
UNIT 1 ENTRY OF ENGLISH: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Process of A Language Unfolding Itself
- 1.3 Introducing Language From A Position of Power
- 1.4 Introduction of English in India: Phase One
- 1.5 Introduction of English in India: Phase Two
- 1.6 Introduction of English in India: Phase Three
- 1.7 Introduction of English in India: Phase Four
- 1.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.9 Questions

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will take you into the extremely fascinating area of interaction between history and culture. Ordinarily, we study a trend, an author or a literary work in isolation from the time in which these emerge and are shaped. Here, on the other hand, you will view a language in the process of evolution from the point it was introduced into the life of a nation to the point when it became a self-propelling full-fledged entity. You will also be face to face with a number of important things that contributed to a linguistic phenomenon moving inexorably towards a socio-ideological and cultural event never to be taken apart from the 'soil' in which it was implanted. Let us look at what English means in India next.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

English in India is a truly broad field, encompassing in time more than two eventful centuries and in geographical space countries as far apart from each other as eastern and western sides of the globe. The happening of a European language (the policies and actions of an organised as well as evolving society hidden behind it) in the midst of an alien culture over a long period of time should be considered a phenomenon meriting close investigation and study. In our context, it would be particularly useful to go into the question of a powerful outsider seeking to wilfully subjugate a community caught in its own queer dialectic of existence. The outside force and the indigenous pattern of trends got so intertwined in the early nineteenth century that each seemed to be guided by the other in its pursuit of growth or survival. The next section will deal with what I call the "process of language unfolding itself."

1.2 THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE UNFOLDING ITSELF

The twentieth century India saw an entirely different kind of resistance by natives to the foreign rule, unlike what was witnessed in the nineteenth century. The former had honed their political skills to such an extent (they had imbibed the spirit of enlightenment and rationality of the west and tended to use new concepts of freedom, equality and individual dignity against their political masters) that the tussle between the two went far beyond the economic – it became more and more hegemonic. Our

purpose in this course is to connect the nineteenth century social struggle against the British with the twentieth century 'hegemonic' tussle, a tussle aimed at transforming attitudes and winning minds.

The territory that we mainly explore in this course is that of language. A language, even a totally alien language, is not a simple, one-sided item of use. Instead, a language is a whole system of knowledge-constructing activity in which participation of diverse elements is the key factor.

This takes us straight into the area of literature. As we notice, English began to be used increasingly by writers and thinkers in India. Such a phenomenon of use necessitated a deep understanding of western works and trends and mastery over a language to the level that one experiments and struggles within it to describe and put across one's intent. All this requires a fair degree of acquaintance with the cultural ethos of that language. Thus it is that those who face the question of coming to terms with an alien tongue read its authors and thinkers with exemplary seriousness and view the represented or referred reality from a different angle. This enables them to widen their mental horizon and equips them ideologically to evolve an appropriate stance. The criss-cross of such a path would be discernible when we see the process of English in India unfolding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

What do we make of the growth of English as a medium in the post-Independence India? This is the period in which a nationalist response to an 'alien' tongue was expected, when the newly-emerged nation could take deeper interest in the unveiling of new life-patterns in the native tongues. In the next section we shall examine what happens to a language when it is introduced from a powerful hegemonic position, like in the case of the introduction of the English language in India.

1.3 INTRODUCING LANGUAGE FROM A POSITION OF POWER

In the early phase of its active presence in India, English represented a position of power. I talk of 'active presence' to denote that English came to bear a stamp of authority in the eighteenth thirties, the period in which the British could flaunt their influence and define on their authority the parameters suitable to India. **Macaulay's** famous *Minute of 1835* is the case in point. This has been discussed to an extent in the following unit of this block and at length in one of the later units in this course. Here, I draw your attention to the tone adopted by **Macaulay** in the *Minute*. To quote:

I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalist themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

We are not supposed to take this statement literally but to understand the argument that **Macaulay** advances in the context of the nineteenth century India. There is a sort of rhetoric in the tone and **Macaulay** seems to understand the absurdity of not knowing and yet being able to "form a correct estimate." Add to this the fact that he is addressing the audience of his choice – the people who share not just his prejudice but, his position of power, the people with the job on hand to frame a new language policy for the colony. Here, the word 'orientalists' signifies scholars who assiduously

examine a specific phenomenon the results of which they make available to the larger community of scholars for further study and reference. Obviously, **Macaulay** is in no position to disagree with the orientalist on their findings, one of which is that “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.”

The second point I make with reference to this statement is that **Macaulay** has specifically commented here on “the oriental learning, and not regions of imagination where Indian creative talent has flowered.” To him, “celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works” do not contain what he calls oriental learning. The European orientalist, particularly those in the nineteenth century, looked for knowledge and study – that field of investigation in which new findings lead on to the further knowledge of trends (as in science) in natural and social life.

Yet, what has come out most strongly in the statement of **Macaulay** is what **Edward Said** has called in his *The World, The Text And the Critic*, the rhetoric of belonging and administration. In **Said**’s words:

Macaulay’s was an ethnocentric opinion with ascertainable results. He was speaking from a position of power where he could translate his opinions into the decision to make an entire subcontinent of natives submit to studying in a language not their own. This in fact is what happened: In turn this validated the culture to itself by providing a precedent, and a case, by which superiority and power are lodged both in a rhetoric of belonging, or being “at home”, so to speak, and in a rhetoric of administration: the two become interchangeable (p12-13)

To this extent, thus, what **Macaulay** says could be considered seriously, his colonialist bias notwithstanding. From here onwards, let us divide our discussion about English in India into four parts. I do this to take you into the context in which English, once introduced, went from strength to strength, so to say, in our country. These four parts, historically speaking, are: 1) The first phase when a policy framework was created to bring in an alien language primarily to have a human work force, read middle class, made to order and spread the message of superior thinking and culture through it; 2) The second phase in which English started making a dent in our lives and largely affected our ideas and value systems; 3) The third phase marked by the dialectic of supporting and opposing the emerging scenario under the impact of a growing nationalistic psyche culminating in the final attainment of freedom from the British yoke in 1947; 4) The fourth phase of post-Independence India witnessing the peculiar process of resisting/ adopting English in the wake of new trends emerging in the country. I refer to the social development accompanied by a crisis in polity and culture that unfolded in this period. Placed in the time-frame, these phases belong to the first half of the nineteenth century till 1857, from 1857 to roughly the eighteen eighties when nationalism struck roots organisationally, from the last decades of the nineteenth century to 1947 and the post-Independent period till the end of the century respectively. We shall examine in detail the introduction of English during the First Phase (1800-1857).

1.4 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE ONE (1800- 1857)

As I take up the first phase, I draw your attention to the fact that by the beginning of the nineteenth century Indian economy had become potentially if not actually subservient to British interests. This fact was visible when more and more administrative power started passing into the hands of the **East India Company** and by proxy to the British regime. The period also characterised the enfeeblement of Indian interests divided as they became in the absence of a unifying factor. On their side, the British basked in the glory of their resurgent economy back home and victory over **Napoleon** in the second decade of the nineteenth century. In India, thus,

the fight between an alien power and a politically weak and divided society was an unequal one.

I particularly point towards a strong Britain at the time. After registering her presence as a vibrant economy in the previous century, England had gained the status of a 'super power' around the period she became active in India as an administrator, reformer and benefactor. Those of us who are conversant with English literature would realise that this period is known in the literary history as the Romantic period, a period when poets such as **Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats** sent across a sharply a critical message against growing bourgeois interests. Romantics were true dreamers wedded to the cause of the simple village folk that were gradually sidelined by the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century. To grasp the point, we have to separate the dream in Romanticism from everything else and transpose it over the situation existing in India in the same period. In their society the British were engaged in pulling themselves out of medievalism and transforming their thinking along modernist lines. Such was the zeal of dreamers in England.

However, away from home in the territory of a colony, the intellectually equipped functionaries of the English state had a different role to play. There is no wonder that a **Macaulay** would embark on the course of enlightenment and rational thought far away from his shores where around 1835, where an extremely bitter and scathing critique of the English society of the time began to be presented in English fiction. Students of English literature are thus, better placed to see the irony in the situation.

Coming back to what was happening in India under the increasing British control, we notice in the early nineteenth century India an attempt is being made on the part of policy-framers to perform what could be termed 'social engineering' of a sort. Under this, a whole group of the natives spread through the length and breadth of India would read, write and think English.

We have to recognise that the 'social engineering' of which I mention in the above paragraph did occur and there did gradually emerge a group in the country linked umbilically to the British. These were the natives who largely fought in India the battles of the British, telling the rest of the Indians about orthodoxy and obsolescence existing within them as well as the desirability of adopting a superior culture and value system. The sense of servility the British intended to cultivate among Indians became a fact as a consequence of the influence-wielding conduct of this middle class.

A demoralised society as India was at the time it watched abjectly the spectacle of western superiority presented through the behaviour of 'enlightened' English-speaking individuals. We also know that historically speaking, India had yet a long way to go towards modernity and that it was indeed stuck in orthodoxy. It can also be broadly accepted that the process of confrontation between the 'eastern' and 'western' ethos set in motion the extremely significant trend of liberal education and reform movements in our country. Through English, our elites and middle class individuals came face to face with a perspective radically different from their own. Let us look at the developments that were to take place in the introduction of English during the Second Phase (1857-1880).

1.5 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE TWO (1857- 1880)

The momentous happening with which the second phase of English in India is linked was the famous revolt of Indian soldiers against the British in 1857. It was termed 'mutiny' since the British considered it an illegal and unethical act. From the Indian

point of view, it was an expression of discontent and anger against a power in the presence of whom the country felt helpless. Without going into the causes of the revolt, we can relate this event to the antagonism developing between a strong force in occupation and a country ridden with insurmountable problems of poverty and backwardness. Be that as it may, the British from 1857 onwards chose a course different from the one they had adopted earlier. With the change in status according to which India was placed directly under the English monarch and thus becoming a colony, our society would be managed in the new context as a formation constituting subjects. The general perception of the English was also meanwhile altered vis-à-vis Indians.

Indians from now on would be treated with suspicion irrespective of whether they were from the middle classes, the urban poor, villagers or the landed gentry. The term 'mutiny' with its wide ideological ramifications covered all aspects of British behaviour. The question is whether the adoption of English by Indians in the mean time had given a wrong mutinous orientation to the Indian middle classes in this phase responded to issues such as individual freedom differently from the way they were supposed to do by their masters. The reformist acts undertaken by the regime earlier may also have unleashed trends in India that drew inspiration from the spirit to critique orthodoxy. With pioneers such as **Ram Mohan Roy** active in the realm of reform and change earlier in the century, various communities in India, forged ahead of others and threw up visionaries who would work with all their might to transform the environment at a latter day. Some of these communities took keen interest in education and aimed at ushering in the era of modernity.

This second phase was especially productive in the area of literature unlike the previous one that had inspired only thinkers and reformers. The reason is not far to seek. With increase in the knowledge of English, a large number of creative minds began to look at their counterparts in England as their role models and sought to emulate their example. You will have reference to them in the Blocks that follow. One interesting example is that of a novel written in English by **Bankim Chander Chatterjee**. His novel *Rajmohun's Wife* presented in one go a peculiar amalgam of the Indian folk tale and the English novel. Whereas the characters in the novel are typically Indian with shades of black and white, the descriptions of nature and the ornate style draws much from the contemporary English writing of the day. Add to this the fact that the narrative reveals a number of influences of the contemporary thought in England.

I suggest through this point the emergence of a phenomenon in which the Indian art forms had an interface with the European ones. The latter helped the Indian mind to wrestle free from the highly stylised and moralistic renderings of myths in the Indian writing. However, this phase unhappily caused the marginalisation of those Indian forms that struggled to represent new experiences, dichotomies and disharmonies in Indian life. It certainly took the middle class minds away from some of the best trends emerging in Indian language literatures. The *Urdu Ghazal* of the day, for instance, remained largely confined to the urban elites, not finding its way to the experimenting and innovating youths of the educated middle classes. Radicals would harness the same *ghazals* however, (as in the case of **Faiz**), at a later stage, to create political awareness among the freedom-loving Indians across the country.

Combine this literary trend in English taking shape in the hands of the Indians with some of the new activist reformers, some of them women, in society that chose to read in English and write in an Indian language. We see that a meaningful interaction did begin occurring as a consequence of the efforts of these reformers. Place it in the context of a new educational pattern crystallising in the field of education to realise that a number of visionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century took the courageous step of combining English with Indian languages in colleges and universities. Two institutions that were brought into being and subsequently flourished remarkably were known as the *Anglo-Arabic* and *Anglo-Vedic* institutions of learning. With a strong orientation in the so-called Muslim or Hindu thought, these

institutions rightly sought to adopt the rational approach of receiving knowledge from whichever quarter. They asserted that knowledge was not confined to the place where it initially emerged and that it was a part of the universal human heritage. The point of orientation I am making here is to indicate that language as a vehicle of expression and as the medium of communication can be used with advantage by any community and society, irrespective of the place where it was active initially.

As said above, English in India in this phase opened a window to western learning and made available to the emergent middle class a number of perspectives, many of them radical and modern. At the same time, it also put on the periphery those languages and dialects that had been forged by ordinary people struggling to evolve their own idioms and devices to articulate their specific experiences. It also clearly made hierarchies that put English on a pedestal and assigned inferior position to things Indian. The harm caused by English is perceivable at the sociological level where things occur subtly. English in this phase also worked to the detriment of Indian writing where the genuine emotions of the masses could be expressed in a forthright manner. With a minuscule minority in India capable of receiving information or knowledge through English, the appeal of this foreign tongue remained limited in our environment. The damage was particularly in the case of youths who felt drawn to English, little realising that the language chosen by them restricted not just the appeal of their writing but also the scope of the issues and themes they chose to represent in their writing. What happened or was to happen to English during the pre- Independence and pre- Partition days will be discussed in the next section.

1.6 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE THREE (1880 – 1947)

In my opinion, the third phase of the evolution in English in India (I mean by this the impact English had in Indian life and the way it was itself being shaped in its role by the happenings of the period) reflects a sharp sense of the events unfolding in India in recent history. This phase brought out the inefficacy of a foreign language, whatever the extent of patronage the language enjoyed. In the period, our society, decided to form itself as a meaningful entity by adopting a course at once challenging and desirable. In spite of being diverse in scope and interests, our society came to recognise around this time what could be termed seeds of commonness. I refer to the **Indian National Movement** that began towards the end of the nineteenth century and culminated in the Independence of 1947. We see a peculiar relationship, clearly an antagonistic one, between the nationalist upsurge in India and English. This is also the question of the role a language or a number of languages play in what can be broadly called social life.

At this point, we have to remind ourselves again that India was a British colony bearing the bitter implication of being second to a metropolitan centre. It was supposed to serve at the cost of its resources, culture, identity and dignity the interests of a foreign power. Please consider that of the four I have cited, three – culture, identity and dignity – particularly are the concerns of the middle class. **Macaulay's** dream of creating a middle class in India that would fight English battles and act as buffer between the administration and the common masses took, it appears, a reverse turn in the nationalist phase in our society. One noticed a split between the English knowing middle classes meant to emulate the behaviour and values of the master segment and thus working to the detriment of their own society. This happened but the reverse also raised its head deep within their psyche.

The examples of **Mahatma Gandhi** and **Jawaharlal Nehru** are particularly educative in that they symbolise the needs of the time. Both stood for the effort of the enlightened sections aimed at creating nationalist consciousness. The enlightened sections in India chose in the case of the split the issue of dignity in preference to the modernity of the kind the British represented as colonisers. Also bear in mind, as indicated above, that what I call enlightened sections in India had a modernity and rationality as well as a moral daring that would be the envy of the thinkers and practitioners of the eighteenth century European enlightenment.

Both **Gandhiji** and **Nehru** spoke and wrote English better than most Indians. However, they sent a different message across to people within the **Congress** as well as outside. They stressed that the language of the **National Movement** was to be an Indian language, a language that ordinary Indians could understand and speak. What about the efficacy of an Indian language at the time? Most of the Indian languages in the nineteenth century had a vocabulary rooted in the medieval life and ethos. Few of them had what we call a grammar of their own, that which recognised their structures and identified rules determining them. Yet, we have the great example of **Bankim Chandra** deciding to write in Bengali soon after he had written *Rajmohun's Wife* in English. In English, **Bankim** was quite proficient. If he continued in that language, there is no reason why he should not have used with good effect the cadences of speech in English. Equally well, he would have been fluent and spontaneous in descriptive prose. But the language of his fiction had to be Bengali for the reason cited above.

Premchand's example in this series comes next, a truly radical example since unlike most other Indian writers of the time he shuffled between many native languages and dialects to finally settle down to writing in Hindi. His Hindi drew from the spoken word and was yet formal. There is no denying that **Premchand's** linguistic resources with respect to Persian and Urdu were enormous. His English also matched well with that of his contemporaries, most of who felt more at ease in it than in their mother tongue. **Premchand's** mother tongue was *Avadhi*, a dialect that had a greater claim on acceptability in North India than any other spoken language in the region, with the sole exception of Braj. What I imply is that India in this phase of the national movement needed a language through which the message of freedom, resistance to imperialism, identity and self-respect could be put across effectively. The kind of Hindi that evolved over the first few decades of the twentieth century fitted this requirement in spite of the fact that languages such as Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, etc. were richer in vocabulary and cultural content. The important thing in the discussion is that English did not figure anywhere in the scheme, even as it remained the language of higher discourse at the national level.

A mass movement required a language capable of being understood and absorbed by the masses and Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati or Marathi were the ones meant to play the role of carrying the nationalist argument to the ordinary people. Is that the reason why Indian writing in this period flourished as never before in different Indian languages? If there is any renaissance of Indian writing in our history, it belongs to this phase of the **National Movement**. Compare this writing in the Indian languages with that by **Sri Aurobindo**, **Mulk Raj Anand**, **Raja Rao** or **R K Narayan** in English around the same period and we notice that the substance of Indian life, its down-to-earth appeal emblematised in the fiction of **Tagore**, **Premchand**, **Sharat Chandra**, **Nanak Singh**, **Sadat Hasan Manto**, and many Gujarati or Marathi writers of that age at a qualitatively different level. Combine this with the sweep and wide appeal of giants in poetry such as **Iqbal**, **Subramaniam Bharati**, **Faiz** and **Nirala** and the picture gets complete. This stage marks the hey-day of India's languages and literatures that push the language of our colonial masters clearly to the margins. English as it stands today fifty-seven years after Independence will be analysed in the next section.

1.7 THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: PHASE FOUR (1947-2004)

The fourth stage, that of the post-Independent India, is highly problematic, with the process of efflorescence in Indian languages and literatures getting reversed with the passage of time. The progress and growth of Indian languages and literatures slowed down considerably in this period. Writing in Indian languages became increasingly distanced from the broader concerns of society as time passed. In inverse proportion to this, English has been able to gain unprecedented popularity. This stage has also been witness to a great surge forward of English as a language not just of communication but also of creative endeavour. As a medium of instruction at the present time, it has more or less totally replaced Indian languages at the college and university levels.

In the media, too, the influence of English has increased by the day. Elitism and English are inseparable. There is a mushrooming of institutes teaching spoken and written English not just in metropolitan centers but even small towns. Privately managed, these institutes are money-spinners. From the language of the colonial masters ever since its beginning in the nineteenth century, English has been adopted by the Indian ruling class as their language. Power and prestige are associated with it. We notice that a smartly dressed English-speaking individual is the role model of every youth in our country. It is indeed interesting to watch a popular Hindi film actor talking in English while being interviewed in a Hindi programme on the T V and seeking to impress the viewer by his accent and command over the language of prestige.

In the same manner, Indian writing in English has increased in appeal and influence. Study and research in English attract better talent than in Indian languages. What could be the reason for this? It is difficult for us to make an objective assessment of this phenomenon since things are rather close to us in time. At best, we can raise some pertinent questions. We shall take this up at length in Unit 4 of this Block.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

This overview has sought to emphasise the circumstances in which English was introduced in India by our colonial masters way back in the nineteenth century. The expansion and growth of English was not easy or smooth. After crossing the initial hurdles, it was able to attract a large number of Indians and was instrumental in inspiring a whole group to adopt it. Thus emerged in the nineteenth century an Indian middle class swearing by English manners. English in India passed through a number of phases till it became established as a part of Indian life in the post-Independence period. Its importance has increased considerably in the closing years of the twentieth century.

1.9 QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the circumstances in which English was introduced in nineteenth century India.
2. Discuss the reasons behind the marginalisation of English during the Indian National Movement.

3. Would it be correct to say that finally English has changed from a language of the colonial masters to a language of the privileged in India today? Give reasons in support of your answer.
4. Do you agree that English is associated with the value system of imperialism in the twentieth century? Support your answer with examples.

UNIT 2 MACAULAY, RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY AND CHARLES E TREVELYAN

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.1.1 The Introduction of English Studies in India
- 2.2 The New Face Of Imperialism
 - 2.2.1 New Developments In Indian Society
- 2.3 Raja Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* to Lord Amherst
- 2.4 Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education*
 - 2.4.1 The Postcolonial Critique Of Macaulay's *Minute*
- 2.5 The Orientalists and the New Education Policy
 - 2.5.1 The Political Pragmatism of Macaulay's *Minute*
- 2.6 C E Trevelyan – *On the Education of the People of India*
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Questions
- 2.9 Glossary

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit is to give an outline of the specific debates in the early nineteenth century on the education of the Indian subjects of the British Empire. The three tracts that comprise this unit and encapsulate these debates have been discussed and their main arguments have been summarised. Another objective is to situate these debates in a larger historical context so that they do not appear to be products of certain intellectuals who discussed education as a purely academic matter. The historical context is one of imperialist domination and economic exploitation of India's resources by the **British East India Company**. At the same time the early nineteenth century was a witness to the growth of the social reform movements in India with the rise of some of the most dedicated crusaders against social maladies. The discussion of the three tracts, it is hoped, will show that the educational reforms instituted by the British government cannot be understood unless they are placed within the matrix of the larger socio-political forces.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

English Studies was introduced in India in the first half of the nineteenth century. The year 1835 can be taken as the official date of introduction in India, the date when the Teaching of English at all levels (primary, secondary and higher) was officially sanctioned by the British colonial government. However, the process for the education of Indians through the language of the colonisers was set into motion much before 1835. This process can be broadly classified into two parts. The first comprises a set of arguments and opinions advocating the study of English literature and European sciences through the medium of English. The second is the establishment of schools and colleges for the study of English as well as the setting up of institutional bodies for the formulation of educational policies on behalf of the colonial government. In this Unit we shall restrict our focus to the first half of the process.

2.1.1 The Introduction of English Studies in India

Macaulay, Raja Ram
Mohun Roy and
Charles E. Trevelyan

It can be said that the new educational policy of 1835 officially announced in the **Governor General's Resolution** that:

The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and sciences among the natives of India [and that] all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would best be employed in English education alone

- This statement did not reflect a sudden shift in the educational policy of the colonial government.

Rather it was an outcome of a long debate/conflict between advocates of English education and those who favoured the study of classical Indian languages -- Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. **Macaulay's** *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) and **Trevelyan's** *On the Education of the People of India* (1838) incorporate all these debates along with a passionate plea for the introduction of English studies. However, it must be noted that as early as 1792 **Charles Grant**, an employee of the **East India Company** recommended the dissemination of European literature and sciences through the medium of English among the people of India. The reasons given by **Grant** for this extraordinary importance attached to the study of English literature are significant. They form the backbone of all later arguments demanding an official approval of English studies.

In his treatise *Observations on the State of Society among the Asian Subjects of Great Britain* **Grant** paints a grim picture of Indian society steeped in superstition, idolatry and immorality. These evils of Indian society he believed could only be removed by a system of western education that according to **Grant** possessed all the advantages of a superior civilisation. However, in **Grant's** opinion, English education would be highly beneficial to the colonialists. **Grant** was certain that the natives by acquiring western knowledge and gaining a command over the language of their rulers would be brought nearer to them. This reduction of distance between the natives and their governors would ensure the formers loyalty. **Grant** also postulates that it would be easier to trade with anglicised Indians and ensure their cooperation in the realm of commerce. Thus the original aim of the colonists – the extension of British commerce would be fulfilled.

It can be easily seen that **Grant's** educational scheme is not simply limited to the enlightenment of natives. It may be said that for **Grant**, educational instruction was also a strategy for political and economic consolidation of the British imperial power. Moreover, the question of the enlightenment of Indians also seems to be based on the assumption that native culture and civilisation is intrinsically inferior with no redeeming features. Aren't both these assumptions debatable and problematic? The solution offered by **Grant** is the imposition of an alien but superior culture. **Grant's** view is uncomfortably close to the formulation of the Christian missionaries in India who thought that the inherent barbarism of Hindustan could only be successfully countered by Christianising the whole country. In the next section we shall examine what we may call the new phase of imperialism.

2.2 THE NEW FACE OF IMPERIALISM

While **Grant** was thinking of anglicising the native, the British educational policy was running on completely different principles. Before the Anglicist viewpoint on education was realised in actual practice, the colonial system of education was guided primarily by pragmatic considerations. The encouragement of ancient and medieval Indian learning by the British was based on the policy of neutrality regarding

religious-cultural matters. The fear of rousing the religious sensitivities of the Indians precluded any attempt at conversion or indoctrination. In other words, the policy on non-interference in education was conditioned by the imperatives of socio-political control over the newly conquered territories. It will then be worthwhile to ask - what were the reasons for this crucial policy shift? What made the colonial masters think that the old policy of placating the native's cultural prejudices was outdated? Can we assume that the framers and supporters of the new educational policy of 1838 redefined British imperial domination?

A study of the various minutes and tracts of those who wanted to introduce English in India reveals that they differed from the old policy makers on the issue of controlling the socio-cultural life of their Indian subjects. They did not see imperialism as a purely political practice with minimum interference in the socio-cultural affairs of the colony. Imperialism was now constructed as a transcendent force sweeping the entire globe with a great burden of 'civilising' the natives. In other words **Macaulay**, **Trevelyan** and other anglicists represent imperialism as a benevolent political enterprise zealously working towards the improvement of less developed communities. The assumption, of course, is that these communities cannot improve on their own due to the innate depravity/ inferiority of their socio-cultural practices. Let us examine the new developments that were to take place in Indian society as a result of this grand assumption.

2.2.1 New Developments In Indian Society

From the previous discussion, we arrived at the conclusion that the assumption of the intellectual and moral leadership of the Indian people by the new batch of colonists represents a new phase of British imperialism. What was earlier seen as a politically dangerous and unpragmatic move (i.e. the introduction of English) now became a preferable course to follow. The representatives of the old educational policy like **H H Wilson** and **H T Prinsep** saw, (in this confidence of the new educationists), the inexperience of "individuals with manifestly strong prejudices," individuals who "knew nothing of the people and the country." However the confidence of a **Macaulay** or a **Trevelyan** was not merely the product of a new imperial mindset but had a solid basis in the socio-cultural developments in Indian society. These developments asserted themselves strongly in the Bengal Presidency where a new class of Bengali intellectuals had arisen. This class was extremely vocal in their support of English education. Many institutions for the spread of education through the medium of English were established by learned Bengali Hindus with the financial and moral support of the missionaries and sympathetic officials of the **East India Company**.

The intellectual ferment in middle class Hindu community of Bengal signalled the slow but sure growth of the social reform movement in India. This movement was a revolution in ideas with its trenchant criticism of the decadent and corrupt aspects of the Indian social system. These Bengali intellectuals fully supported the imperial diatribe against *Sattee*, *Child Marriage* and *Thuggery*. These intellectuals saw the colonial regime's critique of the inhuman social customs, as a much needed support to their own agenda. The *Letter* of **Raja Rammohun Roy**, the great Bengali social reformer addressed to the British **Governor-General Lord Amherst** reveals to us a process in which the indigenous impetus of reform oblivious of the new imperial agenda strengthened the arguments of the imperial ideologues and ultimately contributed to the implementation of their educational plans. In the next section we shall take a closer look at **Raja Ram Mohun Roy's Letter to Lord Amherst**.

2.3 RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY'S *LETTER* TO LORD AMHERST

Macaulay, Raja Ram
Mohun Roy and
Charles E. Trevelyan

The *Letter* is the most significant indigenous contribution to the debate of education in the early nineteenth century. **Rammohun Roy** wrote this *Letter* in order to protest against the ruling regime's decision to open a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. It has been already pointed out that before the new educational policy was implemented, the government of India supported instruction in the classical Indian languages. It funded institutions involved in the spread of Hindu and Mohammedan learning and gave financial assistance to Sanskrit and Arabic scholars in order to encourage them to achieve distinction in their respective fields. The government also provided grants for the printing of ancient Sanskrit and Arabic texts in the original and in translation. The **Governor Generals** in the formative years of British rule were committed to the spread and encouragement of native learning. Both **Warren Hastings** and **Lord Minto** were instrumental in the establishment of many institutions where oriental literature was taught. By 1823 (the date of the *Letter*) this official policy of the government faced repeated assaults from a number of quarters. The attack primarily came from the missionaries, the Anglicists of the **East India Company** and the 'enlightened' Bengali elite. In spite of all these pressures, the colonial regime had decided to continue the policy of **Hastings** and **Minto**. The proposal for the establishment of a Sanskrit College at Calcutta was a part of this decision.

Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* locates a contradiction between the modern, scientific spirit of European civilisation and its educational policy in India. The proposal to establish the new Sanskrit College comes as a shock to **Roy** since, in his view, it does not conform to the liberal image of the British. It is clear from a careful perusal of the letter that **Ram Mohun Roy** expects the colonial power to be true to its liberal image and find ways and means to promote western sciences and arts for the benefit of its Indian subjects. **Ram Mohun Roy** finds the indigenous system of instruction outdated because it is medieval. It teaches systems which have no rational and scientific basis and are of little use in the modern world. **Roy** finds abstract metaphysical questions distasteful. These questions were central to the native educational system. Speculations like "in what manner is the soul absorbed into the Deity" or *Vedantic* belief that "visible things have no existence" would not, in **Roy's** view lead to the improvement of Indian society. Progress and modernisation was only possible if people were taught the modern sciences and literatures of the West.

Roy was also opposed to the teaching of Sanskrit grammar that embodied only tiresome subtleties. For **Roy**, Sanskrit was a language that due to its intrinsic difficulties acts as a barrier to the diffusion of useful knowledge. The students spend the best years of their lives learning to speak and write correct Sanskrit. **Roy** was against a mechanical kind of language teaching that treated language as an end in itself and not a means for conveying something useful. However, it is noteworthy that **Roy** makes no specific mention of the medium of instruction. Although he critiques the Sanskrit language for being an "impervious veil," it is the useless, metaphysical learning concealed under this veil that is the chief object of his attack.

The critique of the *Vedantic* beliefs does not necessarily mean that **Roy's** arguments like those of the colonialists embody a wholesale condemnation of Indian cultural practices and the assertion of the essential superiority of European socio-cultural structures. Although the comparison in **Roy's** *Letter* definitely puts Europe ahead of the Orient, this modernity of Europe does not constitute its essence but has been achieved after a long conflict with the medieval world-view. According to **Ram Mohun Roy**, Europeans have emerged from the medievalism of the scholastic philosophers by replacing scholasticism with the scientific spirit of **Baconian philosophy**. By analysing the march of European civilisation from the rational religiosity of the Middle Ages to the world of modern science, **Roy** was able to give a historical dimension to the pitiful ignorance of the Indian people. Within **Roy's**

analytic framework, the superstitious and essentially religious character of the native's world defines a historical epoch akin to the pre-Renaissance world of the schoolmen in Europe. **Roy's** historicisation of the social-cultural practices of the Indian masses subverts the idea of their inherent inferiority. It also ushers in the possibility of change as an intensive educational programme consisting of modern sciences and arts that could root out the decadent medieval ideas that in his view, hampered progress.

Ram Mohun Roy's *Letter* is one of the most significant documents of Indian educational history. Its significance lies not only in its basic assumption of the superiority of the western system of instruction and of western sciences and literature but also in the fact that it strengthened the Anglicists' contention that a change in the educational field was desired by the natives themselves. Anglicists like **Macaulay** used **Ram Mohun Roy's** criticism of the absence of useful knowledge in the Sanskrit system of education to denigrate native culture and to suit their own imperialistic agendas. It is therefore, pertinent that we examine **Macaulay's** *Minute on Indian Education* next.

2.4 MACAULAY'S *MINUTE ON INDIAN EDUCATION*

T B Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education of 1835* is regarded by many as the most significant document in the history of Indian education. In fact its importance has been over-emphasised to an extent that it is sometimes held to be solely responsible for the introduction of English in British India.

It would be unfair to other workers in the field (e.g., **C E Trevelyan**) if we hold this view. However, the *Minute* can be seen as a watershed that not only governed the educational policy of the British administration after 1835 but also reflected a crucial change in the strategy of control and subjugation of the native population. On the face of it, the issue of control and repression appears to be wholly external to **Macaulay's** famous discussion on the benefits of giving English education to the natives of India. The discussion confronts us with 'facts' that are totally contrary to the idea of suppression of any potential dissatisfaction among the Indian masses. One of the most important 'facts' is that the Indians themselves prefer English education to native learning. **Macaulay**, the crusader for the "vast intellectual wealth" of Europe attacks the Orientalists, accusing them of bribing the Indian student to learn languages and literatures that in **Macaulay's** interpretive framework represent irrationality and barbarism. Thus he asserts, "the people should be left to make their own choice between the rival systems of education without being bribed."

But the most important 'fact' of **Macaulay** is the incontrovertible superiority of English literature language and sciences to Oriental learning. This conviction of **Macaulay** propels him to the swift conclusion that all the literatures of the East are not worth "a single shelf of a good European library." **Macaulay** finds the vernaculars so poor in their vocabulary that no useful instruction can be given in these languages. Thus the rejection of indigenous literatures and languages and their replacement by English is the only course available to the 'enlightened' colonial educationists. The *Minute* also encapsulates the concept of the White man's burden, the messianic responsibility of enlightened Europe to inculcate modern values among the less civilised communities. **Macaulay** predicts that this process of acculturation will make the natives forget their inferior cultural past and facilitate cultural assimilation. The new native who will emerge after receiving English education will be "Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." This cultural intolerance and the consequent plea for cultural subsumation are transmitted in the guise of imperial generosity. The assumption that the great wealth of the European intellectual heritage being offered to Indians is implicit in the

historical parallel that **Macaulay** draws between Renaissance England and nineteenth century India. He argues that the Englishmen of Renaissance England embraced the ancient Greek and Latin learning rejecting their medieval Anglo-Saxon culture. This analogy facilitates **Macaulay's** conclusion that "what Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of **More** and **Ascham**, our tongue is to the people of India."

**Macaulay, Raja Ram
Mohun Roy and
Charles E. Trevelyan**

Thus **Macaulay** in the *Minute* presents an image of an imperial policy devoted to the welfare of the Indian subjects of the British Empire. Firmly convinced of the civilising mission of the Empire's servants, he charges the Orientalists with not only a dereliction of their imperial duties but of erecting barriers in the way of progress and modernisation of Indian society. Let us now examine **Macaulay's Minute** critically in the light of postcolonial theory.

2.4.1 The Postcolonial Critique Of **Macaulay's Minute**

Macaulay was severely criticised by the English Orientalists for his rhetorical condemnation of Indian culture. **H H Wilson** and **W H Macnaughten**, two committed Orientalists of **Macaulay's** time were outraged at the negation of an entire cultural heritage as worthless by an individual who had spent only a few years in India and consequently in **Wilson's** view knew nothing of the country and the people. This outrage forms the basis of most postcolonial critiques of the hegemonic mode of imperial thinking. This kind of critique contains reflections on the arrogance of imperial ideological practices, the complete want of regard / ignorance of an entirely different culture, a refusal to understand cultural distinctiveness etc. **B Rajan's** view of **Macaulay's Minute** is one of the best instances of this kind of cultural critique. According to **Rajan**:

Understanding the subjected culture or even laying down the basis for a dialogue with it is not the primary objective . . . The Anglicist view based on imperial assumptions of superiority that in its nature cannot be dialogic, is less concerned with world understanding than with remaking the world in the western image.

It may be noted that the critique concentrates only on the discursive practices of imperial power. It does not focus upon the material benefits that this discourse confers upon the imperialists. The English Orientalists negated the idea of any practical utility of the new educational scheme. The question that confronts us now is, whether the new policy of devaluing native literatures and languages had any practical use or did it, as the Orientalists contended, endanger British interest in India? We shall discuss the attitude of the Orientalists towards the New Educational Policy in the next section.

2.5 THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE NEW EDUCATION POLICY

It has been already pointed out that the encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic learning by the **Company** officials was in consonance with the early colonial policy of religious neutrality. The colonised people were seen by the British as highly sensitive where their scriptural learning was concerned. Thus the new policy based on an explicit assertion of cultural superiority was seen by the Orientalists as not only a falsification of the true state of Indian learning but an unpragmatic political move. Most critiques of the Orientalist disagreement with the new policy are based on the assumption that the Orientalists were concerned less with politics than with an academic interest in eastern learning. For instance, **Kalyan K Chatterjee** in the book *English Education in India* sees the Orientalist emphasis on learning the classical Indian languages as "cosmopolitanism and intellectual curiosity of eighteenth century Enlightenment." Thus it becomes necessary for **Chatterjee** to

assert the Orientalist “enthusiasm for the Oriental languages and literatures transcended the *merely pragmatic need* for acculturating the British administrators in the Indian milieu (*italics... the unit writers*).

Therefore, it becomes necessary to clarify the Orientalist position vis-à-vis Indian education and its difference from the **Macaulay-Bentinck** group that was responsible for the promulgation of the new education policy of 1835. As we have already seen the oppositional relation between the two camps has led to an identification of imperial hegemonic thinking of the Anglicists and a liberal understanding of Indian culture with the Orientalists. **Percival Spear** has summarised this opinion succinctly when he says that the Anglicists argued that Indian civilisation had no value and had to be replaced by Western civilisation while the Orientalists were of the opinion that Indian civilisation was ripe for enrichment by Western knowledge. However, on a closer scrutiny, it can be seen that the Orientalists did not attack the fundamental assumption behind the Anglicist position – “the notion the unquestionable superiority of European literature and science.” In fact they un-hesitantly referred to “the direction to true science and good taste in literature which the superior lights of Europe ought to enable us bestow.” **John Fytler**, an Orientalist and a translator of books into Arabic pointed out that “Eastern sciences bear scarcely more proportion to those of Europe, than the first lisp of an infant to the ratiocinations of man.” It is easy to see the hierarchical nature of the discourse in which the child is to be taught/dominated by the man.

Therefore it cannot be said that the Orientalists had no links with a discourse designed to serve hegemonic ends. The disagreement with the Anglicists primarily lay in how these ends were to be achieved. The Orientalists favoured an alliance with the upper caste Indians that actually constituted the Indian ruling class. This alliance obviously excluded any attempt at direct indoctrination in Christianity or a criticism of native learning on the grounds of a want of a scientific attitude. The Orientalists felt that since European science and the natives held literature in low esteem, it was indeed not desirable that it was imposed upon them. **H H Wilson**, the great Oriental scholar pointed out that “a mere English scholar is not respected for his learning by the natives, they have no notion of English as learning but they have a high respect for a man who knows Sanskrit or who knows Arabic.” In **Wilson**’s view such prejudices would be difficult to eradicate in the near future and therefore “any attempt to enforce an acknowledgement of the superiority of intellectual produce amongst the natives of the West can only create dissatisfaction.”

Thus it is not surprising that **Macaulay**’s *Minute* not only struck the Orientalists as a product of a man not acquainted with ground realities but as a set of pronouncements fraught with grave political consequences. Was the *Minute* politically pragmatic is the question that arises now. Let us examine its validity in the next section.

2.5.1 The Political Pragmatism of Macaulay’s Minute

When **Macaulay** in the *Minute* harps on the native clamour for English education, he is responding to charge of being unpragmatic. The imperial hauteur apart, the reasons given in the *Minute* for teaching English literature and language are not solely dependent on the argument of their innate superiority to native learning. Thus the ‘intrinsic value’ of English literature is only one of the arguments for the imposition of English on the natives. Since the importance of this argument has been overemphasised by postcolonial criticism, it appears to constitute the entire thrust of **Macaulay**’s educational programme. **Macaulay**, in fact, works hard in the *Minute* to convey the impression that the Orientalist fear of the native backlash at the prospect of English education is illogical. He points out the dissatisfaction of the jobless ex-students of the Sanskrit College who wasted the best years of their lives in learning what according to **Macaulay** gave them neither bread nor respect. In **Macaulay**’s view the great enthusiasm of the learned natives for English instruction proves that hostility by the Indians towards the new policy only exist in the realm of imagination. He even brought out the details of the relative popularity of native and English texts.

There was no great demand for Arabic and Sanskrit books, which the *Committee of Public Instruction* had printed at so great a cost while the *Calcutta School Book Society* was selling a large number of English books at a profit. For **Macaulay**, as **John Clive** points out, 'the state of the market was the decisive test.'

**Macaulay, Raja Ram
Mohun Roy and
Charles E. Trevelyan**

The *Minute* implies that the old policy of the appeasement of the natives and of yielding to their religious prejudices is of no further use and needs to be replaced by a new programme of instruction in English, which responds to the indigenous demand for improvement through the teaching of sciences, and the literatures of Europe. Thus **Macaulay's Minute** does not see English education as an imposition. As **Clive** points out "**Macaulay** was familiar with the feelings of liberal Hindus on the subject of education." It is also clear that **Macaulay** interpreted the Indian social scene as a site, which contained seeds of social transformation. No longer were the religious figureheads held as representatives of communities whose significance could not be ignored. The social reformers who battled against decadent social systems and values were fully supported in their work by **Bentinck** and **Macaulay**. The new tide of reform helped **Macaulay** to project his scheme as practical and worthy of implementation. He could also accuse his opponents of not conforming to the ostensible project of imperialism – the intellectual and moral improvement of the colonised peoples.

The *Minute* thus builds up an assurance that British imperial interests will not be harmed by the new educational scheme. Certain portions of **Macaulay's** tract implies that the new framework of education will only increase the efficiency of colonial administration and help in the growth of trade. As **Macaulay** points out, English "is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government and is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East." However the fact that the Indian class speaks English or that English is to become eventually, a language of trade does not confirm the political and commercial dominance of the British in India. What is needed is a class of Indians thoroughly bred in the literature and arts of the colonisers. It is quite clear that **Macaulay's** education system is designed to produce a native who faithfully imitates the habits, customs and values of his/ her master. It is also evident that an anglicised native intellectual taught to revere and identify him/her self with the coloniser's culture will not be sufficiently critical of the exploitative nature of the colonial regime. Thus any potential subversion will be kept in check.

Thus **Macaulay's** scheme of anglicisation was not politically unpragmatic but was specifically structured to meet the needs of British imperialism. Its results were visible in the next fifty years. It succeeded in creating a class of Indians who were well versed in the art of speaking and writing English, Indians who would eventually be absorbed into the lower rungs of British administration. The anglicised elite was alienated from the rural masses of India. The reason lay not only in an education in a foreign language but also in the fact that it occupied positions of power in the civil administration and thus became a part of the exploitative colonial structure. However English education also acquainted the Indian intelligentsia with the liberal thought of the West that greatly contributed to the development of the anti-colonial movements later. Having analysed **Macaulay's Minute** in detail let us now turn our attention to **C E Trevelyan** and study the implications of his work *On The Education Of The People Of India*.

2.6 C E TREVELYAN – ON THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

Charles E Trevelyan was one of the foremost crusaders for the establishment of English studies in India. Like his brother-in-law **T B Macaulay**, he had a firm conviction that education in India had to be built upon new foundations. He saw India and her inhabitants in an advanced state of moral and intellectual decay. This

depressing imperial view of the colony was counterpoised by his optimism that teaching of English literature and language could successfully rejuvenate the people of India and lead them away from the path of false beliefs, false religions and immoral behaviour.

Trevelyan's condemnation of Indian religions and their corrupting effect on the native psyche were comparable to the missionary view of native religions and the resulting attempts at conversion. In his letters to **Governor-General William Bentinck**, **Trevelyan** unravels a scheme of spreading English literature language and religion in India. His vision is, however, not limited to India alone. India according to **Trevelyan** is merely a stepping-stone to the anglicisation of the entire Asian continent. In his famous treatise *On the Education of the People of India* **Trevelyan** interprets education as a tool with which the conversion of the Indian people could be achieved. Conversion obviously involves a rejection of native religions and cultures by the natives/Indians themselves. Like the missionaries, **Trevelyan** is unable to see any redeeming feature in the native cultures. These cultures, in his view, have to be replaced by the advanced culture of the West represented by the English colonisers. The missionaries considered the non-idolatrous variant of Christianity as one of the primary factors responsible for the greatness of the western civilisation. Therefore, they insisted on the teaching of the Bible. **Trevelyan**, on the other hand, agreed with the dominant official opinion about the delicate sensitivities of Indians where religion was involved. Thus he does not view direct proselytisation as congenial to British rule in India. **Trevelyan** was of the opinion that English literature could act as a mediator between English culture and the natives. He concludes that the best possible way to convert Indians is to teach them this literature.

Trevelyan hardly makes a distinction between English culture and Christianity. The two are treated as inseparable. **Trevelyan** shares the religious zeal of the missionaries to propagate this Christian culture of the Englishmen in India. However, he differs from them by rejecting the direct indoctrination of Indians. English literature, in his view, can take the place of the Bible. It can be easily seen that **Trevelyan's** views on the subject of education were a combination of evangelist fervour and political pragmatism. His genuine hatred of indigenous Indian learning which was just "an ocean of words" with no "influx of ideas," made him a strong advocate of English education. His urge to awaken Indian society from its intellectual and moral stupor brought him into contact with the opinions of Bengali social reformers who also demanded a system of western education. The awareness of this indigenous demand strengthened **Trevelyan's** conviction. His cause was popular and radical while his opponents' (the Orientalists) schemes were anti-popular and conservative.

But the reasons for **Trevelyan's** rejection of Hindu and Mohammedan learning went beyond a simple cultural prejudice. The reasons were profoundly political and were central to the issue of domination and subjugation of the native people. As **Trevelyan** himself pointed out:

The spirit of English literature cannot but be favourable to the English connection. Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the Indian youth almost cease to regard us as foreigners. . . . Educated in the same way, interested in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindus. . . .

In other words, English education will erase the consciousness of foreign domination as it will produce natives who will be cut off from indigenous knowledge and totally identify themselves with the English colonisers. **Trevelyan** notes in his *Education* that Hindu and Muslim literature will maintain the awareness of the Englishman's foreign origins and will relegate him to the status of an outsider. Hindu scriptures teach that the English are "unclean beasts" while the literature of the Muslims

constructs them as infidels in the land of the faithful. Thus in the interests of British imperialism, it was imperative that such literatures were rejected and replaced by the literature of the colonists. Cultural subsumation will preclude any resistance or rebellion on the part of the Indian subjects of the British Empire.

Here a question might be raised in relation to the process through which cultural assimilation of the native takes place. **Trevelyan** visualised the process as a kind of displacement whereby the actual Englishman/woman is removed from the mental framework of the colonised subject by English literature that then becomes the only basis for an understanding of the coloniser and his/her culture. **Trevelyan** rightly recognises the advantages of the process. As the native converses with the best minds of England through English literature, s/he comes to form a much higher opinion of the English than by a normal daily interaction with actual English people. Does **Trevelyan** mean to say that the real face of the British Empire does not invite/deserve homage on the part of the colonised subject? What is however certain is the fact of conquest and domination and its removal from the sphere of reflection and criticism through the agency of English literature. **Trevelyan**, like **Macaulay** uses analogies from history to justify his thesis. But while **Macaulay** concentrates on the culture's potential of spreading civilisation in an alien land, **Trevelyan** notes in glee that the people of subjugated nations never revolted against their conquerors as they were taught to identify themselves with the invaders. This was achieved by a dissemination of the conqueror's culture. Speaking of the Romans he points out that:

Acquisitions made by superiority in war, were consolidated by superiority in the arts of peace; and the remembrance of the original violence was lost in that of the benefits which resulted from it. The provincials of Italy, Spain, Africa and Gaul having no ambitions except to imitate the Romans and to share their privileges with them, remained to the last faithful subjects of the empire.

Historical examples prove that imperialism has triumphed not by mere repression but by a destruction of the memory of the repression by projecting itself as the benefactor of the subjected people. As **Trevelyan** correctly notes, the benefits that accrue from such a relationship not only include the transference of a superior culture from the metropolis to the colony but also a certain sharing of power and privileges.

In the Indian context, this sharing would mean the absorption of the natives into the British administrative structure. **Trevelyan** agreed with **J S Mill** who advocated the appointment of Indians to the civil government posts "in proportion as the Native [became] trustworthy and qualified for high office." Thus while anglicisation, for **Trevelyan** ensures a cultural hegemony, it is also made a precondition for the opening up of employment opportunities. English education will produce natives "with enlightened views and integrity which distinguish European officers." These natives it was believed would make efficient administrators. It is not difficult to find reasons for this imperial generosity. As **Trevelyan** points out, it was the new policy of **Lord William Bentinck** that made government jobs available to the anglicised Indian. He tells us that the old policy of excluding Indians from the British civil administration was a product of the **Cornwallis** era. **Trevelyan** agrees with the assumptions on which **Cornwallis** based his policy. The assumption was of course, the vast superiority of the Europeans in administrative skills. **Cornwallis'** policy was shelved because "the public revenue did not admit of the employment of a sufficient number" of European officers. And **William Bentinck** who was in the words of **John Clive** "sent to economize" solved this problem by employing natives to transact public business.

However, it cannot be said that **Trevelyan's** support for **Bentinck-Macaulay** anglicisation policy was completely determined by a desire to ensure that the oppressive nature of British Empire was kept well hidden. He genuinely believed that India was in a need for social-cultural resurgence. He contended that this renaissance could be brought about by English education alone. He was against the

cultivation of Persian and Sanskrit learning which, in his view, could never enrich the vernaculars. By enrichment, **Trevelyan** meant the flow of modern ideas into the native Indian languages. These ideas would, in his opinion, lead to the growth of a rich indigenous vernacular literature. Since English literature and European sciences will be the source of inspiration for the literature in these diverse Indian languages there will develop, in **Trevelyan**'s words "a common standard of taste, a common nomenclature." In other words, English will function as a uniting factor for all these literatures. This union will ultimately facilitate the emergence of a national literature. What **Trevelyan** had in mind was an image of a nation broken up into different linguistic groups and correspondingly, different cultures with English serving as a nodal language that unites these linguistic entities. The result will be "a united and enlightened nation."

Trevelyan believed that the growth of a national literature of India conformed to his disparaging view of native, or local cultural forms. The diversity among languages in India is seen by him not as an instance of a rich cultural plurality but as "one of the greatest existing obstacles to improvement in India." **Trevelyan**'s *Education* encapsulates an entire gamut of arguments to justify the introduction of English studies in India. It encompasses several ideological terrains ranging from strong missionary fervour for the upliftment of the poor, benighted Asiatics to the plain **Machiavellian** desire to consolidate and strengthen British imperial interests. The tract reveals a highly self-conscious voice in complete harmony with the imperial ideology. Yet it is able to provide us with some glimpses of the real motives that lay behind the institutionalisation of English Studies in India.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

The views of **Macaulay** and **Trevelyan** played a decisive role in the growth of the opinion that political intervention in the realm of Indian culture was not inimical to British imperialism. The promotion of English literature and English language was seen as a measure intended to consolidate the gains made through conquest and suppression. A new interpretation of the causes of the disaffection and rebellion among the natives was also responsible for the growth of this opinion. Earlier the native was seen as volatile and murderous where his/her religion was concerned. Thus any attempt at cultural assimilation was seen as one that invited a negative response from the semi-barbaric Indian. This Indian, it was suspected, could sow seeds of revolt among other natives.

This traditional view of the native was contradicted by social reformers like **Ram Mohun Roy** who supported the introduction of liberal rational ideas of the West in India. Now the source of subversion was no longer a hostile Indian whose religious sensibility was hurt but a cultural gap between the Indians and their rulers. Native culture is interpreted as an agent that increases this gap. For **Macaulay** and his brother-in-law, **Trevelyan**, the function of English education was to close this gap by promoting a devaluation and eventual rejection of native cultures by the natives themselves and teaching them to imitate/respect the cultural values of Britain.

Although the socio-political control of the Indian masses was the aim of the new educational plan, it was masked by the ostensible project of the intellectual and moral regeneration of the colonised subject. This project also gave birth to the now familiar dichotomy of the backward Indian society and culture and the liberal civilisation of the West with English as its vehicle. This dichotomy exercised a tremendous sway over the mind of many Indians in the post-Independence era. English education is widely regarded as a symbol of power and prestige, of civilised attitudes and cultural superiority in contemporary India. In the next unit this continuing hegemony of

2.8 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the education policy in colonial India prior to the establishment of English Studies.
2. What is the contribution of the social reform movement in India to the institutionalisation of English Studies?
3. Examine Ram Mohun Roy's critique of Sanskrit learning keeping in mind his role as a social reformer.
4. What, in Ram Mohun's view is the role of English Studies in India?
5. Discuss the comparison that Ram Mohun makes between medieval scholasticism of Europe and the system of Sanskrit learning in India.
6. What are the arguments used by T B Macaulay in his *Minute on Indian Education* to advocate the introduction of English in India?
7. "Macaulay's plea for cultural assimilation of the natives is actually a new strategy of socio-political control." Examine the *Minute* in the light of the statement.
8. Critically analyse Macaulay's attack on the Orientalist position on Indian Education.
9. What were the similarities and differences between the views of C E Trevelyan and the missionaries on the question of Indian education?
10. What reasons does Trevelyan give for his rejection of indigenous Indian learning?

2.9 GLOSSARY

Anglicists:	The group of company officials who pleaded for the teaching of European literature and sciences through the medium of English.
Baconian:	From Francis Bacon (1561-1626) the great English humanist and philosopher. Bacon was the first philosopher who based his understanding of the world on rational, and scientific principles.
Enlightenment:	An intellectual movement which developed in Western Europe in the 17 th century and reached its zenith in the eighteenth. The movement expressed a trust in man's reason as adequate to solve all problems. It was against all forms of superstition, prejudice and irrational belief in tradition and authority.

Hegemony:	'hegemony' denotes a process in which domination is achieved through consent not force, i.e. by making the people agree with the ideas of their rulers.
Idolatory:	The worship of idols or images.
Imperialism:	The political and economic domination of one country by another.
Machiavellian:	From Machiavelli (1469-1527) the great Italian political thinker of the Renaissance period. Machiavelli developed the idea of politics as a game of power that remains uninfluenced by an "absolute moral law. The term 'Machiavellian' is nowadays used in a pejorative sense denoting the cynical manipulation of people in order to stay in power.
Metropolis:	The home country of the colonisers.
Native:	The original inhabitants of a country as opposed to the colonists who left their own land and lived in the land of the 'natives.'
Orientalists:	The group of company officials who were in favour of teaching classical Indian languages such as Sanskrit Arabic and Persian to the Indians.
Scholasticism:	The philosophy of the schoolman of medieval Europe. The speculations of the philosophers of the medieval era excluded man's earthly existence from their scope. Instead they discussed God, heave and hell.

UNIT 3 A VIEW OF POST INDEPENDENCE DEBATES

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 English and Interpretations of the Nationalist Movement
- 3.3 The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-1949)
 - 3.3.1 The Kothari Commission (1964- 1966)
- 3.4 The Regionalisation Scheme and its Critique
 - 3.4.1 Major Universities
- 3.5 Rising Social Disparities and the New Educational Policy
- 3.6 The Rise of New Social Forces
 - 3.6.1 The Ramamurti Commission
- 3.7 New Developments on the Educational Scene
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Questions

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this Unit is to give a critical account of the fierce debates that raged on the 'place of English in free India', its role in the evolution of the national movement and nationalist ideology, its importance in the field of science and technology and its role in shaping the different educational policies of the Indian governments in the post-Independence era. An understanding of these debates is necessary for charting out the process through which the cultural identity of the Indian nation was forged. The secondary objective of this unit would be to discern the political imperatives for the definition of a national culture and its role in controlling waves of dissidence and rebellion emanating from within the nation-state.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we examined the close relationship that existed between the policy of educating the Indians in the literature and language of the colonisers and the political-ideological imperatives of British imperialism. The great nationalists of the pre-Independence period had understood the crucial role of English in the hegemonisation of the native mind. The political independence of India from British rule raised hopes of a possible decolonisation in cultural and educational fields through the formulation of new policies by the Indian government. One of the simplest strategies to subvert the dominance of English was its replacement by a modern Indian language. However, those who interpreted English as a vehicle of imperial domination and hoped that it would be abolished by the Indian State soon found that their opinion did not exercise a universal sway over the Indian intelligentsia and the policy makers of Independent India. Let us examine the debates on the role played by English Studies before we proceed, any further. The debates on the role played by English studies in India can be classified into two parts. The first contains a set of assessments of the original reasons for the introduction of English by the British in India and the impact of English education on the social and cultural identity of the different sections of Indian society. The other set of debates concentrated upon the place and relevance of English in an Independent India. It is evident that the interpretations of the role of English in colonial India in relation to the interests of the imperial regime and the subject people would result in an

incorporation/rejection of English in the post-Independence era. For, as **Swati Joshi** points out:

English cannot be viewed like any other foreign language. The teaching of English has a long history; a history of political and economic subjugation of the Indian masses; a history of marginalisation of native forms of culture (Joshi, p. 1 Rethinking English).

English being a legacy of colonial rule, it is obvious that its continuance in a India where political decolonisation has been accomplished will come under intense critical scrutiny.

Both the official and unofficial perspectives on English studies in contemporary India have chosen not to ignore linkages between English and the colonial aim to establish a socio-cultural hegemonic structure that was intended to perpetuate colonial rule. In such a case, it is surprising that there has been no consensus on the rejection of English even in recent times. How is it that English was retained in India despite the attempts of several Education Commissions' to replace it with some Indian language? Is it that the preservation (and expansion) of English was not based on an alternative view of the history of the colonial period but on the socio-economic conditions of an independent nation? These are some questions that will be dealt with in subsequent sections of this unit. In the next section let us examine the relevance of English in Independent India.

3.2 ENGLISH AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Though the intelligentsia of free India could not ignore the imperialist goals of **Bentinck**, **Macaulay** and **Trevelyan** – the chief architects of English education in India, it questioned the extent of their fulfilment. The educationists and political thinkers emphasised the importance of the period between **1835** (the official date of the introduction of English) and **1947** (the year of independence). It is well known that this period was a witness to the gradual growth of the discontent of the Indian people that eventually culminated in a nationalist struggle against exploitative foreign rule. The major argument of the post-1947 era in favour of English posits an organic link between the study of English by Indians and the growth of a nationalist consciousness. This argument has virtually determined all discussions on the place of English in independent India. The relevance of English is not discussed in relation to the socio-economic configurations of the new nation-state, but is endorsed or rejected in accordance with the differing interpretations of the contribution of English to the Indian anti-colonial struggle.

In support of the view that the introduction of English in India was deeply ironical as it ultimately helped in rooting out the British from Indian soil, various testimonies ranging from the utterances of British colonial administrators like **Lord Curzon** to the views of an ardent nationalist like **Lala Lajpat Rai** are invoked. **Curzon** disappointed and angry with the experiment of English education felt that it gave birth to dissidence and rebellion in the ranks of anglicised Indians:

There exists a powerful school of opinion which does not hide its conviction that the experiment was a mistake and that its result has been disaster. . . . It has given birth to a tone of kind and to type of character that is ill-regulated, averse from discipline, discontented and in some cases actually disloyal.

Curzon's comment on the deleterious impact of anglicisation of the natives on the stability of the British Empire makes a strong case for the contention that the study of English made the native more self-aware and conscious of his/ her victimised status. **Lajpat Rai** also associates English education with modern, progressive ideals that are to be adopted if India is to forge ahead towards a brighter future. English for **Lajpat Rai** does not necessarily entail a process of acculturation but is merely a vehicle of modernity:

We do not want to be English or German or American or Japanese: true, we want to be Indians, but modern up to date progressive Indians; proud of our past and aspiring to a greater and a nobler future.

Lajpat Rai sees modernity as an essential component of Indian nationhood, a modernity that is not in conflict with the past. Rather the past is seen as a cultural heritage in which Indians can take pride. Thus while **Lajpat Rai** avoids the antagonistic relation between the Indian past and the rational, progressive values of the West so central to the imperial discourse, he has no doubt that English education instituted by the colonists would have a positive impact. The pronouncements of **Curzon** and **Lajpat Rai** were used to legitimise a discourse that harps upon English as a doorway to modern, rational thought. The supporters of English in India after 1947 decided that the door be kept open so that India does not relapse into a pre-modern phase of civilisation (read barbarism). This discourse leaves its indelible mark on the report of the **Radhakrishnan Commission On Higher Education (1948-49)**. Let us examine the **Radhakrishnan Commission** next.

3.3 THE RADHAKRISHNAN COMMISSION (1948-49)

Let us discuss the merits/ demerits of the **Radhakrishnan Commission** in this section. The makers of the Indian Constitution reposed all their faith in the ideals of the modern world. **The Radhakrishnan Commission Report** displays a similar faith in its definition of the role of the universities in society. According to the **Commission** Universities are “homes of intellectual adventure”(source) and the aim of education is to promote ideals of justice, liberty and fraternity and produce citizens who would work for a just, egalitarian social order. The Report discourages “a fatal obsession of the perfection of the past” and emphasises that the modern scholar should undertake a critical study of the past. To the question as to whether these modern values are products of indigenous structures of thought or are imposed from without, the Report is probably more in agreement with the latter proposition. Thus it advocates that English be retained so as to “keep ourselves in touch with the living stream of ever-growing knowledge.” If the position of English is unassailable in the context of the modern world, why does the **Commission** recommend the dethronement of English as the medium of instruction and its replacement by an Indian language? To answer this question it is necessary to focus upon the **Commission's** critique of revivalism and its definition of Indian culture.

The **Commission** rightly focuses upon the dangers of revivalist tendencies in society and culture by rejecting an unequivocal glorification of Indian past. It asks the scholars and intellectuals to undertake a rational assessment of the negative features of Indian history with the help of all the apparatuses of modern thought. Thus, it avoids the reductive dichotomy – indigenous versus foreign which forms the parameters of revivalist ideologies. Therefore it cannot be said that the recommendation of replacing English by an Indian language reflects revivalist concepts at work in the framing of educational policy. If the **Commission** refuses to circumscribe Indian culture within an essentialist paradigm, it does so due to its awareness of the wide diversity of cultures within India. It is obvious that the **Commission** cannot avoid the political implications of cultural and linguistic

plurality. Thus while it does not view Indian culture as a monolith, it asserts that India has evolved a common culture.

After centuries of stress and conflict India has gradually evolved a common civilisation, a collective consciousness which embraces wide varieties of temperament, tradition, ways of thought and belief. Our people belong to different provinces speak their own languages, preserve their own habits and customs. . . . Despite all these, there is a fundamental unity which binds the people together as members of one society with the same cultural loyalties.
(source)

Though it is not clear what it is that unites people who speak different languages and follow different faiths, it is evident the **Commission**'s aim is to seek a legitimisation of the formation of the nation. The implicit assertion is that the unity of India is not a fictional construct arbitrarily imposed from outside but already exists in the cultural fabric of the country.

Here it might be asked – what is the place of English in Indian culture? Can we regard English as un-Indian? Since the **Commission** recognises the dynamism of Indian culture, English would not be foreign in its view. Again as the **Commission** visualises Indian civilisation as a peaceful co-existence of many cultures, English, the harbinger of a modern worldview would be easily absorbed by it. This co-existence was not possible in the colonial era when English edged out other languages and correspondingly the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India's past. This marginalisation led to a feeling among educated Indians that they were "without roots." The **Commission** seeks to restore the balance by encouraging the study and development of regional languages. While the **Commission** envisaged the continuance of English in order to remain in contact with modern developments in the field of knowledge, it did not visualise English as a language which was essential for the unity of the nation. Also it did not feel that any other language could be used to define the cultural identity of a nation composed of diverse linguistic groups and cultures. In fact it preferred to define the Indian nation as a federation and therefore advocated the development of a federal language through the assimilation of words from various sources.

The **Commission** did not comment upon the use of this federal language and whether it would be used as a medium of instruction all over the nation to ensure the **Nehruvian** "unity in diversity." Rather it seemed to be confused on this question as it sought to replace English with an Indian language. However the need for a federal language implicitly communicated the fact that no Indian language could become the medium of instruction all over India. The principle of federalism is questioned if a language of one particular region is imposed on all other regions. It is probable that the **Commission** had Hindi on its mind as a suitable replacement for English. The basic aim of the **Commission** it appears was to remove English from its privileged position as the medium of education. The encouragement of indigenous languages and cultural practices as well as the overriding imperative of the nation's unity and integrity was the main ideological planks on which its recommendations were based.

The **Commission**'s opposition to English was probably inspired by the widespread recognition and a comprehensive critique of imperial ideologies. The critique appeared in its most forceful form in the utterances of **Mahatma Gandhi**. **Gandhi** not only saw English as a barrier in the way of Indian cultural development but also interpreted the widespread use of English in civil institutions as a sign of cultural enslavement of the Indian people:

Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium; that, when I become a Barrister, I may not speak my mother tongue. . . . Is it not a sign of slavery? (source)

For **Gandhi**, the project of decolonisation entailed a freedom from the coloniser's language. The political freedom, in **Gandhi's** view, has to be accompanied by a linguistic freedom of the colonised people.

Though the **Radhakrishnan Commission** was guided in its language policy by this anti-colonial sentiment, it could not dislodge English from its dominant position. This was partly due to its silence on the issue of India's national language as well as its inability to equate the federal language it sought to develop with the national language. As a result, English continued to be used as the dominant medium of education in the country. The next commission came into existence in 1964. The recommendations of which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.1 The Kothari Commission (1964-66)

The **Radhakrishnan Commission's** views on the language question rested on a firm assertion of India's federalism, the centralising imperatives of the Indian State brought to the fore, the question of the national language. As Hindi was made the official language of the Union, it became easier to project it as a possible national language of India. However, this proposal was unacceptable to the Southern States that were prepared to give Hindi no more respect than was given to any regional language. When **Nehru** disclosed his plans for the replacement of English by Hindi, the South interpreted the move as an infringement on the rights of the (southern) states to develop and enrich their own languages. The dominant opinion was that if Hindi were accepted as the national lingua franca:

Indian languages would have no greater provenance and no higher prestige than they enjoyed during the last decade of British rule. (source)

The controversy over the issue of national language gave an impetus to the then dormant linguistic nationalism in many states with violent demonstrations and militant activism. These developments in Indian polity gave rise to fears that the nation and its philosophy of federalism stood endangered. Many political analysts were of the view that a serious political exercise needed to be carried out to silence these harsh notes of dissent. In 1964, the government of India appointed an Education Commission under the Chairmanship of **Dr D S Kothari**. It cannot be said that the **Kothari Commission** was appointed to carry out a specific task of quelling the political-social tensions brewing within the nation. Yet the modified three-language formula evolved by the Commission was designed to satisfy the various divergent perspectives on the question of language. As the **Commission** itself pointed out, in fashioning the formula "the impelling considerations were more political and social than educational." (source) The three language formula consisted of:

*The mother tongue or the regional language
The official language of the Union (i.e. Hindi) or the associate official language of the Union (English)
A modern Indian or foreign language not covered under (1) and (2).*

It can be easily seen that the options given by the **Education Commission** allow ample space for the inclusion of English and the rejection of Hindi in states where the anti-Hindi movements held sway. The choice between a modern Indian language and a foreign language also gave the states a free hand in not including any other regional language than their own (i.e. the mother tongue). In the next section we shall attempt a critique of the regionalisation scheme.

3.4 THE REGIONALISATION SCHEME AND ITS CRITIQUE

The **Commission** also recommended “the development of all modern Indian languages for use in education as well as in administration. . . .” But the most important recommendation of the **Commission** was the regionalisation of the medium of education in the Universities. This proposal drew a lot of protest from scholars, educationists and academics. The protest was primarily directed at what was seen as an attempt to create eradicable barriers in the way of national unity. Attempts were made to remind the Indian State that the political union of the country had a relatively short history and India in the past never achieved a perfect unity due to the multiplicity of languages and cultures. It was feared by scholars like **A A Karve** that if the **Commission**’s plan of regionalisation was implemented:

All hope of India’s making rapid progress as a modern country and sinking its regional and linguistic differences in the interest of national unity would be shattered. (source)

If national unity is to be kept at the top of any educational agenda what will be the solution to the language problem in India? **Karve** like many educationists of the day does not pay any attention to the idea of a federal language evolved by the **Radhakrishnan Commission**. English, in **Karve**’s opinion is best suited to occupy the hallowed place of the medium of instruction as it has been not only used “as the language of instruction during the last one hundred years”, but “has also served us as a means of communication between scholars from different parts of India and between them and the intellectuals of the outside world.” (source)

The responses to the **Kothari Commission**’s regionalisation scheme clearly show that the dominant groups in university and administrative circles were upset by what they understood as a threat to the long reign of English as the language of higher education. They advocated the preservation of the *status quo* in the name of national and international integration. It is also evident that they perceived the question of integration in a very narrow sense, namely the freedom of communication between scholars and academics in the national and international arena. It is also significant that a tirade against regionalisation implicitly rejected the **Nehruvian** position on Indian cultural identity. **Nehru**’s concept of a common cultural base in India despite its varied manifestations was replaced by the revitalisation of the old colonial idea that English contribute to a large extent, to the evolution of the Indian nation and a common national culture. Thus the argument runs that if regional languages replaced English, India would suffer a political and cultural disintegration.

But were the proposals of the **Kothari Commission** principally directed against the study of English in India? On a careful scrutiny of the **Commission**’s report a number of evidences emerge which prove that the **Commission** was not unduly biased against English. As previously shown, the **Commission**’s three-language scheme was structured in such a way that many states could introduce English instead of Indian languages like Hindi. Also while the **Commission** advocated the establishment of “centres of advanced study” (source) for the development of all modern Indian languages, it also stressed that the Universities and Colleges be provided with “adequate facilities” for the study of English. The **Commission** emphasised that the continuance of English was highly desirable because not only did it occupy a significant place on the Indian education scene as a library language but, it could be used for developing the Indian languages.

The concept of the development of Indian languages through English was not new. In fact it can be traced to the debates in the early nineteenth century when English

studies was introduced in India. The major issue over which the British educational administrators fought was the enrichment of the Indian vernaculars. While the Orientalists considered Sanskrit and Arabic as essential for the growth of the vernaculars, the Anglicists were of the view that English was best suited for such a use as it provided access to the vast developments in science, technology and social sciences unheard of in the eastern world. It is evident that the **Commission** more or less agreed with the views of **Macaulay** and **Trevelyan**. But the enrichment project also recognised a hierarchy among languages. It amounted to an admission on the part of the **Commission** that the modern Indian languages, when compared to English, were deficient in certain respects. It questioned the legitimacy of the **Commission's** own project of regionalisation of the medium of higher education. It also strengthened the arguments that questioned the suitability of Indian regional languages for the purposes of higher education. Thus **A A Karve** writes:

If a language is to serve efficiently as medium of instruction in college and universities, it must satisfy certain basic requirements. First it must be capable of expressing modern thought which . . . includes pure and applied science, technology, the humanities and social sciences. An adequate terminology must be available in that language and it must be capable of development so that new ideas and new words can readily be added to it.
(source)

As none of the Indian languages fulfils these requirements, **Karve** concludes that regionalisation cannot be effected without causing great harm to academic excellence in the Indian universities.

It is true that the **Commission's** programme of regionalisation was to be carried out in a phased manner over a period of ten years. Did the **Commission** think that the regional languages would be ready to bear the academic burden of higher education in ten years? In other words, there was a certain amount of tentativeness and lack of conviction in the **Commission's** intention to switch over from English to the regional languages. This shall be duly examined in the next section.

3.4.1 Major Universities

The **Commission's** proposal to establish five or six 'major' universities in the country also reveals that it felt doubtful about the fate of higher education after the change of medium from English to regional languages. The ostensible purpose of these super Universities was to raise the general academic standard of the country so as to prevent the exodus of students to foreign countries (for training), and to restore to India, the centre of gravity of academic life. However, it is noteworthy that the so-called major universities would have English as the medium of education. The reason given by the **Commission** for choosing English was that the teachers and students would be drawn on an all-India basis. Did the **Commission** feel that other universities with Indian languages as the medium would fail to reach the required academic excellence that would make India one with the West in terms of academic standards? Whatever be the reason, an implementation of the proposal would have resulted in a hierarchy between the universities imparting education in English and others that carried their academic work in Indian languages.

It is also a well known fact that the annual migration of Indian students to foreign countries is due to all pervasive conception of the Indian middle class that academic standards of the West far exceed those of India. This view may be correct but this does not mean that it is arrived at through a process of a rational comparative exercise. In fact the perspective that dominates the mind of an average middle class Indian scholar is that there is no need to compare the academic productions of the West and those of India, so infinitely superior are the former to the latter. Prejudices that date back to the colonial regime in India and play an important part in the formulation of such a view. The dominant prejudice produced by the system of

English education was the superiority of the literature and language of the colonial masters.

British ideologues instilled into the native mind that English was an agent of rationality and modern sensibility. The average middle class Indian student well versed in English in post-independence, India was inclined to enrol him / herself in the 'original' centres of English learning (i.e. **Oxford** and **Cambridge**) than to languish in 'sub-standard' institutes of higher education in India. The association of English with civilisational and cultural progress was never seriously questioned even after Independence. The bureaucracy and universities of Independent India have shown a marked preference for students who have received education in Western countries thus replicating the pre-independence period when the England-returned elite manned the higher echelons of administration and educational institutions. The **Commission** failed to see all these factors responsible for the so-called brain drain. Though it did not take suitable measures to counter the bias for English education, it certainly strengthened the dominant notion of the superiority of English by recommending the establishment of major universities.

It is also certain that these universities would not have posed a significant challenge to **Oxford** or **Harvard**, given the attitude of the Indian elite towards 'foreign' education. Furthermore the domination of these foreign-returned Indians over Indian bureaucracy and academic institutions would not be questioned as long as the notorious notion of the superiority of western educational practices exists. As **A R Kamat** points out:

Only a determined policy of encouraging Indian scholarship coupled with the creation of more and better facilities for advanced research in the country and a careful selection and strict control of research students sent abroad for training could eventually break this unhealthy grip of the foreign returned elite on the academic life of the country. (source)

Kamat's association of English with Indian elitism marks a significant departure from the traditional views on Indian education. The usual interpretation of English education as a familiarisation tool with modern forms of thought and progressive attitudes is replaced by a view that the continuance of English in India perpetuated the political-social hegemony of the Indian ruling class. Thus the ruling elite of India betrayed any hope of an indigenous cultural revolution. As **Kamat** observes the arbiters of India's destiny soon found out that:

Their interests were better served not by removing this stranglehold [of English] but by continuing it with minor modifications so that their own offspring (often mediocre and no good) could also join the select group of 'foreign trained.' (source)

Thus, it is not surprising that the proposal to educate Indians through indigenous languages met with a lot of resistance and criticism. Higher education through regional languages meant an opening of avenues for the Indian youth from the backward areas of Indian states that wanted to pursue higher studies. In other words it meant establishing a contact with the Indian masses that did not speak English and encouraging them to come up to the level of the English trained elite. However the **Commission** saw to it that the interests of the ruling class were protected. The major universities had English as the medium of education. The implicit suggestion being that they were required to study in the non-major universities. These universities would have been seriously impoverished due to the **Commission's** plans to collect the "critical mass" of the best amongst teachers and students. Thus the non-English student would have been doubly victimised – by the falling standards of the regional universities in which s/ he studied and indirectly by the super universities responsible for the decline of academic life in his/her university.

It would not be far fetched to conclude that the **Kothari Commission's** recommendations were not designed to produce a cultural revolution. Rather, they protected the power and privileges of the English speaking few who were already deeply entrenched in the administrative and academic institutions of post-Independence India.

3.5 RISING SOCIAL DISPARITIES AND THE NEW EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The **Kothari Commission** was conscious of the link between higher education and rising unemployment. It discovered that the universities produced a great number of graduates, many of who were unable to find employment in the job market. Yet it could not frame a policy to help the educated unemployed youth. Its measures to counter unemployment were negative in nature. It sought the implementation of the selective admission system so that overproduction of graduates could be prevented. Thus the 1970s saw an increase in urban and rural unemployment. The social disparities gave rise to an intense dissatisfaction of the Indian masses with the political establishment. As the vast majority of the population toiled for its daily bread education became the first casualty. The decline of education in the backward and rural areas of India reflected disillusionment with the educational system, which did not equip the people with any source of livelihood. **The National Policy on Education (NPE)** of 1986 reflected a growing realisation on the part of the ruling establishment that educational goals had to be redefined. The **NPE** did not worry about the decline of academic standards. Rather it stressed:

The need for the removal of disparities and emphasised the steps to be taken to equalise educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far – women, scheduled castes and tribes. (source)

However, the **NPE's** quest for social justice remained incomplete as it maintained a status quo on the question of English in India. On the subject of languages it observed that:

The Educational policy of 1968 had examined the question of the development of languages in great detail; its essential provision can hardly be improved upon and are as relevant as today. (source)

Thus the dominance of English was not questioned by the **NPE**. The development of regional languages was seen as a purely cultural activity and was therefore linked to an understanding of the diverse socio-cultural systems of the people. Since the respect for English in the Indian civil society was never questioned by the **NPE** it was not surprising that the English speaking class continued to exercise its dominance over Indian administrative and academic institutions. If the top jobs were 'reserved' for this class, one can ask that what was the purpose behind the spread of education among the lower strata of Indian society which could never seriously think of upward social mobility? It is significant that **NPE** never asks such uncomfortable questions which empty its scheme of "equal access to education to all" of any meaning whatsoever. Let us now take a look at the rise of new social forces that came into being as a result of these commissions.

3.6 THE RISE OF NEW SOCIAL FORCES

As unemployment and poverty rose in India due to the impoverishment of the agricultural sector and indiscriminate industrialisation of the country, the consciousness that the political class has failed in its promises grew stronger. The

diverse political groups that had come up in the meantime and posed a significant challenge to India's main political party – the **Congress**, who exploited this consciousness. The social and economic disempowerment of people was the chief strength of such groups which otherwise held sectarian views about Indian society. These groups to further their own political agendas used the anguish of the oppressed masses. The decade of the nineties saw an increased incidence of caste and communal violence that threatened to tear the secular fabric of the country to shreds. The **United Front** government that came to power in the early 1990s realised these threats and sought to counter them. In 1990 it appointed the **Ramamurti Commission** to review the 1986 educational policy and to bring about educational reforms so as to check the growing menace of casteism and communalism in Indian society.

3.6.1 The Ramamurti Commission

The **Ramamurti Commission** rightly focussed upon the evils of casteism, communalism and obscurantism that had also in its view infested educational establishments. It understood that the reason for the growth of such forces lay on the socio-economic oppression of the Indian masses. Thus, in the **Commission's** scheme of education, villages were assigned a primary role. The reason given was that the majority of the Indian population lived in villages. Villages are "where our producers live, voters live, the poor and illiterate live." (source) It was clear that the **Commission's** educational framework had no place or use for English. However the **Commission** neglected the sphere of higher education and therefore, the controversial subject of languages. Rather, it insisted upon the universalisation of primary education and vocationalisation and decentralisation of education in general. Decentralisation meant an implicit opposition to the idea of all India institutes that were meant to produce the anglicised elites of India. The **Ramamurti Commission** did not indulge in any debates on cultural unity or diversity of India as these debates were usually used to oppose the process of educational decentralisation. Its aim was to educate the masses directly so as to generate a consciousness of social justice and equality in them.

Thus the **Commission** implicitly critiqued the **Macaulayan** idea of educating a privileged few. It rejected the fake pessimism of the ruling class (borrowed from **Macaulay**) expressed in the view that it was impossible to educate the vast population of an equally vast country such as India. Several developments have taken place thereafter that needs to be looked at. This will be done in the next section.

3.7 NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON THE EDUCATIONAL SCENE

As the **United Front** government did not remain long in power, the next government shelved the recommendations of the **Ramamurti Commission**. The **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)** government in 1998 appointed a group of experts to give suggestions on educational practice. The group's recommendations are particularly disturbing in the context of multilingual and multicultural identity of Indian society. The experts demanded "the curriculum from the primary to the highest education should be indianised, nationalised and spiritualised." (source) This indigenisation would be accomplished by establishing Sanskrit Universities in four zones of the country, making Sanskrit a compulsory subject from Class III to X and by teaching a course on Indian philosophy in the higher education programme.

Can we conclude that these recommendations constitute an attack on the supremacy of English in India by insisting on the teaching of Sanskrit and nationalisation of the

curriculum? Or is it that the project of nationalisation defines the cultural identity of India within such restrictive parameters that it marginalises other indigenous cultures? The emphasis on the teaching of Sanskrit recalls the new familiar debates among the British officials in the early nineteenth century on the relative claims of classical Indian languages (Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic) and English. The oppositional relationship between English and the classical languages of India developed by the British colonialists was directly linked to the binary system of colonial discourse in which the modernity of the West became real only in relation to the pre-modern civilisations of the East. Both the British Orientalists and Anglicists had a consensus on this view of Indian culture whose roots, in their view lay in the ancient Sanskrit texts like the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. For these groups, the introduction of English in India was a violation of Indian cultural identity, an imposition of modern structures of thought on an ancient (read static) civilisation.

The programme of Indianisation clearly reflects a colonial mindset which dehistoricised Indian culture and defined it in opposition to the modern/materialistic culture of the West. Not only did it reject values of rationality, scientific attitude and secularism as the ideological baggage of modernity but also excluded the contribution of other religious and ethnic communities to the growth of Indian culture. It is interesting to speculate on the impact of this intolerant form of thought on English education. It is significant that the **BJP** government has not till now proposed any radical measures to curtail the dominance of English in the academic sphere. In fact in recent years there has been a growth of educational centres (both public and private) that intend to give Indians a good working knowledge of English. More than ever, English is now associated with social power and prestige. The growth and consolidation of English studies in the 1990s is not a mysterious phenomenon. The opening up of Indian economy to foreign investors in 1991 resulted in a drastic increase of the share of foreign capital in Indian industrial and commercial establishments. The English trained executive and salesman, more than ever before, was in great demand to carry out the commercial transactions of the multinational corporations. The Indian middle class, on expected lines, showed great eagerness to grab the opportunity with English as its passport to social and economic advancement.

Although the Indian elite has used English to reap material and social benefits, it has not used English to critique conservative and decadent social and institutional structures. It has rejected the legacy of the anglicised elite of the nineteenth century represented by figures such as **Raja Rammohun Roy** and **H L V Derozio**. It uses colonialist paradigms to define Indian culture. The writers and intellectuals of this class write in English but are obsessed with ideas of Indianness, Indian mode of life, Indian customs, Indian cuisine, the spirituality of ancient India, etc. The concept of Indianness not only homogenises the highly plural nature of the Indian cultural fabric but also ignores the deep divisions and fissures in Indian society. Most of the contemporary Indian writing in English is thus doomed to a dull and tedious celebration of Indianness. It does so at an immense cost – the exclusion of the concerns of the Indian masses.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

To conclude, **Nehru's** hope of building an educational system on new foundations after independence has been belied. English which was used by the colonial masters in the nineteenth century to build up a class of indigenous elites has not only continued but has become synonymous with education itself in the post-independence period of Indian history. The Indian elite, which played a progressive role in the nationalist struggle against British imperialism, lost its contact with the masses in the decades that followed Indian independence. The national system of education with the dissemination of political, social and cultural awareness among the Indian people

as its goal could not be carried through English. Any attempt to bring the fruits of modern science and arts to the doorsteps of the people entailed the use of the people's own languages.

However, such a goal was not congenial to the interests of the Indian ruling class. It was a well calculated strategy of this class to keep the masses in ignorance by using English which not only insulated them from the concerns of the people but also gave them social power and prestige. At the same time the ruling elite justified the use of English in the name of progress, modernity and national unity and integrity. It raised the bogey of linguistic nationalism, which, in its view threatened to split the nations into small linguistic entities. Both the attempt to evolve a federal language, which would transcend linguistic boundaries and the proposition that English be used as the national language, were based on the theoretical premise that a single language unites people while several languages divide them.

The proposal to regionalise the medium of instruction reflects the ruling class's dream to reach out to the people that it was unable to realise due to its own political and social compulsions. As a result regionalisation has not been effected in actual practice. Even in places where it has taken place, the academic standards are allowed to decline through insufficient funding and callous neglect. On the other hand institutions with English as its bulwark are seen to prosper and continue to produce anglicised natives who generally display no trace of an enlightened social consciousness. It will not be an exaggeration when we say that the growth of English Studies in India after 1947 parallels the rise of an exploitative social system and a marked increase in social disparities.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. Examine the attempts made by the several Education Commissions to displace English as the medium of instruction by Indian languages in the post-independence era.
2. Discuss the three-language formula recommended by the Kothari Commission of 1964-66. Do you think the formula was an attempt at a compromise between different political views on the subject of education?
3. "English played a highly significant role in the definition of Indian culture". Examine the statement in the light of the various debates on the relationship between English and Indian culture.
4. Do you think that the dominance of English in the educational sphere after 1947 reflects a betrayal of the promises made to the Indian people at the time of independence? Give a reasoned answer.

UNIT 4 SETTLING DOWN OF ENGLISH AS STUDIES AND MEDIUM

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 India in the Nineteen Fifties
- 4.3 English as the Medium of Instruction
- 4.4 The Settling Down of English in India
- 4.5 Institutionalisation of English in India
- 4.6 For English or Resisting It?
- 4.7 Conflict Between Indian Literatures and English
 - 4.7.1 Literary Writing in Indian Languages
 - 4.7.2 Indian English Writing
- 4.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.9 Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The present unit will familiarise you with a period in which all of us have lived and grown up watching the process of consolidation of a foreign language and strengthening of its grip on our minds and hearts. I use 'minds and hearts' to denote the emotive aspect of our response to a language that has its centre elsewhere. We shall also investigate in this unit the issue of an alien language gradually becoming our own and interestingly playing the role of a unifier, or conversely coming in the way of evolution of the different Indian languages contend as they do with a strong adversary. Should we be realistic or merely reactive will be the question we address finally in this unit.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the final part of Unit 1 in this Block, we took up the complex question of interaction between a language inherited by us from our colonial masters and those other languages with us that have their source in our own long history of existence. Was the interaction smooth and spontaneous, or did it have a contentious, a highly controversial dimension to it? In this unit, we carry the discussion from this point to areas in our life that are sociological, cultural and ideological.

The last sixty years or so of our recent history faced a number of ups and downs and met with challenges not just difficult but daunting and obstructive. And yet, the juggernaut of English has gone on. What do we make of this phenomenon? Do we take the extreme approach of throwing out English from our life and aggressively nurture our own tongues or recognise the reality of many languages including English and a variety of cultures and ethnicities in our midst? Secondly, and still more importantly, what positive role do we assign, if at all, to this language that connects us with the world outside and within India with other regions?

Keeping the debate around English 'connecting' regions, communities and ethnic groups, we have to realise the usefulness of a language to the enrichment of which we may ourselves have contributed in good measure. At the same time, studying the vast literature available in English may itself enable us to have a comparative view of our own literatures. Knowledge of English thus may become a tool with which we assess our own creative and intellectual worth. Add to this the aspect of the medium that

English is, a means through which we access newest developments in science, technology and other branches of knowledge. In the next few sections we shall consider these and related areas to gain an understanding of a few important aspects of our socio-cultural surroundings.

4.2 INDIA IN THE NINETEEN FIFTIES

Let us look at the political scene in India in the nineteen fifties, the decade that followed Independence. Two things particularly lurked at that time in the minds of most Indians. The first was the happening of Partition, both on the western and the eastern sides of the country. No well-meaning serious individual could overlook the occurrence and go on one's safe and smooth way, gifted as it would have been by one's economic background. The second was Independence itself, a result of close to hundred years of effort and struggle by countless Indians. The free India required what could be called nation building, an act positive in nature and designed to meet the basic requirements of all and inspired by the humanist urge to plan things 'idealistically'. Unlike other species, human beings have the capability to rise above themselves and think of goals bigger than the individual ones. The values and principles standing at the back of the **Indian National Movement** testified clearly to this capability of human beings, more so in the case of those who fought relentlessly against the mightiest power in the world in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. To see this is to know that a newly emerged nation had its future secure in the progressive and humanistic modern perspective.

There was, however, a problem with this vision, pulled in the two different directions of pain and despair (for the reason of Partition) on one side and the potentiality of humanist endeavour supportive of Nationalist values on the other. The problem related to the presence of the privileged in our midst. The lobbies active all along the **National Movement** were those of the industrialists and the urban rich. These expressed themselves in what was called moderate politics, the politics of compromise, bargain and circumspection. A section of the **Congress Party** called it realism, a pragmatic approach that shunned both 'extremes' – supporting the British and going all out against them. There was also evidence at many points of time during the **National Movement** of the privileged amongst us showing preference for a 'superior' language and culture. In our context, the relevant thing is the inseparability in the minds of the economically privileged between language and culture. There could be seen a tacit understanding among the rich sections in our society that English minus the Britishers could be a safe bet and therefore adopted to suit what could be considered 'national' interests. The argument then was that English should be allowed to stay till Indian languages developed to take on the job of carrying the society, culture and knowledge forward. In the next section let us examine how this was to be achieved.

4.3 ENGLISH AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

The argument of letting English stay and be used to promote national interests may have set in motion the process of increasing utilisation by the power that be, of English in the school curricula. The pride of place was granted to English with particular respect to the medium in which education was to be imparted. Consensus was created through powerful pleading and argument that English was a more effective vehicle of expression and communication and had a vocabulary rich enough to serve such diverse areas as science, technology, commerce, economics, law, administration and culture. The strong and privileged presence of the English press

having direct links with policy makers sealed the fate of the Indian languages as not good enough for the job of nation building.

A bit of sociology would help here to place in perspective the rise of English in post-Independence India. The rich and upper middle classes in the country had a penchant for feeling different from the ordinary masses, they wished to look a group apart from the rest of society, a group meant to administer, manage and rule the society from above. Knowledge and use of English gave them immense power. The presence of a person equipped with the capability of using English fluently left the ordinary onlookers tongue-tied, as it were. The message was getting across to the majority that higher echelons of administration, judiciary, police force and army had a different plumage and that they were in the society to shape the destiny of the nation unquestioned. English came as the key-component of the machinery to do the job. Exclusive schools imparting education in English away from the humdrum of cities were already in existence at the time of Independence. These catered to the progeny of the landed gentry, families of *nawabs* and princelings in British India.

The group that such English-medium institutions groomed in pre-Independent India became well knit through the working of an elitist discourse in the education these institutions provided to their students. The specialised knowledge gained by the students of these schools stood them in good stead when it came to competing for top jobs. After Independence, such a system of division in society along class lines caught the fancy of those with money and political-social influence. Could the **Congress Party**, a formation brought into being and nurtured by simplicity-loving **Gandhi** and **Nehru** resist fancying themselves as rulers wielding influence to look distinctly superior to all else? Soon, the fascination for such exclusive existence became a national dream with the larger middle classes planning careers of sons and daughters on the strength of what they considered 'healthy competition' and merit. The idealism of the **National Movement** working for the uplift of **Harijans**, women and other underprivileged sections turned in the post-Independence period into a self-serving individualism. The dreamers of the new phase would sacrifice comforts only for their own children. As suggested, at the centre of this entire process was English, the medium of instruction in schools and colleges and other places of higher learning as well as one used in daily discourse in the family and the market place.

Freedom of a country is basically about democracy that enables groups and individuals to interpret rights or duties in their own terms. Considering this, it was but normal that English would occupy centre-stage if the society wished it to happen. To the settling down of English in India, another factor also contributed in good measure. This related to the approach of confrontation that the aggressive supporters of Hindi and other Indian languages adopted. This shall be analysed in the next section of the unit.

4.4 THE SETTLING DOWN OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

With Independent India launching big schemes of expansion in productivity and education, powerful lobbies became active to claim a share in the cake, cornering high jobs and positions of authority. Particularly the right wing supporters of Hindi set much store by Sanskrit and made Hindi highly stylised, purged as it assiduously was of all colloquialisms, spoken phrases and idioms. School and college curricula insisted on keeping Hindi free from Urdu words and expressions alternatives to which were coined from Sanskrit roots. A language understood in most regions of north India and promoted through aggressive national jargon elsewhere would soon be treated with suspicion for harbouring hegemonic ambitions. The non-Hindi speaking regions/ states sensed the danger in the planned 'popularisation' of Hindi across the country in the first crucial decade of India's Independence. This compounded the language scene so much in the fifties and sixties that many non-

Hindi regions opted for their own languages as medium in schools and English as the link language at the national level. For this, I blame the lobbies only a little. Much bigger forces than lobbies were at work. Lobbies operated in an overall atmosphere of a socially privileged upper crust (highly alert and circumspect) cutting across states and regions. This group was seen using a number of subtle strategic ways for retaining and perpetuating English.

The next thing that comes to mind in this context is the factor of ideology and culture coming from the west. The dictates from the western academic and cultural centres targeted the places of higher learning in India, the power points framing and implementing policies with the help of large resources at their command. The nationalistic paradigm of active intervention, struggle and purpose-oriented work was attacked in particular. It was argued that the point of useful social endeavour accountable to society did not meet the requirements of human freedom – that value, in fact, lay in the private domain of the individual. Words such as change, resistance, justice, equality and social good were anathema to the modernist thought that came from the west in the post - World War II period. The capitalist west had decided to block all thought of equality and justice with phrases such as human predicament, anguish, ennui, loneliness and the meaningless or absurd in life. The Indian writing of the fifties and sixties faced this ideological-cultural onslaught and imbibed in the process a good deal of the mystery-oriented modernist paradigm. Since the terms of reference of the study of literature and culture were changing fast in the post-Independence India, the syllabi of English literature all across universities and colleges in India at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels selected great modernist-religious texts, with **Yeats**, **Eliot**, and **Lawrence** being projected as the great masters of writing.

Graduates from universities joining journalism took pride in using expressions such as 'I have measured out my life in coffee spoons,' little realising that the country in which they lived was an ex-colony and a backward third world country with most people not having access to clean drinking water. 'Coffee spoons' indicated coffee houses and shops in metropolitan centres and middle class journalists in India working for prestigious English dailies related better to that character in the **Eliot** poem who cynically moved around ridiculing love and talked of history in a condemnatory tone. Yes, English had finally succeeded in consolidating itself at the level of society, ideology, culture and literature. The following section will examine how English came to be institutionalised in India during the post -Independence period.

4.5 INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

English in India became gradually institutionalised, working through courses that were taught in schools and colleges. English also became the basis on which a person's merit and worth would be assessed in an examination or interview and following which jobs would be assigned to the successful candidates. At another level, bureaucracy, judiciary and other services would conduct their work in English as they went into the ramifications of implementing policies, studying individual cases and pronouncing judgments. Soon, English would make its way into the warp and woof of a nation's life.

So far, we have viewed the phenomenon of English in its broader aspect. However, we should not forget that the Indian democratic regime went about the task of institutionalising education in a systematic manner and studied the efficacies and utilities of the languages in operation with extreme care. A number of commissions were set up at regular intervals to ponder over the issue of the medium to be adopted in institutions of learning. The question of assessing merit for appointing suitable

persons in government jobs, the very manner of conducting examinations and on top of it, the framing of syllabi for various courses and teaching programmes at different levels were discussed threadbare. Add to this the fact that in each successive commission, the changing scenario of the country was taken into account so that misjudgements done earlier could be rectified. Particularly, the issue of a national language in which the regime would do its business and communicate to the various states its policies and programmes attracted attention of the elite and common masses alike. The adoption of one or the other language became a matter of heated debate all over the country.

Eventually, the pressure of selecting one language in preference to another for specific aims became too much to bear for the nation. At many a time, the tussle for supporting and opposing Hindi in *Devnagari* script as a national language was extremely hard. A formula evolved by one commission was put to nought by the subsequent commission with ongoing debates about the whole issue in the national press, political circles and social platforms. Even today, the situation is not clear regarding the link language, or the language of instruction in educational institutions, public and private, as the uncertainties of life created by the ever-shrinking job market grow. In all this, one thing, however, is certain – English in India has become stronger than ever before riding on the crest of the capitalist market, globalised economy and a unipolar world strongly operating from its western centre.

Though English occupies a relatively strong position among the languages spoken, read and written in India, it has had a long and difficult journey since the time it was introduced. The 'vernacular' press has offered sharp criticism of the policies governing the use of English in administrative, judicial and other fields. It has articulated forcefully the views of those who stand to lose immensely in the battle of survival in the job market. Thus, even today, fifty-seven years after independence there are many who resist English as the language of the colonial masters. Let us examine the implications of these debates next.

4.6 FOR ENGLISH OR RESISTING IT?

As is clear, the journey of English in India from the time of Independence to this day has not been a smooth one. At every point of change in influence, it has faced obstacles from regions, ethnic centres and native languages. There are political formations in all corners of India either resisting English or playing an aspect of it against what they call the hegemonising character of Hindi. Resistance is there in all Indian languages to English expressions that find their way into them through colloquial use. Indian languages do not know at this stage what to make of the onslaught on them from linguistic mannerisms in English. Whereas English can conveniently embrace and adopt as many 'Indianisms' as there are in the social environment, see the ever-expanding size of English dictionaries, Indian languages find the exercise of accepting words and expressions from English truly threatening.

4.7 CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIAN LITERATURES AND ENGLISH

Two more issues remain to be considered in this discussion: literary writing in Indian languages and the relevance of English to the overall conditions of life in India. These are related and ever appear in a state of conflict with each other. The conflict is not simple or merely ideological. Instead, it is 'real.' Let us see how it is so by beginning with literary writing in Indian languages first.

4.7.1 Literary Writing in Indian Languages

Even though literatures in Indian languages bear the initial stamp of modernist writing in the early years of Independence coming from the west, they have shown evidence of freeing themselves from that influence gradually. They still look towards their roots in the **Indian National Movement** and draw inspiration from the works written in that phase. The examples of **Tagore, Premchand, Bharati, Nazrul Islam, Faiz** and **Manto** get more frequently cited today than ever before. Being closer to life at the grassroots, Indian languages remain capable of grasping inequality, poverty and gender injustice better than English. They catch the rhythm of existence, the rise and fall of speech, the dust and stink of narrow streets with an immediacy not possible in a foreign tongue, however indigenised it may have become through use by a section of people.

In attitude also, the writers of Indian languages have a greater sense of commitment and concern for the masses whose life they choose to depict. Thinking and expressing in a language spoken by a whole community imbues the writer with the dignity of an involved person, a participant. The participatory nature of the enterprise keeps the writer focused upon not just the plight of the person depicted but the conditions in which a particular situation emerged. This suggests that the role of language, like perhaps the role of form, in literary writing is crucial. It is to keep the genius of the creative individual in touch with those ups and downs of life in specific epochs that an ethos is witness to. Languages see as well as participate in the making of that ethos. This is borne out by the way in which a **Mahashweta Devi**, a **Muktibodh** or **Sri Sri** registers the complex trends of existence in an Indian language.

4.7.2 Indian English Writing

As far as the literary writing in English by an Indian writer goes, one notices a great deal of versatility there. This is accomplished by a skill and an acumen difficult to achieve ordinarily. Large international publishing houses sponsor these writers and project them as representative voices of great merit. The contemporary Indian writer in English makes a great splash one day, drawing attention to him/ her for the artistic feat achieved. The appeal of this writer is assessed commercially with mention of the number of copies sold of a particular work. The 'signing amount' of the work in question is also big news with publicity of the work arranged proportionate to the money changing hands on the big occasion. Thus, literary writing in English, particularly with reference to India, has become more of a commodified entity meant to be packaged for the market and sold across the counter all over the globe to rake in huge profits. Artistic value of such a commodity, which also happens to be a literary work, is a mere by-product. Interestingly, this by-product, too, is also made to add value to the primary commodity through the organised effort of the publicity industry that newspapers, magazines, journals, prize-giving organisations and academic centres of high learning in the western world have finally become. English in India is part of a tricky world, a globalised atmosphere run on the hard logic of commercialism.

For a third world country such as ours, the phenomenon of the rise and growth of English in India is indeed educative. It offers a great many insights into the likely shifts and changes one notices in historical epochs. It also makes clear to us the role played by power centres in the creations of paradigms, canons and perspectives, many of which we have been witness to in our eventful history of the last hundred and fifty years. Today, we have a burgeoning middle class fed on the ideas of merit, efficacy and skill that English is capable of imparting in the modern world.

But this is not the only thing English symbolises. Providing a window to a large number of literatures in the world, English also has its own wealth of knowledge and learning. We come across through English the renaissance values of freedom, secular

thought, humanist principles of dignity and identity as well as the social urge to intervene in history. What inspired our great nationalist writing in the era of the freedom struggle were English writers such as **Shakespeare** and **Milton**, both of whom relentlessly attacked in their writing the irrational and inhuman in society. **Shakespeare** is a truly modern mind capable of going fearlessly into the forbidden areas of morality and sanctity and showing what they are worth in social and human terms. His depiction of political power play in drama after drama is unmistakable, where he shows the human being in the meanest of individuals and conversely stark immoral traits in seemingly angelic figures. Such works of **Shakespeare** dealt a mortal blow at the feudalist vision of a harmonious world as well as the crass commercialism of the 'new man' in the seventeenth century. **Milton's** attitude towards kingship was equally inspiring as he (**Milton**) sided clearly with the forces of republicanism. Equally importantly, Romantics and the nineteenth century radicals have a good deal to tell us about the undesirability of accepting capitalism. Nearer our period in the twentieth century, a section of writing in English in the west is seriously engaged with the issues of gender injustice, racial inequality and the oppressiveness of present day imperialism. These are available to us through the same English that struck deep roots in our soil and came to play a complex role in our society and culture. Our task is to have an adequate grasp of the worth English has and the role it can play in our life towards achieving equality, justice and dignity for all.

4.8 LET US SUM UP

This unit has asserted that the phenomenon of settling down and consolidation of English in our country is to be studied with care and interest. As we ponder over this question, we realise that a number of problems and conflicts emerging in our history of the recent period can be understood better with reference to the introduction and growth of English in our society. The introduction of English in India unfolded a dialectic that went far beyond the expectations and intentions of the British regime. In the post-Independence period, English got enmeshed in the social processes of a different kind, when it earned substantial support, strangely indeed, from a middle class associated previously with the **Indian National Movement**. The settling down of English in our midst should not be a cause for concern since it could still be our link with the Renaissance vision of humanism and the values and principles of Enlightenment in Europe.

4.9 QUESTIONS

1. Briefly comment on the changed attitude of the Indian middle class towards English in the nineteen fifties.
2. Explain the process in which English gained support and consolidation in post-Independent India.
3. Contemporary Indian writing in English is driven more by commercialist interests than humanist concerns. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.
4. Define the role English can play towards achievement of equality and justice in today's India.

SUGGESTED READINGS

UNIT 1

1. Said, Edward., (1991), *The World, The Text, And The Critic*, (Vintage: London)
2. Ghosh, Suresh Chandra., (2000), *The History of Education in Modern India*, (Orient Longman: New Delhi)
3. Nurullah, Syed and Naik, J.P., *A Student's History of Education in India*
4. McCully, Bruce., (1940), *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, (New York)

UNIT 2

1. Chatterjee, K.K., (1976), *English Education in India*, (Macmillan: Delhi)
2. Chatterjee, Reena., (1983), *Impact of Raja Ram Mohun Roy on Education in India*, (S Chand & Co: New Delhi)
3. Kopf, David., (1969), *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*
4. McCully, Bruce., (1940), *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, (New York)
5. Nurullah, Syed and Naik, J.P., *A Student's History of Education in India*
6. Sengupta, K.P., (1971), *Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, (Calcutta)
7. Stokes, Eric., (1959), *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford University Press: Oxford)
8. Tagore, Saumyendra Nath., (1989), *Raja Rammohan Roy*, (Sahitya Akademi: New Delhi)

UNIT 3

1. Bhaskaran, Roy., (1967), "Universities and the Language Problem." *Higher Education in India*, (Ed.) A.B. Shah., (Lalvani Publishing House: Bombay)
2. Kamat, A.R., "Higher Education: Myths Old and New." *Higher Education in India*, (Ed.) A.B. Shah.
3. Kapoor, Kapil and Gupta, R.S., (1991), *English in India*, (Academic Foundation: New Delhi)
4. Karve, D.D., "Universities and the Language Question." *Higher Education in India*, (Ed.) A.B. Shah.
5. Misra, B.B., (1961), *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford)

6. Raina, Badri., (1991), "A Note on Language and the Politics of English in India". *Rethinking English*, (Ed.) Swati Joshi, (Trianka: New Delhi)

UNIT 4

1. Said, Edward., (1991), *The Word, The Text, And the Critic*, (Vintage: London)
2. Ghosh, Suresh Chandra., (2000), *The History of Education in Modern India*, (Orient Longman: New Delhi)