importance of what is usually termed secular knowledge” and proposed a

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124 For how religion induces a similar reflexivity, see Balagangadhara (1994): “The predicates ‘true’ and ‘false’ are not applicable to a tradition because it is a set of practices.... By thematising this as a belief-guided and theoretically founded set of practices, religion transforms the very terms of description” (330). The pagans are now “incorporated into theology” (331). Thus, for colonial actors like Macaulay, the natives learning to cast their traditions in terms of a system of belief itself constitutes “conversion,” rendering actual conversion unnecessary.
close link between the dissemination of secular knowledge in India and the propagation of religious truth. Arguing that the spread of secular, useful knowledge would be far more effective in Christianizing India than any direct attempt by missionaries to assert the truth of Christianity, Duff in his “The Church of Scotland’s India Mission” argues that the first step would be in enabling the native to be able to make a truth claim with regard to practices and recognize the nature and force of historical reasoning, along with relevant evidences in ascertaining an assertion as true. In his *Church of Scotland’s India Mission* (1835), after laying out the difficulties in conversion of the natives into Christianity, Duff records his engagement with students of the Hindu college, Calcutta, where Western literature and the sciences were taught without any religious instruction. He notes the difference the possession of liberal education makes for any meaningful communication:

> Like the older Hindus, they demanded that I should show them my authority, i.e. that I should show them satisfactory evidence for the assertion, that Christianity is an authentic revelation from God. But totally unlike the older Hindus, these were enabled to comprehend the nature of evidence. They had studied our language, our histories, and our science. They were acquainted with the sources and facts of history and chronology. They were initiated into the first principles of inductive reasoning. They knew the laws that regulate the successions of state in the material universe. They were quite capable, therefore, of comprehending the nature and the force of a historical argument, the argument from miracles, or the argument from prophecy. ...*the older ones asked for evidence or proof; we had abundance in store, but the want of a liberal education prevented them from comprehending its nature and weighing its force. The younger ones, in like manner, demanded evidence, and the possession of a liberal education enabled them at once to understand its nature and weigh its force.* (Duff 1835, 13; italics mine)

While the natives with or without liberal education, demand evidence for an assertion made by Duff, the natives, in order to be able to comprehend the nature and force of the evidence, must have been initiated into liberal education and its ways of ascertaining truth. Secular
education removes a particular “mental defect” in natives by familiarizing them with the process of ascertaining if a truth claim is true or false based on historical, scientific and factual evidence. Duff captures the effect of this mode of thinking on the natives in his *India and her Mission* (1839) where he records an “incident” in class which he characterizes as “the first practical illustrations of true knowledge becoming a handmaiden of true religion, which the history of the world can apply.” Comparing the minuteness of the event to the apparently insignificant fall of the apple which spurred Newton’s grand theory, he records the reaction of the students to a lesson on “what is rain” with the considerable excitement of an educational anthropologist:

In the course of ordinary interrogation, the question was put, What is rain? It was replied, “Water from the sky.” Has it been produced by the sky itself? “No.” How then has it been formed? “Oh,” said one, with the smartness and self-possession so characteristic of Hindu youth, “Do you not know that yourself?” I think I do, said the master; but my present object is to find out whether you know it. “Well,” remarks another, with an air of manifest satisfaction, “I’ll tell you. It comes from the trunk of Indra’s elephant.” Indeed, I said, that is a new theory of the origin of rain, which I did not know before; and I should now like to be informed on what evidence it is founded. “All I can say about it,” responded he, “is, that my Guru (or religious teacher), told me so.” But your Guru must have some reason for telling you so. Did he ever see the elephant himself? “Oh no, how could he? The elephant is wrapped up in the cloud, as in a covering; and no one can, therefore, see it with his own eyes.” How then came the Guru to know that the elephant was there at all? “To be sure,” said he, “because the Shastra says so.” Now I understand the matter: You have asserted that the rain comes from the trunk of Indra’s elephant, simply because the Guru has told you that this is the account contained in the Shastra? “Certainly; for, though I never have seen it with my own eyes, yet I believe it is there; because the Guru has told me that the Shastra says so; and what the Shastra says must be true.” (Duff 1839, 581–82)

Duff notes that the teachers did not contradict the shastras directly and instead focused on the scientific explanation of the phenomenon. After remarking that the theory which their Gurus
in Scotland had taught them to account for the meteorological phenomenon was different,

Duff proceeds to narrate the explanation given for “what is rain?”

Their attention was then directed to a very simple phenomenon. It was asked, In boiling your rice what is observed to rise from the vessel? “Smoke and vapour.” When a dry lid is held for some time over it, what effect is produced? “It gets wet.” What makes it wet? “The smoke and the vapour.” True; and when it gets very, very wet, does all the vapour continue to stick to it? “No; it falls off in drops.” Very good. What then would you say of the vapour itself, that it is dry or wet? “Wet, sure enough.” And whence can the wet vapour proceed? “It can only be from the water in the vessel.” Is the vapour a different kind of substance from the water? “No.” Why think you so? “Because when it gathers on the lid we see it turn into water again.” So you conclude that the vapour is just a part of the water in the vessel? “Yes.” What then drives it off from the rest, and makes it fly into the air? “It is its nature to do so.” Think a moment; when you hold a cup of water in your hand, do you see vapour arising from it? “No.” What then makes the difference between the drinking water in your cup, and the water that boils the rice? “The one is cold and the other warm.” What makes it warm? “The fire.” So then it is from the water warmed by the fire that you see the vapour ascent, and not from the cold? “Yes.” What must you infer from this? “That it is the fire which in making the water warm, makes it go into vapour.” Right. The attention was next directed to the application of all this. The pupils were referred to a very familiar phenomenon in Bengal. (582–83)

Duff records the effect of the explanation on the students by noting that the students are impressed, struck by the simplicity and naturalness of the explanation. Duff then proceeds to single out the effect of the explanation on one of the boys in whom he detects the first sign of “a mental struggle” in which Duff marks the beginning of the overthrow of Hinduism:

Instantly, however, one of the boys,—as of suddenly recovering his recollection, and finding that he had committed himself, and gone too far,—began to manifest some tokens of alarm at the unwelcome discovery: “Ah!” said he, with a peculiar earnestness of tone and manner, “Ah; what have I been thinking? If your account be the true one, what becomes of our Shastra?—what becomes of our Shastra? If your account be true, then must our Shastra be false. Our Shastra must either be from God,
Duff identifies precisely that moment of reflexivity in the native student that Macaulay alludes to and which Duff recognizes as the means to access another culture. One can, of course, doubt the accuracy of Duff’s account and also question whether the teaching of the sciences genuinely made the student abandon his traditions, stories and practices. However, what is clear is that the sciences, along with history and English literature, were expected to inculcate in the students a certain form of reasoning both to explain the objects and occurrences in the natural world on the one hand and the domain of human actions and practices on the other. In other words, if the student earlier inhabited the world and took the world as a given, secular education introduced the social and natural world as an entity in itself to be explained. The question of “why the rain falls” or “what is the boiling point of water” is not a natural attitude towards objects or phenomenon in the world. It is a theoretical attitude fostered by a religious culture where the world is an entity to be explained. To see the universe not as a field of our actions and as a place of dwelling, but as a separate domain to be explained is a relatively new way to relate to the world. As part of the learning process, now the student turns back on himself and develops a certain critical attitude towards the relation between himself, his shastras and his actions. A possibility opens up for the student to compare the “truth” of the shastras with the truth of science and consequently reject the former as false. However, it is clear that the water spouting from Indra’s elephant was never meant as an explanation for a phenomenon of rain and nor was it

125 See Balagangadhara (1994), particularly Chapter IX for the link between religion and theoretical knowledge of which he sees natural science as a paradigmatic example. Religion, according to Balagangadhara is an explanatory, intelligible account of the universe. It fosters particular kinds of questions that make the world into an entity to be explained, requiring all physical phenomenon and human actions to be causally explained. Human actions therefore come to be seen as expressions of belief or meanings and foundations. To possess a religion means to see the universe as having a deep underlying constancy which is governed by the will of a perfect, omniscient, creator God. Thus, Balagangadhara suggests that Religion is a prototypical explanatory model. All other kinds of explanatory models, including scientific explanations, are inspired by it and modeled after it.
expected to have any factual basis. There were bound to be several other stories where there would be other kinds of “explanations” for rain. However, the introduction of a new form of ascertaining truth value reorders these stories along a new axis, thereby subjecting them to the same parameters as one would subject an assertion in physical or historical sciences, where a principle is proved through experiments, demonstration and other forms of valid evidence. In this way, two very different forms of knowledge are treated as if they were comparable along the same axis, with the scientific explanation presented as a development over an outmoded, absurd “explanation” of the shastras. In this process, the various shastras, are transformed into a variant of theoretical knowledge, albeit as “outmoded false theories” which modern science had left far behind.

We see that whether Anglicists, Orientalists or missionaries and Evangelists, they all worked within a similar horizon of expectation: initiating the natives to secular, Western literature and sciences was a more effective way of orienting the natives to Christianity than direct efforts at conversion. Hence, many missionaries including Duff, far from opposing secular education, initially supported its introduction. Secular education, contrary to our expectation, was not seen by the participants to be in opposition to Christianity but as leading to the same goal.

James Ballantyne, a Scottish Orientalist and the superintendent of Benares Sanskrit College from 1845, is known for his interesting cross-cultural experiments with the pundits in Benares Sanskrit College. In The Bible for the Pandits (1860), he distinguishes his attempts

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126 Here, it is useful to note that the distinction between laukika vidhya and alaukika vidhya in native thought. While laukika vidhya included astrology, astronomy and other sciences, alaukika vidhya referred to knowledge “that was inaccessible to the unaided human mind.” Though this distinction was not sharp, with the two forms being juxtaposed in various ways, puranas invariably were seen to belong more to the domain of the latter. Thus, the criterion of scientific correctness or whether the stories that the puranas tell were true or false were irrelevant to the puranas since accuracy and scientific correctness was not its raison d’être (Young 1981, 85).

127 This was in contrast to Britain where secular education did not emerge as a distinct form till the late nineteenth century. See Connell (2002).
from the missionaries who exclusively “appealed to the heart” rather than the head and states that his aim is to “satisfy the requirements of a subtle intellect” (Ballantyne 1860, xi). Hence his pedagogy is driven by his need to make Christianity acceptable to the natives first by providing them rational and scientific basis for its acceptance and by equipping the natives to ascertain for themselves the veracity of historical evidence, with the help of records and evidences. In this, he declared that the role of the sciences was crucial and immensely supportive. In another work titled Christianity contrasted with Hindu Philosophy (1859), he asks “Shall our absolutely ultimate end, then, be the production of a first-rate engineer, or of a valuable revenue officer, or of an accomplished native magistrate? With this I am not prepared to be satisfied. My proposed end is the making of each educated Hindu a Christian, on principle and conviction” (1859, 198-99). He then forwards the notion of unity of knowledge system where initiation into and awareness of the linkages between various sciences are necessary steps in the way of learning to perceive the truth of Christianity. Ballantyne emphasizes the role of historical evidences in validating truth claims and the role of various sciences in the cultivation of the critical faculty:

Let us trace the assertion backward, - as thus. That a Hindu should on principle and conviction, embrace a religion which, like Christianity, bases its claims on historical evidence, presupposes not merely an acquaintance with historical assertions, but a cultivation of the critical faculty, so as that the force of the historical evidence may be intelligently felt. The immediate preparation for a critically intelligent study of history, is the study of Physical Geography. A history, all of whose assertions are found consistent with the multifarious information supplied by Physical Geography, must be felt to present very different claims on our respect from those of a purana, with its nowhere-discoverable oceans of treacle, cane-juice, and butter milk. But to apprehend with full intelligence what is presented of Physical Geography, a knowledge of Zoology, Botany and Geology are required. The full appreciation of these, again, presupposes Chemistry, in all its extensive bearings on Meteorology, climate, &c. The study of Chemistry must be preceded by that Physics. Physics demands an anterior acquaintance with the sciences of Number and Magnitude, - sciences which present the most
elementary exemplification of applied Logic. Such is a rapid enumeration of the great steps in the intellectual course. (199)

Learning of the sciences for Ballantyne was essential and prior even to the learning of arts which he characterizes as “applied sciences.” Ballantyne argues that the various sciences provided the necessary basis to make practical arts possible and the latter got their intelligibility and rational basis in the former. Thus if a person “merely” excels in a particular form of a practical art or possess a particular skill, displaying an extraordinary “know-how,” s/he does not really “know” the art. One had truly mastered the art only when one knew the principles that were at work. Hence, an action in the domain was always an applied conception. A practical art is envisaged as an applied theory, an actualization of an already given schema. In response to those who might object to the idea of it being “all about knowledge” but not about teaching applied sciences, he remarks:

...assuredly you have got to teach these; and if you wish to teach them (arts) effectually, you will have to take care that your exposition of each of them shall emanate from a previously well-digested exposition of the sciences from which arts draw their life-blood. Your instruction in Surveying will bear reference to your scientific exposition of Geometry and Arithmetic, and will be given in the accurately determined language of those scientific expositions. Your Pharmacy will be founded on your scientific expositions of Chemistry, and will avail itself of Chemical languages and of Chemical principles. You will not - it is to be hoped, - when penning practical instructions for the miner, ignore the scientific views and terms of your Geology. In short, all treatises on the arts ought to bear reference to the parent science and should be constructed in such exact accordance with the exposition of the parent sciences, that the artist may have nothing to unlearn, or to confuse him, when he turns to the expositions of the parent sciences for fresh suggestions in the prosecution of his art. Hence, in a systematic preparation of a literature, we must, except in cases of urgency, attend to science first: and even in the exceptional cases, you must regard your first rude manuals of art as merely provisional, and as awaiting the rectification which a thorough exposition of the parent science will subsequently render possible. (200)
Arguing that a carpenter may complete his task and raise a perpendicular by rule, but if he does not understand “the principles” or the rationale of the operation, then we only ought to regard him as engaged as a carpenter and not as a Man, Ballantyne makes the intrinsic link between the abstract category of Man (the principle of humanity) and the theoretic activity of cognition essential to the concept of Man. The bearer of knowledge of “how to do something,” was knowledgeable only when his actions derived from knowledge about the domain. In this way Ballantyne, in the line of his predecessors, clearly established the subordination of the domain of practical arts which embodied the knowledge of know-how to the theoretic activity of Man and also laid out what was involved in the movement from one to another.

Every reasonable being must conscientiously work out the problems of philosophy, as those of mathematics, for himself. He who takes them on trust, abnegates, in that, his reason, and so far his character as Man. The carpenter who is shaping a chair or table for me may raise a perpendicular by rule, without understanding the geometrical principles involved in the process, - and we regard him, so engaged, not as man but as carpenter, - the function of his mind being there akin to that of his compasses, neither the mind nor the compasses being cognizant of the rationale of the operation which they are jointly concerned in carrying out. (1860, xv; italics in the original)

For Ballantyne, the native mind was characteristic of the compass and must be trained to work out the inconsistencies that resulted between their new learning and the old. No one proposition or belief that one held could contradict another. However, the natives, he found, often held “contradictory beliefs” without experiencing any form of bindingness to a true belief. In his earlier work, A Synopsis of Science, from the Standpoint of the Nyaya Philosophy (1852), Ballantyne narrates his cross-cultural experiment to bring about mutual understanding between the students of Sanskrit and English Department in Benares Sanskrit College in 1848-49. Noting that the advanced students of Sanskrit and English departments were mutually unintelligible when the conversation turns to their studies because the
technical terms of the two opposing theories are not convertible by someone who does not know both, Ballantyne remarks:

[Our] English students, struck by the imposing methodical completeness of the Brahmanic systems, which they cannot comprehend in detail, and bewildered in every attempt to cope with the dialectical subtlety of the Pundits, who they see perfectly, though unintelligible to the English, are quite intelligible to each other, become possessed by an uneasy feeling, that there is more, if they could but come at it, in the Sanskrit Philosophy than is dreamt of in ours. Hence comes the apparent anomaly of a man who can expound the Newtonian Astronomy, consults his astrologer with the same deference as the most ignorant villager; and confusedly believes in his heart, what the Jesuit Editors of the “Principia” only professed with their lips, that the earth stands still, though the hypothesis of its motion is suffice to account for the phenomenon. Hence it is also, that although acquainted with the theory of eclipses, and able to calculate them by European formulae, he would not on any account neglect to perform the ceremonies ordained for the purpose of helping the luminary out of the jaws of his mythological enemy, the trunkless demon of helping the luminary out of the jaws of his mythological demon of the ascending node. The only way to remedy this, is to put such a one in a position to judge for himself by making him sufficiently well-acquainted with both sides of the case. It is scarcely necessary to observe that a decision in our favour carries ten-fold moral force with it when it is known that the person so deciding knows not merely what he embraces, but also, thoroughly, what he deliberately abandons. (Ballantyne 1852, I: iv; italics mine)

What troubles Ballantyne is that the introduction to European scientific theories explaining the physical occurrences in the world does not result in the pundits forsaking their practices. Ballantyne sees the practices of the pundits as embodying beliefs that are part of a rival theory which have been rendered indisputably false by European sciences. Thus, for him it is essential that the pundits correct their practices in the light of true beliefs/better theories explaining the world. If one had understood the scientific explanations then one had to give up on a “mythological explanation” for a particular natural phenomenon. However, the pundit in Ballantyne’s story, is acquainted with the theory of eclipses and is able to calculate them
by the European formulae and yet does not neglect to perform the ceremonies whose justification seems to be a mythological story. This can only imply that these pundits are holding on to a false belief even after being exposed to a true belief, indicating for Ballantyne a failure of reasoning. For Ballantyne, it violates the principle of non-contradiction.

Now, failures of reasoning, as some historians of ideas tell us, require some additional explanations that holding on to a true belief does not. When a belief that is being held is true, no further explanation is required. However, when a belief is false and yet being adhered to, something further needs to be explained. One now needs to ask what kind of ‘psychological pressure’ or ‘social functions’ prevents the participants from seeing the mistaken belief as false. However, Quentin Skinner (2010, 89–94) objects to this view by pointing out that this already starts with the assumption that the participant’s (in our case, the pundit’s) belief is false (which is false only from an observer’s point of view, the observer here being Ballantyne). However, according to Skinner, we must grant that the participant holds the belief to be true and rational, subject to their own evidences, justifications and criticisms.

This means that we need to ask what makes it possible for the participants to have the kind of beliefs they do. These beliefs, Skinner points out, can be held as irrational only when they fall short, not of our epistemic standards, but of their own epistemic standards.

Does Skinner’s formulation of the problem help us understand the issue at hand? Skinner’s formulation still requires us to render intelligible the “belief system” of the participants by assessing their beliefs as true or false within their own epistemic standards.¹²⁸ Let us consider

¹²⁸ Skinner’s solution runs into another problem. Skinner recommends this method when we are examining the beliefs of people in the past and makes a case where the observer has to restrain from imposing his “true” belief which is true only for the observer. Thus, Keith Thomas presses Skinner on whether Skinner would still hold the truth question at bay if we witnessed the coexistence of more than one set of what Quentin Skinner calls “prevailing norms for the acquisition and justification of beliefs” during the same historical period: “This was the case in John Locke’s day, when the animate and mechanical views of the universe coexisted, but it is also the case in our own day. Are the pilgrims who travel to Lourdes in the hope of a miraculous cure behaving irrationally? Do they have sufficient grounds for believing in the possibility of such a cure? I suspect that not all this audience would agree about that.” See Keith Thomas response to Skinner in (Mout and Stauffacher 2010,
all the options available to Ballantyne. Ballantyne has to conclude: a) That the pundits actually do not understand the theories explaining natural phenomenon and are mechanically learning the sciences b) That pundits believe the theory of eclipse to be true but are hypocrites due to social pressure to conform and therefore their ceremonial actions are insincere or false. c) They are unable to see the contradiction between their true belief and actions; therefore there is an epistemic deficit or failure in reasoning. d) If Ballantyne were to follow Skinner’s methods, he would have to ask what the belief system of the pundits is such that performing ceremony for the eclipse is a rational action within the framework the pundits hold. In all cases, one would still have to maintain the pre-supposition that actions are expressions of beliefs that the participant’s hold and would render the native either insincere or cognitively inferior. However, it is possible like we saw in the previous examples, that the pundits did not see these practices in terms of beliefs at all and held them as two distinct forms of knowledge.

Thus, we see that the domain of everyday actions, the various puranas, rituals, ceremonies and performative art/craft, whose raison d'être is not their truth or falsity, are now evaluated under the truth norm. If in the case of Duff, we have a record of the success of an attempt, in the case of Ballantyne, we have a record of an attempt that fails. Education itself is pressed into the task of social reform and to inculcate in the natives a certain form of rationalism.

Conclusion

We have so far explored the horizons of expectations on part of the British – whether Anglicists, Orientalists or missionaries – which render their intervention in the domain of education coherent. We traced the intellectual milieu and the factors that make the debates around the introduction of education in this period intelligible to us, by examining the

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89–94). Both Ballantyne and the pundit belong to the same period here. Yet, Ballantyne approaches the pundit as if he were holding an outmoded belief, a remnant of a past era.
cognitive presuppositions and mental categories that underpinned their actions and arguments. This is not to say that they jointly conspired or were intentionally moving towards a common goal, as it may easily be mistaken. The point of this chapter instead was to show, through textual and historical research, that certain assumptions were shared across actors during this period of history and that we must understand the cognitive assumptions and framework which render their observations and actions coherent rather than impute immorality to the British. These set of assumptions made by the Europeans are part of their pre-understanding *which is necessary* for any kind of comprehension to take place. We see that the British are engaged in a large-scale anthropological experiment in the domain of education, as is evident in the keen notes maintained by Duff and Ballantyne.

We notice three salient features of the debates. Firstly, we see that the order of the debate is substantially different from the debates around *Bildung*. The debates on education in Europe were concerned with formation of the subject of education: the cultivation of conceptual thought, the discipline of scientific and ethical thinking or the nurturing of aesthetic sensibility. In colonial India, the debate is not about what it is to enable the full-flourishing of a people from another culture who have their own traditions and newer forms of learning to acquire. Instead, the aims of education are made *subordinate* to “useful” knowledge and the moral reform of *an entire people and their society*.\(^{129}\) Secondly, none of the Europeans of the early nineteenth century frame the encounter between two cultures as one of religion (Hinduism) versus science (West) but as one of true religion giving rise to true science and

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\(^{129}\) We would see the culmination of this debate in The Wood’s Despatch of 1854. In a combination of Macaulay’s emphasis of usefulness and Grant’s stress on truthfulness, the report would reiterate the value of liberal education in teaching the natives of India “the marvellous results of the employment of labour and capital” and supplying public servants with integrity: “We have moreover, always looked upon the encouragement of education as peculiarly important, because calculated ‘not only to produce a higher degree of intellectual fitness, but to raise the moral character of those who partake of its advantages, and so to supply you with servants to whose probity you may with increased confidence commit offices of trust’ in India, where the well-being of the people is so intimately connected with the truthfulness and ability of officers of every grade in all departments of the State” (C. Wood 1987, 6).
true morality, and false religion to a false science and false morality. Thirdly, (and flowing from the second), contrary to our assumption that secular education in India must be antithetical to all forms of religion, we find that none of the colonial actors perceive a conflict between the teaching of Western science and literature on the one hand and Christianity on the other. On the contrary, they cut up their world differently and secular education is seen as an aid to the latter. How is it that all the participants non-trivially link Western sciences and literature as orienting one to Christianity? This, I submit, is a question that can occur to us only today when the link between Christianity (especially its Protestant variant) and the Western knowledge forms has been rendered completely invisible. During the period that is the focus of our study, the relation between these knowledge forms and Christianity is self-evident to Europeans and there is no other way to envisage the relationship.

Recent scholarship has shown us that the conflict between science and religion is at best a late nineteenth century invention and far from being antagonistic to each other, Christianity fuelled scientific growth (Harrison 2007, 1990; Balagangadhara 1994; Gillespie 2008; E. Grant 1996; Shapin 1996, 2011). As detailed in Chapter II, the notion that God was the author of the Book of Scripture and Book of Nature and that the truths of reason could not contradict the truths of revelation had been dominant in the debates of the previous centuries in Europe. Theological debates about the Fall of man and the extent to which the Fall had damaged the mind and senses had directly driven the “scientific revolution” and the scientific methods of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including experimental science (Harrison 2007; Shapin 2011).

In the domain of human action, the scholastics of the medieval schools, as Southern shows, had played an important role by unifying Europe with the hope of creating an orderly society based on Christian values. Their efforts were aimed at bringing about an agreed system of
universal body of knowledge in the form of doctrines which would be as perfect as man’s
human state would permit and could be used to defend an orthodox Christian view of the
world from heretics without and within the organized Christendom in order to guide human
actions under all circumstances. As a result, when pagan texts were rediscovered, they were
subjected to the same debates as well as procedures that were used for other, earlier known,
authoritative religious texts that had been used to produce a body of doctrine which would
govern Christian life. *Since the goal of the medieval schools was doctrine*, the attempt of the
medieval scholastics was to systematize the doctrines making use of the newly found
Aristotelian logic, such that no contradiction beset the interpretations of scriptures. Slowly, *a
single system* of doctrines governed by the notion of unitary truth grew such that *no doctrine
would contradict another* (Southern 1995).

That the “scientific revolution” of the sixteenth and seventeenth century itself was an off-
shoot of this process and owed many of its tools and framework to Scholastic humanists with
their emphasis on doctrines and texts has been shown by several scholars (Grafton 1991;
Southern 1995; Harrison 2007; Harrison 1998). Even when God goes out of the picture, the
notion of a singular, Christian truth that unifies the entire system remains a regulative force
driving the scientific pursuit as well as governing the domain of human actions. Given this
theological framework and legacy, it is not surprising that Macaulay, Duff and other
Europeans of the early nineteenth century placed such an extraordinary emphasis on
ascertaining true beliefs and expected secular education to create conditions for the
acceptance of a singular truth.