# The Disciplines in Colonial Bengal

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## A Centre of Empire

When the gods arrived in Calcutta in 1880, they were met by a weeping Ganga. The only available account of this visit[1] tells us that Ganga complained bitterly to the gods of the indignities she was being forced to suffer at the hands of the English, the new rulers of the country. As he heard this tale of woe from his long lost daughter, Brahma, the creator of the world, was greatly distressed. Looking up, he surveyed the shore and realized to his utter amazement that this was not how he had created the world. Clearly, someone had intervened. The river was so thick with boats, large and small, of all descriptions that the water was hardly visible. The air was heavy with the sounds of horns, sirens and whistles emanating from the vessels. There were English sailors perched on the masts of the large ships. On the opposite bank of the river, bathers had lined up like rows of ants on the steps of the ghats. Beyond them, in a line stretching from one end of the horizon to the other, stood the great mansions of the city, interspersed at points by huge chimneys belching smoke into the sky.

Puzzled by this unexpected sight, Brahma said to his daughter, 'Ganga, you are the mother of the world, the greatest of rivers! Have the English made you so contented that you have forgotten even your old father? Their ships float on your waters, their city adorns your bank: does this please you so much that you cannot get away from this place even for a moment?'

Ganga turned to her waves and said, 'Look, that old man standing there weeping is my father. Next to him are Indra, king of the gods, Varuna, the rain god, and Narayana himself, from whose feet I sprang to life. They all look so crestfallen. It breaks

[1] Durgacharan Ray, *Debgaer marttye agaman* (1886; reprint Calcutta: Dey's, 1984).

my heart to see them like this, unattended. If a son of the Empress of India, or if even the Governor, were to come here, imagine what a scramble there would be. All the great men of the city would assemble to receive him. Schoolboys would line up with flags in their hands. Shopkeepers would close their business for the day and crowd around to watch. And by now the guns would sound in the fort. But no matter! Run along quickly and wash their feet.'

The ablutions over, Ganga proceeded to tell her father about her present condition. 'I have been bound and gagged,' she said. 'Look over there. See how they have put me in chains.' Brahma turned his gaze up the river and saw the bridge. He stared at it long and hard, and his eyes were filled with astonishment. Varuna, whose annual visits during the monsoons had made him familiar with the changes in this part of the world, decided that he ought to explain. 'When they first put it up,' he said, 'we did try to destroy it. We even sent a cyclone for the purpose. But it withdrew after a while fearing the damage it would cause to the rest of Bengal. The bridge connects Calcutta to Howrah. It's the only floating bridge of its kind. It cost them eighteen lakhs of rupees to build. It is 1530 feet long and 48 feet wide. It was opened in October 1874.'

Ganga in the meantime had begun to catalogue her woes. 'Father,' she said, 'no one, god, demon or human, is as unfortunate as me. The new rulers of the country are not content with having me bound in chains. They force me like a slave to carry their huge ships. If I say it's too hard for me, they tug the boats all over me. There are carriages and men crossing that bridge at all times of day and night. I don't have a minute's rest. And now they've put up all kinds of factories on my banks: the noise and the smoke are unbearable. I've never seen rulers like these in my life. When they need land, they grab it from me. Just look how far they have filled up the land near the mint. They tax the boats, they tax the fish, they tax the corpses, they even tax my waters.'

Brahma, we can imagine, was both moved and embarrassed by his daughter's plight. He felt it necessary to console her. 'Daughter,' he said, 'don't worry. Your days of sorrow will soon be over. As soon as possible, I will arrange to take you back to heaven. When you left my care, I had told you that when towns become forests and forests towns, when you are forced in places to flood your banks and at others to dry up, when people lose faith in you, it is then that you will return to heaven. I see that the

time has come. Be patient for another ten or fifteen years. I will take you back to heaven.'

Although the report on the visit does not tell us this, we know that these were empty words. Even in his dotage, perhaps Brahma too knew it. For when the gods took their leave of Ganga and proceeded to cross the bridge into the city, they were struck with awe by the power and inventiveness of the English. Brahma had to strain to the utmost his failing memory in order to recall another instance when the waters had been stilled so as to float a bridge. 'I've seen this only once before, in the Treta age, when Rama made the crossing to Lanka.'[2]

During their wanderings through the city over the next few days, with Varuna as their guide, the gods saw many more examples of this awesome power of the new rulers of the country. They saw the great public buildings, the massive offices of government, the High Court, the municipal office, the museum, all recently built. They saw the banks, the shops, the new municipal market, the race course and Presidency Jail. They went up the Ochterlony Monument from where the cows looked like goats and the women like little dolls. They went around the Fort and saw the 999 guns on the ramparts (one less than planned because someone had made a mistake with the count). They visited the police headquarters in Lalbazar from which they beat a hasty retreat when they discovered that the officers of the law were empowered to impose fines on even such everyday necessities as relieving oneself on the side of the street. Varuna, the rain god, was particularly voluble on the subject of the new waterworks and the system of piped water supply which he regarded as an encroachment on his jurisdiction. To Brahma, however, this again confirmed his assessment of the spectacular powers of the English. Finally, when they managed to enter Government House (because the Viceroy was away) and to see for themselves the pomp and splendor of imperial power, Indra, king of the gods, made a confession: 'This *lasaheb* must be the happiest man in the world. Before him, my own powers fade into insignificance. Who knows how many crores of years of meditation are necessary to get someone a post like this?'[3]

What the gods did not know, because their followers on earth had not endowed them with a modern historical consciousness, was that the wonderful inventiveness of the English was not

[2] Ibid., pp. 408-14.

[3] Ibid., p. 502.

unrelated to the humiliations they were inflicting on the gods as well as the people of the country. Had they received proper historical advice, the gods would surely have discovered that power on earth was no longer the gift of a divine providence; it was now produced by a diligent practice of the new disciplines of knowledge. Perhaps then they would have been less baffled by the strange goings-on in the capital city of the new rulers of India.

The city had in fact grown, and in the last decades of the nineteenth century was still growing, according to a historical pattern that was quintessentially colonial. The division of the city into white town, intermediate town and Indian town[4] was still in place. The population had increased five times during the course of the nineteenth century, and yet, or so at least the available records show, the number of houses rose by only 14 per cent.[5] The overcrowding was mostly in the intermediate zone and in the Indian town to the north. Building activity, it seems, picked up significantly in the last decades of the century. Still, whereas the number of brick-built houses went up between 1891 and 1901 by 55 per cent, this was overtaken by the rate of increase in the number of *kutcha* houses with mud walls and thatched roofs - 67 per cent.[6] Large parts of the city outside the white town had by then taken recognizable shape as the infamous slums of Calcutta. The population growth especially quickened in the period between 1881 and 1901 with the rise of industries in the northern suburbs and across the river in Howrah.

But increase in population was not a uniform feature of every locality of the city, nor indeed was the density of population the same. While the population in the northern wards of Shyampukur, Bartola, Jorabagan, Jorasanko and Sukea's Street rose steadily in this period, southern wards such as Kalinga, Park Street, Victoria Terrace, Hastings and Alipur did not see any population increase at all. Between 1881 and 1921, the northern wards became twice as densely populated as before, the average density in 1921 being in the region of 200 per acre, whereas in southern wards with European concentrations the average density remained steady at around 30 per acre.[7]

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[4] Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1978), p. 15.

[5] A. K. Ray, *A Short History of Calcutta, Town and Suburbs: Census of India, 1901, Volume VIII, Part 1* (1902; reprint Calcutta: Rddhi-India, 1982), pp. 140-1.

[6] Ibid, Appendix III, p. 125.

[7] Amiya Kumar Bagchi, "Wealth and Work in Calcutta 1860-1921" in Sukanta Chaudhuri, ed., *Calcutta: The Living City*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 212-23. In 1931, 36.70 per cent of the population in Park Street ward was

There was a large element of conscious intervention in all these urban developments. The apparent chaos in the city today has produced a widespread impression of Calcutta being an "unplanned city" or even "an overgrown village." The truth is that those who founded the city as the capital of their empire also devoted considerable attention, both administrative and scientific, to its orderly growth.[8] From the early decades of the nineteenth century, a succession of committees were appointed by the colonial government to suggest measures for the improvement of the city. Physical intervention began in earnest in the 1820s when the so-called Lottery Committee took charge. It was this Committee which supervised the construction of a roadway cutting straight through the middle of the Indian town from north to south and named it in sections after such stalwarts of empire as Cornwallis, Wellington and Wellesley. More significant was the laying out of the area just south of Park Street where the scattered slums, shrubland and narrow gullies bearing names like Anis Barber's Lane and Misser Khansama's Lane had to make way for a new, far more well-ordered residential area into which the European population would begin to move. The Lottery Committee died a somewhat inglorious death in 1836 because the political authorities in Britain found it morally indefensible that money should be raised for municipal improvements by encouraging the dubious public passion for gambling. In 1856, three paid Commmissioners were appointed to a new Corporation which was given funds and the responsibility for "the conservancy and improvement" of the city. Soon a Health Officer and an Engineer were appointed and under this regime, in which the Commissioner of Police was the leading figure (one should not be surprised: we are talking of the capital city of a colonial empire), the metalling of roads, the installation of gas lighting on the streets, the major sewerage works as well as the system of filtered water supply were inaugurated. A historian of

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European (computed from *Census of India*, 1931, vol. VI, parts I and II, Imperial Table XIX, p. 178), whereas in the northern parts - "deep in those recesses of the Black Town" - a white face was, as an English resident of Calcutta observed, "a thing to scare children with", Mowson, *A Few Local Sketches* (1846), cited in Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History*, p. 115.

[8] For a short account of municipal planning in Calcutta in the nineteenth century, see Samita Gupta, "Theory and Practice of Town Planning in Calcutta, 1817 to 1912: An Appraisal", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 30, 1 (January-March 1993), pp. 29-55. For a history of municipal administration, see Keshab Choudhuri, *Calcutta: Story of its Government* (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1973).

colonial Calcutta was later to put on record the obstacles that had to be overcome:

> In the matter of the water-supply infinite tact and patience were required to meet the initial difficulty occasioned by the prejudices of religion. Orthodox Hindoos debated whether they would, without loss of caste, drink water that had come through infidel pipes. But their scruples were gradually overcome. The claims of conscience were met halfway by the mingling of a little of the muddy but holy Ganges water with the pure fluid from the municipal standpost: and finally they were ignored altogether.[9]

While the civilizing mission thus made some headway in the native quarters, considerable reorganizations were taking place within the central space itself. The decade of the 1870s in particular saw the physical consolidation of the principal offices of both the Imperial and Provincial governments within an area centered around Dalhousie Square, with Writers' Buildings to the north and Government House to the south. Several new buildings were put up - the High Court, the Imperial Secretariat Building, the General Post Office, the Central Telegraph Office, the Customs House - and existing buildings extended and renovated, especially Writers' Buildings and the Treasury Building. The stretch between the Strand and Dalhousie Square which was 'covered with native dwellings of the very worst type' was cleared. It was this newly refurbished capital, with its distinctly Victorian look, which so dazzled Brahma and Indra when they came to Calcutta in 1880.

Diagonally across the Maidan from Government House, near the point where Park Street today disgorges its traffic into Chowringhee, was built in 1875 the massive building of the Indian Museum to house "collections illustrative of Indian Archaeology and of the several branches of Natural History." The Museum soon became the nucleus for an entire campus devoted to the pursuit of colonial knowledge. The offices of the Geological Survey of India were housed here. So was the new School of Art and the Government Art Gallery. Just south of the Museum, at

[9] H. E. A. Cotton, *Calcutta Old and New* (1909; Calcutta: General Printers, 1980), p. 181.

the corner of Park Street, the venerable Asiatic Society continued to flourish. A little way down Park Street there came up the new buildings for the offices of the Surveyor-General of India. Directly north of these citadels of science, another massive red-brick building was constructed for the offices of the municipal Corporation from where the "improvement" of the city was henceforth to be supervised. Further north, at the point where the line running northwards along Chowringhee and Bentinck Street met Bowbazar Street running west from Dalhousie Square - the point of origin, in geometric parlance, of the axes of power on the one side and of knowledge on the other - stood Lalbazar, the headquarters of the Calcutta Police.

There was, of course, a third axis which gave to the colonial edifice its solidity. This represented, so to speak, the original cause of empire. If we project this axis on to a map of Calcutta from the turn of the century, we should find it extended northwards from Dalhousie Square along a street named after none else but the founder of the empire in Bengal. The corner of Clive Street and New China Bazar Street was where the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the premier association of British commercial interests in Calcutta, was located. The same building also housed the Royal Exchange with some six hundred members at this time. Further up on both sides of Clive Street were the offices of the numerous managing agencies and banks. This was the hub of colonial economic activity which had by this time expanded from its original mercantile function to become the leading force in both industrial manufacturing and finance.

Our recent understanding of the modern regime of disciplinary power tends to persuade us that power no longer has a centre and that older forms of political authority radiating outward from singular institutions or zones or even bodies of sovereignty are dissolved and dissipated by modern disciplinary practices into capillary forms of power which pervade every part and exist at every point of the social body. We must remind ourselves, however, that although the fully developed colonial regime of the Victorian period was precisely the agency which supervised the introduction into India of most of the institutions characteristic of modern disciplinary power, the project of modernity was insurmountably limited by the nature of colonial rule itself. Thus, whereas the superior reach and effectiveness of modern power would justify the introduction into colonial governance of appropriate disciplinary institutions and practices, they would at the same time be compromised and even subverted

by the need to maintain a specifically colonial form of power. Indeed, since it could only continue to exist by reproducing the difference between colonizer and colonized, the colonial state was necessarily incapable of fulfilling the criterion of representativeness which is the fundamental condition that makes modern power a matter of interiorized self-discipline rather than external coercion.[10]

We should not be surprised therefore to find the connections between colonial power and colonial knowledge displayed so clearly and yet confined within such a carefully protected zone of physical exclusiveness as in late nineteenth-century Calcutta.

But if this was the end of modernity's journey in colonial India, we would have had no nationalism, no independence and indeed none of our postcolonial confusions and miseries. Fortunately for history, modern power and the scientific practices of the disciplines spilled over their colonial embankments to proliferate in the native quarters. Energized by the desires and strategies of entirely different political agencies, the intellectual project of modernity found new sustenance in those densely populated parts and in the process took on completely new forms. That is the process we will look at in this book. Notwithstanding the mocking remarks of the colonial historian, we will find that it was not as though the "pure fluid" of European enlightenment was merely mingled with a few drops of the "muddy but holy Ganges water"; the "claims of conscience," as indeed the strategies of power, opened to question some of the very procedures of the practice of modernity.

## English, the Classical Language of Bengal

The formative role of English-language education in the rise of the new intelligentsia, and through it in the emergence of modernizing movements and nationalism in India, has been commented upon innumerable times.[11] As far as the involvement

[10] I have discussed at length the colonial state as a modern regime of power and its limitation by "the rule of colonial difference" in my book *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 14-34.

[11] Perhaps the earliest elaboration of this argument in academic historiography is Bruce Tiebout McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940). However, liberal nationalist historiography in Bengal has long accepted this idea, from as early a work as Sibnath Sastri, *Ramtanu lahidl o tatkalln bangasamaj* (1904) in *Sibnath racanasamgraha* (Calcutta: Saksharata Prakashan, 1979).

in all this of the colonial state is concerned, the debate in the early nineteenth century between Orientalists and Anglicists, and the acceptance by the government in 1835 of Macaulay's minute recommending the spread of western learning through the medium of the English language, are usually regarded as crucial. Also seen as important is Wood's despatch of 1854 which argued that government should involve itself in higher education only to the extent that it is given to the upper classes of Indian society from whom the effects of western knowledge would filter down to the masses.[12]

In actual fact, the role of the colonial government in the spread of education was quite limited. There was undoubtedly an attempt, especially from the middle decades of the century, to organize a system of liberal education so as to spread western knowledge. This was shown particularly in the establishment of the first Indian universities in 1857. It was expected that the new class of Indians, literate in English and schooled in the various branches of European knowledge, would in turn pass on the results of their schooling to other Indians in the Indian languages. The colonial government itself would confine its role mainly to that of assisting private enterprise in education. The assessment made in 1853 by John Marshman, a missionary long associated with vernacular education and journalism in Bengal, had a strong element of prescience:

> It is impossible to extinguish the language of 30,000,000 of people; English will, doubtless in the course of time, become the classical language of Bengal, and every native of respectability will endeavour to give a knowledge of it to his children; but at the same time, the vernacular language of Bengal... and of the other provinces throughout India, will continue to be used and to be cultivated to an increasing degree. [13]

As it happened, there was a rapid expansion, especially from the 1880s, of secondary and higher education in Bengal, as indeed

[12] For a general review of colonial policy on Indian education, see Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik, *A History of Education in India (during the British Period)* (1943; second ed., Bombay: Macmillan, 1951).

[13] J. C. Marshman before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Indian Territories, 21 July 1853, quoted in B. D. Basu, *History of Education in India under the Rule of the East India Company* (Calcutta: Modern Review, 1922), p. 125.

in other parts of India, principally as a result of private initiative. Between 1881-82 and 1901-2, while only one new government college was set up in all of India, the number of private colleges with government aid went up from twenty-one to fifty-five and that of private unaided colleges from eleven to fifty-three. The growth of English secondary schools in the same period was as follows: government 562 to 696, private aided 1,080 to 1,573, and private unaided 491 to 828. Most of this expansion of education in the private sector was in Bengal. In fact, government high schools in Calcutta had 1,750 students in 1883, whereas the city's unaided schools had 8,088 students.[14] Some of the older private institutions were run by European missionaries, almost all of them with government aid; the unaided schools and colleges were invariably set up and run by Indians. In 1881-82, of the twenty-three arts colleges in all of India run by private organizations, only five were managed by Indians, the rest belonging to missionary organizations; by 1901-2 there were forty-two colleges run by Indians compared to thirty-seven by the missionaries.[15]

On the whole, the expansion in higher education was most rapid in Bengal. In 1901-2, the province had forty-four colleges, government and private, compared to forty in Madras, twenty-six in the United Provinces and ten in Bombay.[16] Literacy in English increased by 100 per cent between 1891 and 1901, by 50 per cent in the next decade and by 50 per cent again in the next. In 1921, while the figure for literacy stood at 18 per cent in Bengal, 3.4 per cent of the population was literate in English.[17] By 1918, Calcutta University, with 27,000 students, was the largest university in the world, and the proportion of literate people taking full-time university courses was the same as in the United Kingdom.[18] But the proliferation was only in the liberal arts. Just as official policy on vocational education was merely to train Indians for the lower grades of the government's technical services, so also was there a lack of enthusiasm among Indians to initiate professional or technical education since there seemed to be little demand for it. In 1901-2, compared to 140 arts colleges in India with some

[14] Nurullah and Naik, *History of Education*, p. 297; Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 21-22.

[15] Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 80; Nurullah and Naik, *History of Education*, p. 260.

[16] Basu, *Growth of Education*, p. 105.

[17] *Census of India 1921*, vol. V, Part 1, Bengal, pp. 298, 394.

[18] Basu, *Growth of Education*, p. 107.

seventeen thousand students, there were thirty law colleges with about 2,700 students and only four colleges each for medicine and engineering.[19] Not surprisingly, the bulk of the university graduates were employed in government service, education and law: of 1,378 graduates of Calcutta University between 1858 and 1881 on whom information was available, 44.48 per cent were in legal occupations, 25.91 in government service excluding education and 23.66 per cent in teaching, which left a mere six per cent engaged elsewhere.[20]

There is substance, of course, in the argument that the colonial influence on modern education in India had sources other than the direct role of the government in setting up schools and colleges. One of the most important of these was the choice of curriculum. Bringing Western education to India did not mean the mere replication of a course of instruction that might have been offered at a British school or university. Much thought and effort was spent in the nineteenth century in determining a suitable content of Western education under colonial conditions. The emphasis clearly was on providing a general humanistic education; advanced courses in the sciences were largely unavailable until the last decades of the century. Religious instruction was carefully avoided, but in its place, as Gauri Viswanathan has shown, an entire academic discipline was invented for the teaching of English literature as the formative spiritual influence on a colonized elite.[21] The consequences were far-reaching for the emergence of the new literary and aesthetic disciplines in the modern Indian languages.

Another focus of colonial influence was, of course, the very institutions of school, college and university and their characteristic disciplinary practices. There were contrary pulls that operated in this area. On the one hand, the government was happy to let Indian managements take the initiative in opening schools and colleges, since the expectation was that the very content of the new education and the rigors of the institutional system would correct the deficiencies in knowledge and character inherited by the students from their native culture. As Alfred Croft, a senior educational officer in Bengal, put it in 1886:

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[19] Ibid, p. 80.

[20] Computed from figures furnished in Seal, *Emergence*, p. 358.

[21] Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).

> It is in the school-room alone that habits of obedience and discipline are at the present time systematically taught. School discipline is now the one force that does not conspire with, but actively combats and counteracts, those other and far stronger influences that are apparently at work in Bengali society.[22]

On the other hand, there existed in official thinking a parallel concern that mere humanistic enlightenment and school discipline might not be enough to contain disloyalty or to generate active consent among the educated. Soon, with the rise of nationalist political agitation in the last decades of the century, a demand went up in official circles for more direct government control over education. With the turn of the century, Curzon made a determined attempt to reorder the system; his reforms, however, failed almost entirely to achieve the objective of establishing greater control.[23] Indeed, educational institutions, especially in Bengal, had by then largely passed into a disciplinary domain where the discursive forms of a specifically nationalist modernity were already in command.

Curiously, however, even as nationalism was in the process of constructing its sovereignty over this crucial area of cultural hegemony, it continued to harbor suspicions about the alienness of these institutions of learning. The nationalist cultural project of producing disciplined citizens for the new nation took root in the inner spaces of the community, especially in the restructured everyday life of the new family, not in the public institutions of civil society. Seeking zealously to protect that inner space from colonial incursion, the nationalist tended to see the school as a source of alien cultural influence and moral corruption. Virtually as a mirror image of the colonial view of the school as the only reliable disciplinary institution for counteracting the unhealthy influences of a native culture, the nationalist thought of the home as the proper domain where the "spiritual character" of the new citizen of the nation would be cleansed of outside corrupting influences. And as the contest over this disciplinary space intensified, the official view tended to construct the schoolroom

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[22] Alfred Croft, Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, quoted in McCully, *English Education*, p. 172.

[23] See Basu, *Growth of Education*, pp. 32-59.

as an extension of the state, while the nationalist sought to bring it under the domain of family and community.

## Societies of Learning

The oldest and most prestigious institution of colonial knowledge was the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Set up in 1784 at the initiative of William Jones, then a brilliant young member of the Indian judiciary, the Society pioneered the formation of the different branches of Indological scholarship. About its journal it was said in 1833 that 'the *Asiatick Researches* comprehended the sum of our knowledge of the classical literature of India; the European inquirer into that literature began and ended his investigations with this work.'[24] Indeed, the main achievement of the Society was to make available for modern European scholarship the materials of an Oriental civilization. Not surprisingly, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that there was any serious participation by Indians in the intellectual activities of the Society. In the first hundred years of its existence, only five Indians figured in the list of office-bearers of the Society and of these only Rajendralal Mitra could be said to be a leading scholar. In the same period, among nearly a thousand contributors to the journals and proceedings of the Society, there were only forty-eight Indians; of these, once again, only the polymath Rajendralal was a regular contributor.[25]

But in the meantime there had come up in Calcutta other institutions through which a new Indian intelligentsia was already engaging with the modern disciplines of knowledge. The activities of these learned societies provide an account of not only the transformation in a colonial situation of the nineteenth-century European sciences but also of the emergence in that situation of the civil-social institutions characteristic of the new public sphere.[26]

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[24] Cited in O. P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past 1784-1838* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 154.

[25] Computed from Appendix B, "List of Presidents, Vice-Presidencts and Secretaries of the Asiatic Society" and Appendix D, "Index to contributions to Asiatic Researches and Journal and Proceedings of Asiatic Society (upto 1833)" in Rajendralal Mitra, A. F. Rudolf Hoernle and P. N. Bose, *Centenary Review of the Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1784 to 1883* (1885; reprint, Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1986), Part I, pp. 84-94 and 106-195.

[26] For general histories of these learned societies, see Bela Dutt Gupta, *Sociology in India: An Enquiry into Sociological Thinking and Empirical Social Research in the Nineteenth Century with Special Reference to Bengal* (Calcutta: Centre for Sociological Research, 1972); Binay Ghosh, *Bamlar bidvatsamaj* (second ed. Calcutta: Prakash

Of the dozen or so literary and learned societies in Calcutta in which Indians took the leading part in the middle of the nineteenth century, the four that were the most important were the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (established 1838), the Tattvabodhini Sabha (established 1839), the Bethune Society (established 1851) and the Bengal Social Science Association (established 1867). The appeal that was circulated by the founders of the first body began with a significant observation. 'Countrymen,' it said, 'though humiliating be the confession, yet we cannot, for a moment, deny the truth of the remark so often made by many able and intelligent Europeans, who are, by no means, inimical to the cause of native improvement, that in no one department of learning are our acquirements otherwise than extremely superficial.' School education, it continued, could hardly do more than lay 'the ground-work of our mental improvement,' but this was not enough. It had become necessary to set up a society 'to create in ourselves a determined and well regulated love of study, which will lead us to dive deeper than the mere surface learning, and enable us to acquire a respectable knowledge on matters of general and more especially, of local interest,...' That this was a matter of self-interest as well as patriotic duty was also emphasized: 'We cannot believe that in such a cause, coldness will be manifested by any person that entertains the least regard for his own improvement, or breathes any love for his own country'.[27]

The leading lights of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge were former students of Hindu College, and several of them had been members of "Young Bengal," that celebrated circle of radicals that had formed in the 1820s around the free-thinking rationalist Henry Derozio. Although the Young Bengal radicals were renowned (and reviled) for their overtly Westernized views and manners, the Society, it seems, allowed papers to be presented not just in English but in Bengali as well.[28] More interesting is an account of how it sought to establish and defend its autonomy as a civil-social institution. In 1843, at a meeting of the Society held at Hindu College, a paper was being

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Bhaban, 1978); Rajat Sanyal, *Voluntary Associations and the Urban Public Life in Bengal* (1815-1876) (Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1980).

[27] Appeal by Tariney Churn Banerjee, Ramgopaul Ghose, Ramtonoo Lahiry, Tara Chand Chukerbuttee and Rajkrishna Day, 20 February 1838, reprinted in Binay Ghosh, *Bidvatsamaj*, pp. 126-8.

[28] Binay Ghosh, *Bidvatsamaj*, p. 87.

read on "The Present State of the East India Company's Criminal Judicature and Police." D. L. Richardson, a well-known teacher of English literature at Hindu College, got up angrily and, according to the Proceedings, complained that

> to stand up in a hall which the government had erected and in the heart of a city which was the focus of enlightenment, and there to denounce, as oppressors and robbers, the men who governed the country, did in his opinion, amount to treason.... The College would never have been in existence, but for the solicitude the Government felt in the mental improvement of the natives of India. He could not permit it, therefore, to be converted into a den of treason, and must close the doors against all such meetings.

At this, Tarachand Chakrabarti, himself a former student of Hindu College, who was chairing the meeting, rebuked Richardson:

> I consider your conduct as an insult to the society.... if you do not retract what you have said and make due apology, we shall represent the matter to the Committee of the Hindoo College, and if necessary to the Government itself. We have obtained the use of this public hall, by leave applied for and received from the Committee, and not through your personal favour. You are only a visitor on this occasion, and possess no right to interrupt a member of this society in the utterance of his opinions.[29]

This episode is usually recounted in the standard histories as an example of early nationalist feelings among the new intelligentsia of Bengal. Not that there is no truth in this observation, but it does not lie in the obvious drama of an educated Indian confronting his British teacher. Rather, what is significant is the separation between the domain of government and that of "this

[29] A report on this meeting which appeared in the *Bengal Hurkaru*, 13 February 1843, is reprinted in Goutam Chattopadhyay, ed., *Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century* (Select Documents), vol. 1 (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1965), pp. 389-99.

society," and the insistence that as long as the required procedures had been followed the rights of the members of the society to express their opinions, no matter how critical of government, could not be violated. This represented, one might say, the founding moment of modernity, where a liberal theory of power, viz. the freedom of the members of civil society, could declare itself as the enabling condition for rational knowledge, viz. the condition of freedom of speech and unhindered access to discourse. It is interesting to see the argument being deployed in this fashion so early in our history of the emergence of the scientific disciplines in India.

The moment held the possibility of two alternative developments. Either the liberal distinction of state and society could have stayed in place and freedom of speech and unhindered access established in the institutions of civil society. In this case, there would have been no need for a specifically "nationalist" modernity. Or, and this is what actually happened, the domain of civil society would be split into one inhabited by the colonizers and the other by the colonized, and the rights of the latter regarded by the colonial state as inferior to those of the former. The nationalist response to this would be to declare the domain of intellect and culture - the "spiritual" domain - its sovereign territory from which the colonial power was externed. This would become the nation's own "civil society," with the crucial proviso, however, that within that sovereign zone there would now be no distinction between the political and the social, between "national state" and "national society": they would lie enmeshed in the moral and institutional life of the nation as community. As far as the pursuit of knowledge is concerned, there would now emerge a curious ambivalence: on the one hand, a persistent complaint at being excluded from or discriminated against in the matter of equal access to the supposedly universal institutions of knowledge, and on the other, an insistence on a distinctly Indian form of modern knowledge. We will encounter this ambivalence in the rest of the history we are looking at.

The Bethune Society and the Bengal Social Science Association were in some ways a continuation along the first line where learned bodies were still seen as representing an unfractured civil society in which rational men, irrespective of race or creed, could unite in the pursuit of knowledge and defend their right to do so. Indeed, the Bethune Society congratulated itself in 1861 for its success 'in bringing together - for mutual intellectual culture and rational recreation, the very elite of the educated native

community and blending them in friendly union with leading members of the Civil, Military and Medical services of Government, of the Calcutta bar, of the Missionary body, and other non-official classes.'[30]

In some ways, the Tattvabodhini Sabha was the first learned society to pose squarely the problem of propagating a knowledge that was both modern and national. It conducted its affairs exclusively in Bengali and, along with its journal *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, edited for the most part by the redoubtable Akshaykumar Datta (1820-1886), could be said to have founded the modern discourse of science and rational philosophy in that language. In particular, it faced up to the question of finding a rational and modern way of talking about the religion and culture of the people of the country. Not surprisingly, a historian of nineteenth-century intellectual history has concluded that the reason for the spectacular success of the Tattvabodhini Sabha - its membership reached 800 within a few years and every major writer of the period contributed to its journal - was its avowal of Western modernity without, as in the case of Young Bengal, declaring war on Indian religion.[31]

Science was undoubtedly the most revered idea in the deliberations of these societies. Even on social and cultural questions, a scientific viewpoint and method were considered essential. The variety of subjects on which learned discussions were held is quite remarkable. A list of lectures delivered at the Bethune Society shows, for instance, that a talk in English and Bengali 'on the Sanskrit Language and Literature by Pundit Isser Chandra Vidya Sagar' was followed by one 'on the Practical Working and Varieties of the Electric Telegraph by Mr. Woodrow,' while "Pizzaro, the Conqueror of Peru" by the Rev. C. H. A. Dall was followed by a lecture "On the Nature of the Evidences on which the Truth of Phrenology is founded" by Babu Kali Kumar Das.[32] Also significant are the speed and seriousness with which the latest advances in European knowledge were followed. On subjects of social philosophy in particular, the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, Comtean positivism and the social evolutionism of Huxley and Spencer were keenly debated.[33]

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[30] *The Proceedings of the Bethune Society for the sessions of 1859-60, 1860-61* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1862), p. v.

[31] Binay Ghosh, *Bidvatsamaj*, p. 94.

[32] *Proceedings of the Bethune Society*, pp. 35-37.

[33] On the influence of positivism, see Geraldine Hancock Forbes, *Positivism in Bengal* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1975).

Empirical investigations on social matters, using schedules and questionnaires, were also taken up, especially at the initiative of the Irish missionary James Long in the Bethune Society and the Bengal Social Science Association.[34]

In the social and cultural disciplines, however, the most persistent methodological problem arose out of the awareness of cultural difference. Did the fact of the birth of the modern sciences of society in Europe rule out their applicability in societies that were fundamentally different? Could their methods be used in Indian conditions without modification? Were their fundamental concepts applicable to India? Was it necessary to devise alternative theories? Or was "science" itself inappropriate in discussing matters of Indian society and culture? These are, of course, questions that pervade the entire literature on modernity in India, and they acquired their problematic and contested disciplinary forms even at the time of their birth in the deliberations of the nineteenth-century learned societies.

## The Cultivation of Science

The curricula in the educational institutions in the nineteenth century were, as we have mentioned before, heavily biased towards the liberal arts. When the resources of the natural sciences were deployed for the acquisition of colonial knowledge, it was done outside the universities and colleges, in specialized technical services set up and controlled by the government. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that virtually all scientific personnel engaged in research in India in the nineteenth century were employed by the government. There were nearly a dozen such scientific organizations: the Survey of India, the Geological Survey, the Botanical Survey, the Zoological Survey, the Archeological Survey, the Agricultural Service, the Forest Service, the Medical and Bacteriological Service, the Munitions Board, the Meteorological Department and the Veterinary Department. The senior personnel in these organizations were predominantly European; even as late as in 1920, compared to 195 European scientific officers in senior grades in the various services, including those in select government colleges with research laboratories, there were only eighteen Indians.[35]

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[34] See Dutt Gupta, *Sociology in India*.

[35] V. V. Krishna, "The Emergence of the Indian Scientific Community," *Sociological Bulletin*, 40, 1-2 (March-September 1991), pp. 89-107.

Thus, there was little participation by Indians in scientific research in the nineteenth century. What did occur, however, was a massive program of translating into the Indian languages the results of modern science. This was particularly true in Bengal: between 1875 and 1896, a total of 776 books were published in Bengali on medicine, mathematics and the natural sciences, representing more than a third of all books on science published in Indian languages in that period.[36] All the major Bengali journals of the time - *Tattvabodhini*, *Rahasya sandharbha*, *Bangadarsan*, *Aryadarsan*, *Bharati*, *Bamabodhini* - regularly carried articles on scientific subjects, while *Bibidhartha samgraha* and *Bijnandarsan* were almost exclusively devoted to the cause of popularizing science.

The main point of debate in all this writing on the natural sciences, unlike the literature on social theory and philosophy, was not the content or methods of science, but the problem of translation. From the time when the newly set up School Book Society in Calcutta decided in 1819 to bring out a Bengali text-book on geography, the debate began on whether to retain approximate equivalents of scientific terms if these were commonly used in the local language, or whether to coin new words by drawing upon Sanskrit, or whether indeed to merely transliterate the English terms. Opinions varied from those who pointed out the advantages of popularization if local terms were used to those who complained of the imprecision and lack of standardization of such a local terminology. In 1877, Rajendralal Mitra made a reasoned intervention in which he suggested a flexible scheme in which, depending on specific criteria, commonly used Bengali terms could be retained in certain cases, in other cases new terms could be constructed by using root words from the Sanskrit and in still others European terms had to be adopted. Rajendralal's overall strategy will be regarded as unexceptionable even today, and yet, more than a hundred years after his suggestions, the problem of translation of scientific terms in Bengali continues to be a vexed question.[37]

The reason for this, it is obvious, is the absence, despite the attempts at popularization, of any participation of the Indian languages in the formation of scientific discourse itself. From the early decades of the twentieth century, when the science

[36] Ibid.

[37] For a survey of the debates over scientific terminology in Bengali in the nineteenth century, see Binaybhusan Ray, *Unis sataker bamlay bijnan sadhana* (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1987), pp. 17-57.

departments in the Indian universities began to flourish, English has been the professional language of Indian scientists; the function of science writing in the Indian languages has been to make available at the lower educational levels and to the general reading public the materials of a "translated science." The engagement with the discursive process of scientific research, which alone can give to a scientific terminology its consensual fixity, has not been available to any Indian language. The point can be illustrated rather well by looking at the history of medical education in the Bengali language.

In 1851 a Bengali section was opened at the Calcutta Medical College in order to train Indian students in western medicine without requiring them first to go through a course of secondary education in English. The Licentiate and Apothecary courses were a great success. Beginning with a mere twenty-two students in its first year, it overtook the English section in 1864, and in 1873 it had 772 students compared to 445 in the English section. That year the Bengali section was transferred to the newly established medical schools in Calcutta and Dacca. Largely because of the demand from students, nearly seven hundred medical books were published in Bengali between 1867 and 1900.[38]

But while the courses remained popular, complaints began to be heard from around the 1870s about the quality of training given to the students in the vernacular sections. It was alleged that their lack of facility in English made them unsuitable for the positions of assistants to European doctors in public hospitals. This was the time when a hospital system had begun to be put in place in Bengal and professional controls were being enforced in the form of supervision by the General Medical Council of London. From the turn of the century, with the institutionalization of the professional practices of medicine in the form of hospitals, medical councils and patented drugs, the Bengali section in the medical schools died a quick death. From 1916 the Licentiate courses were taught exclusively in English.[39]

Curiously though, this was the time when organized efforts were on, propelled by nationalist concerns, to give to the

[38] Computed from list supplied by Binaybhusan Ray, *Bijnan sadhana*, pp. 252-77.

[39] For a brief history of medical education in Bengali, see Binaybhusan Ray, *Bijnan sadhana*, pp. 58-120. A recent study of medical education in general is Poonam Bala, *Imperialism and Medicine in Bengal: A Socio-historical Perspective* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991). For colonial health policy in British India, see David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

Ayurvedic and Yunani systems of medicine a new disciplinary form. The All India Ayurveda Mahasammelan, which is still the apex body of ayurvedic practitioners, was set up in 1907. The movement which this organization represented sought to systematize the knowledge of ayurvedic clinical methods, mainly by producing standard editions of classical and recent texts, to institutionalize the methods of training by formalizing the college system leading to a degree, and to standardize medicine and even promote the commercial production of standard drugs by pharmaceutical manufacturers.[40] There have been debates within the movement about the extent and form of "integration" of indigenous and western medicine in the curricula of ayurvedic training, but even the proponents of *shuddha* ayurveda agree that the course should have 'the benefit of equipment or the methods used by other systems of medicine... since, consistent with its fundamental principles, no system of medicine can ever be morally debarred from drawing upon any other branch of science,... unless one denies the universal nature of scientific truths....'[41]

The very idea of the universality of science is being used here to carve out a separate space for ayurvedic medicine, defined according to the principles of a "pure" tradition, and yet reorganized as a modern scientific and professional discipline. This is one of several strategies one encounters in the emergence of the disciplines in colonial society. The claim here is not that the field of knowledge is marked out into separate domains by the fact of cultural difference; it is not being suggested that ayurveda is the appropriate system of medicine for "Indian diseases". It is rather a claim for an alternative science directed at the same objects of knowledge.

We see then that it is not only on the grounds of the different cultural constitution of the objects of knowledge that there will be claims for disciplinary difference. Thus, it will not do to say that the disciplines of the natural sciences are more resistant to the play of cultural difference that the social and cultural disciplines.

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[40] For brief discussions on the recent history of the Ayurveda movement, see Paul R. Brass, "The Politics of Ayurvedic Education: A Case Study of Revivalism and Modernization in India" in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *Education and Politics in India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); K. N. Panikkar, "Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony: A Study of the Revitalization Movement in Keralam", *Studies in History*, 8, 2 (July-December 1992), pp. 283-308.

[41] *Report of the Shuddha Ayurvedic Education Committee* (Delhi, 1963), cited in Brass, "Politics of Ayurvedic Education", pp. 342-71.

It is not simply because of the fact that clinical procedures are liable to be influenced by cultural conditions that it was possible to sustain a nationalist agenda for the revival and reorganization of indigenous medicine. Similar claims were made even on behalf of the so-called hard sciences, and not only from the lunatic fringe shouting 'It's all in the Vedas' but from within the modern academic and scientific professions themselves. Thus it was not only the will to fight against racial discrimination in the government scientific organizations or the desire to have autonomous national institutions of modern scientific research that gave rise to a movement such as Mahendralal Sarkar's Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science. The same set of nationalist desires led the eminent academic philosopher Brajendralal Seal to look for *The Positive Sciences of the Hindus* and the scientist Prafulla Chandra Ray to write *A History of Hindu Chemistry.*[42] The same desires also guided Jagadis Chandra Bose, Fellow of the Royal Society, into a research program, regarded by most scientists as of dubious validity, to demonstrate that inanimate life 'was merely the shadow of human life.'[43] Even for the natural sciences, then, there was a struggle to nibble away at the edges of the supposedly hard disciplines, to carve out spaces which would be no less "disciplinized" but where national identity would be implicated in defining the position of the scientist. As Jagadischandra asked, 'When science is universal, can there be in the world of science a place which will remain vacant without an Indian devotee?'

## Dissemination and Agency

In a recent paper, Gyan Prakash has argued[44] that while science acted as a crucial force authorizing the new discourse in nineteenth-century India of modernity and reform, 'its very functioning and the demonstration of its power as a transformative force required the ground of cultural difference, producing the dissemination and hybridization of its authority.' The posing of

[42] Gyan Prakash, *In the Beginning there was Hindu Science*, unpublished ms., Department of History, Princeton University. Also see Gyan Prakash, "Science Gone Native", Representations, (1992).

[43] Ashis Nandy, *Alternative Sciences: Creativity and Authenticity in Two Indian Scientists* (New Delhi: Allied, 1979), pp. 17-91.

[44] Gyan Prakash, "Authorizing Science as Modernity in Colonial India", in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds., *Subaltern Studies* IX (Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

the difference between enlightened rationality and "ignorant and bigoted superstition" was essential for science to become a justification for social reform. Yet the fact that this difference was implicated in the political relations between colonizer and colonized meant that the purported culture of rationality could never be allowed wholly to replace that of indigenous tradition, since the erasure of all difference is also the erasure of identity. Science therefore had to be "translated" from one culture to another: just as indigenous tradition, or so at least the argument went, needed to be adequately supplemented by modern science, so did the European enlightenment need to be naturalized in India. 'The position of science could not but be dislocated by the process of translation and negotiation in which its functioning was situated.'

What was produced as a result was a hybrid. The process of translation and negotiation did not define a dialectic: science did not negate tradition and produce a new and higher unity. Rather, translation became a process of dissemination and hybridization in which science's authority was "renegotiated and relocated." Science no longer possessed 'a language independent of the place and event of its enunciation;' it was subjected to discrete, local strategies of redeployment.

The trouble with this characterization is not that it is incorrect. As Homi Bhabha has pointed out in an oft-cited article, the advantage of looking at the effect of colonial power as the *production* of hybridization is that one does not have to narrate this history as 'the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions.'[45] Nor does one have to name the new formations in their entirety with negative qualifiers such as semi-, quasi-or non-, or with the negative chronological indicators pre- or post-. The field can be said to be structured variously, according to local and entirely contingent strategic conditions.

The trouble is that the characterization remains insufficient. In spite of making a plea for acknowledging variableness and contingency, it manages to impose, paradoxically, a quality of sameness upon all products of dissemination. How are we to distinguish between hybrid and hybrid? How do we pin down the location of the local? the discreteness of the discrete? Instead of negative qualifying prefixes, one now has recourse to

[45] Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817", *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn 1985), pp. 144-165.

metaphors of spatial transference such as realignment and re-location, but can we devise a language to describe the new topographies?[46] Can we, in other words, find the means to distinguish, spatially as well as in time, between the products of dissemination? Can we then identify the specific genealogies of the formation of each of the separate "hybrid" disciplines?

The argument around which the essays in this volume are knit suggests that the distinctions can be best made by focusing on the institutional sites where the new discourse of modernity was produced. We will, consequently, look for instruments of dissemination, for attempts to enforce disciplinary norms through institutional practices, and, most crucially, for the evidence of contests over these practices. Home, school, university, bureaucracy, literary society, journals, books - each became a site for the definition of disciplinary practices; their institutional reach defined the boundaries of disciplinary enforcement. By focusing on the histories of these contests over institutional sites, we hope to be able to write specific histories of dissemination, distinguished by disciplinary fields.

The metaphor of hybridization is one that was familiar to the nineteenth-century pioneers of the modern disciplines. As Gyan Prakash has noted of Rajendralal Mitra, his proposal for translating scientific terms involved

> a process of aligning and realigning non-equivalent languages.... This process exposed scientific reason to "contamination" from the subordinated, indigenous culture in which the authority of western science was re-presented. There ensued, then, a dissemination, not a dialectic, of western science and Indian culture from which neither one nor the other could re-appear in its "original" position and meaning.[47]

This is entirely true. But Rajendralal also went on to point out that the production of hybrids depended on certain conditions; not all attempts at hybridization had equal chances of success.

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[46] The difficulties become apparent from the massive overwork to which the metaphor of spatial transference has to be subjected. "Dislocation," "division," "realignment" (three times), "relocation" (twice), "rearrangement": these words occur in the first few sentences of Gyan Prakash, "Authorizing Science."

[47] Ibid.

Languages of the same class can borrow freely from each other without difficulty; but from different classes they cannot do so to any large extent without serious injury. The loan becomes an incubus in the one case, and a reproductive and useful resource in the other; or, taking it as a process of hybridization, it becomes agenesic in dissimilar families, and ugenesic among similars.

He also did not fail to point out the political dimension to the question of transference between "non-equivalent" languages.

> No language on the face of the earth has borrowed more extensively, and is better able to do so, than the English; and yet I doubt very much if any person would for a moment tolerate a proposition to put into it 20,000 Manchu, or Kamschatkan, or even Greek, words in a lump.... The foreign matter, unless introduced in very moderate quantities, will never engraft itself on the new stocks, and is sure to be cast out as sloughy, dead substance unsuited to their constitutions, even as the Bengali and the Hindi are now casting off the Semetic elements which were forced into them by the Moslem rulers of India, and which seven centuries of intimate association did not suffice to assimilate. That an experiment of the kind with Latin, Greek, and English elements will prove more successful, I have every reason to doubt.[48]

The range and subtlety of the contestatory moves made in these passages are remarkable. Not only is it a question of translation between non-equivalent languages, but between unequal languages - languages unequal in power. English has become the most powerful language on earth by borrowing extensively from other languages. As a result, it now claims universal currency as the language of modern science. But if it imposes its universality on less developed languages, it does so by virtue of the superior power wielded by its political agency. Forcible hybridization of this kind does not, however, succeed (and the intrusion into the Indian languages of English under British rule is in this regard no different from the intrusion of

[48] Rajendralala Mitra, *A Scheme for the Rendering of European Scientific Terms into the Vernaculars of India* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink, 1877), pp. 6-7. For biographical details on Rajendralal, see Alok Ray, *Rajendralal mitra* (Calcutta: Vagartha, 1969).

"Semetic elements" under the "Moslem rulers": acting as the vehicle of modern science does not confer upon English any special privilege). Hybridization of languages, like that of natural species, must follow certain natural laws; the cross-breeding of languages that are not "of the same class" must be attempted with great caution, for being "unnatural" the attempt is likely to fail.

Rajendralal is indeed deploying the metaphor of "naturalness" to use the very authority of science to challenge the claim of English to act as science's universal vehicle. By doing this, he is not rejecting hybridization, but asserting the right to define "the native stand-point" for selecting the appropriate hybrid. It is assertions like this which constitute the materials of the emergence of the disciplines in the colonies.

To narrate them as history, we must situate them in their particular configurations of the strategies of power and the contested claims to agency. There was nothing inherent in the "pure" disciplines which determined the particular forms of this hybridization in the colony. The specific intellectual history of dissemination - the specific contingencies of power and agency - determined why and how Ayurveda and Yunani now flourish as parallel "disciplined" forms of medicine while "Hindu chemistry" was virtually stillborn, or why the canonical principles of the novel in India remain explicitly European while those of music, both classical and popular, have been successfully "disciplined" into modern, and yet recognizably Indian, forms. It is questions like these that we will raise and seek to answer in the essays in this volume.

## Dispersed Disciplines

It must be obvious that these questions have been largely prompted by our reading of Michel Foucault. In this, our efforts could be seen as proceeding along the same lines as recent investigations into the "disciplinarity" of various disciplines of knowledge.[49] However, there is, I think, an irrevocable historical contingency in the genealogies of the disciplines in the colonies which give rise to questions of an altogether different import. Since, for reasons of accessibility to a wider readership, we have for the most part avoided using the specialized vocabulary of Foucauldian discursive analysis in the rest of this volume, this

[49] For example, the essays in the collection Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway and David J. Sylvan, eds., *Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993).

may be the appropriate place to spell out the theoretical implications of this difference.

If one recalls the detailed and complex genealogical exercises carried out by Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*, in *Discipline and Punish*, or in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*[50], one cannot help thinking how ridiculously simple by comparison our task is in India of identifying a "moment of rupture" as the discursive event that produces a new disciplinary constellation. The various modern knowledges arrive in the colony in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries already formed as disciplines, their objects and boundaries defined, their conceptual apparatus in place and their authorities firmly established (in the metropolis, of course). The only interesting question here seems to be the institutional one, i.e. of the specific educational, literary, cultural or professional institutions through which the modern disciplines are transmitted in the colony and the nature of their appropriation within various non-discursive practices. One might say that this is exactly what the "social and intellectual history" literature on Indian modernity has attempted to do for many years.

A more critical look of the sort I have described above into the contents of the disciplines as they have been practiced in India in the last hundred years or so must suggest, however, that the matter is far from simple. We are forced to recognize, first, that following its implantation in a different if not entirely alien field, the new discursive formation will open itself to intrusions by various elements in the pre-existing linguistic or intellectual practices of the country. Perhaps the natural-topographical analogy itself becomes inappropriate here, because what happens is that the new indigenous practitioners of the disciplines actively seek out the various points of entry - equivalence, similarity, adjacency, substitutability, etc. - through which, in a ceaseless process of translation, the new knowledges are aligned with prior knowledges. These "prior" knowledges are not those whose elements may have already gone into the formation of the discipline (such as, let us say, the Greek sciences or medieval scholasticism). These are "prior" knowledges which belong, so to speak, to an anachronistic present, knowledges that one would have assumed had been overtaken by the history of scientific

[50] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage, 1975); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1978); *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980).

progress except for the fact that they now have to be encountered horizontally, as adjacent formations that must be engaged in the process of translation. Second, we also recognize that the relation between the discursive and the non-discursive does not operate in one direction only: the appropriation of the new disciplines within the array of existing non-discursive practices in the colony could result in substantial modifications in the disciplinary formations themselves.

Indeed, if we consider the rules of formation of disciplinary knowledges as Foucault attempts to set them out in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*,[51] we will find that, in the dispersal of the disciplines in the colonies, differences could appear at all four levels: in the formation of objects, in the modalities of enunciation, in concept-formation and in the thematic choices. There are numerous examples, most frequently of course in the social and cultural disciplines but not necessarily only in those, where the objects of knowledge in a non-Western field are declared to be specifically different from the ones considered by those sciences in their "original" Western forms (thus, to take possibly the most enduring example, "caste" as an object of sociological inquiry). As far as enunciative modalities are concerned, the questions of who is authorized to speak, from which institutional site, and from which subject-position, lead to some of the most fascinating transferences. Even as the metropolitan authorities and institutions of science come to be recognized as authoritative, there are attempts, as we will see in several of the essays in this volume, at setting up parallel authorities, parallel institutions and parallel subject-positions, all claiming a privileged status by virtue of the "authenticity" of their affiliation to the indigenous tradition and yet displaying at the same time as many authorized tokens of "science" as possible. The differences that occur in the course of conceptual translations are perhaps the most intricate of all. This ranges from the identification of an absence in the given disciplinary forms (is the concept of *rasa* available at all in the Western aesthetic disciplines?) to pointing out a whole range of divergences between supposedly analogous concepts (is *dharma* the same as religion? is *vyavahara* the same as law?). By tracing these lines of divergence, it even becomes possible to define entire conceptual ensembles claiming to reorder "in the Indian context" several related disciplinary fields (such as, for example, the

[51] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972).

opposition Indian spirituality/Western materialism as it has been used in the various social and aesthetic disciplines).

Finally, in the matter of thematic choices, several strategies can be encountered. There are attempts, first of all, to look for "possible points of diffraction"[52] in the Western scientific disciplines where two incompatible concepts or enunciations may exist in the same discursive formation as alternatives (since both "pathology" and "effective remedy" belong to the scientific clinical discourse, the latter concept could be used to proclaim the scientific legitimacy of alternative therapies based on, say, Ayurveda or Yunani, disregarding entirely the corresponding statements on pathology). Then there are attempts to locate authorities from within the Western discursive constellation in order to sustain the claims of indigenous knowledges (an interesting example is the encouragement given to the study of indigenous preindustrial manufacturing processes in the early twentieth century, with a view to utilizing locally available raw materials, on the political-economic grounds of industrial self-sufficiency). And, of course, most frequently of all, there are attempts to alter the rules and processes of appropriation of scientific discourse by various institutions situated in the field of non-discursive practices.[53] There are innumerable examples here of differences in the manner of appropriation, not only in familiar disciplinary institutions such as the school or the family or the court of law, but in a host of other arenas such as religion, politics and art. Particularly crucial here are the strategic possibilities opened up by the 'positions of desire in relation to discourse.' It seems possible for Foucault to say of discursive analysis in its European setting that it

> must show that neither the relation of discourse to desire, nor the process of its appropriation, nor its role among non-discursive practices is extrinsic to its unity, its characterization, and the laws of its formation. They are not disturbing elements which, superposing themselves upon its pure, neutral, atemporal, silent form, suppress its true voice and emit in its place a travestied

[52] Ibid. pp. 65-66.

[53] Using "non-discursive practices," of course, in Foucault's sense, as in ibid., pp. 67-68.

> discourse, but, on the contrary, its formative elements.[54]

In the colonial setting, discursive transformations will always appear to be the result of external intrusion by local non-discursive elements and thus as impurities, travesties. To take seriously the possibility of such transformations as internal to the field of scientific discourse is to introduce an entirely new source of instability into the formation of the disciplines.

[54] Ibid., p. 68.