

Subrata Chattopadhyay Banerjee

# The Development of Aryan Invasion Theory in India

A Critique of Nineteenth-Century Social  
Constructionism

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Singapore, Singapore

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	1
1.1	Background and Motivation . . . . .	1
1.2	A Survey of the Prior Research . . . . .	4
1.3	The Questions Asked . . . . .	7
1.4	Materials and Methods . . . . .	9
1.5	Structure and Organization . . . . .	11
1.6	Central Argument . . . . .	13
	References . . . . .	13
<b>2</b>	<b>Max Müller’s Beginning of Modern Religious Study and the Silent Formulation of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT)</b> . . . . .	15
2.1	Introduction . . . . .	16
2.1.1	A Century of Innovations . . . . .	16
2.1.2	Universities in Europe at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century and the First ‘Linguistic Turn’ . . . . .	17
2.1.3	Schools of Theology in Nineteenth-Century Europe . . . . .	19
2.1.4	Emergence of Scientific Methods . . . . .	20
2.2	Curiosity to Common Past: The Study of Ancient Indian Literature in Europe . . . . .	21
2.2.1	Romantic Movement . . . . .	23
2.2.2	Linguistic Research . . . . .	24
2.3	Emergence of Max Müller in European Scientific Scene . . . . .	25
2.3.1	Short Biography of Max Müller . . . . .	25
2.3.2	Influences on Max Müller . . . . .	26
2.3.3	Sanskrit: Text to Treatise . . . . .	28
2.3.4	Müller’s Research with Rig Veda . . . . .	29
2.4	Max Müller’s First Synthesis: Science of Language . . . . .	31
2.4.1	Scientific Study of Languages . . . . .	32
2.4.2	Müller–Darwin Debate . . . . .	33
2.4.3	Sociopolitical Influences on the Research . . . . .	34

2.5	Max Müller's Second Synthesis: Science or Religion . . . . .	36
2.5.1	Evolution of Religion . . . . .	38
2.5.2	Anti-christian Controversies . . . . .	40
2.5.3	Müller's Proposition: Universal Religion . . . . .	41
2.6	Max Müller's Silent Formulation of AIT . . . . .	42
2.6.1	Aryan: Language or Race . . . . .	43
2.6.2	Rig Veda as a Tool . . . . .	46
2.7	Conclusion . . . . .	48
	References . . . . .	49
<b>3</b>	<b>Brahmo Samaj as an Actor in the Dissemination of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) in India . . . . .</b>	<b>51</b>
3.1	Introduction . . . . .	51
3.1.1	Nineteenth-Century European Politics and the Emergence of Oriental Studies . . . . .	53
3.1.2	Nineteenth Century European Scientific World . . . . .	55
3.1.3	Development of Aryan Myth . . . . .	57
3.1.4	Indian Political System in Nineteenth Century . . . . .	59
3.1.5	Social Crisis in Nineteenth-Century India and the Emergence of 'Brahmo Samaj' . . . . .	61
3.1.6	Brahmo Samaj as Socio-Religious Reform Movement During Nineteenth Century in India . . . . .	62
3.2	A Short Overview of Brahmo Samaj . . . . .	63
3.2.1	Foundation and Growth of Brahmo Samaj . . . . .	64
3.2.2	Differences Between Debendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen . . . . .	65
3.2.3	Declining Influence of Keshub Chandra Sen . . . . .	66
3.2.4	Ideas and Influence of Brahma Samaj . . . . .	67
3.3	The Coagulation of Brahmo Samaj: from Conflict to Collaboration with Christian Missionaries . . . . .	68
3.3.1	'Brahmo Samaj of India' (Sadharan) Was a Representative to the Religious Multitudes of the Empire? the British View . . . . .	69
3.3.2	The Concept of the Leaders of Brahmo Samaj and Max Müller: Setting up a Network with Redefined Brahmo Samaj . . . . .	72
3.3.3	Müller's Interest Towards Spreading Christianity in India . . . . .	73
3.4	Keshub's New Synthesis: Making Brahmo Samaj <i>Really</i> Universal . . . . .	75
3.4.1	Keshub's Silent Support of AIT: Asiatic Christ . . . . .	75
3.4.2	Relation Between the AIT and the Anti-Caste and Anti-Brahman Movement . . . . .	77

3.5	AIT and Its Contradiction with Christianity . . . . .	78
3.5.1	Retracing of Brahma Movement Towards Hinduism . . . . .	79
3.5.2	Müller and Keshub: The Method of Integration . . . . .	81
3.5.3	Keshub’s Adoption of AIT . . . . .	83
3.5.4	Relationship Between AIT and British Monarchy . . . . .	84
3.6	Using the Tools of British Empire: The Politicization of Brahma Samaj . . . . .	86
3.7	Summary . . . . .	91
3.7.1	Transition of Social Reform Movements . . . . .	91
3.7.2	Keshub Played a Role in British-Missionary Alliance? . . . . .	91
3.7.3	Donor–Receptor–Facilitator . . . . .	93
	References . . . . .	94
<b>4</b>	<b>The Role of Christian Missionaries Towards Formulation and Spreading of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) in India . . . . .</b>	<b>99</b>
4.1	Christianity in Nineteenth-Century Europe . . . . .	100
4.2	Oxford Movement . . . . .	102
4.3	Colonial Missions . . . . .	103
4.4	History of Christian Missions in India . . . . .	105
4.5	Missionary Interest in India: Methods and Outcome . . . . .	108
4.6	Initial Setback of Missions: Insurmountable Obstacles . . . . .	109
4.7	Interaction with Indian Social Reformers . . . . .	113
4.8	Intellectual Conflict Between Missionaries and Social Reformers . . . . .	116
4.9	Educational Reform Movement: A New Strategy . . . . .	118
4.10	Christianity and Colonialism in India . . . . .	122
4.11	Discovery of AIT . . . . .	125
4.12	Müller’s Role in Linguistic Studies: Colonial Ties . . . . .	127
4.13	Reactions of Christian Missionary Groups to Aryan Myth . . . . .	129
4.14	AIT and the Role of Christian Missions in India . . . . .	133
4.15	Vedantist Movement in Calcutta After Rammohun . . . . .	133
4.16	Reactions of Social Reformers: Dayanand Saraswati, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jyotirao . . . . .	137
4.17	Divide and Rule . . . . .	139
4.18	Adoption by Christian Missionaries: A New Method . . . . .	140
4.19	Müller’s Communications with Social Reformers in India and the Propagation of AIT . . . . .	145
4.20	Conclusion . . . . .	149
	References . . . . .	151

<b>5 Summary</b> .....	155
5.1 Extending the Research on Max Müller .....	156
5.2 Future Directions .....	157
References .....	158
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	159
<b>Index</b> .....	165

# Chapter 1

## Introduction



### 1.1 Background and Motivation

Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) was one of the leading intellectuals of nineteenth-century Europe. He was a prolific author and was blessed with a long life and sturdy health. His particular specializations were on comparative linguistics, a subject, where he did pioneering work, as well as Indology, where he undertook the monumental task of editing a 50-volume set of English translations of Eastern religious texts. His lectures, Gifford lectures being the most notable ones, were heavily attended and followed across contemporary academia. Having done pioneering work in several blossoming academic disciplines, Müller rightfully received a lot of attention during and after his life. His celebrity spread across much of the European colonial states, particularly in India, where he gained many friends. Several people went on to author his biography, with deep praise, the most notable one being from Nirad C. Chaudhuri.<sup>1</sup>

Contemporary intellectuals, however, also remember Müller for his alleged contribution to the development of a racial migration theory. It is claimed by many authors, notably by Brahm Dutt Bharti, in his book titled—Max Muller, a lifelong masquerade—that Müller masterminded a theory combining race, religion and linguistics. It is argued that this migration theory has acted as the precursor and most significant theoretical force behind Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT). Such linear interpretation of history were popularized rather quickly in the second half of the

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<sup>1</sup>Chaudhuri (1974) This book covered the life of Müller with a social backdrop and analysis of his actions as a reigning scholar of his days. The book won the highest literary award, Sahitya Academy award, in India. Chaudhuri, himself an eminent scholar, took this book to pay the homage of many Indians to Müller, who resurrected the ancient texts through his tireless zeal. Chaudhuri traced the journey of Germanic renaissance and how it helped India to connect with European intellect. He described about how Müller, even at Oxford, lived like a hermit studying the earliest civilization traces from India. Indeed, many of his admirers believed that he was previously born in India and made this superhuman effort to finish his incomplete works from previous births!

nineteenth century, which puts forward the claims that AIT was a grand scheme, where Müller was an accomplice to the British colonial powers. Such stark claims get fanciful support even more, while sometimes overshadowing the central argumentative piece, that whether Aryan migration happened or not.

This critical view on Max Müller and AIT also received a major support when Edward Said questioned the cultural impact of modern empires in his landmark books on ‘*Orientalism*’ and ‘*Culture and Imperialism*’.<sup>2</sup> His argument of a distorted view on the colonized nations in order to destroy the possibility of the autochthonous to resist—all seemed to elegantly strengthen the critiques of AIT and Max Müller. Bernard S. Cohn supported a similar argument in his ‘Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India’. He argued that the pre-existing notions regarding Orientalism among the British scholars significantly helped shaping Indian society along metropolitan hegemonic concepts. India thus was a typical case of postcolonialism. A similar viewpoint is raised by Arie L. Molendijk in his recent book titled ‘*Friedrich Max Muller and the Sacred Books of the East*’,<sup>3</sup> where he shows how a big-ticket academic project can also lead to the appropriation of knowledge under the powers of Orientalist scholarship.

In another major development of the scholarship of postcolonial studies, Thomas R. Trautmann refuted the worldview propagated by Edward Said. In his ‘*Aryans and British India*’ he argued that the emergence of AIT was the result of a long history of engaged debates and struggles between diverse academic studies ranging from linguistics to ethnology.<sup>4</sup> In particular, there were two contending parties, first, presenting a case of ethnic similarity between Indians and Europeans based on linguistic kinship. On the other hand, there was another school of researchers, who brought forward the argument of supremacy according to the ‘racial science’, notably, Herbert Hope Risley, who, as a colonial administrator in India, attempted to survey Indian population castes according to their racial features. Nevertheless, the enigma presented by *civilized* Indians at an early stage of history challenged the Victorian ideas, no less than Darwinian ideas overturned the Biblical narrative. While the first part of linguistic kinship was throwing light on

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<sup>2</sup>Said (1994) The works of Said, in fact, form a crucial foundation of postcolonial studies, with notable and recent contributions from other scholars, such as Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak and R. Siva Kumar. These views have been influenced by a binary relation of power and knowledge, as advocated by Michel Foucault. This is nicely captured by Rana Kabbani in his book, ‘Imperial Fictions: Europe’s Myths of Orient’, where he wrote ‘*The ideology of Empire was hardly ever a brute jingoism; rather, it made subtle use of reason, and recruited science and history to serve its ends*’.

<sup>3</sup>Molendijk (2016).

<sup>4</sup>Trautmann (1997) The arguments in favour and against the racial vs linguistic debate has been deeply explored in this excellent book. The construction of Indian ethnological history significantly shook up European scholarship and kept it open for re-examination. Trautman also included the aftermath of the entire debate, when, in 1920 s the discovery of Indus Valley Civilization showed clearly that the chronological boundaries imposed on the ancient Indian civilization cannot be contained within it anymore. New ideas of racial projection based on biological roots have also emerged.

every other aspect of the civilization, arguments from racial science tried to draw the favour towards the long-held Victorian ideals, as well as Christian worldview. The debate ended up, when a lasting consensus was reached about ‘racial theory of Indian civilization’, as Trautmann puts it. It was indeed, upon the British scholars to interpret the ancient Indian texts and finding a narrative to fit the Biblical history, and the encounter of ‘fair-skinned civilized Aryan and the dark-skinned savage’. The resulting scholarly effort was not final but got challenged numerous times. The evidence was largely based on the archaic texts from Vedas, which are highly subjective to interpret in one way. Trautmann summarized it thus—‘The argument I should like to make, then, is not that the racial theory of Indian civilization is a fabrication, a tissue of lies, or that the Veda has nothing useful to say’. In other words, Trautmann attempted to remove some of the blemishing that Orientalists received in the wake of postcolonial studies. Trautmann argued that it is not only a grand scheme of things in which the scholars played their role, but there was also a considerable difference of opinions between linguists and ethnologists. The riddle of India needed an answer, which was provided by the best tools of that time, resulting in a new ethnological construction.

As a powerful closing remark, Trautmann even contended the development of binary power–knowledge relation by quoting Foucault himself—‘*We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another*’.

Trautmann also indicated towards a research direction on the effects of this new ethnological history discovered by Orientalists on contemporary India, and mentioned the excellent piece of scholarly work by Tapan Raychaudhuri, ‘Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth-century Bengal’ (1988). Indeed, as Raychaudhuri described, ‘*the belief that the white masters were not very distant cousins of their brown Aryan subjects provided a much needed salve to the wounded ego of the dependent elite*’. This question forms a key motivation of the current thesis.

In retrospect, one wonders how a theory like Aryan Immigration got such a large-scale acceptance within a relatively short time and maintained a stronghold for many decades, even until now. Despite its repeated refuting,<sup>5</sup> the theory never seems to fully rest like the legendary Phoenix. In the 2005 California state schools controversy, multiple textbooks were found to contain the term Aryan in the context of a race and included statements like ‘*Aryan technology improved farming in India*’. In this debate, an important subversive theme that is often ignored is ‘how’ the theory took shape and got accepted. Thus in contrast to the prevailing question of ‘whether’ the theory is true, this thesis studies ‘how’ the theory proliferated. By

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<sup>5</sup>Elst (1999) The most recent and comprehensive update on the Aryan Invasion Theory debate is given by Konrad Elst including works that base their argument on Linguistic, Astronomical and Geographical evidences. He also referred to the astronomical evidences, e.g. the position of Equinox, among others, as noted in Veda and how that significantly predates the ad hoc dating of Vedic antiquity proposed by Max Müller.

taking note from the lingering thought of Trautmann, a larger canvass of Indian social backdrop, state of political affairs and missionary interest towards spreading Christianity is used as the perspective to examine the propagation of the Aryan Immigration theory.

**To answer the question—how this theory found its way through popular imagination and had such a deep and long-lasting presence—forms the key motivation of this work.** As a corollary of the central thesis that establishes answers to this question, we also get a sneak preview of the way scientific research was conducted in nineteenth century. Interestingly and importantly, such a theme is recurring in modern world with myriads of new scientific discoveries happening and shaping human understanding of the surrounding world. It is, therefore, a pertinent question to ask, on how science *does* and how science *should* interact with society.

## 1.2 A Survey of the Prior Research

Arguably, culture and imperialism are the most intensely studied topics in modern human history. It has bifurcations in so many disciplines that to undertake such a survey, in itself is a significant task. To limit the scope of this work, without losing the perspective, the theme in this thesis is narrowed down to Max Müller, Aryan Immigration and British colonial policies in India. Even in that domain, several cross-connecting themes have been studied, which directly helped the arguments drawn in the current work.

One of the prime arguments of this thesis is that British rulers were not the only stakeholders in the creation of Aryan myth. It was a topic with the direct involvement of the growing Indian elite intellectuals. John Stevens,<sup>6</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri<sup>7</sup> and David Kopf<sup>8</sup> have shown how the colonial intellect were shaken up during the British rule and slowly liberated itself to form a fiercely independent mind, to the point of even questioning the very intellect of British rulers, from which they borrowed generously. However, these works were not focussed on

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<sup>6</sup>Stevens (n.d.) The work of John Stevens serves as an excellent reference about the rise of Keshub Chandra Sen, and how the relation between him and the imperialists was crucial to win the support of reformists in India and Christian evangelists in Britain.

<sup>7</sup>Raychaudhuri (1988) Raychaudhuri concentrated on the reception of the Aryan theory rather than how their interference shaped the course of it.

<sup>8</sup>Kopf (1979) In his book, 'The Brahma Samaj and The Shaping of Modern Indian Mind', Kopf has delved deep into generations of rebels, who took part in the social reformation in India and eventually that sowed the seeds of Indian nationalist movements. Interestingly, Kopf also presented a contrarian view to the 'anger' exhibited by Edward Said, in his review of Orientalism, published with the title 'Review: Hermeneutics versus History'. He mentioned that leaders of independent India, such as Nehru, was impressed with the work of British Orientalists, and used in their own reconstruction of Indian history.

the Aryan debate or nineteenth-century European scientific world, the topic that is central to the current thesis.

The other perspective of the Aryan myth propagation comes from the Christian evangelists, who had serious interest in India. How their activities were intertwined with the colonial policies is studied in detail by Anna Johnston,<sup>9</sup> Andrew J. May<sup>10</sup> and Avril A. Powell.<sup>11</sup> These authors have shown that there was a major interplay between the colonial policies and missionary activities, which went through phases of antagonism, mutual respect and in cases, also mutual benefit. By focussing on the propagation of Aryan myth, I will underline the role and the interests played by missionaries therein.

The current thesis also provides a glimpse of the early interaction between scientific research and society at large during nineteenth-century Europe. At this time, mankind witnessed a dramatic growth and proliferation of technology and scientific approaches significantly improving the quality of life. In return, common men were interested in research and technology like never before. Arguably, this interaction influenced the growth and course of research and technology. This has been established later in form of theories generally under the theme of 'Social Constructionism' and 'Sociology of Scientific Knowledge'. The social constructionism, to some extent, overplays the role of a human actor in the development of a theory. This has been criticized by the theorists from the school of Actor–Network Theory (ANT). ANT attempts to explain the success of a theory by analysing the (human) actors, the (scientific/material) evidences and the interactions in this network. In fact, this applies remarkably well to the theme of this thesis, where it is more important to understand how it was successful rather than investigating the veracity of it. Such sociological studies of science and other epistemological constructions have been studied, in multifaceted forms, in the volume edited by Bijker, Hughes and Pinch.<sup>12</sup> In the current era of information technology, this is interesting to study, for example how development of technology is influenced by social construction.<sup>13</sup> Arguably, AIT represents a very early and excellent study of such social construction.

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<sup>9</sup>Johnston (2003) Johnston nicely portrayed the ambiguity the Missionaries faced while being caught in between the religious and imperial interests. In fact, it is nothing but a shadow of the long-drawn battle fought in Europe. While the missionary practice blended nicely with the colonialism in some parts of the world, it required much more effort, and garnered much less success, in India.

<sup>10</sup>May (2012) The ambiguity of missionaries discussed by Anna Johnston, is actually elaborated with a prismic study of Welsh missionaries in North East India by Andrew May. She showed, with evidence, that they did suffer due to the imperial pursuits, too.

<sup>11</sup>Powell (2010).

<sup>12</sup>Bijker et al. (1987) This book covers the growth of diverse technologies across times and shows how their adoption and eventual success depends on not only the technological advances alone but also their applicability to the contemporary social, political and economical questions.

<sup>13</sup>Winner (1993).

Playing with words one could argue these developments as Social Construction of *Theory* (SCOT); the idea is strikingly similar to the development of AIT. There were indeed several *users* of the theory, who influenced the development of it.<sup>14</sup> An alternative viewpoint of this is put forth by the landmark work of Berger and Luckmann, who, in the book ‘The Social Construction of Reality’<sup>15</sup> argued that people and groups interact with each other in a social system in a reciprocal manner. These actions, over time, become institutionalized.<sup>16</sup>

While we have to look at the general background of Indian cultural history, as well as of European culture, the very point of my thesis is on stressing the inter-relationship between cultural actors from both sides. Thus, I try to write a real ‘entangled history’<sup>17</sup> instead of a comparative history or a history of cultural transfer. By this ‘entangled’ perspective, I’m hopefully able to integrate the diverse findings of Thomas R. Trautmann, Edward Said, Romila Thapar, David Kopf, B. B. Lal and Koenraad Elst. While—to mention just three of them—Edward Said has put AIT into the realm of cultural imperialism, Thomas Trautmann argued for a more balanced and scholarly approach, and Romila Thapar put his endeavour into the question whether AIT is true or not I will argue that AIT has been the result of a transnational strive for a new identity construction and modernization. This work can be best linked to the earlier studies of Tapan Raychaudhuri, done in the ‘Europe Reconsidered’, however, with a larger canvass that includes social, political and missionary perspectives as well.

It is also important to note that there is a subtle difference between Aryan Invasion Theory and Aryan Immigration Theory. The propositions of Müller and contemporary Orientalists hinted towards immigration without any explicit discussion on battle or invasion. Mortimer Wheeler, a British Brigadier took charge of the Archaeological Survey of India and started excavations in the site of Harappa in 1946. He asserted—‘*Here we have a highly evolved civilization of essentially non-Aryan type, now known to have employed massive fortifications, and known also to have dominated the river-system of north-western India at a time not distant from the likely period of the earlier Aryan invasions of that region. What destroyed this firmly settled civilization? Climatic, economic, political deterioration may have*

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<sup>14</sup>Koblitz et al. (2011) Popular acceptance of a theory does not necessarily vouch for its veracity. The path of science is often full of serpentine courses as exemplified earlier by the battle of Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler to disprove the geocentric model of cosmology or even in more modern times the errors of Newtonian mechanics pointed out by Einstein. The theory of popular acceptance is even harder to usurp due to the belief system that grows around it over time and the sociopolitical agenda that it serves nicely.

<sup>15</sup>Berger and Luckmann (1966).

<sup>16</sup>One interesting study of this could be the enforcing of caste system in India, which, according to some studies originated from a division of labour and eventually got ingrained in a complex socio-economic setting over time.

<sup>17</sup>Werner and Zimmermann (2006) ‘Histoire croisée’, founded by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, provides a different perspective on transnational history that allows to surpass the shortcomings of the classical comparative history (e.g. the national perspective). History, as well as, literary study benefit from this approach that is not tied to a particular period.

*weakened it, but its ultimate extinction is more likely to have been completed by deliberate and large-scale destruction. It may be no mere chance that at a late period of Mohenjo-daro men, women and children appear to have been massacred there. On circumstantial evidence, Indra stands accused*'.<sup>18</sup> Indra is one of the chief Gods and leaders of the Devas referred in Rig Veda. The archaeological evidences advanced by Wheeler hinted at a gory battle and soon the theory got denoted as Aryan Invasion Theory. In this thesis, I have denoted both immigration and invasion though in essence, based on the time of this study, it was only immigration.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3 The Questions Asked

Aryan migration has been extensively studied due to its deep-rooted political implications. Contrarily, the question of how an innocuous linguistic theory snowballed into a theory with strong racial overtones is not studied in depth hitherto. It is of no little interest to appreciate and uncover the facts behind the propagation of this theory. All the more since, it is an example of the earliest theories that were propagated with the help of colonial connections and presents one of the first theories to gain wide acceptance.

**Social Constructionism:** In this regard, the theory of Aryan migration serves an excellent first-generation study into the field of Social Constructionism<sup>20</sup> and Actor–Network Theory (ANT). Advocates of social constructionism, in the special case of social construction of technology, argue that technology does not determine human action, but that rather, human action shapes technology.<sup>21</sup> In particular, Ludwik Fleck proposed the concept of *thought collective*, which acted as a precursor to the later developments of social constructionism principles. Fleck argued that during the discovery of truth in a scientific research, the researchers are locked into thought collectives. The development of a 'new' truth necessitates over-throwing of old ones, and therefore, Fleck argued the development of *comparative epistemology* as a mean to chart the course of growing body of knowledge. The growth of AIT definitely represents a very interesting case from such perspectives.

In this context, I study the propagation of AIT in India, which was arguably the most important colonized nation under British rule, during the discovery of AIT.

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<sup>18</sup>Wheeler (1947) In his defence, Wheeler was possibly the most influential person in the uncovering of the evidential history of ancient India, having played a role in the archaeological surveying of Indus Valley, Taxila and showing evidences of Roman trades with ancient India. He fought to increase the budget for his surveys and nurtured fine talents as his students, who rose to become prominent historians. He was present during the sectarian violence that erupted during the partition of India and personally helped many people to escape it.

<sup>19</sup>For inquisitive readers willing to find in-depth analysis of the Indo-Aryan invasion debate, an excellent reference is Bryant and Patton (2005).

<sup>20</sup>Berger and Luckmann (1966), Burr (1995), Pinch and Bijker (1984).

<sup>21</sup>Oudshoorn and Pinch (2003), Fleck et al. 1979).

***Entangled History:*** Since the global voyages of Darwin, Columbus and rapid colonization by European powers, the world events were more and more connected. This makes it important to study history, even of nineteenth century, not only to view it as a transcultural effect but as a real entangled history. The Eurocentric view is criticized in<sup>22</sup> and it is argued in<sup>23</sup> that mere cultural transfer studies do not do justice to the actual growth of events. Depending on the actual importance of the central object, the history is indeed entangled, as in the case of the history of important food ingredients, for example.<sup>24</sup> Needless to mention, the growth of knowledge that I discussed in this thesis, such as the theory of evolution, Aryan invasion theory and other scientific knowledges—all are momentous discoveries in the history of human civilization. As the events unfolded, I will show, the history of Europe and its colonies were in complete synchronization with each other. Though I focussed on British and Indian histories to some extent, it is a trivial extension of this study to show that in fact, other European powers and their colonies were deeply connected during the growth and spread of Aryan Invasion Theory. Throughout the thesis, I draw examples of other British colonies, such as Sri Lanka, and other European powers, such as Germany and Portugal to establish this argument.

***Modern Intellectual History:*** The idea of modern intellectual history emerged from its precursors such as history of ideas and history of philosophy.<sup>25</sup> The central premise of modern intellectual history is that the creation of ideas is not an isolated event and therefore, need to be studied in the perspective of the social, cultural and historical of people who proposed these ideas. I believe, the current study is an important contribution in the modern intellectual history.

It is often argued that the border of cultural history and intellectual history is shallow and unclear on their exact limits and boundaries.<sup>26</sup> I believe that this current study will clearly show that this is indeed belonging to the camp of modern intellectual history, rather than to the history of cultures. A similar argument about the overlap of intellectual history and political history can be disproved by this study—it is actually the history of an idea, rather than the history of political events. In that sense, the current work is a contribution in the new intellectual history stressing the social web in which an idea is developed.

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<sup>22</sup>Randeria (2002).

<sup>23</sup>Werner and Zimmermann (2006).

<sup>24</sup>Kurlansky (2003, ISBN 0-14-200161-9) In this excellent work of non-fiction, Kurlansky traces the history of trade routes and businesses among early civilizations through the salt. Spice trade, readers will surely recollect, was one of the reasons why European colonists were interested to find a sea route to India.

<sup>25</sup>Pocock (1985) Pocock is celebrated for his interpretation of Gibbon's historical cycle, a battle between ancient virtue and modern commerce; his study on the response and eventual destruction of the political order of Florentines, Americans and British in the modern history.

<sup>26</sup>Kelley (2002) This choice of the inquiry method, also known as internalist and externalist, can have serious implications on the outcome. In general, it is important to cover all the perspectives but, it is likely that one of these are prioritized over the others.

More importantly, this work can serve as a trend reversal of the decline of ‘history of ideas’ that has been suggested by Bowsma.<sup>27</sup> Bowsma assumed that rational and conscious thoughts are universal and therefore, need not be forcibly contextualized in a cultural backdrop. Bowsma’s optimistic projection was to look into the ‘history of meaning’ instead of ‘history of ideas’. I believe that this thesis serves as the perfect counterexample of this case—which I will coin as ‘*history of interpretation*’. This is, in essence, what is noted by Peter E. Gordon—‘*sociological or discursive approaches to intellectual history can have a tremendous appeal*’.<sup>28</sup> However, Gordon warns that, intellectual historians often cross the boundary of ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ worlds resulting in ‘metaphysical hyperbole’, especially when discourse-theoretic ideas are concerned. This is certainly not the case here. The Aryan discourse, which I discussed in this work, actually resulted in a distorted reality, which continues to remain relevant even today, thereby producing its own history.

Overall, the key questions asked in this work are summarized in the following.

- How was Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) constructed?
- How did the theory gain acceptance in the scientific community?
- Who were the parties involved in the development of AIT in the British colonial world?
- What were the roles of the following parties in the acceptance and propagation of AIT in India?
  - Social reformers in India.
  - Christian missionaries in India.
  - Scholars in Europe.

## 1.4 Materials and Methods

Historical studies are based on materials of two kinds: *sources* and *literature*. Sources are letters, autobiographies and transcripts of speeches delivered by the key players of the current study. Literature consists of the reminiscences of historical figures, analysis of policies from larger perspectives and similar studies undertaken by prominent historians.

Fortunately, the modern technology has enabled the access of older materials through efforts like Google Books, Project Gutenberg and Internet Archive projects. In many cases, however, I did access several libraries for procuring my sources. The

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<sup>27</sup>Bowsma (1981).

<sup>28</sup>Gordon (2012).

major sources of material came from the National Library of India, located at Kolkata, India. It has origins from 1836 in form of Calcutta Public library. Lord Metcalfe, the then Governor General of India transferred a large number of volumes from Fort William to Calcutta Public library. Apart from the rare collections, which were procured from the original manuscripts at Fort William, another source of materials were Asiatic Society Library. Incidentally, Asiatic Society played a vital role in defining the course of Aryan Invasion Theory, a central topic of the current work. The two other libraries, which I accessed heavily, are Sadharan Brahma Samaj Library, Kolkata, India and Uttarpara Public Library, Uttarpara, Hooghly, India. Both of these libraries received generous patronage from the elite class of Indian intellectuals in the early stage of nineteenth century, precisely the epoch of interest for this thesis. In particular, the works of Keshub Chandra Sen were available at length in the library attached to the society that he founded.

A collection of original literary sources and treatises are used multiple times throughout the thesis. Among these chief sources, there are some materials, which belong to the original archives and printed materials (ancient scriptures, letters, reminiscences, recorded lectures) and some to the secondary sources (treatises, theses, articles). In the following, we make a list of these different categories with the clear distinctions. Few original archives in this collection stand out due to the extensive amount of materials from these sources that helped formed a clear opinion about the main protagonists of this work. The memoirs and works of Friedrich Max Müller were meticulously compiled by his dutiful wife and published posthumously under the title ‘The life and letters of the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller’ proved to be a rich source. The letters, in particular, are helpful to uncover the personal side of Müller, especially his dilemma, struggles and mournful moods. His lectures provide an excellent treatment of the ideologies that he subscribed to, which are available through the Internet Archive, and Project Gutenberg. Also, for Keshub Sen, his biographical essays, lectures and sermons are preserved perfectly by Sadharan Brahma Samaj, and also available as printed books through Calcutta Brahma Society, Navabidhan Publication committee and other publishing outlets of the society that he founded. Likewise, an invaluable source of materials remains in the correspondences and publication outlets of Missionary societies. Notable examples of this kind are the long ‘Letter from Calcutta’, sent by D. Rozario in (1846), reprinted in Church Missionary Society, and ‘Letters on the State of Christianity in India’ authored by J. A. Dubois, in (1823), now available through Internet Archive.

Several valuable material that formed the foundation of Oriental studies in general, and motivated the development of current thesis are authored by Thomas Trautmann (‘Aryans and British India’), Said Edward (‘Orientalism’), Romila Thapar (‘The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics’), T. Ballantyne (‘Orientalism and Race Aryanism in the British Empire’) and T. Raychaudhuri (‘Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in nineteenth-century Bengal’).

## 1.5 Structure and Organization

The book is composed of three main chapters apart from this introductory chapter and concluding chapter (Chap. 5).

The *second chapter* details the argument that the origins of AIT in Europe were due to pure scientific motivations. I start with looking at the educational reform movements of this and the rationalistic leanings of studies in Germany. Europe discovered the East and made efforts to establish a connection through romantic nationalism. This also chronicles the growths of many theories, such as scientific racism, evolution of species, comparative linguistics, which clearly lacked the scientific rigour but nonetheless caught popular imagination because the conclusions those reached. Müller was catapulted to academic stardom because of the importance that his research—comparative linguistics—carried in the colonial administration. Müller was also close to the Christian scholars, who were clearly challenged by the growth of scientific theories shaking up the core of Biblical knowledge. A major point of this chapter is also the debate between Müller and Darwin over the supremacy of linguistically endowed human race versus apes. Müller argued that the distinctive cognitive capacity possessed by the human mind is reflected in their highest form through religious/theological studies.

Contrary to the commonly held opinion that Müller invented AIT to support British colonialism or even, he was paid by his British employers to concoct a theory around it, it is evident from this study that Müller defied conservative Christianity from the start. AIT was less an invention to support colonialism and more of an unrestrained and arguably misdirected scholarly adventure to establish scientific methods (evolution) in the contemporary emerging disciplines like comparative linguistics and comparative religion.

The *third chapter* details the social fabric of contemporary India and how it was receptive to modern ideas originating in Europe. Particularly, several branches of Indian social reform movements had considerable leanings towards science, western education and Christianity. Multiple leaders of such social reform movements maintained regular acquaintance with Müller, who, in turn, encouraged, deliberated and directed them to the goals of their movements. The underlying theme, that the ancestors of Europeans and Indians came from the same racial stock, was welcomed by several social reformers, most notably Keshub Chandra Sen. Having a strong command over the intellectual elites of Calcutta, the capital city of British India, Sen's sympathetic view towards Aryan migration helped the theory to get quick acceptance. Apart from Sen, there were other social reformers who denounced the idea of kinship by putting forth indigenous Aryan claims. Thus, regardless of the scientific basis of comparative linguist, diverse groups developed their own theories by essentially drawing similar, dubious lines of arguments. This caused a sharp divide of opinion among the leaders in Indian mass movement, a division that is still very much alive today.

The main claim of this chapter is that for any theory it is important to have a receptive mind to let it grow. Indian social reform movement was an ideal breeding

ground for the theory developed in Europe. Without the active support from reformers like Keshub Sen, it is doubtful whether Müller could have been as influential in Indian mindset as he was then.

The *fourth chapter* takes a look into the endeavours of Christian missionaries in the evangelization of India over several centuries. The history dates back to the rumoured visit of St. Thomas in 56 AD and spreads over diverse efforts from Christian groups from many parts of Europe. A common theme in these efforts is to develop a method that would enable penetrating the complex Indian religious system. To manage that missionaries went so far as to adopt Indian customs, learning Indian languages, learning Indian rituals and even in cases living like an Indian monastic. In this process, they had to abandon their homes, suffer at the hands of local kings and colonial British administration and also bear through the hardship of managing the enterprise on funds generated by their fellow missionaries in Europe. To attract sympathetic donors in Europe, they would often resort to a false and gloomy picture of orient. When none of these worked to their satisfaction, particularly to attract the upper echelons of the society; Alexander Duff managed to raise a storm in Calcutta by his educational methods. He befriended Indian leaders aspiring to get rid of the vices of Indian religious and cultural systems. His method was debated among missionaries in India, on whether it would produce the desired results but, nonetheless, the most promising Christian converts came from the students of Alexander Duff. Exposure to western education was naturally coupled with the knowledge of Müller and his studies on comparative linguistics. Müller's ideas were not well received in European conservative Christian groups but there were also sympathetic missionaries, with rationalistic leanings, who dwelt on the possibility of a universal church with oriental flavours. Similarly, in India, Christian missionaries colored the ideas of Aryan migration with their own interpretations, drawing from the arguments of Müller as required from time to time. Müller often acted, as an intermediary between the conservative Christian leaders, like Pusey and Indian intellectuals, like Keshub Sen. Again, the entire effort of Christian missionaries; after the educational mission initiated by Duff; centred on the idea of Aryan migration. Eventually, the evangelization efforts switched back to the socio-economically deprived classes of society as promoted earlier by Francis Xavier in sixteenth century. Nonetheless, the idea of Aryan immigration remained.

The main claim of this chapter is that missionaries continuously experimented with new methods to gain more footholds in India. Müller's ideas gave them a possibility to connect with different strata of society, which was done, albeit without much success. Müller himself was aware of these efforts and often acted as an intermediary between them. However, contrary to the perception that Müller was a devout Christian and deeply sought for its evangelization, it is evident here that Müller had his own religious perception. His rationalistic approach did not strike a chord with many Christian groups. He was open to the idea of a universal church, which was closer to that imagined by Indian social reformers. Nevertheless, his comparative linguistic studies, coupled with the emphatic description of Aryan migration, were heavily used in the missionary efforts of India.

Across the chapters, for the sake of convenience and completeness, there are several themes that are repeated. The background of nineteenth-century Europe is detailed in both first and second chapters and for that reason, the themes of romantic nationalism and Oxford movement are discussed in both. In all the chapters, the crisis of faith in Europe served as a backdrop for the discussions and for that reason discussed with different detailing. The life of Max Müller is discussed in most detail in the first chapter, however, needed to be touched upon in the second chapter as well. It has been endeavoured that these discussions bring new perspective and new knowledge to avoid being repetitive and monotonous. An alternative structuring of this work could have been to put all the background studies in a few introductory chapters. However, I strongly feel that the current structure allows for a better weaving of the arguments and offers a more pleasant reading experience.

## 1.6 Central Argument

In sum: In this book, the stakeholders in the propagation of AIT are identified and subsequently studied with as much importance as its purported originator, Max Müller, who assumes a prominent role throughout this thesis.

**In contrast with the prevailing notion that Max Müller is the father of AIT, this thesis claims that Müller was driven, primarily, by academic curiosity and there was no less contribution from Indian social reformers, Christian missionaries and British imperialists towards the establishment of AIT in the popular psyche.**

**By this, AIT serves as an excellent example of an entangled history in a globalized world. This work also shows how different socio-religious–political parties commonly shape a new theory, taking AIT as an example.**

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## Chapter 2

# Max Müller's Beginning of Modern Religious Study and the Silent Formulation of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT)



**Abstract** ‘It is language and religion that make a people, but religion is even a more powerful agent than language’, wrote Friedrich Max Müller, the pioneer of comparative philology and scientific study of religion. Nineteenth-century Europe underwent major turmoil by the rise of critical thinking from scientific luminaries like Charles Lyell and Darwin, growth of the romantic and nationalistic movement and the reigning crisis of faith. The supremacy of religious scholars as the guardians of knowledge was repeatedly questioned. Consequently, there was an increased need of a more scientific approach looking at ancient religious texts. In 1845, after following the lecture of Burnouf on Rig Veda, Müller got attracted towards the study of Sanskrit. However, Müller’s research was not free from the contemporary sociopolitical influences. One of his mentors, Baron von Bunsen, toiled to develop a philosophy of religion by linking comparative philology and theology. Müller’s magnum opus—The Sacred Books of The East project, was an effort, partly directed to this cause. It received generous support from the British Empire due to colonial interests it served and due to the intellectual curiosity, it raised about the origin of civilization. During this work, Müller established the word Aryan to refer to people speaking old Indo-European branch of languages. Thereafter, Müller started to reconstruct the intellectual history of mankind by first, considering language as the basis for intellect and second, by applying the theory of evolution to religion. Thus, language, race and religion were merged in the same pot paving the way for Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT). In this part of my study, I take a critical look into the scholarly pursuit of Müller and argue that his scientific methods were not necessarily sound. To fit a set of preconceived notions in scientific wrapper, he helped formulate the questionable notion of AIT. Thus, my analyses not only throws light into the formulation of AIT but also shows that scientific studies of nineteenth century were not free from individual ideologies and sociopolitical interests (Notably, this is aligned with the argument in the ‘strong program’ of culture. See for example, [The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology by Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith. This essay has appeared in The Handbook of Sociological Theory, edited by Jonathan Turner (New York: Kluwer, 2001), and in Alexander’s The Meanings of Social Life (New York: Oxford, 2004)]).

## 2.1 Introduction

In numerous research articles, it is argued that Max Müller played a prominent role in the establishment of AIT via his linguistic studies. Some of his research was funded by the British monarchy, leading to further accusations that Müller simply played a role in even larger fabric of things, where the intention to establish racial supremacy via intellectual force was predetermined. The fact is, there was not a single reason that led to the birth of dubious scientific theory of AIT. The roles played by, for example the leading social reformers of British colonies, such as India, were no less significant than the willingness of British monarchy or German romanticists to introduce Aryanism.

This naturally leads to the question, *whether the same spirit of scientific integrity existed across the entire landmark innovations of nineteenth-century Europe?* We undertake the unfolding of those times together with the rise of Max Müller as a leading European intellectual. In this juxtaposition, an effort is made to understand the contemporary world of science and how innovations were happening. Possibly that would provide an ideal platform to argue on the contribution of Müller towards establishing the theory.

### 2.1.1 A Century of Innovations

Europe in the nineteenth century witnessed remarkable growth in scientific sphere, with practical inventions like steam engine, telephone, locomotive, electricity and ideological innovations like evolutionary theory from Charles Darwin, Utilitarianism by John Stewart Mill and the psychoanalytic postulates from Sigmund Freud. Advances of medicine increased the life expectancy of human. These developments occurred in parallel with the introduction of railroads, rapid urbanization of Europe and discovery or connection of different races across the world. Apart from few extreme locations, accurate world knowledge was available due to the publications from well-known explorer Alexander von Humboldt,<sup>1</sup> establishment of prominent geographical societies in England and the USA. In summary, human society and the collective knowledge possessed by it, both were growing at a rapid pace.

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<sup>1</sup>(Humboldt) Humboldt had a flair of publishing his findings unlike many of his contemporaries. Many of his travel diaries across would constitute thousands of pages, which studied different elements of nature—plants, animals, geology—in unison. His published works would lead to the foundation of multiple nascent scientific fields like plant geography and meteorology. Coincidentally, his brother Wilhelm von Humboldt would be instrumental in spearheading the modern education system in Germany. Humboldt travelled through America, Spanish America, Europe and Russia in his lifetime. Among others, Charles Darwin, frequently referred to Humboldt's writings in his famous voyage on HMS Beagle.

In 1859, Charles Darwin published a book titled ‘On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life’. With evidences scored from detailed observational data, this book singlehandedly threw Christian beliefs into serious ebb. This led to a period of Victorian crisis of faith in England with repercussions around Europe. Though Christianity featured prominently in the national life, it led to the rise of atheism and agnosticism, as coined by T. H. Huxley, a defender of Darwinism. The German theologian and philosopher Feuerbach attacked conventional Christianity in a book titled ‘Das Wesen des Christentums’ (1841) translated by George Eliot as *The Essence of Christianity*, where it was suggested that religion was ‘the dream of the human mind’, projecting onto an illusory god our own ideals and nature. George Eliot was a prominent novelist with serious misgivings about the morality in Christian doctrines. Her proclaim was that we can be good without God and without the metaphysical basis of Christianity. She turned into the conviction that humanity can shape their own destiny with a ‘religion of human sympathy’, which essentially echoes the ideologies from Humboldtian education system.

Christopher Lane termed this period as the first great ‘Age of Doubt’ in his study of Victorian England.<sup>2</sup> The crisis was spread in all forms of intellectual activities, where the entire generation learned to accept doubt as an inseparable element of faith. Timothy Larsen in<sup>3</sup> argues that it is not really the crisis of faith but crisis of doubt as some secularist leaders retraced back to core Christian beliefs at the prime of their lives. Larsen emphasizes that for many Christianity was simply ‘more intellectually convincing than unbelief’. While this proposition is arguable, it can be clearly stated that nineteenth-century European scholars demonstrated a high degree of ambivalence among the two choices, traditional Christianity or morality with scientific spirit.

### ***2.1.2 Universities in Europe at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century and the First ‘Linguistic Turn’***

This sudden burst of human knowledge was nowhere more prominent than within the elite universities, which kept on updating their curriculum and appointed

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<sup>2</sup>Lane (Mar 29, 2011, p. 248) The book by Lane is an excellent analysis of how Victorian intellectual icons converted doubt from a fearsome mental state to an ethical necessity that balances out certainty and fanaticism.

<sup>3</sup>Larsen (2008) The case of Thomas Copper, poet and William Hone, satirist and writer, are prominent, who adopted Christianity after preaching and practising scepticism for years. Edward Royle wrote in the book—‘Victorian Infidels’—about eight leaders of the Secularist movement in 1860: G. J. Holyoake, Joseph Barker, Charles Bradlaugh, Austin Holyoake, John Watts, J. H. Gordon, Robert Cooper and J. B. Bebbington. Of this group, three members—Barker, Gordon and Bebbington—embraced evangelical Christianity.

pioneers of different fields to fuel the preservation and accumulation of knowledge in a systematic manner. The university education system arose out of necessity in medieval Europe. The University of Bologna serves as a nice example to illustrate the point. The university came to existence to support mutual aid societies of foreign students called '*nations*' (due to their grouping by nationality) for protection against certain laws in the city, which put collective punishment on foreigners for the crimes perpetrated by their countrymen. These students formed a scholastic guild and hired scholars from the city to teach them, eventually forming a larger association, or *universitas*—thus, the university. Due to the control on the university practices exerted by the students, who would pay to get taught, they could enforce the amount of pay, the person to hire and also the content to be taught. This would result in stand-offs between students and teachers, which were, at last, ended by the city, making it a public university to be managed by the tax revenues. Apart from this, there were universities, which were managed by the crown, as in Britain and there were universities funded by Church, as in Paris. For students pursuing the highest forms of education, the choices were between Law, Medicine and Theology, where the last one was the most prestigious.

From the sixteenth century to late eighteenth centuries, the predominant positioning of theology was challenged in the waves of Enlightenment, not only in France but also in Germany and across Europe. The reigning question was whether the study of theology required a prior commitment to the authority of a particular religious discipline and whether this commitment curbs academic freedom.<sup>45</sup>

The liberal movement to free academic study from the stronghold of the church was prominent in Germany and clearly represented by the *Humboldtian education model*, propagated by Wilhelm von Humboldt (22 June 1767–8 April 1835), who also happened to be the elder brother of the explorer Alexander von Humboldt. Wilhelm von Humboldt was influenced by the national identity crisis experienced throughout Europe after French revolution and also the call for the rise by writings on educational reforms by German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Humboldt was appointed the education minister of Prussia in 1809, when he started implementing his plan on educational reforms and constituted 'Königsberger Schulplan' that mandated compulsory and basic schooling for everyone. In 1810, the new

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<sup>4</sup>Howard (2006) Howard's detailed and careful analysis shows how Germany rebuilt its education system with the flagship university in Berlin from its Protestant theologian faculty.

<sup>5</sup>The teaching of theology was instituted in Bologna in 1364 and much like the rest of the Europe, the stormy debates of Enlightenment era also raged in Bologna. Italian philosopher and medical doctor Pietro Pomponazzi (16 September 1462–18 May 1525) was a professor of Bologna. He challenged the Aristotelian beliefs, closely held by the church, in his *Tractatus de immortalitate animae* ('Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul', 1516). The book was publicly burned at Venice and he had run the risk of extreme penalty till Cardinal Pietro Bembo helped him. He had to defend his views in two following treatises and withheld several other works, which were published posthumously. He demonstrated his rational and sceptical tone in further works such as 'On Incantations' (1520), where he applied the principle of causality to religion. However, he declared his complete loyalty to the Catholic faith and argued that the theological adherence and scepticism can coexist, by choosing to study the Aristotelian theory interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Frederick William University in Berlin was set up, where Fichte was made its rector and also the first Chair of Philosophy.

In one sense, the Humboldtian education model was an answer to the French occupation of Prussia and responded by an attempt to form a national identity, thus clearly indicating a shift from religious consciousness to the state or national consciousness. Clearly, Humboldt was a visionary in the educational reforms, having his educational model adopted throughout the world even today. His model strived to attain unconditional academic freedom independent from ideological, economic, political or religious influences. He regarded philosophy to be the important link between academic disciplines. Humboldt was also a noted linguist. In a theme that would come recurring throughout the works of Max Müller, Humboldt wrote on ‘*Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts*’ (Heterogeneity of Language and its Influence on the Intellectual Development of Mankind).<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1.3 Schools of Theology in Nineteenth-Century Europe

A theological study in Christianity is an attempt to undertake a critical study of the divinity. The studies include a better understanding of Christian tenets; making comparison with other traditions; help reformation of Christian Church; propagation of Christianity, and to defend Christianity against criticism. While the history of Theology is a subject matter demanding a complete volume of books by itself, and has been treated well in the classic book by William C. Placher and Derek R. Nelson,<sup>7</sup> we review the position of nineteenth-century Theological thoughts for better appreciation of the situation, when Max Müller entered in the university.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1255–1274) was the most well-regarded proponent of natural theology in the medieval Europe. His works, on synthesizing Aristotelian philosophy with the principles of Christianity, went on to become the core teachings of the Catholic Church. Martin Luther (1483–1546), a German professor of Theology, challenged several teachings and practices of the Catholic Church, ultimately led to the formation of a different school of theology and a branch of Protestant Christianity known as Lutheranism. The fact that Martin Luther translated the Bible to the German vernacular made his works and teaching even more accessible to en masse. The Protestant School of theology rode through support and antagonism to the nineteenth-century schools of liberal theology. These schools came under the umbrella of Biblical criticism, which included two major segments,

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<sup>6</sup>The book was published posthumously in 1836.

<sup>7</sup>Westminster John Knox Press (2013).

both arising out of nineteenth-century European rationalism. The first, higher criticism, takes a secular approach of examining a Biblical text and reviews why, how, by/for whom the text was composed. The second, lower criticism, is also denoted as textual criticism, deals with the manuscripts, its date, transmission to other sources for a specific text. Lower criticism can also include mathematical and statistical techniques to examine a text.

Specifically, the German school of Biblical studies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries promoted the higher criticism, which is to be reflected in the methods of Max Müller throughout his life. Indeed, his methods moved from lower criticism to higher criticism. The development of higher criticism was spearheaded by liberal theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) and David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874). The key ideas of liberal theology were closely linked with the rationalism and romanticism; had borne the stamp of Lutheranism (Max Müller was Lutheran) and eventually spread across Europe. In the domain of liberal theology, it is of particular significance to note the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who is often called the father of liberal theology. Schleiermacher was deeply influenced by Immanuel Kant, Spinoza and German Romanticism, as represented by his friend Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, poet and philologist. Together with his brother August Wilhelm von Schlegel, who was the first Professor of Sanskrit in Europe, he formed the core group of *Jena Romantics*. Another notable figure of this movement was David Strauss, whose investigations in the historical accuracy of Jesus rocked the Christian Europe. Essentially, Strauss discarded the supernatural claims made in the Gospels as being without any historical accuracy. He had to eventually abandon academic theology, as he was expelled from further teaching either at Tübingen or at the University of Zürich, where in 1839, he was debarred from a professorship even before he assumed the duty.

By the time Max Müller entered into his studies in Leipzig, the influence of liberal theology was vibrantly present. The School of Theology in Leipzig, founded at the same time as the university itself in 1409, was shaped by the Lutheran ideologies.

### ***2.1.4 Emergence of Scientific Methods***

Emergence of science was not only influencing the rapid proliferation of technology and visible changes in the quality of human life, but also was instrumental in firmly cementing the usage of 'scientific methods' in the educational institutes.

In the history of science, there are two viewpoints regarding the industrial revolution and its relation to the science. The first viewpoint, put forth by Musson

and Robinson,<sup>8</sup> argued that pure science; applied science and technology are connected via a causal relation. The contrarian position, summarized by A. Hall,<sup>9</sup> argues that the inventors of that time owe little to the contemporary developments in science. However, in the scientific procedures, Hall observed that there were ‘attempts to classify technical processes logically,’ ‘the employment of systematic experimentation, usually involving model[s]’, and ‘the treatment of data quantitatively’. This second-order relation between science and technology, rather than the simplistic linear model, is also echoed by Stephen F. Mason, who wrote, ‘Whilst the content of scientific knowledge did not have much influence upon the development of industry up to 1850, the method of science did’.<sup>10</sup>

The competition in industrialization and military technologies led to the creation of technological schools around Europe at that time. In 1747 and 1748, two French institutes were created with such purpose: the *École des Ponts et Chaussées* (1747), the school for civil engineering, and the *École du Genie militaire* (1748). Mining academies were created in Freiberg (Saxony), Berlin and Schemnitz (Slovakia) in 1770. Many German states started setting up *Technische Hochschulen*, or institutes of technology. These developments reflect that there was a strong undergoing change in the education system and definitely left a lasting impression on many young academics of that age, even on those who were engaged in language, philosophy or religion. Max Müller, a brilliant scholar, clearly imbibed the principles of scientific methods and applied those to the subjects he mastered, albeit to reach half-baked conclusions.

## 2.2 Curiosity to Common Past: The Study of Ancient Indian Literature in Europe

The study of ancient Indian literature in Europe was initially driven by curiosity and colonial interests. It was the foreign culture, which was of interest to the scholars. The earliest comprehensive study of Sanskrit grammar was done by Heinrich Roth (1620–1668)<sup>11</sup> who gained financial support from King Leopold I for this task.

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<sup>8</sup>Robinson (1969) The model of Robinson was further examined by Margaret C. Jacob in ‘The Cultural Meaning of Scientific Revolution’, who proclaimed that the emergence of scientific revolution created a culture of curiosity, improvement and learning, thus fuelling industrial revolution. While that is in principle correct, these authors, perhaps inadvertently, skip the history of colonialism and how without the rampant loots of British colonies, Industrial revolution would not have been a success.

<sup>9</sup>Plumb and Europa (1974, pp. 129–151) [Chapter—‘What did the Industrial Revolution in Britain owe to Science?’].

<sup>10</sup>Mason (1962, p. 503).

<sup>11</sup>S.J. (1620–1668, 1988) Roth was a polyglot, having mastered Persian, Kannada, Hindustani and Sanskrit, apart from several European languages. He spent considerable time in different places of India, including Goa and Agra, where he finally died and was buried.

Johann Ernst Hanxleden (1681–1732) was the first European to have studied Malayalam and Sanskrit, having even composed Sanskrit verse and authoring a definitive Sanskrit grammar known as *Grammatica grandonica*. Sir Charles Wilkins (1749–1836), who was trained as a printer and went to India to serve East India Company, received support from the governor of British India, Warren Hastings, in his efforts to translate the Indian epic, Mahabharata. Though he could not finish the entire translation, a key part of the book, known as the Gita, was published in 1785 as *Bhagavad Gita, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon* (London: Nourse, 1785). This book was subsequently translated into French and German. Charles Wilkins helped Sir William Jones to establish Asiatic Society of Bengal on 15 January 1784 for advancing the cause of Oriental research.

Starting from the sixteenth century, some of the European scholars raised attention to the similarities between European and ancient Indian languages, thus drawing more studies in this area—apart from pure colonial interests. In 1653 Van Boxhorn had published a proposal for a proto-language ('Scythian') for Germanic, Romance, Greek, Baltic, Slavic, Celtic and Iranian. In a memoir sent to the French Academy of Sciences in 1767 Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux, a French Jesuit demonstrated a clear analogy between Sanskrit and European languages.

On the eve of the third annual discourse of the Asiatic Society in 1786, William Jones mentioned '*The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family*'. This is often quoted as the beginning of comparative linguistic studies between Oriental and European languages. The *common source* referred to by William Jones, came to be known as Proto-Indo-European language.

At the turn of the eighteenth century, there was a widespread interest in Indian language and culture, a phenomenon, Thomas Trautmann has called 'Indomania'. It is best exemplified by quotations, such as, from French philosopher Voltaire—'*I am convinced that everything has come down to us from the banks of the Ganges,—astronomy, astrology, metempsychosis, etc*'.<sup>12</sup> German poet Schlegel, in 1808, published the book '*Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*' (*On the Language and Wisdom of Indians*), where he argued that the people originating from India have been the founders of the first European civilizations.

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<sup>12</sup>Voltaire (1777, letter of 15 December 1775) In fact, Urs App, in his well-articulated book '*The Birth of Orientalism*', covers the crucial role played by Voltaire in the genesis of Orientalism in depth.

It can be of further interest that Jones found immediate approver of his ideas not only among linguists but also among scholars or administrators, who subscribed to the theories of scientific ‘racism’.<sup>13</sup> British administrators like Herbert Hope Risley followed linguistic origins closely when doing the census and racial studies across India.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.2.1 Romantic Movement

At this point, it is worthwhile to mention the different inputs that fostered the confluence of cultural, linguistic and religious studies. The European Romantic Movement, for instance, stood up against a purely rationalized world, stressed the beauty of nature, emphasized that man is not only a rational being and stood up against the loud, dirty and mechanical industry. Instead of an industrialized society, it looked for a community as the basis of the common living of mankind. In the end, this meant nation and nationalism.

In Germany, for example the Romantic Movement increased interest in anything that is *originally* German. A collection of folk stories were published by Grimm Brothers, which represented undiluted form of national culture and literature. In 1836, Gustav Klemm published a book titled ‘Handbook of German Antiquity’, which tried to retrace German culture through ancient literature and available archaeological data. Schlegel, Orientalist and poet, was very much familiar with ancient Indian texts, as well as the Aryan myth due to the Proto-Indo-European language family. In his book ‘*Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*’ (*On the Language and Wisdom of Indians*), he put forward a theory. In the first-hand account of Julius Caesar’s ‘*Commentarii de Bello Gallico*’ (*Comments on the Gallic Wars*), Caesar mentioned about Ariovistus, a German leader. Schlegel suggested that etymologically Ario is close to the German word ‘Ehre’ (meaning honour), and hence, it is connected to Aryan. Since Aryan, as a race or a language-speaking group of people, was connected to an ancient time, it could firmly establish the rich history of the nation. Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829) was a

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<sup>13</sup>Geulen (2007).

<sup>14</sup>Robb (n.d., p. 231) Risley used the ratio of the width of a nose to its height to divide Indians into Aryan and Dravidian races, as well as seven castes. He relied on the anthropometrical studies for indology, in contrast to the prevalent methods based on ancient texts. Among other works, he published a paper in 1891, titled ‘The Study of Ethnology in India’, which is described by Trautmann as the racial theory of Indian civilization. Apart from Max Müller, according to Trautmann, Risley was the main proponent of this theory, which attempted to establish that Indian civilization experienced a cataclysmic event when the fair-skinned, Sanskrit-speaking Aryans clashed with dark-skinned, barbarian aborigines.

German poet, philosopher, Orientalist and one of the founders of Romantic Movement in Germany. Like him, several orientalists took centre stage throughout Europe in the romantic nationalism phase.

The Romantic Movement in Germany initiated around a circle of friends in Jena from about 1798–1804, thus being anointed as Jena Romanticism. The circle had a literary magazine established by the brothers August Wilhelm and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel. Liberal Theologist Friedrich Schleiermacher and poet Friedrich Schlegel contributed to this magazine. The later phases of the Romantic Movement were initiated in Berlin and Heidelberg.

Given the early studies on the origin of language and the struggle for finding the 'roots' of a nation during the romantic nationalism, the linguistic research gained significant attention during that time.

### 2.2.2 Linguistic Research

Linguistic research in Europe originally took momentum partly due to nationalism and partly owing to political and military motivations. Since the Russo-Turkish war European interest in Southeastern and Oriental languages grew steadily.

This is especially true for England, which was interested in the region from a military–political perspective. A letter by Charles Trevelyan to Max Müller, dated 21 March 1854, just 3 days before the war, is especially revealing. In his letter, Sir Charles requested Müller to prepare at once a treatise, showing which language is spoken in that part of the world, their general structure, and the alphabets used, and what would be the most useful books on the respective languages. By 16 May 1854, Max Müller was able to send his suggestions.<sup>15</sup> In his first letter to Sir Charles, Müller called attention to a subject that continued to occupy his thoughts almost to the end of his life. He writes—*'It is undoubtedly high time that something should be done to encourage the study of Oriental languages in England', 'other Countries which have any political, commercial, or religious connections with the East, provision has been made, by Government or otherwise, to encourage young men to devote themselves to this branch of studies'. He strongly maintains 'In England alone, where the most vital interests are involved in a free intercourse with the East, hardly anything is done to foster Oriental studies'.*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, pp. 153, 154).

<sup>16</sup>Anon (n.d., p. 154) Indeed at that time, St. Petersburg had a chair for every department of Oriental scholarship. Vienna had a Oriental seminary, Prussia encouraged young Oriental scholars by employing them afterwards as consuls and interpreters.

## 2.3 Emergence of Max Müller in European Scientific Scene

European scholarly world, at the time of Max Müller, was shining brilliantly, in the realm of oriental scholarship. Among the most well-recognized oriental scholars, a significant number were from Germany or received training there. This includes William Dwight Whitney, the first president of American Oriental Society, Franz Bopp, Otto Böhtlingk, Rudolf von Roth and August Wilhelm von Schlegel. Eminent French scholars like Eugène Burnouf and British scholars such as Edward Balfour, William Jones and Henry Thomas Colebrooke were bustling with activities. To rise and shine among these scholars was not an easy task.

### 2.3.1 Short Biography of Max Müller

Friedrich Maximilian Müller was born at Dessau, 6 December 1823. His father was a poet and scholar Wilhelm Müller, who was a famed romantic poet of his times, wrote *Die Schöne Müllerin*, which was set to music by Schubert in *Die Winterreise*. He was a librarian to the ruler of the small German principality of Anhalt-Dessau. His early death at the age of only 33 left his family impoverished. Müller was only 4 years old at that time. Müller enrolled in a gymnasium (school) in Dessau and moved to Leipzig to attend Nicolai school at the age of 16. He entered Leipzig University to study philology in 1841 and received his degree in two years after submitting a dissertation on Spinoza's Ethics. By this time, he also demonstrated a penchant for learning new languages, having learnt Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit.

Hermann Brockhaus, a noted German orientalist and student of von Schlegel, was appointed as a faculty at Leipzig in 1842. Upon finishing his studies, Müller immediately began a course of Oriental studies, chiefly Sanskrit, under the supervision of Professor Brockhaus, and in 1844 engaged in his translation of the *Hitopadesa*, an ancient Indian collection of fables. He moved further from Leipzig to Berlin, and attended the lectures of Bopp, Rüdiger and Schelling on Sanskrit, Philosophy and Oriental studies. In March 1845, he went to Paris to listen to Eugène Burnouf at the Collège de France. Upon Burnouf's inspiration, he embarked on the task of preparing a critical edition of the Rig Veda. England was a rich source of ancient Sanskrit manuscripts at that time. He went to England in June 1846 to examine the manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and at the Indian House, where he befriended, among others, Prussian ambassador von Bunsen and H. H. Wilson, Orientalist. Soon, he was commissioned by the East India Company to publish his edition in England at their expense. The first volume appeared in 1849, and in 1850 he was appointed deputy Taylorian professor of modern European languages at Oxford University, eventually becoming a full Professor in 1854. He became a curator of the Bodleian library in 1856, holding that office till 1863; and

again from 1881 to 1894. In 1868 Max Müller, after leaving the Taylorian chair, was nominated to the new professorship of comparative philology at Oxford, which he held for the rest of his life.

Max Müller introduced the idea of comparative philology to England also did pioneering works on comparative mythology, comparative religious studies and scientific studies on language and religion. He was a prolific writer, eloquent public speaker and welcome host to numerous dignitaries in Oxford. Among his long-lasting works of scholarship, the most notable one is the Sacred Books of the East, a series of English translations by noted linguists of non-Christian religious texts in Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic and Chinese among others. He embarked upon this huge editorial task after relinquishing his active duties as a professor in Oxford in 1875. This series of books remain as a valuable source of early human history, not only in religious thoughts but also in sociopolitical systems. He died at Oxford on 28 October 1900, aged 76.

### 2.3.2 Influences on Max Müller

Max Müller entered Leipzig University in 1841 to study philology, leaving behind his early interest in music and poetry. Müller received his degree in 1843. His final dissertation was on Spinoza's Ethics. He also displayed an aptitude for classical languages, learning Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. Müller turned out to be a brilliant student. He was already proficient in Greek and Latin as a youth, to which he added a repertoire of further classical languages. As per his college records, he enrolled in fifty lectures during his two and half years of study in Leipzig. Beyond the classical languages, he took interest in the systematic philosophy starting from Plato, Aristotle and got introduced to the idealist philosophy of Hegel. Müller recounted how Hegelianism was a craze at that time—'*To be a Hegelian was considered a sine qua non, not only among philosophers, but quite as much among theologians, men of science, lawyers, artists, in fact, in every branch of human knowledge, at least in Prussia. If Christianity in its Protestant form was the state-religion of the kingdom, Hegelianism was its state philosophy*'.<sup>17</sup> Hegel played a significant role in influencing the German thought process regarding Orientalism and contributing to the debate of India as a cultural model for Germany and as a root for Christianity. In his Lectures on the History of Philosophy (given between 1819 and 1831), Hegel ascribed to antiquity as a negative quality, since it reduces often to a state of primitive un-development. Oriental politics is found wanting because civil government is inextricably bound up with theocracy, meaning that all moral and religious commandments are brought under the power of the state, leaving no room individual rights or freedoms. According to Hegel, Oriental religions lack a reflective element and fail to fully separate God from the

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<sup>17</sup>'The Essential Max Müller: On Language, Mythology and Religion' by J. Stone (Editor).

infinite substance of nature. Furthermore, the Orient is characterized by traits of moral failure: the Chinese are servile and the Indians are savage, cruel, and effeminate.

Christian Hermann Weisse was the professor of Philosophy at Leipzig, who ascribed to the ideas of Hegel and at first introduced Hegelianism to Müller. Weisse attempted to idealize all Christian dogmas through natural postulates of reason in his work on philosophical dogmatics (*Philosophische Dogmatik oder Philosophie des Christentums*, 3 vols, 1855–1862). Weisse, though a Hegelian at first, would raise criticism against his lack of historical objectivity. To Müller, the conflict between the historical accuracy and Hegelian idealism, formed a great intellectual curiosity that he would carry for the rest of his life. An aspect of Hegelian school of thought was that the East and Oriental started at the dawn of history, which reaches a triumphant point at the nineteenth-century Occidental thoughts. This is explained by the evolutionary development of *logos* ('word', 'reason', 'principle of order or knowledge'). While Müller admitted to that by accepting Christianity as the highest expression of divine logos, he did not embrace the concept of Hegelian *Weltgeist*,<sup>18</sup> which discards plurality or parallel streams in development. Müller took great care to not being labelled as a Hegelian, especially, their penchant of forcing data into a theory, which was the same charge levelled against him, ironically.

Among the prominent tutors of Müller in Leipzig, apart from Christian Hermann Weisse, Hermann Lotze was also there, to whose philosophical societies he admitted to belong. Hermann Lotze was a logician and philosopher with great command over biology, with pioneering works in scientific psychology. The topic of Müller's dissertation was Spinoza's Ethics. Spinoza (1632–1677) was leading Philosopher of Dutch golden age, who laid the groundwork for enlightenment and modern Biblical criticism in eighteenth century. In Ethics, Spinoza's magnum opus, the mind–body dualism proposed earlier by Descartes, was challenged. With this, Spinoza established himself as the foremost philosopher of his time, having so much influence on the later thinkers that Hegel commented—'You are either a Spinozist or not a philosopher at all'. It is trivial to follow that without the Spinozist thinking such as, the unified working of body and mind, and the acceptance of God being the natural world—the following thoughts of Hegel and Müller would not have the solid foundation.

To further understand the influence of contemporary Germany, it is also necessary to follow the Higher Criticism that was circulating amongst the theological elite of Germany. Biblical criticism is a general term covering different techniques for applying literary historical-critical methods in the analysis of the Bible and its textual content. The criticism is in fact motivated by the historical studies, which, technically speaking refers to the scholarly approach of critical assessment of Bible

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<sup>18</sup>Weltgeist or World-spirit is Hegel's version of the God of Christianity rooted in realism. According to him—'The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom.... Itself is its own *object of attainment and the sole aim of Spirit. This result it is, at which the process of the World's History has been continually aiming*'.—G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (1822. J. Sibree translation).

as a literature. The fact that this has close ties with the historical development of Philosophy and Protestant reformations made Biblical criticism an active topic of debate in Germany during the student years of Müller. Hermann Weisse was a noted scholar in Higher Criticism, having proposed the two-source hypothesis in 1838.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.3.3 *Sanskrit: Text to Treatise*

The initial interest in Europe about Sanskrit was akin to that of another ancient language. There were linguistic similarities between ancient languages; however, comparative philology was an emerging subject. The most active topics in Sanskrit studies were a compilation of dictionaries, and translating well-known Sanskrit manuscripts. Several hundreds of Sanskrit manuscripts were available throughout Europe, notably in Berlin, Paris and London.

Alexander Hamilton, a British linguist, who set up the Asiatic Society of Bengal, together with William Jones, returned to Europe in 1797 and became the first European professor of Sanskrit in 1806 at Hertford College. Among the most important works of Hamilton was the compilation of a catalogue of Indian manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, published in 1807. To study the manuscripts, several European scholars came to Paris and learned Sanskrit from Hamilton, notable among who were Franz Bopp, Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Jean-Louis Burnouf, father of Eugène Burnouf. In 1818, von Schlegel became a Professor of Sanskrit in the Bonn University, Germany and in 1821, Bopp became a Professor of Sanskrit in Berlin, Germany. Bopp and Schlegel were successful in establishing a new line of research along comparative grammatical studies between Sanskrit and other languages, in contrast to the first generation of translation-based studies.

Eugène Burnouf, who envisioned studies in richer detail than language, further extended this. Müller recalled that later with great admiration.

*'At that very time, however, now about forty years ago, a new start was made, which has given to Sanskrit scholarship an entirely new character. The chief author of that movement was Burnouf, then professor at the Collège de France in Paris, an excellent scholar, but at the same time a man of wide views and true historical instincts, and the last man to waste his life on mere Nalas and Sakuntalās. Being brought up in the old traditions of the classical school in France (his father was the author of the well-known Greek Grammar), then for a time a promising young*

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<sup>19</sup>The hypothesis is a solution to what is known as the synoptic problem: the question of how best to account for the differences and similarities between the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. The answer to this problem has implications for the order in which the three were composed, and the sources on which their authors drew. Prior to the proposal of Weisse, most Catholic scholars held to the Augustinian hypothesis (Matthew > Mark > Luke) and Protestant biblical critics favoured the Griesbach hypothesis (Matthew > Luke > Mark).

*barrister, with influential friends such as Guizot, Thiers, Mignet, Villemain, at his side, and with a brilliant future before him, he was not likely to spend his life on pretty Sanskrit ditties. What he wanted when he threw himself on Sanskrit was history, human history, world-history, and with an unerring grasp he laid hold of Vedic literature and Buddhist literature, as the two stepping-stones in the slough of Indian literature’.*<sup>20</sup>

The ‘*mere Nalas and Sakuntalâs*’, which Müller is alluding to here refers to Antoine Leonardo Chezy, a French Orientalist, who occupied the first European chair professorship in Sanskrit set up in 1814. The magnum opus of Chezy, the *editio princeps* of the *Sakuntala*, an episode of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, appeared in 1830. This example of Chezy that to publish a translation of the epics were followed by most of the early European Sanskrit scholars. The reason for this was simple; it was hard to manage a complete epic and in many cases, the complete manuscript was unavailable. For example, Bopp published the *Visvamitra* episode of Ramayana in 1816 in *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache (On the Conjugation System of Sanskrit in comparison with that of Greek, Latin, Persian and Germanic)*. Burnouf significantly altered this approach of textual study, which was eagerly taken up by Müller.

### 2.3.4 Müller’s Research with Rig Veda

In the nineteenth-century scientific world Sanskrit was the oldest known Indo-European (IE) language, with a rich source of manuscripts scattered across India. In search of new leaves of history to be uncovered, linguistic researchers concentrated their studies around old IE languages, including Sanskrit. Müller’s Sanskrit studies came at a time when scholars contextualized language development in the light of national and cultural development, as in the Romantic Movement. The discovery of the Indo-European language group had started to lead to much speculation about the relationship between Greco-Roman cultures and those of more ancient peoples. Due to the presumed antiquity of Sanskrit, the language used in the Vedic ages, it was the centrepiece of attention. Müller quickly came to be known as a leading Sanskrit scholar of his day.

Among the available Sanskrit manuscripts, the oldest known was the Rig Veda. In 1845, Max Müller attended a spirited lecture given by Burnouf on Rig Veda. Müller was impressed by the sheer antiquity of the manuscripts. He wrote that Rig Veda is ‘*the oldest and most important book in India, perhaps the oldest book that*

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<sup>20</sup>Müller (1882) Müller carried the penchant of going beyond ‘mere classical studies’ and studying the universal progression of religion and philosophy from the perspective of linguistic evolution.

exists' and this lecture opened a new world to him.<sup>21</sup> It was Burnouf who encouraged him to take the lead role in translation and publication of the complete Rig Veda, using manuscripts available in England. Müller moved to England in 1846 in order to study Sanskrit texts in the collection of the East India Company, which was in economic and political control of the Indian subcontinent. Müller's excellent knowledge in Sanskrit, connections with the East India Company and with orientalists based at Oxford University led him to an illustrious career in Britain, where he eventually became the leading intellectual commentator on the culture of India. This resulted in complex intellectual exchanges between Indian and British elite minds, especially through Müller's links with the Brahmo Samaj, a dominant Indian social reform movement. Müller was greatly impressed by Saint Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836–1886), his contemporary and proponent of Vedantic philosophy, and authored several essays and books on him.<sup>22</sup>

In the early years of struggle in England, Müller was influenced and mentored by the then Prussian minister in London, Baron von Bunsen. Bunsen narrated him in great detail, how as a young German, he tried in vain to go to India for studying ancient manuscripts via Italy with the help of an American millionaire, Mr. Astor. The plan failed, which resulted in Bunsen's position as a secretary with the Prussian minister in Rome. Bunsen kindled the desire of Oriental studies in Müller again, when Bunsen came to know that Müller was obliged to return to Germany without finishing his voluminous works on the Vedic manuscripts. Bunsen took the hands of Müller and told—'*I look upon you as myself, young again. Stay in London, and as to ways and means, let me see to that*'.<sup>23</sup>

The task of publishing Rig Veda occupied the prime part of Müller's life, starting at 1849–1874, consuming a significant effort. However, that was a labour of love. In a letter to students of Vienna, dated December 31, 1879 Müller said that '*When I was as young as you are now, I made up my mind to wander to England, in*

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<sup>21</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, pp. 34, 36) Burnhouf was in regular correspondence with British residents in India, such as Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800–1894), who would send him Sanskrit manuscripts during his stay at Nepal. Hodgson selected six famous libraries as the depositories of his Buddhist texts—Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta; the College of Fort William; the Royal Asiatic Society, London; the India Office Library, London; and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Having thus placed at the disposal of British scholars a munificent endowment of manuscripts, he enriched French Orientalists with a scarcely less splendid donation of 147—transmitted to Burnouf and the Paris Asiatic Society.

<sup>22</sup>Anon (n.d.) Müller wrote an article on Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa in 'Nineteenth Century'. Swami Vivekananda, a noted disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and an Indian monk, met him during 1896 at Müller's residence in Oxford.

<sup>23</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 50) Like many contemporaries, Bunsen supported historical interpretation of Biblical scripture. He believed that German scholarship, particularly as it related to history, philology and religion, could bring benefits to Britain. Bunsen depended on Müller's vigour and scholarship. He aided Müller by inviting him regularly to the Prussian Embassy to meet leading figures of the day and by ensuring his participation in a presentation to the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Oxford in 1847. Bunsen communicated in no unclear terms to Müller that '*We must show them what we have done in Germany for the history and philosophy of language, and I reckon on your help*'.

order to publish, where alone it was possible at that time to publish, the Rig-veda, which I consider the oldest literary monument of the whole Aryan family. As we all, as you know, belong to this Aryan or Indo-Germanic family, the Rig-veda is, so to speak, our own oldest inheritance, and to make such an inheritance and jewel accessible again to the European scientific world after many thousand years, seemed to me a work worthy the labour, even should its completion occupy my whole life'.<sup>24</sup> In 1849, after the publication of the first volume of Rig Veda, in a letter to his wife, he wrote, 'It treats of the history of the civilization of the Aryan nation before the fifteenth century BC, as one can construct it from the researches of comparative philology'.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, he started to work towards a larger perspective to match the important intellectual quests of that time.

## 2.4 Max Müller's First Synthesis: Science of Language

*'It is language and religion that make a people, but religion is even a more powerful agent than language', wrote Friedrich Max Müller.*<sup>26</sup>

For Müller, the culture of the Vedic peoples represented a form of nature worship, an idea clearly influenced by Romanticism.<sup>27</sup> With language, Müller had a powerful tool that allowed him to trace and outline the history of mankind. He wanted to have a solid foundation of the new linguistic theories that he was postulating. Like any other social theory of his age, notably evolution of species, he had specific inclination towards science.<sup>28</sup> Veda was the book that helped to achieve that. As he said to the Duke of Albany, Parks End, Oxford, December 13, 1875, 'I believe that the Veda is an extremely important book, in fact the only book in Indian literature which is important, not only for India, but for the early history of the whole Aryan race, including Greeks, Romans, and ourselves. It contains the first attempts at expressing religious thought and feeling, and it alone can help us to solve many of the most critical problems in the Science of Religion'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Max Müller (n.d.) Indeed Müller would spend a good amount of his life in the translation and interpretation of Rig-veda. His association with it through the usage of 'our own oldest inheritance' is unclear whether that simply refers to a scholarly inheritance or inheritance as in the Oriental root of Germany.

<sup>25</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, pp. 97, 98) Also notable is the use of a specific date by Müller here.

<sup>26</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 56).

<sup>27</sup>Sushil Mittal (n.d., p. 336).

<sup>28</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 78) Readers would remember his tutor in Leipzig Hermann Lotze, who did pioneering work in scientific psychology. Notably, Wilhelm Wundt, the first person to term himself a psychologist founded a formal laboratory of experimental psychology in the same University of Leipzig in 1879.

<sup>29</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 501).

### 2.4.1 *Scientific Study of Languages*

Müller studied under the tutelage of noted Indo-European linguist Franz Bopp, who was the chair of Sanskrit and comparative grammar at Berlin. Franz Bopp was well aware of the established common root language for Latin, Greek, Persian, German and Sanskrit. His main research theme was to identify the common origin of not only the words but, their grammatical forms. Müller continued in this tradition. He picked up the unfinished works of translating ancient Sanskrit texts that Bopp initiated. In addition to the volumes of Rig Veda, Müller also published history of Vedic literature in 1859, Sanskrit grammar, books on comparative mythology and religion; and most importantly, two series of lectures on the 'Science of Language', published in 1861 and 1863.

The lecture series on the science of language were splendid success, as he himself recalled long after—'*That is how I rose in the estimation of the London world, and how Albemarle Street became crowded with fashionable carriages, and people could hardly find places in order to hear all about Aryan roots and our Aryan ancestors, and our common Aryan home somewhere in Asia*'.<sup>30</sup> The luminaries of British society, including Dean Stanley, Michael Faraday and John Stuart Mill, attended the lectures, which took place at the Royal Institution.

In these lectures, Müller continued the tone of Franz Bopp. Bopp, in 1827, wrote that—'*Languages must be taken as organic natural bodies which form themselves according to definite laws*'. Müller, as a leading philologist, spoke of the languages as a set of immutable laws much like the laws in chemistry or physics. Fully realizing the varied set of arguments against such a claim, especially the fact that language is a fairly new tool compared to the age-old laws of chemistry, Müller asserted eloquently—'*We cannot tell as yet what the language is. It may be the production of nature, a work of human art, or a divine gift....If it be a production of nature, it is her last and crowning production, which she reserved for man alone. If it be a work of human art, it would seem to lift the human artist almost to the level of a divine creator. If it be the gift of God, it is God's greatest gift; for through it God spake to man and man speaks to God in worship, prayer and meditation*'.<sup>31</sup> Müller also suggested that though the modern languages are simply the creation of human, the primitive form of language is pristine and existed at the dawn of mankind. This gave the followers of this new science an important charge to settle, i.e. to determine the root or original language that existed at the earliest form of

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<sup>30</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 195) Notably the usage of the word Aryan here with 'our' in several context does indeed help little but, blur the borders of language, race and ethnicities. To have a wonderful past that has been uncovered in a mystic land thousands of miles away, fell in a perfect extrapolation of the romantic nationalism. Further, following the Hegelian ideals of Baron Bunsen to form an Anglo-German alliance, Müller took to tasks that went beyond academic interests. He was the first president of English Goethe Society. He, with his wife, translated and edited the memoirs of Baron Stockmar, a German physician and statesman, who played leading role in English affairs as a close confidante of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria.

<sup>31</sup>Müller (1861, pp. 1, 29).

human civilization. Naturally, with the oldest manuscripts of Sanskrit and Rig Veda, Müller was at the helm.

Nevertheless, the idea of the scientific study of language caught significant attention. The fact that a chair for comparative philology was just created for him in 1868 speaks volumes on the admiration and influence Müller earned in England.

### 2.4.2 Müller–Darwin Debate

This glorification of the science of language via asserting divinity to its origin actually allowed philologists to put language in the same table as other natural sciences, the idea of which, however, met with a strong criticism from the evolution theorists.

Robert Chambers took a directly opposite stand against Müller, who suggested that language is the gift of nature to human. Robert Chambers wrote in the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) that human language is simply an evolved version of the animal communication. Darwin carried this argument forth in a more general form. In *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin argued that there is no qualitative difference in the faculties of primate animals and human. This was not only an argument over the faculty of language. Rather, Müller ascribed the key-reasoning faculty of humans to language and therefore, this assertion from evolutionary theorists stood against his very idea that language is a natural science. Müller wrote that '*because language is the necessary condition of every other mental activity, religious not excluded, and I am able to prove that this indispensable condition of all mental growth is entirely absent in animals*'.<sup>32</sup>

Müller engaged in a long debate to tilt the opinion against evolutionary theorists. This included public lectures against Darwin's ideas on language and debates with also fellow linguists, e.g. William Dwight Whitney, who supported the claims of Darwin. The antagonism between Whitney and Müller went beyond the academic realm. Whitney was gaining a solid reputation as a Sanskrit scholar and Orientalist, having been elected as a member of Royal Asiatic Society, awarded by Russian Imperial Academy for his works on Sanskrit treatise, and having received the Bopp prize from the Berlin Academy of Sciences. Whitney also criticized Müller directly

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<sup>32</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 481) This was, in fact, a great debate of that time and also remains a relevant open question now. 'The distinction of language in man is very great from all animals', Darwin wrote, 'but do not overrate—animals communicate to each other' (Barrett, Paul. et al. eds. Charles Darwin's Notebooks, 1836–1841. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and British Museum (Natural History), 1987). Max Müller asserted that language was the 'one great barrier between the brute and man'; 'no process of natural selection will ever distil significant words out of the notes of birds and the cries of beasts'. Darwin eventually published his views on language in *Descent of Man* (1871), as part of a chapter on the comparative mental powers of humans and the lower animals. He acknowledged that language had 'justly been considered as one of the chief distinctions between man and the lower animals'.

for slow progress on the translation of Rig Veda and having delegated most of laborious works to his assistant.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.4.3 *Sociopolitical Influences on the Research*

It was not without reason that the scientific study of language received so much attention. The study of the origin of languages touched several chords in the contemporary society. The idea of comparative philology and the root language had overlaps with the romantic nationalism. The emergence of new branches in the natural sciences made people open to accept new forms of science. At the same time, the questions raised by evolution theorists had to be answered.

The other debate that centred on the scientific study of language was the veracity of the claims that the root language evolved in India and migrated westward. There was a growing controversy among anthropologists, ethnographers and evolutionists, on whether a single or multiple sources existed for the human civilization. Interestingly, at many a times Müller did put his presumptions as a fact—*‘In these three centers, more particularly in the Aryan and Semitic, language ceased to be natural; its growth was arrested, and it became permanent, solid, petrified, or, if you like, historical speech. I have always maintained that this centralization and traditional conservation of language could only have been the result of religious and political influences’*.<sup>34</sup>

Müller was at the heat of every argument, no matter from which perspective it was coming from—*‘I had become responsible particularly for the Law-Books, and it was unfortunate not to be able to carry out my program. Sir H. Maine has just read a paper at the Royal Institution on the “Sacred Laws of the Aryas,” where he attacks me for having fixed the date of Manu at 1300 AD, and I only said it did not appear earlier than the fourth century AD’*.<sup>35</sup> Müller confided to Professor Bühler during June, 1882.

On the other hand, Müller needed to get more evidence in support of his theories, which included, in cases, exact data. One of his mentors, Baron von Bunsen, toiled to develop a philosophy of religion by linking comparative philology and theology. Müller's magnum opus—The Sacred Books of The East project, was an effort, partly directed to this cause. It received generous support from the British Empire due to colonial interests it served and due to the intellectual curiosity, it raised about the origin of civilization. In fact, while the first wave of oriental and

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<sup>33</sup>Valone (1996).

<sup>34</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 61) George Bühler was an expert in ancient Indian languages and law. He was a close associate of Max Müller, participating in the translation of several volumes in the Sacred Books of the East project. He also accepted the invitation from Müller for joining as a Professor of Oriental Studies in the Elphinstone College of Bombay, and became a member of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay branch.

<sup>35</sup>Max Müller (n.d., p. 117).

Sanskrit research was more about the understanding of the colonial subjects, the second wave of this research was fitting the history of the colonial civilization in a larger structure of the evolution of human civilization.

The idea of Bunsen with respect to his national tradition and Christianity was quite clear—*'the Germanic nation, the ancient Greeks and Romans and (for the earliest period) the Median- Persian-Indian race. For this portion, on nation can be taken in preference to the Hebrew, were it only on account of their records, and yet their significance in universal history consists in their being the means of preparation for Christianity, rather than in their rank in humanity, or their discernible condition of development'*.<sup>36</sup>

The above passage definitively shows that Bunsen tried to break from the Christian traditions of supremacy, which was, so far governed by the order in which the religion evolved. However, the secularized worldview and emerging linguistic science provided new ammunition to the ideas of romanticism and new opportunities to define the order. This is arguably the seed of new, radicalized German antisemitism that got further inputs from Paul De Lagarde, a prolific German anti-Semite and Orientalist, whom Bunsen invited for a research stay at London during 1852–1853.

Bunsen requested Müller to provide an exact date for the Rig Veda. Dating Rig Veda, apparently a pure scholarly pursuit, actually fueled three debates. First, the dating of an ancient religious text is important to support the Biblical creation. Second, it should validate the supremacy of European or more specifically national cultures. This supremacy can be cohesively designed by creating a continuous history of a nation, as imagined by the romantic nationalists. Third, the date would be ancient enough to remove any man-made contributions to the natural body of language. Müller was interested in the last one, though; he started with many presumptions that mired his conclusions. His conclusions, in general, were conforming to the expected answers. For example, after his articles on comparative mythology appeared in the Oxford Essays, a contemporary writer speaks—*'he applied the rules of comparative philology to the elucidation of Aryan myths, in a manner at once scientific and popular'*.<sup>37</sup>

Regarding the dating of Rig Veda, Max Müller felt that the ground too insecure for any historical treatment. In April 1856, in one letter he wrote to Bunsen *'I only recognize one chronology for India, the four literary periods of the Veda, which bring us to at least 1500 BC, and even at that time show us a formulated system of divinities and even priest-craft'*. On the other hand, in the same letter, he mentions that, *'... and before the nomadic Greeks separated from the nomadic Indians,*

<sup>36</sup>Bunsen (1884 to 1885, p. 88) Bunsen dreamt of a strong protestant church presence. In fact, his selection as a Prussian ambassador, was partly due to the common interest he shared with Prussian king Fredereick William IV, about setting up a Prusso-Anglican bishopric at Jerusalem.

<sup>37</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 186) This method was known to Bunsen, himself a scholar on several languages. Notably, Bunsen had been influenced heavily in the company of the noted historian Niebuhr. Niebuhr was a leader of the romantic era, and a prominent voice on the classical Roman history, where he applied philological analyses.

centuries must have passed...So you see the oldest date of the name Ophir occurring in the Bible is the latest time in which the Aryans were already settled by the sea, and at the time of the Veda they had not yet settled there'.<sup>38</sup> However, it should also be noted here that in a true scientific spirit, Müller was open to ideas that argued against these dates. While discussing the age of the Veda in 1891, Müller quoted Prof. Sayce, who presented some evidence that would 'prove the presence of Sanskrit-speaking Aryans in India about at least 3000 BC'.<sup>39</sup>

Müller treaded his path very carefully, because of the repercussions his ideas could generate. To establish his scientific approach, he started, unintentionally, a few other intellectual debates. To some he responded with vigour and to some, he gave in to the populist ideas. In general, the idea of the science of languages was a success, which inspired him to attempt something even in a larger scale.

## 2.5 Max Müller's Second Synthesis: Science or Religion

*'It is language and religion that make a people, but religion is even a more powerful agent than language'* quoted Müller.<sup>40</sup>

Coming from an academic atmosphere that still was emerging from the overarching themes of theological studies, it was naturally interesting for Müller to see the connection of language and religion. It was helpful that the oldest available linguistic documents were about religion. Considering religion to be the highest form of human intellectual expression, Müller attempted his next big venture, to propose a scientific study of religion.

In 1874, the second International Congress of Orientalists was held in London. There, in his lecture, Müller stated—'*all religions spring from the same sacred soil, the human heart*', which echoed similar ideas expressed in Rig Veda. The verse 1.164.46 of Rig Veda, quoted by Müller later during his Gifford lectures, reads as following.

Indram mitram varuNam agnim āhuh,  
 atho divyah sa suparNo garutmān,  
 ekam sad viprāh bahudhā vadanti,  
 agnim yamam mātari'svānam āhuh.

<sup>38</sup>Anon. (n.d.) This ambiguity about the dating of Rig Veda is expected given the absence of any circumstantial evidence, until Indus valley civilization is unearthed.

<sup>39</sup>Max Müller (1891, pp. 86, 87) Archibald Henry Sayce was a noted British linguist and Assyriologist. Among other accomplishments, he deciphered several ancient Egyptian texts, set up new studies on ancient astronomical studies and discovered remains of the lost Hittite empire that existed long before the age of Old Testament.

<sup>40</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 56).

(They hail Him as Indra, as Mitra, as VaruNa, as Agni, also as that divine and noble-winged Garutmān. It is of One Existence that the wise ones speak in diverse ways, whether as Agni, or as Yama or as Mātari'shvān.)

Müller was well versed with Semitic religions, having studied their texts in detail. To explain the apparent contradiction between the monotheism and polytheism, instead of suggesting that all the religions are the same, he adopted the structured growth model. He argued, '*Do you still wonder at polytheism or at mythology? Why, they are inevitable. They are, if you like, a parler enfantin of religion*'.<sup>41</sup>

Müller started proposing his ideas through public lectures, such as in the lectures delivered at the Royal Institute in 1870, later published in 1882 as a book titled *Introduction to the Science of Religion*. He was invited to deliver the Hibbert lecture in 1878. The goal of this lecture series was to uphold 'the unfettered exercise of private judgment in matters of religion'. Müller spoke on the topic of *On the Religions of India*, which was, as usual, full of enthusiastic listeners. A leading newspaper reported after the opening lecture—'*The Chapter House was thickly crowded with perhaps the most remarkably eclectic audience ever assembled within that majestic old building. The old monks of Westminster would have looked upon such an audience gathered in their Chapter House for such a purpose*'.<sup>42</sup>

His ideas of having a systematic growth of religious beliefs were considered heterodox, as we will see later. It was clear that Müller was deeply influenced by his lifelong studies of ancient Indian texts as evident from the following excerpt from a lecture at Cambridge in 1883.—'*If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India*'.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, Müller had rather strong opinion about the supremacy of Christianity, though he accommodated the existence and truth in ancient religions. In a letter dated 4 September 1881, he wrote to B. Malabari, an Indian poet and social reformer, on his perceived influence that Hibbert lectures would have on

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<sup>41</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 164).

<sup>42</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 47) It was interestingly noted that at least one-tenth of the audience were ordained ministers of the Gospel.

<sup>43</sup>Müller (1882).

Indian minds—*'the views put forward in my Hibbert lectures are the result of the studies which have not ignored any one of the objections raised against religion whether in England or in India...There is no religion which does not contain some truth, none which contains the whole truth...The first duty which every student of religion has to perform is to make himself acquainted with the books on which each religion claims to be founded. Hence my publication of the Sacred Books of the East, i.e. of the world, for all religions comes from the East'*.<sup>44</sup> In this statement, he addressed the concerns of the social reformer; points towards a necessary exchange between religions and also admit to the eastern origin of religions. Note that, here, he included Christianity of eastern origin, echoing claims from some social reform movements in India, who embraced Christianity and suggested that Jesus was Asiatic. He was actually able to also touch a chord with the devout Christians in England, as he said in the concluding Hibbert lecture—*'The Christian, that which is better than all,... our love of God, call Him what you like, the infinite, the invisible, the immortal, the Father, the highest self, above all, and through all, and in all, manifested in our love of man, our love of the living, our love of the dead, our living and undying love'*.<sup>45</sup>

In 1888, Müller was appointed Gifford lecturer at the University of Glasgow, the first one to hold this title. Gifford lecture series were to be given in several Scottish universities. Müller gave four lecture series over the next 4 years. At the age of 65, Müller was at the culmination of his lifelong pursuit of knowledge. Gifford lecture series summarized most of his key ideas in form of a theological exposition. The four lecture series were, in order of delivery, Natural Religion, Physical Religion, Anthropological Religion and Theosophy or Psychological Religion. The first two lecture series focused on the individual growth of different groups of people towards the discovery of unseen forces in nature. The third lecture was about the arrival of different nations to a similar belief system about the soul. The final lecture was about the relation between two infinities, God and soul.

### 2.5.1 Evolution of Religion

It is important to note that though Müller rejected some claims from Darwinism, he was an avid reader of Darwin, which he also mentioned in one of his letters. In forming the scientific study of religions, Müller followed the structure of evolution and tried to wrap his findings in a scientific approach as much as possible.

Starting with the first lecture, natural religion, Müller tried to establish the definition of religion in the widest possible sense. His definition of Religion, as

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<sup>44</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 110) These ideas are not far from how it was developed by Hegel. That the world-spirit originated in the East and manifested itself in the finest form in the West (Christianity).

<sup>45</sup>Anon. (n.d., p. 49).

consisting 'in the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man', was questionable. Müller confirmed that this lecture intends to examine various definitions of natural religion. He drew comparisons to the other scientific disciplines to drive home the point. For example, in the lecture on physical religion,—'*it was only like guessing at the former existence of a geological stratum which does not come to the surface except in scattered fragments*'. In physical religion, he tried to connect the human thoughts that grew from natural phenomenon to the forces behind those, also referred to as Gods. He elaborated on the functions of natures and how Vedic deities were associated with those. He drew his earlier conclusions on the relation between language and intellectual growth several times. While existing religious scholars associated animism, the act of personifying an inanimate object, to the primeval forms of religion, Müller argued that language is the root cause of this process. This thesis came to be known as the *disease of language* theory, which postulated that the expressions in mythology are contaminated due to the poor linguistic faculty. This argument allowed him to accommodate less acceptable elements of religions of non-Christian origin. Müller specifically dealt in detail with Agni, the agent of fire as described in Vedic texts and showed how the concept of Agni existed in both abstract and concrete forms. In scientific studies, this is a method of leading to the existential conclusion from a singular premise.

In the discussion over Anthropological Religion, Müller showed how different communities, cultures or races had arrived at similar belief systems like freedom, toleration and most importantly, the discovery of soul in both man and God. He asserted the commonality by drawing from a wide set of religious texts—'*...how what St. Paul, what the Fathers of the Church, what mediaeval theologians, and what some of the most learned of modern divines had asserted again and again was most strikingly confirmed by the records of all non-Christian religions which have lately become accessible to us*'.<sup>46</sup>

The fourth and last course of lectures was intended to examine the relation between God and the soul ('*these two Infinities*') including the ideas that some of the principal nations of the world have formed concerning this relation. Real religion, Müller asserted, is founded on a true perception of the relation of the soul to God and of God to the soul. He maintained that the idea was to show that '*like every other concept that of the Infinite also had to pass through many phases of historical evolution*'.

From a purely historical perspective, he mentioned, Christianity might be a reform or extension of Judaism but, from the perspective of Theology, there has been a synthesis of Semitic and Aryan thoughts in Christianity. This lent it a power to satisfy '*not only the requirements of heart, but likewise the postulates of reason*'. This argument allowed simultaneously addressing the voices of reason and establishment of a new order in Christianity, which, so far, was governed by its roots in Judaism.

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<sup>46</sup>Max Müller (n.d., pp. 276, 277).

## 2.5.2 *Anti-Christian Controversies*

Being cornered on having liberal views regarding religion was not new for Müller, which in 1860 actually cost him the Boden chair of Sanskrit in favour of the conservative candidate Monier Monier-Williams. The same issue was repeated, in a different form, during the Gifford lectures.

In 1891, at a meeting of the Established Presbytery of Glasgow, the Minister of Ladywell moved a motion that Müller's teaching was '*subversive of the Christian faith, and fitted to spread pantheistic and infidel views amongst the students and others*' and questioned Müller's appointment as lecturer.<sup>47</sup> Monsignor Alexander Munro in St Andrew's Cathedral declared that Müller's lectures '*were nothing less than a crusade against Divine revelation, against Jesus Christ, and against Christianity*'. The blasphemous lectures were, he continued, '*the proclamation of atheism under the guise of pantheism*' and '*uprooted our idea of God, for it repudiated the idea of a personal God*'.<sup>48</sup> There were serious protests about the content of the lectures.<sup>49</sup>

It is very likely the Müller had received personal attacks and being deemed as a non-Christian, which he defended in the entire preface of the third lecture, Anthropological Religion, and, even thanked the Glasgow Presbytery '*for having thrown them out by a majority of 17 to 5, and to the General Assembly for having declined even to entertain them*'.

On the other hand, religious leaders like Helena Blavatsky, who wanted to establish merits of 'Pagan' religious traditions over Christianity, were courting Müller. Blavatsky frequently expressed her gratitude for the careful research done by scholars: '*And it is also due to the unremitting labours of such Orientalists as Sir W. Jones, Max Muller, Burnouf, Colebrooke, Haug, de Saint-Hilaire, and so many others, that the [Theosophical] Society, as a body, feels equal respect and veneration for Vedic, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, and other old religions of the world; and, a like brotherly feeling towards its Hindu, Sinhalese, Parsi, Jain, Hebrew, and Christian members as individual students of 'self,' of nature, and of the divine in nature*'. Müller distanced himself from this conflict and was disturbed by the appropriation of the name Theosophy for the society that was founded by Helena Blavatsky, and how it led to the wrong interpretation of both Indian and Western religious traditions. For his Gifford lectures, he changed the title of his final lecture to include Theosophy. He mentioned, rather bluntly, '*It seemed to me that*

<sup>47</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 262).

<sup>48</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 263) In the University of Glasgow, which was conducting the Gifford lectures, there was a petition from the faculty of Theology that desired the senate to make it clear to the general public that the 'sole responsibility for the mode in which the subject may be treated rests with the Lecturer'.

<sup>49</sup>Max Müller (1892) In fact, this incident possibly represents an early example of civil debate between freedom of expression and the sensitivity of the religions. The Gifford lectures were set up specifically for the scientific studies of the religion, which went further than they could anticipate.

*venerable name, so well-known among early Christian thinkers, as expressing the highest knowledge of God within the reach of human mind, has of late been so greatly misappropriated that it was high time to restore its proper function. It should be known once for all that one may call oneself a theosophist, without being suspected of believing of spirit-rappings, table-turnings, or any other occult sciences and black arts*'.<sup>50</sup>

### 2.5.3 Müller's Proposition: Universal Religion

The idea of religious exchange and tolerance was prominent in Indian history, such as in the times of emperor Ashoka (304–232 BCE), and Mughal emperor Akbar (15 October 1542–27 October 1605). Müller was well acquainted of these and stepped into the same traditions. He mentioned "*these Sacred Books of the East will become in future the foundation of a short but universal religion*".<sup>51</sup> The idea of universal religion was being toyed by contemporary Indian social reformers, such as Rammohun Roy and Keshub Sen. For Müller, it was a certainty that '*Above and beneath and behind all religions there is one eternal, one universal religion, a religion to which every man belongs, or may belong*'<sup>82</sup> and the only question was how to accommodate these different views within a single agenda.

He actually did not propose a new doctrine or custom. Rather, he tried to unify different religions by exposing their similarity or evolution under the same church. He asserted that the science of religion that he proposed would show, '*for the first time fully what was meant by the fullness of time*' and '*restore to the whole history of the world, in its unconscious progress towards Christianity, its true and sacred character*'.<sup>52</sup> The process of uniting elite minds has to be done '*without sacrificing one iota of their philosophical convictions*'.<sup>53</sup>

It was an arduous task involving a complex social struggle with orthodox Christians, oriental scholars, scientists and lending conviction to the leading intellectuals of the non-Christian religions. To him, the scientific approach would be the solution to that. However, he admitted '*it is almost impossible to speak of religion at all, without giving offence either on the right or on the left. With some, religion seems too sacred a subject for scientific treatment*'<sup>54</sup> possibly reflecting on

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<sup>50</sup>Müller (n.d., p. xvi).

<sup>51</sup>Max Müller (n.d., p. 141) This is the first instance, where the intentions of Müller to propose a religion is found. While it is conceived only within the scope of saints and gods in the context of India, for Müller, he had the examples of von Bunsen (setting up an Prusso-Anglican church in Jerusalem) and Martin Luther, who started as a protestant reformer, leading to form a church. To Müller, Indian social reformers could play the same role, where he would provide them with the necessary foundation through the sacred books of the east.

<sup>52</sup>Müller (1895).

<sup>53</sup>Max Müller (n.d., p. 296).

<sup>54</sup>Max Müller (n.d., p. 4).

the strong criticism that he received during the Gifford lecture series. Nevertheless, he believed that his monumental work on the Sacred Books of the East would play a major role in the process of unifying humanity under the same progressive religious tradition. In a letter dated 5 January 1883, he wrote—*'I saw the other day that some Buddhists in Japan meant to start what they call a „Bible Society“ for printing and distributing portions of the Tripitaka. I prefer to speak of „Sacred Books.“ Strictly speaking, “Sacred Books” are such only as have received some canonical sanction, and form a body of writings to which nothing could be added. They need not be considered of Divine origin or revealed, but they must have been formally recognized as authoritative by a religious body or their representatives.'*<sup>55</sup>

## 2.6 Max Müller's Silent Formulation of AIT

Max Müller's research was clearly not free from the contemporary social, political and religious debates, arguments and tensions. His ambitious propositions on synthesis came during the time when racial scientists, social commentator, religious leaders and scholars were full of preconceived ideas about their own theories. While Müller did not support all of them explicitly, like his criticism of the Theosophical Society of India, it did not prevent many to interpret the results of Müller in their own way. Everything was hardened with a scientific merit and sweetened with a romantic nationalist view, which made these all the more acceptable.

The form of paternal colonialism that Britain exported to the colonies, including India, implicitly assumed that as a nation India was of inferior standing. The fact that it had a rich source of ancient texts did not match expectations. Europe had to *'embrace millions of strangers and barbarians as members of one family'*.<sup>56</sup> Stating that Aryans migrated from an ancient homeland towards India solved this riddle. There were several claims to the original homeland and the most authentic representatives of the original Aryan form, however, that was another issue. In the heat of the discovery of a golden past, the possibilities that could arise from an observation were never considered. The postulate directly resulted into a theory, until much later, when historians debated in favour of a indigenous Aryan theory.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Anon. (n.d., p. 129).

<sup>56</sup>Müller (1882).

<sup>57</sup>Bryant (2001) To complete the picture, the current Indo-Aryan migration theory postulates that the Yamna culture is the 'Urheimat' of the Indo-Europeans, from where the Sintashta culture (2100–1800 BC) emerged eastward, further from which developed the Andronovo culture (1800–1400 BC). Andronovo culture interacted with the BMAC (2300–1700 BC) and, due to this interaction, Indo-Iranians originated. Indo-Iranians split into the Indo-Aryan and the Iranian branches around 1800 BC. The Indo-Aryans migrated to the Levant, northern India, and possibly east Asia. Aryan Invasion Theory is essentially a skewed variant of the above theory, which artificially places the western branch of the Indo-Aryans at a superior scale and also uses a clock that matches with Biblical history.

In the logical form, this is a typical case of *unwarranted assumption fallacy*. In the following, some prominent influences on Müller are reviewed, to show how he repeated this fallacy in the name of scholarly pursuit.

### 2.6.1 *Aryan: Language or Race*

The term Aryan was used in mixed contexts for some time before it was fully appropriated to denote a race. In the following, I recount how scientific racism was evolving at that time and the first instances of the word Aryan being sprinkled in the intellectual circles.

In 1853, Arthur de Gobineau, a French aristocrat and prolific writer, who travelled around the world on official duties, published his famous book entitled *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines (An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races)*, which found eager audience in France and Germany. He suggested that all human beings originated from Biblical ancestors, but coloured races belong to different ethnological branches altogether. He blamed racial impurity to the turmoil in France. In essence, de Gobineau did not bring any novelty. He re-emphasized the theory of Polygenism, which stresses the fact that different races have evolved separately in different geographical locations without any common ancestor. Polygenism was widely held belief in nineteenth-century Europe, with establishment of Anthropological Society of London in 1863. They had the completely opposite view of Darwin and generally supported scientific racism, as proposed by authors like de Gobineau.

In 1839, Samuel George Morton, a noted Physical anthropologist, published a monograph titled *Crania Americana*, where he suggested that the intellectual capacity of a race could be measured from the size of the skull of its members. Works of other anthropologists, such as, Josiah Nott, who supported the notion of Polygenism, followed this. Though Darwin opposed this standpoint with Monogenism, i.e. every species has a common origin, the racial segregation gained momentum when Josiah Nott translated the works of de Gobineau in English. Further evidences from physical anthropologists suggested that long-headed, tall, blonde Nordic races were clearly demarcated from broad-headed people from south.<sup>58</sup> The notion of racial difference and their presumed hierarchy was a debated topic in Europe in nineteenth century. As a result, it was not uncommon to mix up notions from other fields of research with a racial tone.

The term *Aryan* was associated with Indo-European since Indo-Iranian languages represented this group and Indo-Iranian speaking people referred themselves as Aryan in many places. The same term came to be used for the new group,

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<sup>58</sup>Anon. (1992, p. 248) These early studies got ingrained with the linguistic theory of Müller, and in the longer duration got hijacked by racial theorists, such as British administrator Herbert Hope Risley.

i.e. Proto-Indo-European language. The term Aryan can be traced to ancient Sanskrit word *ārya*, which occurs multiple times in different verses of Rig Veda, the oldest Vedic manuscript. According to the translation in 1872 by Monier-Williams, Boden professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, the word had diverse meanings but generally attached to a person, who is noble and follows Vedic traditions. The word Arya is also found in the ancient Iranian texts, particularly in Avesta, the collection of sacred texts in Zoroastrianism. Unlike the Indian reference, the Iranian texts ascribed to Aryans in a clear ethnic context.

The first reference of *Aryan Race* in linguistic research occurs in page 262 of the lectures on the Science of Language, by Müller, delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1861. Müller comments—*‘while examining its ramification, learn at the same time why that name was chosen by the agricultural nomads, the ancestors of the Aryan race’*. It might, very well, be an unintentional mistake as in the same lecture he mentioned several times ‘Aryan dialect’, ‘Aryan verb’, ‘Aryan speech’ and ‘Aryan languages’. Nevertheless, the overlapping of language-speaking group with the race continued. The blurring of language-speaking group and race continued to gain momentum due to his proposition of linguistic evolution and the assertion that language represents the key intellectual faculty. Taking all prevalent causes at this point, it is most likely that Müller’s assertion of language-speaking group as a race has its roots in his public opposition of Darwin, who refused to accept language as a faculty that marks the qualitative separation between different species. The race is mixed throughout the lecture with connotations to other countries and other language-speaking groups as well. For example, he mentions that—*‘this could be done only by the same careful and minute comparison which enables us to class the idioms spoken in Iceland and Ceylon as cognate dialects’*.<sup>59</sup>

Even though the 1861 lecture strongly established the connection, the relation was gaining momentum already, thanks to the earlier works of orientalists like Friedrich von Schlegel. For example, Swiss philologist Adolphe Pictet stated in 1859—*‘The religion of Christ, destined to be the torch of humanity, was adopted by the genius of Greece and propagated by the power of Rome, while Germanic energy gave it new strength, and the whole race of European Aryas, under its beneficent influence, and by means of endless conflict, raised itself little by little to the level of modern civilization...It is thus that Aryas, more favoured than any other, was to become the main instrument of God’s plan for the destiny of mankind’*.<sup>60</sup> The romantic fervour is apparent in another quote from the same book—*‘Is it not perhaps curious to see the Aryas of Europe, after a separation of four or five thousand years, close the circle once again, reach their unknown brothers in India,*

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<sup>59</sup>(Müller, Great Britain) Müller was in touch with the various Missionaries for both the collection of ancient texts and linguistic studies. In his Lectures on the Science of Language, he mentions Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Gothic as the ‘royal heads in the history of language’. However, to search for their offsprings and linguistic rivulets, he mentions of his correspondences with Missionaries in India, Central Asia, America and Africa.

<sup>60</sup>Pictet (1878a).

*dominate them, bring to them the elements of a superior civilization, and then to find ancient evidence of a common origin?*<sup>61</sup>

At much later point of time, Müller repented the mixing of notions—*'I have declared again and again that if I say Aryas, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair, nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language. To me an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar'*.<sup>62</sup> However, the fact that he had to repeat his words 'again and again' shows how deeply these words got ingrained into the popular usage. In fact, on other numerous occasions, Müller extended the application of the term Aryan to nations, such as, *'Thousands of years have passed since the Aryan nations separated to travel to the North and the South, the West and the East'*,<sup>63</sup> and *'It treats of the history of the civilization of the Aryan nation before the fifteenth century BC, as one can construct it from the researches of comparative philology'*.<sup>64</sup> It is important to note that Müller's first public opposition of the theory that he created, even if inadvertently, came on the occasion of an inaugural lecture at the newly found Kaiser Wilhelm University in Strasbourg. It was during the aftermath of 1870/71 Franco-Prussian War. Perhaps Müller was concerned about the overzealous growth of German nationalism, which is fuelled by the Aryan race theory. In the inaugural speech he stated that *'These two sciences, the Science of Language and the Science of Man cannot, at least for the present, be kept too much asunder; and many misunderstandings, many controversies, would have been avoided, if scholars had not attempted to draw conclusions from language to blood, or from blood to language. When each of these sciences shall have carried out independently its own classification of men and languages, then, and then only, will it be time to compare their results; but even then, I must repeat what I have said many times before, it would be wrong to speak of Aryan blood as of dolichocephalic grammar'*.<sup>65</sup>

However, the damage was done long ago.

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<sup>61</sup>Pictet (1878b).

<sup>62</sup>Müller (1888, p. 120).

<sup>63</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 172).

<sup>64</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, pp. 97, 98).

<sup>65</sup>Speech before the University of Stassbourg, 1872, Chaudhuri (Oct 3rd, 1974) The mixing of language and race, apart from being used as a tool by racial ethnologists, also received heavy criticism when Müller tried to assert the position of „Aryan brethren“. Notably, John Crawford, a former chair of Ethnological society and a British diplomat, sarcastically commented—*„...that would amount to allowing that there was no difference in the faculties of the people that produced Homer and Shakespeare, and those that have produced nothing better than the authors or Mahabharat and Ramayana; no difference between the home-keeping Hindus, who never made a foreign conquest of any kind, and the nations who discovered, conquered, and peopled a new world“*.

### 2.6.2 *Rig Veda as a Tool*

While Aryan as a term to indicate a race gained more prominence than Aryan as a group of people speaking the same language, it was not a sufficient condition to establish a theory of Aryan migration. It needed the support of antiquity, which had to be rendered by a manuscript that is older than any other known piece of written document. Rig Veda served this purpose.

Müller was well versed with Rig Veda. Apart from being a religious text, Rig Veda contains a narrative of ancient India. For example, it mentions the contemporary social stratum, administrative systems and priest-craft. Most notably, there is an allusion to the Battle of the Ten Kings (dāśarājñā)<sup>66</sup> Historians date the battle to have taken place during the middle or main Rigvedic period,<sup>67</sup> near the river Parusni (modern Ravi river in Punjab, India). In this battle, King Sudas, leading the tribe of Trtsu, defeated the coalition of tribes consisting of Alinas, Anu, Bhrigus, Bhalanas, Dasa, Druhyus, Matsya, Parsu, Purus and Panis. There are several hymns that are dedicated to gods, Indra and Varuna, for helping Sudas.

To Müller, this was a clear reference to the battle the nomadic ancestors of European homeland had to forge to claim their land in India. In a lecture addressed to aspiring civil servants in Oxford before their journey to India, he mentions,

*'We find there the Aryan man, whom we know in his various characters, as Greek, Roman, German, Celt, and Slave, in an entirely new character. Whereas in his migrations northward his active and political energies are called out and brought to their highest perfection, we find the other side of the human character, the passive and meditative, carried to its fullest growth in India. In some of the hymns of the Rig-Veda we can still watch an earlier phase. We see the Aryan tribes taking possession of the land, and under the guidance of such warlike gods as Indra and the Maruts, defending their new homes against the assaults of the black-skinned aborigines as well as against the inroads of later Aryan colonists'.*

He was quick to dismiss any false notion about the greatness of these ancient texts, by mentioning in the same lecture that,

*'There have been silly persons who have represented the development of the Indian mind as superior to any other, nay, who would make us go back to the Veda or to the sacred writings of the Buddhists in order to find there a truer religion, a purer morality, and a more sublime philosophy than our own. I shall not even mention the names of these writers or the titles of their works. But I feel equally impatient when I see other scholars criticizing the ancient literature of India as if it were the work of the nineteenth century, as if it represented an enemy that must be defeated, and that can claim no mercy at our hands. That the Veda is full of childish, silly, even to our minds monstrous conceptions, who would deny?'*

While Rig Veda served as a tool for reviving the root of a nation, it was clearly deemed primitive compared to everything that was then manifested in Europe. Like

<sup>66</sup>Anon. (n.d., pp. 4–8).

<sup>67</sup>Witzel (2000).

a double-edged sword, Rig Veda in Europe was a key for establishing historical supremacy over other nations; it was used for establishing a kinship and promoting the paternal colonialism in India. Through a web of detailed scientific study, and possibly a glimmering hope of original scientific work, what got propagated was nothing but falsehood. As noted by Edmund Leach (1910–1989), a British social anthropologist—*‘Where the Indo-European philologists are concerned, the invasion argument is tied in with their assumption that if a particular language is identified as having been used in a particular locality at a particular time, no attention need be paid to what was there before; the slate is wiped clean. Obviously, the easiest way to imagine this happening in real life is to have a military conquest that obliterates the previously existing population! The details of the theory fit in with this racist framework... Because of their commitment to a unilineal segmentary history of language development that needed to be mapped onto the ground, the philologists took it for granted that proto-Indo-Iranian was a language that had originated outside either India or Iran. Hence it followed that the text of the Rig Veda was in a language that was actually spoken by those who introduced this earliest form of Sanskrit into India. From this we derived the myth of the Aryan invasions. QED’*.<sup>68</sup> It needs to be noted that the proof was not so simple and lied deep in the growth of European scholarship and ended with the construction of entire disciplines like science of language and science of religion though, the fact remains that, Müller was committed to the unilineal segmentary history of development—at least as far as language and religion were concerned.

The fallacy originated from the unhesitating belief of Müller that Christianity and Europe blossomed forth ahead of the growth of any civilization at any point of time in human history. All his efforts were in tune with the resurrection of those lost kins. As he spoke in the Hibbert lecture series on 21 June 1878, *‘I hope the time will come when the subterranean area of human religion will be rendered more and more accessible, ... and that the Science of Religion, which at present is but a desire and a seed, will in time become a fulfillment and a plenteous harvest. When that time of harvest has come, when the deepest foundations of all the religions of the world have been laid free and restored’*. Of course, his other labour of love was, to explain his critics that his efforts are actually dedicated towards Christianity—*‘I feel very certain, that this translation of the Sacred Books of the East, which some of the good people here consider most objectionable, will do a great deal towards lifting Christianity into its high historical position’*.<sup>69</sup> Müller wrote to lady Welby on July 27, 1879.

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<sup>68</sup>Sir Edmund Leach (1990, pp. 227–245).

<sup>69</sup>Max Müller (n.d., p. 67).

## 2.7 Conclusion

Nineteenth-century European scholarship was undergoing tumultuous time. First, there was a wave of new scientific ideas, which in some cases were affecting the lives of people. These ideas were discussed, debated and challenged age-old religious beliefs, throwing people into a dark age of doubt. Lecture series were quite common and heavily attended. Proponents from ancient and modern notions publicly fought over their ideas. Universities were one at the centre stage of such debates, having well-known scholars throwing into new ideas in every sphere of knowledge on a regular basis. Second, the world was slowly dawning to the existence of many nations, ideologies, religions, cultures and languages. How to interact, integrate and accept these diversities, were not clear.

Max Müller was a spirited, enthusiastic and hard-working scholar of this time. He followed the footsteps of the giants of his time and soon become a force in linguistic studies to reckon with. With the enormous knowledge that he gained, he had to embark on a grand problem—a problem that would address the crisis of belief, a problem that would cement the place of European civilization in the modern world and a problem that he would be remembered for.

Müller chose the problem to be uncovering the human and world history. He proposed notions like the science of language and science of religion through an elaborate series of lectures, volumes of articles and regular discussions with the most important people in the European and colonial societies. While he did not endorse the scientific theories of racism, he also opposed the view that evolution can bridge the gap between a human and an ape. He reinforced on the idea that language acts as a media of rational thinking and it also separates human from any other species. By accepting this line of argument, he also opened up the corridor of scientific racism through a hierarchy of languages, knowingly or unknowingly. He also enabled development of a world order that, at first, is based on language, then, language-speaking people and finally, ethnicity or race.

To his credit, Müller did his best to apply the contemporary technique—a scientific approach to all these studies. The result of his efforts was the development and a quick acceptance of a racial theory that remains deeply ingrained even after one and a half century. Later evidences with deeper scrutiny revealed most of his conclusions were erroneous. Nevertheless, the theory prevailed for enough time to render tumultuous damage to human civilization in various forms of conflict and hatred.

This study details the emergence of Müller and his theories. It shows how scholarly pursuit, even with most advanced contemporary methods, might be wrong if presumed notions and social constructions of theory play a role. How to escape this fallacy is an interesting and open challenge in a realm across knowledge, ethics and society.

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# Chapter 3

## Brahmo Samaj as an Actor in the Dissemination of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) in India



**Abstract** Dissemination of a scientific theory does follow, often, a circuitous route. It is a widespread notion, supported by eminent scholars that noted linguist and religious scholar; F. Max Müller is responsible for the dissemination of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT), who played in the hands of imperial interests. In this paper, I argue that there were other stakeholders in the process of widespread acceptance of AIT. In particular, the Brahmo Samaj, a prominent socio-religious reform association in nineteenth century India, played a major role in the spreading of AIT. The prominent leaders of Brahmo Samaj, actively or passively, corroborated with Müller in that process. I closely examine the development of affairs during that time and attempt to establish the fact that development of a scientific theory is not a unilateral process, but rather strongly influenced by the sociopolitical environments of the time.

### 3.1 Introduction

‘We see a re-union of parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race’, proclaimed by Keshub Chandra Sen, arguably the most prominent Indian religious reformer of his times, in a mass gathering in Calcutta, the capital of British India in March 1877.<sup>1</sup> This open embracing of the English nation by the distinguished Indian elite is an event of paramount significance considering the fact that, only two decades ago, in 1857, Indian leaders fought a gory battle to usurp the rule of British in India. The battle was widespread in India, where almost all of the Indian royalties united against British colonialism, however, to accept defeat at the end.

The changes that took place in these two decades, marked the simultaneous rise of a popular theory, known as Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT), proposed by F. Max Müller. The seemingly separate worlds of academic pursuit, linguistic studies, religious reformation and political battles collided to pave the way for this theory. It is a debatable argument that behind political, economic, literary works, a strong

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<sup>1</sup>Sen (1901).

social control is always at action. A major offshoot of this argument is the social construction of science and technology,<sup>2</sup> (Said 1978) which argues that scientific works are not only products of pursuit of truth, but also, cedes to the demands and prejudices of society. In this chapter, I explore the early dissemination of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) in India. I investigate how the interests of British Empire, Christian Missionaries and Brahma Samaj, an elite social reformation movement in India, crossed paths to shape the course of AIT in India. While this study can be generalized to Oriental studies and the field of any scientific theory, I focus on AIT, a prominent Oriental theory.

In his landmark work *Orientalism*,<sup>3</sup> Edward Said proclaims, the apparent academic pursuit of nineteenth-century orientalists had nothing but the interests of colonial powers to serve. This echoes the ideas of Michel Foucault that, knowledge begets power. Thomas R. Trautmann<sup>4</sup> countered the views of Said suggesting that Oriental studies had serious academic interests, too. In particular, Trautmann cited academicians before Colonial rules, who were interested in Oriental studies. Evidently, Trautmann could establish his view as he assumed a rather narrow definition of an Oriental scholar. According to him, an oriental scholar is one with knowledge of Asian languages and not one, who produced inaccurate depictions of Orient based on secondary sources. Let us get into the deeper context of AIT with this background.

F. Max Müller, a linguist with strong background in Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit was definitely a scholarly genius of his ages and satisfied the definition of Orientalist as per Thomas R. Trautmann. Yet, Müller is often (dis)-credited for wrongly putting forward AIT, which served as an instrument of political power, not exactly fitting the image of an Oriental scholar. This apparent contradiction is also present in the life of Müller, who often fought intellectual battles against devout Christians as well as Oriental scholars. To give an example, during the heated contest for the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit in 1860, Müller was pitted as the one with fewer credentials to help the Missionary cause in India by the supporters of his opponent, Monier-Williams'.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, Müller had an interest in ancient Sanskrit texts, which catered to philosophical views of the Indian mind, whereas Monier-Williams had deep knowledge of actual religious practices. Interestingly, even though Müller faced criticism from several quarters for being anti-Christian, he rather intended at some point of his life to promote Christianity in India. Also, in the general debate against reigning scientific heroes of that time, particularly Darwin, Müller was pitched as a devout Christian. Though Müller was primarily a literary scholar, his involvement with various agencies during his

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<sup>2</sup>Healy (1982), Milic (1980).

<sup>3</sup>Said (1978), The powerful proposition of this work, that 'all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact (British Colonization)' shaped subsequent studies and fields like postcolonialism.

<sup>4</sup>Trautmann (2004).

<sup>5</sup>Beckerlegge (1997, p. 189).

research, makes it quite hard to classify him as per the definitions of Orientalist according to either Said or Trautmann. However, Müller is considered the strongest force behind the propagation of AIT, which counters the argument of Trautmann.

What the earlier historians overlooked is that the development of any scientific theory needs the strong interaction between the proponent and receptor of the theory. In the case of AIT, a key class of receptors was educated Indian elite. I argue here, that, the dissemination of AIT had more stakeholders than what has been presented before in literature. The focus of this paper is the role played by Brahma Samaj, a social reform movement spearheaded by the Indian elite, in the adoption and spreading of AIT. The key point of our argument is that AIT served the interests of British Imperialists, Christian missionaries, and Müller as well as the leaders of Brahma Samaj. At the same time, it can be argued that everyone participated in the proliferation of AIT in various capacities. The interests of these parties are not necessarily scholarly, as Thomas R. Trautmann has suggested, not necessarily imperial, as Edward Said argued, but, includes many aspects such as the religious, social and political viewpoint of the stakeholders.

The case presented in this thesis shows that religious reform movements in India also played a role in the adoption and proliferation of AIT. Our idea is similar to that of Catherine Hall who maintained that, the ‘framework of them/us, or what is absolutely the same versus what is absolutely other, will not do. It is not possible to make sense of empire either theoretically or empirically through a binary lens: we need the dislocation of that binary and more elaborate, cross-cutting ways of thinking’.<sup>6</sup> The previous studies in the emergence of AIT focused solely on an individual cause and effect scenario, which is hardly the complete truth.

In the following, I briefly review the background of theories related to *Aryan myth*. I closely study the contemporary state of the *European academic* and *Indian socio-religious movement*, the two prime foci of this work.

### ***3.1.1 Nineteenth-Century European Politics and the Emergence of Oriental Studies***

#### **3.1.1.1 Eastern Question**

Since the Russo-Turkish war that ended in 1774 with the defeat of Ottoman Empire, the decline of this once powerful empire was only a matter of time. To safeguard the military, political and diplomatic interests, major European nations entered in a long power struggle that is termed as the Eastern Question. This was one of the major issues in nineteenth century European politics, particularly involving England, Germany, Russia and Balkan nations.

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<sup>6</sup>Hall (2002, S. 16).

The conflict was specifically highlighted with Russia as one party. Involving a religious dispute, Russia entered in a war with Ottoman Empire during 1853–1856, known as Crimean War. Britain and France were interested to secure Ottoman Empire, partly to prevent the rise of Russia and supported Ottoman Empire with their military fleet. Russia was defeated, but gained ground later once France and several German states entered into Franco-Prussian war in 1871. Later, Benjamin Disraeli, a conservative British politician and two-times prime minister, took a serious interest in the foreign policy to maintain the colonial supremacy of Britain over other European powers. After Turks ceded Bulgaria at the Treaty of San Stefano, 1878, Britain arranged for a negotiation between Russia, Germany and Britain at the Congress of Berlin, during June–July 1878. In the treaty of Berlin, Disraeli could reach an honourable agreement with Russia. Czar Alexander II later remarked the congress as a ‘European coalition against Russia, under Bismarck’.

### 3.1.1.2 Oriental Studies

The fiery political situation of that time, naturally, fostered the study of Oriental languages in England, partly from a military–political perspective. This is reflected by a letter dated 21 March 1854, just 3 days before war was declared against Russia, Max Müller received a letter from Sir Charles Trevelyan (then Assistant secretary to the Treasury), that how to study the languages of the northern division of the Turkish empire and the adjoining provinces of Russia. Sir Charles requested Müller to prepare at once a treatise, showing which language is spoken in that part of the world, their general structure, and the alphabets used, and what would be the most useful books on the respective languages. By 16 May 1854, Max Müller was able to send his suggestions.<sup>7</sup> In his first letter to Sir Charles, Müller called attention to a subject that continued to occupy his thoughts almost to the end of his life. He writes—‘It is undoubtedly high time that something should be done to encourage the study of Oriental languages in England’, ‘other Countries which have any political, commercial, or religious connections with the East, provision has been made, by Government or otherwise, to encourage young men to devote themselves to this branch of studies’. He strongly maintains ‘In England alone, where the most vital interests are involved in a free intercourse with the East, hardly anything is done to foster Oriental studies’.<sup>8</sup>

Müller was a keen follower of contemporary politics as reflected by his numerous letters. Long after, in 1890, a school of modern Oriental studies was established in London. In the inaugural address, Müller mentioned about the efforts he had made for the previous three decades, starting from Crimean war to the need

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<sup>7</sup>Wife (1902, S. 153, 154) The tradition of a dutiful wife to keep the memoirs of his illustrious husband for posterity was not uncommon in nineteenth century. Another example of this is Frances Waddington Bunsen, who published the memoirs of her husband, Baron von Bunsen in 1868.

<sup>8</sup>Wife (1902, S. 154).

of English or Vernacular education. Müller had specific interest regarding India for many reasons. First, Müller admired the deep-rooted colonial prowess that England enjoyed over India. In a letter dated November 1885, he writes, ‘There may be jealousies between England and her colonies, but if it came to extremities, the colonies would allow no hair of England to be touched. Even India, which was formerly a danger, has shown now that England’s enemies are her enemies’. Second, he knew how important it was to understand the subjects. He reflected during his speech during the inauguration of the school in 1890 on how greatly India can benefit if merchants, clerks and employers in general were able, by the knowledge of the languages, which the colonial subjects use. Finally, Müller was clearly intrigued by the ancient forms of religion that existed in Indian texts. In his treatise on different forms of religion, as delivered in Gifford lecture series during 1891, he devoted a complete lecture, the ‘Physical Religion’ to the Vedic literature. There, he also mentions about the assumed date of earliest Vedic literature to have formed between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C. Müller was not alone in his studies of ancient texts, though he certainly was an aberration among the scholars of classic literature by confirming an early date of Vedic literature. In his Gifford lecture series, he points out to the fact in rather hard way—*‘Sanskrit is still looked upon as an unwelcome guest by many classical scholars and anything that can be said against it is welcomed by all who dislike the trouble of learning a new language’*.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, what started in the Oriental studies with a preliminary political interest on Oriental languages, slowly took over as a separate and strong discipline. After wrestling with the facts and assumptions over the Aryan migration and the chronology of Vedic literature, Müller commented—*‘Perhaps we shall have to confess that after all our ideas of what human beings in India ought to have thought 3000 years ago are evolved from our inner consciousness and that we must learn to digest facts though they do not agree with our tastes and our preconceived ideas’*.<sup>10</sup>

The preconceived ideas that Müller passingly referred to had something to do with the changing view of the world, as it was known, thanks to upheavals caused by several European scientific luminaries.

### 3.1.2 Nineteenth Century European Scientific World

#### 3.1.2.1 Abrupt Changes in the Ancient Notions

The nineteenth-century scientific world in Europe witnessed the evolution of many prominent scientific theories. The rising dominance of science over faith was causing major upheaval in the reigning religious circles. There was a scientific revolution in almost every field of knowledge. Theologians and scientists were

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<sup>9</sup>Müller M.

<sup>10</sup>Müller M.

thrown in confusion and they often entered into bitter conflict after the publication of *Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology in 1830–33*. This challenged the theory of evolution from a Christian point of belief. Lyell was a major advocate of James Hutton's idea of uniformitarianism, which states that the earth was shaped entirely by slow-moving forces, acting over a very long period of time. This was in contrast to catastrophism, a geologic idea of abrupt changes, which had been adapted in England to support belief in Noah's flood.<sup>11</sup> Charles Darwin's 'The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection and the Descent of Man' followed this in 1859. This purported to trace man's origin to an ancient form, which diverged from the monkey stock—arousing a controversy still very much alive today.

The hard-hitting empirical evidence brought forward by Lyell and Darwin challenged the Victorian morality and long-standing Christian beliefs. Common people of the era suddenly found themselves in a state, referred to as *Crisis of Faith*. The result was partly an increased interest in ancient texts that would re-establish the supremacy of Christian beliefs and partly an obsession towards new forms of science, which, at all times, were not really based on scientific merit.

In 1853, Arthur de Gobineau, a French aristocrat, who travelled around the world on official duties, published a book titled *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines (An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races)*, which found an eager audience in France and Germany. He suggested that all human beings originated from Biblical ancestors but coloured races belong to different human families altogether. He blamed racial impurity to the turmoil in France. In essence, de Gobineau did not bring any novelty. He re-emphasized the theory of *Polygenism*, which stresses the fact that different races have evolved separately in different geographical locations without any common ancestor. Polygenism was widely held belief in nineteenth-century Europe, with the establishment of Anthropological Society of London in 1863. They had the completely opposite view of Darwin and generally supported scientific racism, as proposed by authors like de Gobineau.

In 1839, Samuel George Morton, a noted Physical anthropologist, published a monograph titled *Crania Americana*, where he suggested that the intellectual capacity of a race could be measured from the size of the skull of its members. Works of other anthropologists, such as Josiah Nott, who supported the notion of Polygenism, followed this. Further evidences from physical anthropologists suggested that long-headed, tall, blonde Nordic races were clearly demarcated from broad-headed people from south.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Whewell (1837, 1973, reprint of 3rd edition of 1857, publ. Class 1967) Much like the efforts to reconcile the dates of Rig Veda with Biblical narrative, there were some proponents of Catastrophism, who attempted to link historical records or legends of a great flood with the Noah's flood. French Palaeontologist Georges Cuvier was among the first to propose a record of multiple such natural floods and formed the group of natural theologians. William Buckland, an English theologian, on the other hand, tried his best to use Cuvier's observations to support Biblical records.

<sup>12</sup>Todd (1992, S. 248).

The general mood in nineteenth-century Europe was political turmoil and close contact, due to colonialism, with many people from a diverse linguistic, cultural, geographical and ethnological background. Amidst all these, the European power struggle found an outlet in scientific theories, particularly for, racism.

### ***3.1.3 Development of Aryan Myth***

#### **3.1.3.1 Development of the Aryan Race Concept**

In 1786, Sir William Jones, a Judge in Calcutta High Court and also the founder of Asiatic Society of Bengal, made the following observation during the third anniversary discourse of the society—‘The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them stronger affinity both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar than could have been produced by accident, so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists’.<sup>13</sup>

Till the discovery of Sanskrit by linguistic scholars, the most ancient Indo-European language group known to scholars was from ancient Indo-Iranian. Among linguists, this discovery led to a significantly heightened activity around Sanskrit literature, particularly the study of most archaic documents in Sanskrit—Vedic texts. Soon, the linguists started referring the entire group as Proto-Indo-European language, also referred to as the Aryan languages. The term Aryan was associated with Indo-European since Indo-Iranian languages represented this group and Indo-Iranian speaking people referred themselves as Aryan in many places. The same term came to be used for the new group, i.e. Proto-Indo-European language.

The term Aryan can be traced to ancient Sanskrit word *ārya*, which occurs multiple times in different verses of Rig Veda, the oldest Vedic manuscript. According to the translation in 1872 by Monier-Williams, Boden professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, the word had diverse meanings but generally attached to a person, who is noble and follows Vedic traditions. The word *Arya* is also found in the ancient Iranian texts, particularly in Avesta, the collection of sacred texts in Zoroastrianism. Unlike the Indian reference, the Iranian texts ascribed to Aryans in a clear ethnic context.

The first reference of Aryan Race in linguistic research occurs in page 262 of the lectures on the Science of Language, by Müller, delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1861. Müller comments—‘while examining its ramification, learn at the same time why that name was chosen by the agricultural nomads, the

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<sup>13</sup>Patil (249).

ancestors of the Aryan race'. It might, very well, be an unintentional mistake as in the same lecture he mentioned 'Aryan dialect', 'Aryan verb', 'Aryan speech' and 'Aryan languages'. Nevertheless, the overlapping of language-speaking group with the race continued. The mixing of language-speaking group and race also had to do something that was taking shape across many European nations.

### 3.1.3.2 Romantic Nationalism

European Romantic Movement or Romantic Nationalism is a movement that started emphasizing on the emotional aspects of nature as a reaction against industrial revolution and scientific rationalization, and left deep impressions on the rise of nationalistic sentiments. Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829) was a German poet, philosopher, Orientalist and one of the founders of the Romantic Movement in Germany. In Germany, for example, the Romantic Movement increased interest in anything that is originally German. A collection of folk stories were published by Grimm Brothers, which represented the undiluted form of national culture and literature. In 1836, Gustav Klemm published a book titled 'Handbook of German Antiquity', which tried to retrace German culture through ancient literature and available archaeological data. Schlegel was very much familiar with ancient Indian texts, as well as the Aryan myth due to the Proto-Indo-European language family. In 1808, he published a book on 'Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier' (On the Language and Wisdom of Indians).

In search of the antiquity, Schlegel put forward a theory. In the first-hand account of Julius Caesar's 'Commentarii de Bello Gallico' (Comments on the Gallic Wars), he mentioned about Ariovistus, a German leader. Schlegel suggested that etymologically Ario is close to the German word 'Ehre' (meaning honour), and hence, it is connected to Aryan.

Due to the simultaneously evolving theories of Polygenism and evidences from physical anthropologists, the Aryan connection was deeply embedded. In the same lecture series on the science of language, Müller commented, 'And as in Persia we found many proper names in which Arya formed an important ingredient, so we find again in German history names such as Ariovistus'. Müller put in the footnote that, etymologically this connection may not be correct but at the end, it was still only a footnote.

### 3.1.3.3 Home of the Aryans

The last part of the missing puzzle was to determine the homeland of the mythical Aryan race. Diverse sets of archaeological data were being put forward to favour the claims for Germany, Western Russia and Scandinavia.<sup>14</sup> However, regardless of

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<sup>14</sup>Todd (1992, S. 248).

the actual homeland claim, it was well established, despite lack of any other evidence than linguistic matches, that there was indeed a migration. Müller explored in depth, the possible migration routes in his science of language lecture, starting with, ‘Two roads were open to the Aryans of Asia in their westward migrations’. It was implicit that the same Aryans, did either migrate from central Asia to India, or migrated westward starting from India. It was also implicit, that the westward migration led to different branches, including Germans and British.

The kinship that could then clearly unite India and Europe would actually be welcomed by a significant group of Indian intellectuals, as will be discussed in the following sections. For Orientalists like Müller, the then state of India could be explained by degradation from their superior, ancient Aryan traditions.

It is interesting to note that, around the same time, in 1850s, Karl Marx, noted philosopher, economist and social commentator, in a series of articles in New York Daily Tribune, justified the British colonization of India as a form of paternal colonialism, which exports civilization to end ‘Oriental despotism’. The story could not be better positioned than what is established, even though via half-baked theories—a lost kin from Europe is bringing back civilization to India.

### ***3.1.4 Indian Political System in Nineteenth Century***

The establishment of British rule in nineteenth century was complete and stable by all orders. The rule started with the defeat of the Nawab of Bengal in the battle of Plassey in 1757 and slowly spread across the nation with battles and treaties with local princely states. The entire land occupied much of Southeast Asia now, totaling nearly 2 million square kilometres. The rule was led by East India Company, which was owned by stockholders and reported to a board of directors in London. The first year of company rule was marked by trade monopoly and by wielding that power, it resulted in governmental powers, arms dealing and judiciary. Rampant corruption was a natural outcome with tremendous exploitation of Indian population. In 1784, Pitt’s India act was constituted to curb this trend, new policies for the elite career in civil services were introduced and British officials enjoyed a life of luxury in India, while looking after the rule of land with a sense of paternal colonialism. The East India Company was locally headed by Governor General with a residency in the capital city of Calcutta. The motto of the company was ‘By command of the King and Parliament of England’. The rule of East India Company faced opposition from Indian subjects throughout at different levels.

In fact, the 1857 mutiny was no sudden occurrence. It was the culmination of decades of discontent with the British policies and imperialist exploitation.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup>The ruthless and rampant loot during the early era of East India Company came to a grinding halt, thankfully, after the Charter Act of 1813, which established the Crown’s sovereignty over British India; allocated a sum of 100,000 Rupees to promote education in India; and also on the other hand, permitted Christian Missionaries to preach their religion freely—thus, leading to new

colonization process of East India Company was a prolonged process, which led to continuous resistance by the people through a series of civil rebellions led by deposed rulers, and ex-officials of the conquered Indian states. The mass base of these rebellions came from the ruined peasants and artisans and demobilized soldiers. These rebellions were, however, wholly local in character and effects and were isolated from each other. This took a completely different character when the Indian soldiers in the East India Company army revolted in Barrackpore and Meerut, killed the European officers and marched to Delhi. In Delhi, they declared an old Bahadur Shah, the heir of Mughal Empire, as the Emperor of India. Overall, nearly half of East India Company's Indian soldiers rebelled. Everywhere in Northern India, the soldiers' rebellion was followed by popular revolts of the civilian population. The Revolt soon embraced a wide area engulfing Avadh, Rohilkhand, the Duab, the Bundelkhand, Central India, large parts of Bihar and East Punjab. There were uprising in Rajasthan at Nasirabad, Nimach and Kota. Even in Kolhapur, the sepoys rose in arms. In many of the princely states of these regions, the rulers remained loyal to the British but the soldiers and people joined the rebels or refused to fight against them. Despite the initial setbacks and even though the magnitude of the revolt was unprecedented in the British rule, British imperialism succeeded in ruthlessly suppressing the Revolt. The reasons were manifold. Despite its wide reach, the Revolt could not embrace the entire country or all sections of Indian society. Bengal, South India and large parts of Punjab remained outside its reach since these areas had already exhausted themselves through prolonged rebellions and struggle against the British. Most rulers of Indian states and the big zamindars remained loyal to the foreign rulers and in fact, the Rajput rulers of Jodhpur and many other Rajputana states, the Nawab of Bhopal, the rulers of Patiala and Kashmir, the Ranas of Nepal, and many other rulers gave active support to the British in suppressing the Revolt. In general, merchants and moneylenders either supported the British or refused to help the rebels. The leaders of the Revolt fought with courage, but could neither coordinate their struggle nor evolve a unified high command. The mutiny lasted for more than a year 10 May 1857–20 June 1858.

Recognizing the magnitude of the unrest and partly to avoid such mishap again, the rule of the British crown was imposed on India in 1858. Queen Victoria would be proclaimed the Empress of Indian in 1876. After this heated times, though the mutineers were crushed, a sense of nationalism started fuming across India. This was reflected in the founding of Indian National Congress in 1885. The idea of setting up a body to present the Indian interests to government was in fact brought up by Allan Octavia Hume, a retired Scottish Civil Servant. Hume was an administrator in Etawah, a small city on the banks of the river Yamuna, during 1857 rebellion, where he saw the atrocities of the mutiny first-hand. Though he made

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forms of resentment. A detailed account of the British atrocities during this time, as well as during the later colonial era is documented in '*An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*' authored by Shashi Tharoor in 2016 (published by Aleph Book Company).

great efforts to restore and redevelop the areas to normalcy after the rebellion, he was always outspoken of the British policies, especially in its poor governance and unfair treatment of Indian subjects. Hume took the permission of the then Viceroy Lord Dufferin, the acting head of Indian government under the Queen Victoria, to initiate the first Indian National Congress in Bombay. Its aim was to obtain a greater share in government for educated Indians, and to create a platform for civic and political dialogue between them and the British Raj. Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee was the first president of the Congress; 72 delegates attended the first session. Representing each province of India, the delegates comprised 54 Hindus and 2 Muslims; the rest were of Parsi and Jain backgrounds. Notable representatives included Scottish ICS officer William Wedderburn, Dadabhai Naoroji, Pheroze Shah Mehta of the Bombay Presidency Association, Ganesh Vasudeo Joshi of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, social reformer and newspaper editor Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Justice K.T. Telang, N. G. Chandavarkar, Dinshaw Wacha, Behramji Malabari, journalist and activist Gooty Kesava Pillai and P. Rangaiah Naidu of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. This body would eventually grow to claim the Indian Independence. What is important to note here that the delegates consisted of balanced involvement from all parts of India, from different socio-religious backgrounds and included significant number of members, with active involvements in contemporary social reform movement.

### ***3.1.5 Social Crisis in Nineteenth-Century India and the Emergence of 'Brahmo Samaj'***

India in nineteenth century was a melting pot of widely contrasting ideas. On the one hand, there was a deluge of western thoughts from the leaders of scientific evolution as well as efforts of Christian missionaries to denigrate the Indian religious practices. On the other hand, prevalent religious customs offered little to support the crisis of identity in a rational Indian youth.

*'First send the missionaries, then send the merchants and send the army'*<sup>16</sup>—this was the dominant policy of European powers for spreading colonialism/imperialism, which has been applied to India, too. For giving a detailed perspective of the prevailing social condition, let us take a look at the reminiscences of Mahendranath Datta, who grew up amidst a serious social turmoil in Calcutta. Calcutta was the most prominent city and cultural centre of India during the middle of nineteenth century. There was an ongoing crisis for the religious identity, especially among the youth. This happened due to the strong currents of ancient

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<sup>16</sup>Datta (2010, S. 22, 21) Mahendranath Datta also happens to be the brother of Narendranath Datta, a famous social reformer in nineteenth century India. They were from an affluent family with a strong tradition of multicultural, intellectual household. Narendranath Datta, later known as Swami Vivekananda, corresponded regularly with Max Müller and also was an admirer and follower of Keshub Sen at one point of his life.

rituals meeting with the new wave of western thoughts brought by Christian Missionaries. Common people hardly had any knowledge about the literature carrying the most ancient philosophical thoughts such as Upanishad and Gita. The existence of religion remained as a bunch of social traditions, which could not stand the scrutiny of an inquisitive, rational mind. The so-called elite people of society spent time in pursuing carnal pleasures, which was also done in the name of religion.

Young boys formed groups to fight against such deterioration of society but could not offer an alternative religion that would match with their identity. Embracing Christianity offered a way out of this precarious situation but at the cost of losing an identity and being socially outcast. On the other hand, to combat Christianity would require considerable knowledge as well as courage, as observed by Datta.<sup>17</sup> The social hierarchy was completely in action, where people with different caste would even not eat at the same place.<sup>18</sup> Christian Missionaries took ample advantage of this social predicament. They openly proclaimed that Hinduism is nothing but, prejudice and it is entirely wrong.<sup>19</sup> There were also groups formed, which completely denied the existence of a God, whatsoever. In this struggling period of the society, Keshub Chandra Sen started to preach Brahma Dharma and established the 'Brahmo Samaj' with the concept of a Universal religion.

### ***3.1.6 Brahma Samaj as Socio-Religious Reform Movement During Nineteenth Century in India***

Brahma Samaj ('Society of Brahma', also translated as 'Society of God') was the societal component of Brahmoism. It was one of the most influential religious reformist movements<sup>20</sup> responsible for the making of modern India. Brahma Samaj was established at Calcutta, the capital of British India, on 1830 by Raja Rammohun Roy. Rammohun Roy was a rich, upper caste Brahmin, a respectable Sanskrit Scholar, well versed in several languages such as Persian, English as well as known for few philosophical publications in Bengali.<sup>21</sup> Debendranath Tagore was a Hindu philosopher and religious reformer. The newfound Samaj was called Adi Brahma Samaj, where *Adi* stands for Original and Samaj means congregation. It began the Bengal Renaissance of the nineteenth-century pioneering all religious, social and educational advance of the Hindu community.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Datta (2010, S. 22, 21).

<sup>18</sup>Datta (2010, S. 22, 21), Hall (2002, S. 16).

<sup>19</sup>Datta (2010, S. 21).

<sup>20</sup>Farquhar (1915, S. 29).

<sup>21</sup>(1866, S. 19).

<sup>22</sup>Official Brahma website Brahmosamaj.org., Retrieved 2012-10-15.

The religion of the Adi Brahma Samaj stood for repudiation of all 'distinctions between people' and foundation of a modern educated secular Indian nation under the timeless and form-less One God. The Adi Dharma (literally meaning original phenomena/ disambiguation) Brahmic religion was originated by the Bengali Brahmin Thakur clan of Rammohun Roy, Debendranath Tagore and Prasanna kumar Tagore. This was the first organized casteless movement in British India and reverberated from its heart of Bengal to Assam, Bombay State (modern Sindh, Maharashtra and Gujarat), Punjab and Madras, Hyderabad, Bangalore. Various facets of this Adi Brahma Samaj took shape in the form of other religious movements in different parts of India.

In Calcutta, other prominent leaders of Brahma Samaj included Keshub Chandra Sen, Pratap Chandra Majumdar and Sivnath Sastri. The ideological differences between these leaders reverberated throughout different socio-religious movements in India. Furthermore, and importantly, the ideological struggles within the various schisms of Brahma Samaj played a key role in the emergence of AIT.

While British Empire wanted a tool to connect to the Indian elites, Christian missionaries needed a theory to demonstrate the supremacy of Christianity and integrate the Indian social cultural, on the other hand, the Brahma Samaj, as a whole, was constantly looking to promote their own ideology regarding Christianity. In this paper, I investigate the interests of these three parties involved for the dissemination of AIT.

### **3.2 A Short Overview of Brahma Samaj**

Reform movement is a significant and arguably strong facet of Hinduism. As early as during the period of Buddha, his doctrines grew out of his protests against the tyrannies of ruling social leaders. Brahma Samaj, in nineteenth century, took the same path of initiating a large-scale reform movement to stop the decadence observed across the society in the name of religion.

Unlike the previous social reform movements, in this scenario, the communication to the entire world, and in particular, with the western world of modern science, was much better established. This was reflected as another reason to glorify this movement. In the book, 'The Religion of Brahma Samaj' Hem Chandra Sarkar mentions 'Now and here, for the first time in the history of the world, the Eastern and Western civilisations, like two mighty rivers after a long parallel march, have at last met: together at the feet of the Himalayas to give birth to a truer, fuller, and completer civilisation for future humanity; and Brahmaism is the religion-' of that future humanity born of the union of the East and the West'.

Rammohun Roy, the founder of Brahma Samaj, believed in the sublime ideal of a universal religion without any barriers of caste, colour, nationality or race. He imagined the world will offer prayers to one eternal God. Roy was closely acquainted with diverse cultures like Buddhism, Islam and Christian. He mastered numerous languages, including Greek and Hebrew, to study the Bible in the

original. His tireless devotion, supreme oratorical skills and zeal for the single goal of propagating this ideology gave him a prophet-like standing among his followers.

### 3.2.1 *Foundation and Growth of Brahma Samaj*

On 22nd August 1828 Rammohun Roy started organizing a weekly meeting for the worship of a form-less God, irrespective of caste, creed or race. Two years later, a building was erected under the banner—Theistic Church or the Brahma Samaj. In 1838, Devendra Nath Tagore, a friend of Rammhoun Roy and hailing from an aristocratic family, started taking a serious interest in his initiative. Rapid progress in the membership and enthusiasm was achieved under the aegis of Debendra Nath Tagore.

Rammohun Roy's approach towards his Hindu opponents as well as Christians was to refute their authorities by citing passages from Upanishads, an ancient set of Indian texts. To strongly argue against idol worship, prevalent in the Hinduism, Roy published some of the Upanishads in original Sanskrit accompanied with Bengali and English translation. Upanishads were follow-up texts of the ancient Vedic literature and therefore, were also known as Vedanta, meaning the *end of Veda*. Due to the strong reliance of early Brahma Samaj ideals on Vedanta, it was also known as Vedantism. This also implicitly assumed that Vedic texts are infallible. This turning back to the roots caused much enthusiasm and added fuel to the growing anti-Christian sentiment among common people. Christianity was actively preached in Calcutta, the capital of British India, at that time, including some conversions of young people from reputed Hindu families. However, the doctrine of infallibility could not be held strong, as examined by Devendra Nath Tagore.

The precursor of the Brahma Samaj was called *Tattwabodhini Sabha*, or truth-teaching society, to discuss social and religious matters. In 1843, Debendranath Tagore institutionalized a Brahma Samaj with the principles of Rammohun Roy and named it Sadharan Brahma Samaj. In 1850, they rejected the religious authority of the Veda, the ancient Indian scriptures, and published the tenets of Brahma Samaj in English. With this, the movement veered towards Universal Theism. Brahma Samaj took a leading role in many social movements. Devendra Nath Tagore refused to perform orthodox Hindu rites after the death of this father and got one of his daughters married according to newly minted Brahma rituals.

The infusion of youth in the Brahma movement grew significantly after the joining of Keshub Chandra Sen, in 1857. Keshub was the son of Peary Mohun Sen, Debendra Nath Tagore's fellow classmate in Hindu College. Keshub had unbounded respect for Debendra Nath, who worked in perfect synchronization. They moved together to all parts of the country preaching their faith, in turn creating many branches of the movement. Keshub wrote articles praising the tenets of Brahma Samaj and how it would revitalize the ancient religion of India against

the onslaught of Christianity. However, Keshub changed his mind over time and grew distant from Tagore.

### 3.2.2 *Differences Between Debendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen*

Though Debendra Nath left orthodox culture himself, there were many followers of him, who were still rooted in Hindu/Vedantic rituals. Keshub Chandra Sen desired to limit the official responsibilities of such members, while Tagore refused to deal sternly with loyal followers. The younger generation, naturally, accepted Sen's leadership. While Tagore initially yielded to their demands, increasing modernization by Sen, such as inter-caste marriage, were unacceptable to Tagore.

In 1855, Charles Dall, an American Unitarian missionary, arrived in Calcutta and challenged the command of Debendranath Tagore. He formed 'Friends of Rammohun Society' in 1857, in which several notable Indians took membership. In 1866, Keshub became the protégé of Charles Dall and took the centre stage of a new movement with strong inclinations towards Christianity. Eventually; a new division of Brahma Samaj was born, in November 1866, under the sole leadership of Sen. This new organization was named as Brahma Samaj of India. The Brahma Samaj, founded by Debendranath Tagore, was then referred as *Adi Brahma Samaj*. The word *Adi* means original in Sanskrit. In Brahma Samaj of India Keshub is appointed 'Secretary for Life' and he declares that 'God shall always be President of his Samaj'.

In a lecture delivered on 5 May 1866, in Calcutta Medical Colleges, Keshub spoke on the topic of 'Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia'. He identified Christ as Asiatic and by that bonded himself with him. He went on to protest the mix of nationalism and religion by stating 'I must therefore protest against that denationalization which is so general among native converts to Christianity'. He reminded Europeans of the high moral values of Christianity and finally ended on a universal note—'Let my European brethren do all they can to establish and consolidate the moral kingdom of Christ in India. Let them preach from their pulpits, and exhibit in their daily life, the great principles of charity and self-sacrifice. And, on the basis of these principles, may brotherly intercourse and cooperation be established between them and my countrymen'.<sup>23</sup>

Under Sen's able and enthusiastic leadership, Brahma Samaj of India quickly spread throughout the elite class of India. To mark the difference with the *Adi Brahma Samaj*, Sen gave a visible universal character to the Brahma Samaj of India. He drew upon the scriptures and inspirations from all the major religions of the world.

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<sup>23</sup>Sen (1870).

In 1870, Sen visited England with a few friends, where he received a warm welcome and created a lively interest about the developments of Brahma movement of India.<sup>24</sup> The visit to England was also planned in order to counter the national religion campaign launched by Adi Brahma Samaj. Keshub was vocal about the benefits of British rule in India. In a lecture delivered in London, 12 April 1870, he maintained—‘the Lord in His mercy sent out the British nation to rescue India’. Keshub was granted a brief audience with the Queen-Empress who gave him an annuity of 300 lb per year. Keshub declared all his followers to be loyal to her Majesty’s Sovereignty. Keshub’s positive attitude towards Christianity made him a frequent target of attack by writers in *National Paper*. However, Keshub maintained his pro-Christian stance from a different point of view, by claiming that Christianity originated in East, and therefore, is part of Indian national culture.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.2.3 *Declining Influence of Keshub Chandra Sen*

In the same year the Adi Brahma Samaj launched a vigorous campaign against inter-caste marriage instituted by Keshub. Keshub sought the legal opinion of Sir Henry Maine (Legal Member of the Viceroy’s Council) and was dismayed to learn that marriages conducted by his followers had no validity in law. To increase the trouble for Keshub, Adi Brahma Samaj ensured the passage of the Special Marriages Act (Act III of 1872), which forced Keshub’s followers to declare that they are ‘neither Hindoo, nor Mussalman nor Christian’.

In 1874, a liberal faction within Keshub’s group organizes the *Samadarshi* party to counter Keshub’s growing dictatorial tendencies. Later on, the members of Samadarshi party would constitute the Indian Association in support of the moderate nationalist ideology and finally would form the Indian National Congress. It is worthwhile to note here that, under the leading role of Indian National Congress, the freedom movement of India took shape.

In 1878, marriage of Keshub’s eldest daughter, Suniti, to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Prince Nripendra Narayan, in violation of the Brahma Marriage Act of 1872, became the cause of action for the first schism in the organization of Keshub Chandra Sen. Samadarshi party returns to its Brahma roots and reconstitutes itself as the Sadharan Brahma Samaj or the General Body of the Brahma Samaj. Keshub proposed Universal religion, termed as New Dispensation, around this time. The goal of this was to assimilate the growing sects of religions in India as well as around the world. Keshub Chandra Sen died at the young age of 45 in 1884. Debendranath Tagore lived till 1905. However, his activities in the Brahma Samaj were restricted while his third son, Hemendranath Tagore took the helm as the chief minister of the Adi Brahma Samaj.

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<sup>24</sup>Hem Chandra Sarkar (S. 13, 14).

<sup>25</sup>Stevens (n.d.).

### 3.2.4 *Ideas and Influence of Brahma Samaj*

The aims of the Brahma Samaj were noted as follows. ‘From this day we intend devoting ourselves to the propagation of Brahmoism and to the furtherance of the interests of our Church, apart from some of those with whom we have so long acted, but relying for aid and support on Him in whose hands are the destinies of man who supports every noble purpose, and has all along invisibly regulated the course of our Church who, in His inscrutable ways, has given strength when our Church languished from very feebleness, has vouchsafed life when her very vitality seemed ebbing away, and who has led her out from the darkness and superstition that eclipsed her face. May He enable us to discharge this sacred mission may He once more fill all the members of our Church with new life and resuscitated energy may He cause the day of hope to dawn upon the darkness of despair may He lead us out of the regions of discord and disunion into those of peace and tranquillity may He bless our cause and lead the millions of our countrymen into truth and salvation’.<sup>26</sup>

Several members of Brahma Samaj played the leading role in organizing the Indian Political Association, forerunner to the Indian National Congress as a platform for the educated middle class. This was the first organized casteless movement in British India.

Notable members of Brahma Samaj include Satyendranath, Tagore, the first Indian to join Indian Civil Service in British Empire and a protagonist for emancipation of women in Indian society; Rabindranath Tagore, the foremost Indian literary figure in British India, who was awarded knighthood but, returned it in protest of British atrocities; Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, a statistician of repute and largely credited for helping the planning of modern India; Jagadish Chandra Bose, a polymath and the pioneer of radio science among many others. It suffices to say that the Brahma Samaj had the Crème de la crème among its members as well as a large following.

During his times, Keshub Chandra Sen was the most popular representative of Brahma Samaj. Keshub could connect to the Indian youth and western audience alike. His dynamic nature, young age and ability to reconcile various religious ideas gave him widespread acceptance among the Indian youth. He gained widespread fame because of his scholarship and eloquence—both among Indian and European audience. It was clear that he was ‘by the common consent of a much larger circle of Indians and Europeans, the foremost Hindu of his time, the chief representative of Native enlightenment in India’.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Sastri (1911).

<sup>27</sup>Slater (1884).

### 3.3 The Coagulation of Brahma Samaj: from Conflict to Collaboration with Christian Missionaries

From its inception, the religious reform movements retained a bittersweet relation with the Christian missionaries. There were conflicts between different groups of Brahma Samaj, as well as, between the missionaries and the Brahma Samaj.

Christian missionaries closely followed the developments of Brahma Samaj to win members for them, if not to control the course of this movement to direct to Christianity. In 1856, Christian preachers attempting to convert Adi Dharma adherents were banned entry into the Brahma premises by Debendranath Tagore. In 1865/1866, there was a dispute in the Brahma Samaj over caste distinctions, and Hemendranath Tagore—which was henceforth known as the Adi Brahma Samaj, expelled many younger members of the Samaj who were influenced by Christian missionaries from the Adi Samaj. It was the first schism in the Brahma Samaj. From 1867 onwards, the Adi Dharm movement became stridently nationalistic. Meanwhile, the expelled Christian factions from Adi Samaj launched a sustained and bitter campaign to wean away the Adi Dharma missions outside Bengal.

With this aspect about Christianity ‘Rammohun Roy and his followers were held for a time to the revealed character of the Vedas and in all their early controversies with Christian missionaries, they maintained that there was no argument in favour of the divine inspiration of the Bible which does not apply with the same or even greater force of the Veda’.<sup>28</sup> In retaliation, the Reverend William Morton of the church Mission Society warned Vedantists that there would be no compromise with a system which through the ages has ‘debased the minds of men, deadened their consciousness, clouded their understanding, corrupted their hearts and countenanced very species of vice and immorality’.<sup>29</sup> To further strengthen the position of the reformist school against the Christian missionaries, the friends of Rammohun ray, honest and fearless as they had always proved themselves to be, sent some young scholars to Benares to study the Vedas and to report their contents.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, there were some cracks in the fragile reformist movements, which helped the cause of missionaries. Lal Bihari De introduced a personal note on Morality, which Missionaries would use to their advantage in later decades and De admitted that ‘I myself was a Brahma though not in name yet in reality but I enjoyed no peace of mind. I could be sure He would pardon my sins’.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the ongoing conflicts, private correspondences between missionaries in India and their office in London reveal a somewhat respectful attitude to the Vedantists. For example in January 1846, a letter from Reverend James Long shows that he referred to the growing influence of Vedantism as evidenced by his

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<sup>28</sup>Müller (1884, S. 52, 163).

<sup>29</sup>Protap Chunder Mozoomdar (1887, S. 206, 208).

<sup>30</sup>Müller (1881, 1884, S. 163, 52).

<sup>31</sup>Macpherson (1900, S. 55).

frequent and interesting conversations with educated Natives in Calcutta, “leading him to conclude, “a momentous change has taken place in Bengal”. He wrote ‘A few years ago an educated Native repudiated Hinduism and admitted the truth of Christianity, now I find that they resort to Vedantism as a kind of halfway house in which they lay outside the gross errors of Hinduism without admitting the Divine origin of Christianity’.<sup>32</sup>

There is another interesting letter in the same report of the Calcutta Corresponding Committee (1846) by an itinerant missionary named De RoZario who, on his most recent tour, was amazed at growing Vedantic influence in suburban towns. The Brahma newspaper was circulating widely, he reported, while Brahma preachers were now appearing more regularly and making Christian-Like speeches in the name of Vedantism. In the latter part of his letter, De Rozario recounted his visiting a Zamindar who he knew well. He was shocked to learn that his friend’s son called his father a ‘bigoted idolator’ and Hinduism a ‘damnable system’. But this was done not in the name of the Bible but the Vedanta. The son had subsequently helped establish a Vedantic society.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, the opportunity for missionaries was being utilized a new religious movement in Bengal.

### ***3.3.1 ‘Brahmo Samaj of India’ (Sadharan) Was a Representative to the Religious Multitudes of the Empire? the British View***

Already within the scope of parent Brahma Samaj, Keshub honed his leadership and oratory skills. Keshub Chandra Sen became more and more recognized as the champion of the Brahma Samaj. In his lecture, delivered 8 of April, 1863, ‘The Brahma Samaj vindicated’,<sup>34</sup> he clearly defined his position, both as against native opponents and Christian Missionaries. However, in the course to enforce more radical reforms, Keshub grew distant from the leadership of Brahma Samaj and veered towards Christianity, particularly under the influence of Unitarian preacher Charles Dall. Eventually, it led to a scenario, where Keshub proclaimed the eastern roots of Christ.

Due to its open embracing of Christianity, Keshub and his organization were under constant scrutiny by Missionaries as well as the British Government. It is noted by Prof. Oman that, ‘From the time of his secession from the parent Society, Keshub by his writings and public lectures enlisted the sympathies of the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, who took a deep interest in the work of the native reformer,

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<sup>32</sup>David Kopf (1979, S. 9).

<sup>33</sup>David Kopf (1979, S. 164, 165).

<sup>34</sup>Müller (1884, S. 54).

particularly as Keshub had spoken publicly of Christ in terms which seemed to justify the belief that he was Christian in all but open profession of the faith'.<sup>35</sup>

There was a serious consideration going on at this time whether Keshub will embrace Christianity or not. This led to the warm welcome and vivid interest of Keshub's visit to England in 1870. England was undergoing turbulent phases at that time, too. Walter Houghton identifies two 'intellectual Currents' that were crucial to the 'Victorian frame of Mind': the 'critical spirit' and the 'will to believe'.<sup>36</sup> There was a dangerous imbalance between the 'Spiritual' and the 'material' in favour of the later, and that Keshub may be the person to restore equilibrium.<sup>37</sup>

In this scenario, it was considered as a definite possibility that 'Hindu genius might give to the teaching of the Bible. An interpretation so fresh that it might attain a new force for our own England, where, checked by the rapidly growing importance of the industrial arts and of physical science, the influence of the Christian faith seems to have reached a standstill, if it has not begun in some degree to recede'.<sup>38</sup> It was noted, 'While Keshub was in England many missionary organizations expressed their hope that he would prove to be a valuable ally in moving his countrymen along the road towards Christianity'.<sup>39</sup>

The idea of converting Keshub to Christianity was not a covert one. When in 1856 Keshub stepped in as a student of the Bible by the help of Rev. T.H. Burne, Domestic Chaplain to Bishop Cotton and as per Max Müller judgment 'If anyone could have persuaded Keshub Chandra Sen to become a Christian it would have been the large-hearted Bishop Cotton'.<sup>40</sup> During the period of Keshub's visit to London, the precious thing was his interview with Queen Victoria. Queen showed interest about the condition of the women, she also amounted to an official approval to Keshub in society. Before he left England, queen Victoria gave him a large engraving of herself and gifted two books *The Early Years of The Prince Consort* and *Highland journal* with personal inscription.

At the time of Keshub's visit to England, he was unable to visit 40 towns, which had invited him, and he had even been invited from America. He wanted to go on, but finally decided that his commitments in India were more important. He delivered a farewell sermon at Unity Chapel, Effra Road Chapel and Brixton and at the Unitarian church at Southampton. This shows the growing acceptance of Keshub by missionaries. Keshub's lifelong companion P. C. Majumdar mentioned Keshub's British reception as 'hero-worship'.<sup>41</sup> He mentioned that, 'when lecturing in

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<sup>35</sup>Oman (1906, S. 118).

<sup>36</sup>Hughton (1985).

<sup>37</sup>The Inquirer (1870).

<sup>38</sup>The Inquirer (1870).

<sup>39</sup>Borthwick (1977, S. 71).

<sup>40</sup>Müller (1884, S. 51).

<sup>41</sup>Mozoomdar (1931, S. 142).

different places, to find that the mere mention of Keshub Chunder Sen's name elicited applause for which I was hardly prepared'.<sup>42</sup> Political, Social circles openly praised Keshub, particularly noting his admiration for Christianity. The Saturday Review article from 4 June 1870 maintains—'Keshub Chunder Sen is an example of what Western, and especially English, civilization is making of native gentlemen in Bengal. He has thrown himself into the study of English religion and English books till he has thoroughly made himself at home with the ideas and general ways of thinking at least of our generation.... He is earnest in announcing his religious views, and his earnestness is of the English rather than the Oriental type'.

Lord Lawrence, who earned quite a reputation for having quashed Indian mutiny in Punjab during 1857, largely organized Keshub's visit to England. Lord Lawrence wrote in a correspondence to Lord Cranborne that 'the gulf between the two classes [the English in India and the 'natives'] is very wide...I look on this as the great danger to which our rule in India is exposed'.<sup>43</sup> Keshub fitted there in two roles. He reminded British of their duties, acting as the voice for India. Further, Keshub demonstrated what an Imperial rule could make of a native Indian.

Though there was considerable disagreement over the Christianity that would be ultimately realized via Brahma Samaj, it was understood by Christian Missionaries that Keshub was the strongest proponent amongst Indians, who could carry their mission.

Sir Bartle Frere identified Brahma Samaj as 'a half-way house to Christianity' and thus 'a decided step in the right direction'.<sup>44</sup> Baptist Rev. Samuel Cox, a Christian Universalist, stated 'I strongly suspect that Mr. Sen is much more distinctly Christian than as yet he knows himself to be'.<sup>45</sup> Most notably, Arthur Stanley, the Dean of Westminster, recognizing the difference of Keshub's spiritual form of Christianity, agreed to the possibility that Christianity in India, and warmly welcomed Keshub by stating—'there would arise some native form of Indian Christianity. (Cheers.) The first dawn of that native form is seen through the religious reformers of whom the guest of the evening is the leading representative'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Müller (1884, S. 72).

<sup>43</sup>(India Office Library John Lawrence Collection. MSS.Eur.F.90/31 (Letters to Secretary of State, Vol. 3). No. 58 to Lord Cranborne. Calcutta., December 19 1866.), (Frere).

<sup>44</sup>The Record Supplement (1870).

<sup>45</sup>Collet (Keshub Chunder Sen's English Visit (London: Strahan and Co., 1871), Speaking at a reception in Nottingham, June 12 1870, S. 384) Decisive form of Christianity was noted only when a person was baptized. Keshub was never baptized. However, given his formation of separate Church, virtual excommunication from traditionalists and proclamation of Jesus to be Asiatic, constantly raised the hope, for missionaries, that he is going to become a Christian.

<sup>46</sup>Collet (Keshub Chunder Sen's English Visit (London: Strahan and Co., 1871), Speaking at a reception in Nottingham, June 12 1870, S. 10).

### 3.3.2 *The Concept of the Leaders of Brahma Samaj and Max Müller: Setting up a Network with Redefined Brahma Samaj*

In this early phase of religious reform movements, Max Müller, who was a German-born philologist and Orientalist and was one of the founders of the western academic field of Oriental studies and the discipline of comparative religion. Müller had a strong connection and stronger opinion about the religious leaders of Bengal. The opinion was biased. This bias is apparent in his description of ‘men of the type of Rammohun Roy’ (the man who founded the Brahma-Sabha movement which preceded Brahma Samaj). These men, he said, ‘could not, and did not, shut their eyes to the superiority of Christianity from an ethical point of view. They despised in their heart the idols, as worshipped by the vulgar and had long learnt to doubt the efficacy of their sacrifices’. In his writing on the subject, the biases of Müller’s own strong religious beliefs, with ties to Christianity, are apparent.<sup>47</sup> He held opinions about other prominent leaders as well. Debendranath became frightened or allowed himself to be frightened by his more conservative friends. He and his friends were prepared to give up all that was idolatrous and pernicious, but they would not part with all their ancient national customs, they would not have their religion denationalized.<sup>48</sup> Müller mentions, ‘open before their eyes’, they found all they wanted in their own ancient literature, and in the book of nature, open before their eyes, while Keshub (who was one of the members of Adi Brahma Samaj and later was the founder of ‘Sadharan Brahma Samaj) was looking more and more beyond the narrow frontiers of India, and seeking for spiritual food in a less degree, in the Koran and other sacred books’.<sup>49</sup>

From another point of view, it is clearly reflected that in 1866 Max Müller who regularly corresponded with both Debendranath and Keshub saw the national problem of Identity. He writes, ‘so far I can Judge, Debendranath and his friends were averse to unnecessary innovations, and afraid of anything likely to wound the national feelings of the great mass of the people’. Müller said they wanted above all to retain the national character of their religion. The so-called universal form would make their religion appear grotesque and ridiculous to the nation. They pleaded for toleration of Hindu usages and customs, which appeared to them innocent.

On the other hand during this period when India was totally disturbed by religious reforms as well as political movements, Müller had complete faith on Keshub Chandra Sen to produce Christianity in India, Müller said ‘After his lecture on “Jesus Christ” Europe and Asia, delivered in 1866, native and European felt convinced that Keshub Chandra Sen would openly embrace Christianity’. Müller

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<sup>47</sup>Mozoomdar (1887).

<sup>48</sup>Müller (1884, S. 55, 56).

<sup>49</sup>Müller (1884, S. 55, 56) Keshub Chandra Sen, in his new dispensation, integrated ideas from Koran, among others. In fact, Girish Chandra Sen’s Tapasmala—life of Muslim saints and his Bengali translation of Koran and Hadis—was a key reference for the new dispensation.

referred to Brahma Samaj as ‘A most active missionary organization was constituted and the preachers were sent to travel from one part of the country to the other’.<sup>50</sup>

In 1870, Dr. Milan, the new Bishop of Calcutta, forwarded a letter on the Brahma Samaj to Max Müller, written to him by Satyendra Nath Tagore, another prominent leader of the religious reform movement. As Max Müller was intimately acquainted later with Keshub Chandra Sen and Mozoomdar, leaders of the Samaj, he always took the deepest interest in the whole movement. Through this Samaj Max Müller, Missionaries and lovers of Christianity wanted to spread Christianity in India. They tried to convince Satyendranath Thakur about Christianity by Veda but he was not satisfied with words. He questioned more about Christianity that even Müller had no idea.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.3.3 Müller’s Interest Towards Spreading Christianity in India

Nevertheless, Müller was convinced and eager for the spread of Christianity in India. As we see from the letters of Max Müller, ‘India is much riper for Christianity than Rome or Greece was at the time of St. Paul. The rotten tree has for some time had artificial supports, because its fall would have been inconvenient for the Government’.<sup>52</sup>

Müller closely held also the goal of a universal religion based on his scientific theory on Religion, which he tried to apply in India as a platform of his research. ‘Only two points seemed to us of real importance in the teaching of his last years, first: the striving after a universal religion and the recognition of a common substance in all religions, second, the more open recognition of the historical superiority of Christianity as compared with more ancient of faith’.<sup>53</sup> Regarding the first

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<sup>50</sup>Müller (1884, S. 61, 62) After the foundation of new dispensation, several followers of Keshub Sen, notably Pratap Chandra Mozoomder, went abroad, e.g. Sri Lanka, England and America. Possibly, these activities are what is referred by Müller when talking about the ‘most active missionary organization’.

<sup>51</sup>Wife (1902, S. 332, 182) The questions put forth by Tagore were, in fact, echoing with the rational mind that emerged in Europe and India alike. He asked—‘Some of these missionaries would turn us out of God’s mercy-seat, by frightening us with the awful name of Justice, as if it is something incompatible with His goodness and mercy. If God’s mercy and justice will not and cannot save us, the Brahmas ask, what will? ‘Christ’s blood’, is the answer. Tell us how? Christ was innocent, and, as you say, perfectly pure. He took upon Himself, it is said, all our sins, and died a torturing death. This was God’s dispensation to save sinners. We cannot reconcile this with our idea of God’s justice. Kill the innocent to save the guilty, kill him not merely in a physical sense, but throw on him all the sins of all the world, and drown him to death in an ocean of sins, that all sinners might escape!’.

<sup>52</sup>Wife (1902, S. 332, 182).

<sup>53</sup>Müller (1884, S. 163, 52).

point, we can see that Keshub and his work impressed Müller and the Christian Missionaries. Müller fully supported the ‘Sadharan Brahma Samaj’ and he compared it as a church. He also said ‘if there is ever to be a real religion in India, it will, I believe, owe its very life-blood to the large heart of Rammohun Roy and his worthy disciples, Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen’.<sup>54</sup>

Müller was well aware of the international Missionary activities and fully sympathized for their causes. In a lecture delivered in Westminster Abbey on 3 December 1873, Müller mentions about the difficulty of preaching as ‘And, in fact, as the official report to which I have referred testifies in strong terms, the presence of the great evils which Indian missionaries have to confront, has often produced in them a noble and truly Christian indifference to the trivial divergences between themselves’.<sup>55</sup> It sounds almost devilish, when he mentions, in the same lecture that ‘The misery of the war on the coast of Africa, the terrible prospect of the Indian famine, may furnish the very opening which we most desire. They may be the very touchstones by which these suffering heathens will test the practical efficiency of a Christian government and a Christian nation, of Christian missionaries and Christian people, and, having so tested it, will judge’.

It can be noted that Müller was not alone in his ideologies and beliefs. He was part of the Victorian English society, with its steady rise as colonial power. Such ideas were very dominant at that time. Christian Mission had become an important representative of Victorian society, especially in the non-European world. The idea of a heroic mission, moving in dark civilizations to rescue the struggling races fitted very well in the public imagination of a Victorian heroic ideal. This is best captured in the words of almost mythic figure, Protestant missionary martyr, Dr. David Livingstone, who said, ‘We come among them [the heathen] as members of a superior race and servants of a government that desires to elevate the more degraded portions of the human family. We are the adherents of a benign holy religion and may by consistent conduct and wise, patient efforts become the harbingers of peace to a hitherto distracted and trodden race’.<sup>56</sup>

Noted historian K. M. Panikkar assessed the Missionary activities to be the ‘most serious, persistent and planned effort of European nations’ in nineteenth-century Europe.<sup>57</sup> Müller was part of this social fabric. Despite his dedication to Christianity, Müller had a liberal view, which he never refrained from propagating. In a lecture on 3 December 1873, he proclaims that the blending of religions is what brings the most beautiful form—‘Whenever two religions are brought into contact, when members of each live together in peace, abstaining from all direct attempts at conversion, whether by force or by argument, though conscious all the time of the fact that they and their religion are on their trial, that they are being watched, that they are responsible for all they say and do—the effect has

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<sup>54</sup>Müller (1884, S. 77, 80, 82).

<sup>55</sup>Max Müller (1874).

<sup>56</sup>Livingstone (1858–1863), (Symondson 1970, S. 65).

<sup>57</sup>Panikkar (1961).

always been the greatest blessing to both. It calls out all the best elements in each, and at the same time keeps under all that is felt to be of doubtful value, of uncertain truth. Whenever this has happened in the history of the world, it has generally led either to the reform of both systems, or to the foundation of a new religion'.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps, these thoughts summarize the ideology of Müller most fittingly. He was possibly more interested to see the Brahma Samaj blossom into a new form of universal religion than it adopting Christianity as it is. To blend these two religions together, the scientific basis came from his racial theories.

### **3.4 Keshub's New Synthesis: Making Brahma Samaj Really Universal**

Modernization efforts of Keshub had to go hand in hand with a religious view. While Rammohun Roy, Debendranath Tagore and other national reformers like Dayananda Saraswati spoke against idol worship polytheism, Keshub moved significantly ahead by drawing ideas from Christianity, Islamic and Zoroastrian ideas. He accepted, like Christianity, that inspiration is the only source of religion. The key question around religion, namely the nature of God, that puzzles western minds, is clearly answered in his doctrines. In 'The religion of the Brahma Samaj', it is mentioned that there is no apparent 'difficulty in reconciling these seemingly irreconcilable conceptions. God, indeed, is immanent. He is not an extra-cosmic, mechanical artificer of the universe'. A universal religion could stand stronger on the pillars of a universal connection of race, culture or language. During the public lecture delivered by Keshub as early as in 1866, we see that there is an implicit assumption on the theory of racial similarity, which is also flavoured by repeated reminders on the Asiatic origins of Jesus.

#### **3.4.1 Keshub's Silent Support of AIT: Asiatic Christ**

In the lecture delivered titled 'Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia', Keshub wonders why 'instead of mutual good feeling and brotherly intercourse, we find the bitterest rancour and hatred'. In the same lecture, he extends the hand of religious brotherhood by claiming, 'Europeans and natives are both children of God'. Further to the claim that Jesus was Asiatic, Keshub suggests that Asiatic can better comprehend the Bible—'And is it not true that an Asiatic can read the imageries and allegories of the Gospel, and its descriptions of natural sceneries, of customs and manners, with greater interest, and a fuller perception of their force and beauty, than Europeans?' Keshub, in no unclear terms, showed deep loyalty to the British

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<sup>58</sup>Max Müller (1874).

Sovereign and accepted the political supremacy imposed by them as a ‘social and moral blessing’.

To connect the western ideas with oriental customs, the Asiatic origin of Christ is repeatedly reminded by Keshub. He reprimanded the converts—‘They deliberately and voluntarily cut themselves off from native society as soon as they are baptized, and, as an inevitable consequence, come to contract a sort of repugnance to everything Oriental, and an enthusiastic admiration for everything European. (Hear, hear.) They seem to be ashamed of their country and their nationality. They forget that Christ, their master, was an Asiatic, and that it is not necessary in following him to make themselves alien to their country or race’. This reinforced the universal nature of Keshub’s religious view, which was shared by Jesus as well. This idea of ancient Christian spirit preserved in Asiatic origins, strongly resonates with a lost racial connection between Europeans and Indians—that was gaining momentum in European scientific world around the same time.

Keshub openly invited Missionaries by stating—‘Let my European brethren do all they can to establish and consolidate the moral kingdom of Christ in India’. However, there was a conflict between Keshub’s expectations and that of the Missionaries. He writes in a letter to Max Müller, about his disappointments over the visit to England, as he records much later in a letter to Max Müller ‘The British public ought to know how the most advanced type of Hinduism in India is trying to absorb and assimilate the Christianity of Christ, and how it is establishing and spreading, under the name of the New Dispensation, a new Hinduism, which combines Yoga and Bhakti, and also a new Christianity, which blends together Apostolical faith and modern civilisation and science. It is this Christianity’.

Keshub’s reconfiguration coincided with the religious and colonial crises of 1857–86 faced by British kingdom and Christian missionaries. This made them all the more excited about the possibility to proliferate through Keshub. There was no doubt about his ability to touch the chord with an educated elite. Keshub had the capacity to produce radically new ideas and also humble enough to give up the movement he generated. It was observed, therefore, ‘there were still some grounds for the excitement of the missionaries’.<sup>59</sup>

There was some understanding of the subtle overtones of Christianity in Keshub’s methods. Borthwick said ‘Keshub was, in fact, engaged in a tremendous effort to apply Christianity to India and thereby create a new synthesis, and he was using the Brahma Samaj as the means for this’.<sup>60</sup> *The Friend of India*, the journal of the Baptist missionaries at Serampore until 1875, when it was acquired by the dissident imperial critic Robert Knight, followed the activities of the Brahma Samaj of India closely throughout the 1870s and 1880s, and was the most important source of information on Keshub’s activities in Britain, where its articles were reproduced in newspapers such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Birmingham Daily Post*.<sup>61</sup> *The Friend of India* was

<sup>59</sup>Meredith Borthwick (1977, S. 71).

<sup>60</sup>Borthwick (1977, S. 71).

<sup>61</sup>(Hirschmann E.) Hirschmann (2004).

generally supportive of Keshub in the early 1870s—it applauded the activities of the Indian Reform Association, and praised Keshub's lecture on 'Primitive Faith and Modern Speculations' for propounding 'a great key principle of religion which cannot fail to spread, and spread for good'.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, 'Collet remained concerned that the emotional side of religion should be kept in check by a commitment to Brahmoism as a social gospel—"emotion" could prove a dangerous attraction to members of "so susceptible a race".<sup>63</sup>

### 3.4.2 *Relation Between the AIT and the Anti-Caste and Anti-Brahman Movement*

Despite the religious proposals from Keshub, Brahma Samaj was essentially a social reformation movement, very much like many other similar movements throughout India. It is important to understand the contemporary social reformation agenda and the entry of AIT in this context.

Before the advent of British colonial rulers, Islam was widely spread by the rulers of India for more than five centuries. In the face of Islamic beliefs, Hindus questioned their long-standing caste system that was highly discriminatory in practice. At the ideological level, social reformers fought back Islam with slogans like 'Equality and Fraternity'. On the other hand, caste was deeply embedded in the social fabric as an identity, which was hard to uproot quickly. Like any strong social movement, with building tension to abolish the caste system, there were proponents of the system for myriad reasons, who tried to justify its presence. A unanimously accepted source of reference was a set of key Vedic texts, which was again, open to different interpretations. Reformers debated whether the Varnasram (caste system) proposed in the ancient Sanskrit literature is merely a model to be adapted for a different time or a universal model that needs to be followed at all times. Keshub promoted a universal brotherhood among Brahmans but the social undercurrent was present nonetheless. Social movements in other parts of India were often more vigorous.

In 1873, Jyotirao Phule established Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth), who denounced the caste system completely and rejected Vedas as the opportunistic creation of upper caste Hindus. Romila Thapar wrote, 'Jyotirao Phule maintained that the Aryan invasion explained the arrival of alien Brahmans and their dominance and oppression of the lower castes. The invasion was necessary to this view of history.'<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Hirschmann (2004) (Hirschmann E., S. February 1 1872, October 23 1873).

<sup>63</sup>Collet (1877), S. 22–23.

<sup>64</sup>Thapar (2000, Sep. 30–Oct. 13).

The dominance of Brahmins (upper caste Hindus) in various prominent political, social and administrative roles was another important issue—that attracted both the British rulers as well as the non-Brahmin population. Either for divisive or inclusive political agenda, a positive discrimination for under-represented population began. ‘The process of distinguishing began with the education department segregating first the Hindus into Brahmans and “other Hindus” in the year 1870. By the year 1874, the segregation had changed to Brahmans and “Hindus and not Brahmans”. By the early 1880s, it was made Brahmans, Vaishyas, Shudras and other Hindus’.<sup>65</sup>

In Southern part of India, series of anti-Brahmin conferences were organized by noted political leaders, Sir Pitti Theagaraya Chetty and Taravath Madhavan Nair, who eventually formed Justice Party in 1917 to vent their opinions. This suited the colonial rulers perfectly. Nair spoke in a meeting in 1917, ‘Non-Brahmins were looking to the British Government for protection, to hold scales evenly and to mete out Justice, but when they saw a movement progressing whose object was to undermine British influence and power in this country, they thought it their duty to rally round the British Government and to support them’.<sup>66</sup>

In a nutshell, AIT helped fuel a discord among various established ethno-racial groups in India. The oppressed classes vented their frustration towards upper caste Hindus and fully accepted AIT. A large section of upper caste Hindus also accepted it embraced the newfound brotherhood with their colonial rulers. This policy worked well even later, when during the upper caste-led freedom movement in India in 1935, British prime minister Winston Churchill mentioned that ‘the British had as much right to be in India as anyone else there, except perhaps “the Depressed Classes”, who are the native stock’.

### 3.5 AIT and Its Contradiction with Christianity

Throughout the proposition of AIT, there remained a possibility that it would contradict Christianity and provide a deeper admiration for universal religiosity predating Judeo-Christian history. This did not happen due to two balancing forces. First, the Raciologists in Europe were busy finding a connection between the ‘English soldiers’ and ‘the dark Bengalese’. Second, the Indian elite reformers accepted to this racial unification as well as ceded to the religious supremacy of Christianity, partly due to the inexplicable decline in the social, religious and economic structure of India.

In 1859, Max Müller wrote—‘Although the Brahmans of India belong to the same family, the Aryan or Indo-European family, which civilized the whole of

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<sup>65</sup>(Bahuguna) The dominance is eroding with time. In particular, last few decades have seen acceleration towards a more ‘balanced’ representation in all sectors, initiated by specific commissions set up by Indian government to identify and help socio-economically backward classes.

<sup>66</sup>Arooran (1980), (Arooran, Tamil renaissance and Dravidian nationalism 1905–1944.).

Europe, the two great branches of that primitive race were kept asunder for centuries after their first separation. The mainstream of the Aryan nations has always flowed towards the northwest. No historian can tell us by what impulse those adventurous Nomads were driven on through Asia towards the isles and shores of Europe. The first start of this world-wide migration belongs to a period far beyond the reach of documentary history; to times when the soil of Europe had not been trodden by either Celts, Germans, Slavonians, Romans, or Greeks'.<sup>67</sup> Seven years after the above publication, Keshub proclaims, to deafening applause, in his public lecture—'I am proud, that I am an Asiatic. And was not Jesus Christ an Asiatic?'

With these strongly entrenched ideologies, the only remaining piece of the puzzle was to show that ideologically, ancient Vedic texts had similar preaching as in relatively modern Biblical texts. Also, it had to be accepted that revelation is not unique in Christianity.

James Martineau, the influential Unitarian philosopher and preacher, believed in God and Christ, but not that Christ was the unique revelation of God In history. He disliked the label 'Unitarian' and felt that belief should never be static. They were totally against the idea of Church and Bible. Their religion was nontraditional and personal kind that was very similar to Brahmoism. When Keshub was in England, they organized his itinerary among a small, but influential group in social reform activities and in theological circles. Martineau naturally agreed to Keshub's views. Other prominent Christian leaders were interested, too. Dean Stanley from the Broad Church carefully followed the developments in Brahma Samaj, 'they felt that Brahmoism was moving towards Christianity, and that being an indigenous movement, it would have greater power than proselytization by foreign missionaries to rescue and convert the masses from the depths of idolatry'.<sup>68</sup>

From Borthwick's viewpoint, Müller was renowned for his belief that every religion had a core of truth and he saw Brahmoism as entering on that core in Hindu religion. Like many others, he also saw the Brahma Samaj as a step towards Indian Christianity, as even though he believed in the truth of all religions, he felt the moral beauty of Christ and Christianity was the summit of civilized belief.<sup>69</sup>

### ***3.5.1 Retracing of Brahma Movement Towards Hinduism***

Keshub's following of the middle path, however, alienated him from many devout missionaries, who were concerned about his ultimate goals. There were attempts to destroy the good reputation of Keshub because he dared to criticize their work.<sup>70</sup> By late 1873, a vast majority of missionary organizations had turned against

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<sup>67</sup>Max Müller (1859).

<sup>68</sup>Meredith Borthwick (1977, S. 102, 103).

<sup>69</sup>Meredith Borthwick (1977, S. 103).

<sup>70</sup>Borthwick (1977, S. 124–126).

Keshub. The immediate cause may have been the initiation ceremony of the Unitarian Charles Dall into the Brahma Samaj, in the course of which Keshub made it clear that he was a 'pure and not a Christian theist'.<sup>71</sup> Many members of the Brahma Samaj of India in Calcutta then echoed this claim of 'pure' as opposed to 'Christian' theism. The Illustrated Missionary News in London expressed considerable shock that 'Christ has been deliberately rejected' and lamented that the Brahmos' 'glory has departed'.<sup>72</sup> Having failed to accept the 'life-giving element' of the Godhead of Christ and the atonement for sin, The Brahma Movement, which for a while seemed so hopeful in its tendency towards Christianity, appears now to have reached its climax and to be receding towards Hinduism again.<sup>73</sup>

Keshub Chandra Sen had his own, firm opinions about the position of India in terms of political and religious landscape. When Keshub was in England in the period of 1870, 13 April, he met Mr. Raken who was in India for a long time. Mr. Raken wanted to know the opinion of Keshub about Christianity. Keshub maintained 'India cannot be truly happy and prosperous unless she throws off the foreign yoke of the British Government'. He also said 'he thinks with the author of the "Bible in India", which he has translated into English, that Christianity has been derived wholly from India'.<sup>74</sup>

'The monthly journal of the Baptist Missionary Society, the Missionary Herald, agreed that Brahmoism would prove 'a nine days wonder' and that 'Hinduism will tend more and more to become a mere cloak for the absence of all religion'.<sup>75</sup> For most of the missionary organizations, there existed no middle path. 'One could move either forwards or backwards along the path to Christian religion and the lack of full acceptance of Christianity would result in retrogression towards Hinduism or atheism'.<sup>76</sup>

Keshub had moved away dangerously from the principles of scriptural authority and reason, which were essential to 'stable' religion, and there appeared to be little chance that he would return to the Christian fold. While Rammohun had adhered to reason and, in 'The Precepts of Jesus', had propounded Christian teachings as 'the supreme guide to life eternal', Keshub's 'comprehensive' approach had retreated from Rammohun's principles, either as a result of 'moral cowardice', 'national prejudice' or misguided 'sincere conviction'.<sup>77</sup>

Müller understood the difference of opinions, he himself being branded as an anti-Christian from certain quarters. Müller tried to bridge this gap by suggesting to Christian Missionaries that, Keshub is helping their cause—'These Indian puritans

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<sup>71</sup>Charles Dall entry (1873).

<sup>72</sup>News (1873).

<sup>73</sup>News (1873).

<sup>74</sup>Sen (1938, S. 36, 72), Herald (1873).

<sup>75</sup>Herald (1873).

<sup>76</sup>Gleaner (1878).

<sup>77</sup>Gleaner (1878).

are not against us; for all the highest purposes of life they are with us, and we, I trust, with them'.<sup>78</sup>

### 3.5.2 *Müller and Keshub: The Method of Integration*

Though the relation between Müller and Keshub has been extensively discussed in the previous sections, yet as the main protagonists for the dissemination of AIT, it deserves a special attention to figure out the relation between them.

The studies of Vedantic traditions in Brahma Samaj by Rammohun Roy and Debendranath Thakur have influenced Keshub's interest in the study of comparative religion. However, the comparative project pursued within the New Dispensation was also influenced by the work of Max Müller. Müller had a deep interest in the Indian social reform movements, having established correspondences with Debendranath Thakur, a few letters of which he presented in his autobiographical 'Auld Lang Syne' in the section dealing with 'My Indian Friends'. He recalls Debendranath to be 'too conservative to be able to follow his young friend in all his reforms'. This young friend was Keshub.

Müller had taken a long interest in the Indian customs and was well acquainted with the diverse groups among the Indian elite, both from the traditional and modern faction. The author of the voluminous Sanskrit dictionary, Shabdakalpadruma, Raja Radhakanta Deb as well as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a social reformer from Maharashtra, were full of praise for Müller. They christened him as Bhatta Makshamooler, which is essentially elevating him to a high social standing in India, where a person from foreign land is derogatorily referred to as a 'Mlecchha' (an uncivilized outsider).<sup>79</sup> Müller exchanged lengthy correspondences with Deb to understand the Indian traditions. The method of Müller was, however, under the influence of 'relentless dominance of textuality' as argued by Girardot.<sup>80</sup> The comparative studies of the Vedic tradition vis-à-vis, for example Teutonic mythology, gave little access to the Indian mind. In an interesting argument, Wilfred Cantwell Smith noted 'turning the Hindu Veda into a written book is an entrancing instance of nineteenth-century Western cultural imperialism, here quietly imposing the Western sense of "Scripture"'.<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, he attempted all methods of integrating the two cultures by seeking to answer 'why then should there be no Christian Vedantists'.<sup>82</sup> The only

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<sup>78</sup>Max Müller (1874) Müller was largely unsuccessful not least because, for the puritans, he already crossed the line multiple times, such as, by trying to establish a heretic viewpoint on the origin of religion.

<sup>79</sup>Deb (n.d., p. 7).

<sup>80</sup>Girardot (2002).

<sup>81</sup>Smith (1988).

<sup>82</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 71).

question that mattered is what would be the best process of integration. In that aspect, sometimes Müller played the role of an observer and sometimes took active participation. He wrote—‘It is most interesting to watch the compromise made between Hinduism and Islam four hundred years ago and to compare it with the compromise between Hinduism and Christianity that is now so eloquently advocated by the followers of Rammohun Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen’.<sup>83</sup> He also was assured of the loyalty of Keshub to Christian church and quoted his letter stating—‘Woe unto us, if I ever conceived the project of setting up a movement against the Church of Christ! Perish these lips if they utter a word of rebellion against Jesus’,<sup>84</sup> which reflects that in some earlier letter Müller made a suggestive query. The difficulty was always in reconciling the society, philosophy and religion, for which neither Müller nor Keshub had a definite answer. However, Muller reflected that the strategy was wrong, when the possibility was high at the earlier times—‘he (Rammohun Roy) used language far too deprecatory, as it seems to me, of the religious and philosophical inheritance of India. Then was the time to act, but there were no Christian ambassadors to grasp the hands that were stretched out. Such missionaries as were in India then, wanted unconditional surrender and submission, not union or conciliation’.<sup>85</sup> Müller adopted the latter method while engaging with Keshub. While Müller proposed the theory of scientific religion, Keshub raised the idea of natural religion stemming from inspirational communion with saints.

In 1880, Keshub started the experiment with his pilgrimage of saints. It was an elaborately arranged event that replicates the socio-religious context of an ancient world and the reforms introduced by a saint of that time. During March, he chose Greece at the time of Socrates. A week-long seminar would make the disciples to live in the presence of Moses, Mohammad or another prophet with the home of Keshub transformed to resemble the historical site of that time. For Keshub, the Müllerian rational comparison of sacred texts and the inspirational comparison of Divine attributes through communion with saints were thus two sides of the same coin.<sup>86</sup> Müller was also convinced about the same, when he commented about the lecture of Keshub ‘Thus he writes in his Lecture, “The Apostles of the New Dispensation: Only science can deliver the world, and bring light and order out of the chaos and darkness of multiplied Churches. If there is science in all things, is there no science in the dispensations of God?”’<sup>87</sup> The idea of scientific religion got firmly established.

However, the ‘Indian’ method, Keshub claimed, was superior as it worked through comparison to ‘unity’ with greater alacrity: Without learning, without

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<sup>83</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 79).

<sup>84</sup>ibid (n.d., p. 82).

<sup>85</sup>ibid (n.d., p. 85).

<sup>86</sup>Müller (1881, S. 150) Mozoomdar certainly expressed this view in a letter to Müller, writing that ‘What you are doing as a philosopher and philologist we are trying to do as men of devotion and faith. It is the same universal recognition of all truths, and all prophets. I grant we are doing it in a Hindu style, perhaps in a Bengali style’.

<sup>87</sup>Müller (1884) Müller (2013, pp. 78–9).

philosophy, without erudition, Asia jumped under a sort of natural impulse into the unsectarian eclecticism of faith. What Asia has done intuitively, Europe will do reflectively. The West will have to verify theologically what the East has realized in religious consciousness. The great scholars will be called upon to vindicate and verify, upon philosophical ground, the scientific unity of all the great religions, which Asia has founded and shaped with all the simplicity and freshness of natural inspiration.<sup>88</sup>

In 1880, this is reflected in a letter from Keshub to Müller dated December 22—‘I can assure you god has been very kind to us in our trials and tribulation, and all the antagonism and persecution we have suffered have greatly strengthened us and helped the progress and extension of our church’. ‘Our influence spreads on all sides there is far greater enthusiasm among us now than in any previous in the history of our Church’.<sup>89</sup>

When Keshub was in England in the year 1870 he met Max Müller and Dean Stanley, of Broad Church, for a meeting they had conversed on Indian subject especially the Vedas. After this discussion Müller wrote to his wife ‘we soon got into a warm discussion, and it was curious to see how we almost made him confess himself a Christian’ this same thing Müller again referred in his book ‘Auld Long Syne’ he said that he asked to Keshub why he is not declaring publicly himself as a Christian, seeing that he was a true follower of Christ. But Keshub handled it very tactfully. He replied ‘Suppose that thirty years hence people find out that I was a disciple of Christ, what would be the harm? Only were I to profess myself a Christian now, all my influence would be gone at once’.<sup>90</sup>

### 3.5.3 *Keshub’s Adoption of AIT*

Keshub Chandra Sen was deeply impressed by Christianity. In the New Dispensation, he embodied 39 articles. The articles resembled closely the prayer book of Anglican Church.<sup>91</sup> Sen was also aware of the developments in the science of religion. To justify the object of his new Samaj, he proclaimed in a lecture on ‘We, Apostles of the New Dispensation’—‘Come then to the synthetic utility of the

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<sup>88</sup>Sen (1901), S. 62).

<sup>89</sup>Müller (1881, 1884, S. 90).

<sup>90</sup>Borthwick (‘Keshub Chunder Sen: A search for cultural synthesis’, Miss Collet wrote ‘To the end Max Müller preserved his faith in Keshub Chandra Sen, and did all he could to uphold him and his work against the attacks made on him in India and England’, 1977, S. 110) Miss Collet wrote ‘To the end Max Müller preserved his faith in Keshub Chandra Sen, and did all he could to uphold him and his work against the attacks made on him in India and England’ and in another letter to Miss. Collet from Max Müller in 1881, Jan 23 wrote about Keshub Chandra Sen that he gave ‘more open recognition of Historical Superiority of Christianity as compared with more ancient forms of faith’.

<sup>91</sup>Bose (1884, S. 126).

New Dispensation. You will see how all other dispensations are harmonized and unified in this, a whole host of churches resolved into a scientific unity...They are connected in one continuous chain which may be traced to the earliest age...The New Dispensation has discovered the missing link. It has found the secret thread, which goes through these dispensations, and keeps them together. Where others see only confusion and anomaly, it sees order and continuity. Joyfully it exclaims, "I have found the science of dispensation at last, unity in multiplicity."<sup>92</sup>

Unmistakably, the discovery of the 'science' in the religion is something that came from the influence of Oriental studies, notably from Müller. In<sup>93</sup> it is conjectured that Sen wanted to please everybody with his universal religion. The author Ram Chandra Bose published this book during Sen's lifetime.<sup>94</sup> There, the claim of a synthetic religion to connect all religions is strongly challenged. In particular, the religion of Veda is dubbed as a sublime form of polytheism. Therefore, Bose argued that, it could never be connected to theism. These writings appeared in paper form in *Indian Evangelical Review*. This clearly reflected the strong opposition of many Brahmos from other factions towards Keshub's New Dispensation.

Keshub stood strong against the opposition and stuck to his new faith. However, the interesting turn occurred when he chose to use the term Aryan. In the book summarizing the new dispensation, it is named as 'the Sacred Laws of the Aryans of the New Dispensation'. This removed whatsoever doubts one had before, that Aryans are indeed a race, which are connected by religious principles, and not just the people who spoke the same language. Sen addressed the entire Indian populace in,<sup>95</sup> 'It is only the national law of the Aryans of the New Church in India'. Aryan connected Indians, British, Christianity and Vedas. In the sacred laws, he connects Rig Veda and Baptism of the son of the God in river Jordan in subsequent laws.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.5.4 *Relationship Between AIT and British Monarchy*

Victorian era was notable for a period of transitions, from ancient beliefs to scientific rationalism, from local battles to international industrial and military

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<sup>92</sup>Bose (1884, S. 128) It is also argued that Keshub found his new dispensation of 'unity in multiplicity' from Indian saint Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, whom he met in 1876, and had been a regular visitor ever since. Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar wrote the first English biography of Ramakrishna, entitled *The Hindu Saint in the Theistic Quarterly Review* (1879), which caught the attention of Westerners like Max Müller. Later, Müller wrote an appreciative essay on Sri Ramakrishna in the magazine *Nineteenth Century*, titled 'A Real Mahatman'.

<sup>93</sup>Bose (1884).

<sup>94</sup>ibid (n.d.).

<sup>95</sup>Sen (1889).

<sup>96</sup>Sen (1889, S. 6) Though it is not clear whether Keshub used the term Aryan with or without the knowledge of Müller, it is clear that the idea of a common racial origin fitted very much to group them again together in a new, universal religion. Sen did exactly that.

capitalism. The role of a strong underlying theory, justifying the supremacy, was not unknown to the elite, in particular the British monarchy. Scientific racial theories as well as emerging disciplines surrounding race, language and culture, was quickly absorbed. Max Müller played a major role there.<sup>97</sup>

This is noted by many studies in Victorian culture, such as described by Daniel O’Leary—‘The new imperial cultural in speeches, addresses, and myriad public utterances, described itself with a vocabulary learned from the philologists, and the “Britons” an “Anglo-Saxon” which emerged from the antiquarian studies of Max Müller (1823–1900).’<sup>98</sup>

During the Victorian era, Max Müller was by far the most influential scholar and he was close to the monarchy. To Baron von Bunsen on August 25, 1856, he wrote, ‘After the last annexation the territorial conquest of India ceases—what follows next is the struggle in the realm of religion and of spirit, in which, of course, centre the interests of the nations. India is much riper for Christianity than Rome or Greece were at the time of St. Paul. Dhulip Singh is much at Court, and is evidently destined to play a political part in India. I wish I could get in touch with him in some quite natural way. Could it be managed with the help of Prince Albert or would you help me to it?’. In many ways, Müller was a protégé of Baron von Bunsen, who again, was the Prussian Ambassador to the British court and close to the prince consort, Albert, husband of Queen Victoria. Müller’s steady rise in the esteem of British Royalty was obvious by his letters in 1864, January, when he mentions that ‘The Queen was very kind, said she was looking forward to the lectures’. Queen indeed attended the lectures together with the princesses, having been to no lectures for ten years. Müller, with little pride, proclaims, ‘She listened very attentively, and did not knit at all, though her work was bought’. The lectures were on the topic—Science of Language. The British royalty hosted Müller at Osborne for these lectures. Before leaving, he gave a morning lecture to Prince Arthur and Sir James Clarke, physician of Queen Victoria. The concluding words of that lecture were,

‘When the last two volumes of Veda are published we shall have saved from destruction a work, older than *Iliad*, older than any other literary document of that noble race of mankind to which the greatest nations in the world’s history have belonged—a race which after receiving from a Semitic race, from the Jews, its best treasure, its religion, the religion of the Old and New Testaments, is now with the English in the van, carrying on slowly but irresistibly the conquest of the world by means of commerce, colonization, education and conversion’.

It is difficult to find a more apt summary of the claims of Müller. In these few sentences, he painted a racial supremacy, justified the colonial rules and linked the British with something more ancient than *Iliad*—this is what the proponents of European Romanticists pursued. Müller was not alone within the closeness of monarchy in these efforts. Joseph Barber Lightfoot was the chaplain of Queen

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<sup>97</sup>(O’Leary) ref: Hudson (1996, S. 247, 64).

<sup>98</sup>(O’Leary).

Victoria and a Hebrew and Classical scholar. He wrote several commentaries on the New Testament between 1865 and 1875, where he also took up the Raciological studies based on philological and etymological evidence.

Needless to mention, when Keshub visited England in 1870, the stage was all set for him. He reiterated the same belief that the royalty learned from scholars like Müller.

### 3.6 Using the Tools of British Empire: The Politicization of Brahma Samaj

The discovery of ancient Indian texts and subsequent adoption of AIT was welcomed by British imperialists as a useful model for maintaining the status quo. Lord Curzon dubbed it as ‘the necessary furniture of empire’ and AIT gained a wide acceptance path via the dialogues of Max Müller, Keshub Chandra Sen as well as with the active participation of the Christian missionaries.

As early as in 1804, Alexander Tod delivered a brilliant dissertation in Bengali whether ‘the translation of the best works extant in the Sanskrit into the popular language of India would promote the extension of science and civilization’.<sup>99</sup> However, the necessity arose from a completely different viewpoint. Mastering the history and culture of the colonial subjects were considered important for multiple reasons. The nation-wide revolution in 1857 clearly showed that it is not sufficient to rely on the loyalty of handful of landlords and kings. Around this time, Müller proposed a scientific study of languages and showed a deep connection between India and Europe. This was eagerly adopted by British rulers as well as by Christian missionaries.

The move away from constitutional notions of British rule in India towards a vision of the British monarchy as the dynastic successor of the Mughals was symbolized, above all, by Victoria’s assumption of the title of Empress of India in 1876, and the vast Delhi durbar of the following year.<sup>100</sup>

As Meredith Borthwick said, Keshub’s craziness of British Queen and British rule in India was without opposition. Therefore, Keshub’s glowing of devotion to the British Queen and rule fully convinced educated Indians at that time. It naturally endeared him to the British community and Officials. ‘It increased his influence with them too, as having unmistakably established his loyalty; he could then go on to criticize the British without being accused of ingratitude’.<sup>101</sup> However, Keshub embraced AIT openly despite his changing stances against the British monarchy.

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<sup>99</sup>Kopf (British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, (Berkeley, CA.), 1969, S. 100).

<sup>100</sup>(Cohn).

<sup>101</sup>Borthwick (1977, S. 68).

In March 1877, Sen, in a public address urged Indians to be loyal to Queen Victoria, the Empress of India. He reminded his ‘educated countrymen’ that it was the ‘British government that came to your rescue, as God’s ambassador, when your country was sunk in ignorance and superstition and hopeless jejuneness, and has since lifted you to your present high position’. Sen continued: ‘India in her present fallen condition seems destined to sit at the feet of England for many long years to learn Western art and science. Thus while we learn modern science from England, England learns ancient wisdom from India’. Sen went on to declare with flourish: ‘Gentlemen, in the advent of the English nation in India we see a re-union of parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race’.<sup>102</sup> The last rhetoric about ‘parted cousins’ is an unmistakable sign of Keshub embracing and popularizing AIT among the Indian intellectuals. Interestingly, despite his later renunciation of AIT and his close connection to Keshub, Müller never refuted Keshub’s adoption of AIT. Though Müller later mentioned that AIT is more about a language than a race, he tiptoed to ‘racial’ theory in other instances such as the following. In an address delivered at 1883 about Rammohun Ray, he mentioned, ‘Ram Mohan Roy was an Arya belonging to the south-eastern branch of the Aryan race and he spoke an Aryan language, the Bengali... We recognize in Ram Mohan Roy’s visit to England the meeting again of the two great branches of the Aryan race, after they had been separated so long that they lost all recollection of their common origin, common language and common faith’.<sup>103</sup> Clearly, Keshub and Müller agreed on this aspect and even extended the origin of the ‘linguistic’ branches to a ‘common faith’.

In England, Gladstone’s return to power in 1880, and his appointment of Ripon as Viceroy, served to reinvigorate the liberal programme of increasing the rights and roles of the Indian urban elite.<sup>104</sup> But Ripon’s efforts were failure ‘a stormy interlude in the era of paternalism which had swept over India since the Mutiny’.<sup>105</sup>

Liberal calls for greater Indian participation in government were frustrated by a growing perception that British paternalistic rule must be strengthened in the face of growing Indian national consciousness, lest the empire be placed in grave danger. As the Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, J. R. Seeley, put it in 1881, ‘if the feeling of a common nationality began to exist there [in India] only feebly from that day almost our Empire would cease to exist’.<sup>106</sup> Hierarchical and paternalistic conceptions of British imperial rule, bolstered by fears that Indian ‘nationalism’ could lead to the demise of empire, were paralleled by the emergence of more militaristic and patriotic popular conceptions of empire.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Sen (1901).

<sup>103</sup>Roy (1884, S. 11) This was an address delivered at Bristol Museum on 27 September 1883 on the 15th anniversary of Raja’s death. Mookerjee (1970, S. 24–28).

<sup>104</sup>Koditschek (2011, S. 321).

<sup>105</sup>Metcalf (1964).

<sup>106</sup>Mehrota (1971, S. 208).

<sup>107</sup>Kennedy (Britain and Empire, 1880–1945, 2002).

As McClelland and Rose have argued, from the 1880s the language of ‘citizenship’ in Britain began to be tied more closely to notions of national and imperial duties, and acquired a more distinctly militaristic and masculinized tone.<sup>108</sup>

It was also from the 1880s that elementary state education in England began to acquire a more overtly imperialist slant, as teachers were encouraged to foster notions of good citizenship and patriotism in the classroom.<sup>109</sup> Of course, emergent discourses of popular imperialism existed in tension with Gladstonian liberal rhetoric in the 1880s, and did not achieve a high degree of popular acceptance until the 1890s.<sup>110</sup>

Nevertheless, Disraeli’s more aggressive imperialism had certainly left an imprint on British attitudes towards the Empire, and the need for a more muscular, conservative approach to people of other cultures was articulated in a variety of political, popular and academic arenas. It was in the 1880s that Max Müller’s arch-rival at Oxford, Monier-Williams, began to move away from his previously liberal position on ‘Oriental’ religions and to become increasingly critical of the ‘limp-wristed comparative scholarship’ exemplified by Müller’s *Sacred Books*, a project which he denounced in 1887 as an ‘unmanly’ example of ‘jelly-fish tolerance’.<sup>111</sup>

In this context, Keshub’s claims to have founded a new world religion that would rejuvenate morality in India and Britain were not regarded as worthy of serious attention. ‘In 1876, with Ananda Mohan Bose taking the lead, the constitutional issue within the Samaj between progressives and Keshub came to a head. Sibnath Sastri, then a Sanskrit teacher at Hare School, as spiritual leader of the progressives also took a leading part in the agitation. Keshub was now being attacked as an advocate of the divine right of kings, in which his support of Queen Victoria was linked to his absolutist rule over the Brahma Samaj’<sup>112</sup>

The English Unitarians continued to support the Brahma Samaj of India, and *The Inquirer* declared in 1877 that the organization still represented ‘The best hope of the future of religion in India’.<sup>113</sup>

Keshub’s criticisms of British rule in India became increasingly vitriolic in the 1880s. In the most politically charged of all his public addresses, ‘Asia’s Message to Europe’, delivered before a vast audience of Bengalis and Europeans in January 1883, Keshub opened with a long and electrifying depiction of British brutality in India: ‘Whence this plaintive and mournful cry, which so profoundly distresses the patriot’s breast? It seems that a whole continent is writhing beneath the lash of oppression, and sending forth from the depths of its heart a deep wail of woe. It is India that weeps. Nay, not India alone; all Asia cries. Many there are in Europe who

<sup>108</sup>McClelland (2006, S. 284–288).

<sup>109</sup>McClelland (2000, S. 286).

<sup>110</sup>Cunningham (1981).

<sup>111</sup>Girardot (1887, S. 247).

<sup>112</sup>David Kopf (1979).

<sup>113</sup>The Inquirer (1877).

hold that Asia is a vile woman, full of impurity and uncleanness. Her scriptures tell lies; her prophets are all impostors; her people are all untruthful and deceitful. Europe has perpetrated frightful havoc among the nations of the East. Europe, why do thy eyes still a role in wild fury and insatiate antagonism, as if bent upon Asia's total annihilation? Before the formidable artillery of Europe's aggressive civilization the scriptures and prophets, the language and literature, of the East, nay her customs and manners, her social and domestic institutions, and her very industries have undergone a cruel slaughter. The rivers that flow eastward and the rivers that flow westward are crimson with Asiatic gore'.<sup>114</sup>

While Keshub encouraged the British to continue their tendency of 'extending the franchise' (echoing his calls in 1870 for the British to increase the level of participation of Indians in government), he ultimately pulls back from demanding explicitly any political concessions from the British, saying of Asia: 'Any secular reconciliation or political treaty she would altogether repudiate'.<sup>115</sup>

Instead, he proposes a 'spiritual alliance', effected through a 'double and perfect atonement' in which the unification of fallen humanity with Christ is mirrored by the unification of 'Asia' and 'Europe'.<sup>116</sup> After entreating Asia and Europe to 'shake hands with each other with the utmost cordiality', he reiterates his belief in the Providential character of Queen Victoria.<sup>117</sup>

David Arnold has called the 'Orientalist Triptych' (a view of Indian history in which a golden classical Hindu age had been destroyed by a tyrannical Muslim rule which had Providentially given way to British regeneration) was an idea expressed not only by earlier universalists such as Ram Mohan, but by contemporary nationalists such as Bankimchandra, Bipin Chandra Pal and writers in the *National Paper*.<sup>118</sup> Amiya Sen notes that Bipin Chandra Pal wrote as late as 1913 of Indian nationalist thought standing 'not only for the furtherance of the case of freedom in India but also for the continuance of the British connection'.<sup>119</sup> Many of Keshub's contemporaries criticized British rule and demanded the increase of Indian participation in government without calling for the end of British rule into—indeed, this was initially the position of the Indian National Congress.<sup>120</sup> This shows that despite harbouring distaste for the way India was being ruled, the emotional connection to the British rule could never be forgotten. This can be strongly linked to the rise of AIT at that time. As David Kopf summarized the situation, 'the alarming

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<sup>114</sup>Sen (1901), S. 49–51).

<sup>115</sup>Sen (1901), S. 69, 106).

<sup>116</sup>Sen (1901), S. 106, 97).

<sup>117</sup>Sen (1901), S. 117–118).

<sup>118</sup>Arnold (2000).

<sup>119</sup>Sen (1993, S. 60).

<sup>120</sup>Mehrota (1971, S. 545–602).

increase of yellow dog racism and cultural imperialism ultimately made a mockery of Brahma universalism'.<sup>121</sup>

The case of AIT was further strengthened by another important aspect. The use of AIT by the Missionaries was common. It is noted by Romila Thapar 'Müller's books were read in India and his views were endorsed in various influential publications, such as John Muir's *Original Sanskrit texts*, (1858–1863) and John Wilson's *Indian Caste* (1877). Both authors were Christian Missionaries and drew attention to the plight of the low castes, oppressed by Brahmins, an oppression which they claimed went back to the Aryan invasions'. The people in the lower socio-economic strata found a sympathizer and a 'scientific' cause to raise their voices against the Brahmins, whom they could claim to be outsiders. Prominent Indian leaders such as Jyotirao Phule, who held that 'the invasion of the Aryans was crucial to the creation of segregated groups in the form of castes, where the Aryans were the victorious aliens who kept the indigenous people permanently subordinated', enthusiastically accepted this view.<sup>122</sup>

Keshub's close relationship with Lord Lawrence was often noted, and the efforts of Brahmans to reform Indian religion were described as operating in tandem with the efforts of the British government.<sup>123</sup> Brahmans' participation in Congress represented an alliance between liberal and rational politics. Both were derived by the progressive Western values, an aspiration of newly educated professional middle class towards the shortcomings of British rule and defended the utility and positive good of Western influences.<sup>124</sup>

In this perspective, the original goal of universal religion took backstage. Collet's sense of disappointment 'It is because we thought so highly of the Brahma Samaj at one time, and hoped so much from it, that we regret so deeply its fall. At one time its religion was rational, spiritual, and sublime in its simplicity; now it has degenerated into mysticism, absurdity, and ceremonial folly'.<sup>125</sup>

Collet's *The Brahma Year Book*, had provided 'absolutely conclusive' evidence of Keshub's 'downward tendency from Theism to superstition'.<sup>126</sup> At the same time, to find harmony in discord, Keshub promoted New Dispensation, a universal religion. Among the 39 articles published in 1879 for New Dispensation, a particular one stands out—Loyalty to Sovereign.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Kopf ('The Universal Man and the Yellow Dog: The Orientalist Legacy and the Problem of Brahma Identity in the Bengal Renaissance') Baumer (1975, S. 64).

<sup>122</sup>Thapar (1996, S. 3–29).

<sup>123</sup>Glasgow Herald (1884), Daily News (1884).

<sup>124</sup>David Kopf (1979, S. 147).

<sup>125</sup>The Inquirer (1833).

<sup>126</sup>The Inquirer (1883).

<sup>127</sup>Bose (1884, S. 130).

### 3.7 Summary

The initial fervour of the discovery of linguistic-cultural similarity slowly permeated the Indian social reformers. The reform movement took another course; the propagation of universal religion did not occur as expected by Keshub but the idea that there was a migration of race coming from the heartland of Europe remained deeply ingrained.

#### 3.7.1 *Transition of Social Reform Movements*

The dominance of Keshub and his followers slowly yielded to new forms of movement, which started with the Cooch Behar marriage controversy. He gave his daughter, Suniti Devi in marriage to Maharaja Nripendra Narayan of Cooch Behar; he revived the performance of mystical plays, and he took part in one. These changes alienated many of his followers, who deserted his standard and founded the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in 15th May 1878. In sanctioning the Cooch Bihar marriage, Keshub effectively contradicted many of his strongest beliefs as expressed throughout the 1860s and 1870s, contravened his greatest legislative achievement as a reformer (the 1872 Act), and betrayed—in the eyes of many—the fundamental principles of progressive Brahmoism. This fact, together with the growing tendency of Keshub towards mysticism and spiritual teaching of the Indian philosophies created increasing distance between him and the intellectual elite circles of India.

On the other hand, the rising fervour of patriotism in India as well as the proliferation of AIT in caste-based politics dented Keshub's mesmerizing influence to some extent. The National Paper, which Debendranath commissioned Nabagopal Mitra to start in 1865, proved from 1867 on to be the most effective means of propagating Hindu Brahmo nationalism against Keshubite Universalism among the Western-educated population in Bengal.<sup>128</sup> Some factions of Brahmo Samaj adopted new doctrines with 'Brahmos welcome the coexistence of Brahmo principles with governance, but oppose all governance in conflict with Brahmo principles', which conflicted with Keshub's loyalty to the Sovereignty.

#### 3.7.2 *Keshub Played a Role in British-Missionary Alliance?*

Keshub's unflinching loyalty to the Sovereign definitely made him an ideal candidate for demonstrating the efficacy of the British rule in India. However, his tendency towards mystic traditions failed him in the eyes of Christian missionaries,

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<sup>128</sup>Bagal (1968).

who were, at times, convinced that Keshub is the best person to spread Christianity in India. For Orientalists, he was already an established ally as he proclaimed the benefit of the 'lost kinship' several times. At this juncture, Orientalists had nothing further to convey to Keshub; Missionaries had a diminishing interest; whereas British Government were interested to link Keshub with prominent leaders to further their cause. In fact, it is interesting to note that the British Government played an important role in the Cooch Bihar marriage, knowing very well that this will ruin the reformist movement initiated by Keshub.

British Government had long established a relation with many Indian kings and Jamindars (landlords), in form of alliance, domination or simply friendly relations, who in turn acted as their representatives in a larger fabric of paternal colonialism. They wanted to extend their influence and intervene in the affairs of Cooch Behar. They wanted to remove 'evil and retrograde' tradition run by the then ruler of Cooch Behar. To materialize their purpose British sent the Raja (king) to Ward's Institute, Benares, and later sent him to Bankipur College, Patna, under an English Tutor. The British aimed to mould him into the model ruler of a modern state, and finally, they sent him to England to finish his education though the ladies of palace object strongly. Pratap Chandra Mazumdar first heard that the British Government had decided that Keshub's daughter would be a suitable bride for the maharajah in 1877. For this they pressed on, writing continually to Keshub. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr Dalton, wrote to Keshub on 22 January 1878, saying that the Lieutenant Governor had decided that the King was to go to England in March, and so should be married before then. To overcome Keshub's repugnance at having his daughter marry before she turned 14, Dalton suggested that it would not be a marriage in 'the ordinary acceptance of the term' but a 'solemn betrothal' only. In effect, the British authorities proposed a legal marriage that would not be consummated till the parties were of age. It was a compromise that would suit British purposes. Keshub had been steadfastly persuaded to see this being of great benefit to the spread of Brahmoism and enlightenment in India.

Why did Keshub agree to a marriage that caused him so much public and personal distress? Pratap Chandra Mazumdar recalls, 'He fervently believed that the representatives of the British Government could never deceive him'.<sup>129</sup> Keshub wrote later to Max Müller that his agreement to the marriage had stemmed from a combination of his conviction that the marriage was Providential, and his duty to place public good before individual interests: 'I saw the finger of God in all the arrangements, trials and struggles in connection with the marriage. A whole kingdom was to be reformed, and all my individual interests were absorbed in the vastness of God's saving economy or in what people would call public good'.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Protap Chunder Mozoomdar (1887, S. 239).

<sup>130</sup>Müller (1881, 1884, S. 114).

While Mazumdar never wavered in his devotion to Keshub, his letters to Max Müller in the 1880s indicate that he was concerned by many of Keshub's innovations. As he admitted in a letter of August 1881, Keshub was 'becoming more and more metaphysical' to the point where 'he may completely elude popular understanding, and that is why I am the more anxious to explain him'.<sup>131</sup> Mazumdar desires to 'explain some of his principles from a simple and rational theistic ground' took the form of a series of accounts of the New Dispensation sent to *The Inquirer* which presented a version of Keshub's teachings sanitized for English Unitarian audiences. He also promulgated a view of the New Dispensation as an expression of 'simple primitive Theism' in a series of lectures delivered during a visit to England in 1883.<sup>132</sup> Mazumdar claims that a 'high government official' confided after Keshub's death that Keshub had the capacity to 'excite the thousands', and that his professions of loyalty as opposed to 'political discontent' were valued highly by the British.<sup>133</sup>

The final years of Keshub marked a stark decrease in his influence. Nevertheless, he raised enough attention to make the intellectual Indians attracted towards AIT. It was so much so that every national group of importance had their clearly defined standpoint on AIT and they used it for their own purpose. The role of Keshub Chandra Sen and Brahma Samaj was decisive for that. Though the ultimate goal of Müller is not clear, his hesitations to take a stand helped the spread of AIT to a great extent. Christian missionaries and British Empire clearly used it for their benefits.

### 3.7.3 Donor–Receptor–Facilitator

Several actors, notably, Orientalists, Brahma Samaj, Christian missionaries and the British Empire together played a role in the spreading of AIT in India. For any theory to get accepted there is a need to have a donor, a receptor and finally, a facilitator. In a gross scale, the donor of the theory was Orientalist, of whom Max Müller played the leading role. The receptor was a multitude of Indian social reformers, notably Brahma Samaj, which was led by Keshub. Christian missionaries and the British imperialists facilitated the process. Ignorant of the ultimate outcome, Keshub and Müller tried multiple possible avenues for reconciling the lost kinship between Europe and India. Sometimes it merged Sovereignty with Church and sometimes it took the form of a Universal religion.

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<sup>131</sup>Müller (1884, S. 163, 52).

<sup>132</sup>The Inquirer (1883).

<sup>133</sup>Kopf ('The Universal Man and the Yellow Dog: The Orientalist Legacy and the Problem of Brahma Identity in the Bengal Renaissance'), Baumer (1975, S. 64).

While, it still remains arguable whether AIT happened or not, it can be concluded without dispute that the modern proliferation of the *idea of AIT* took place in nineteenth century without any resistance.

Brahmo Samaj, which was started, by Raja Rammohun Roy and Debendranath Thakur took a huge shape under its influential leader Keshub Chandra Sen. Keshub Chandra Sen and other prominent leaders of Brahma Samaj interacted closely with Müller, the proponent of AIT. In an interesting turn of events, everyone used AIT to suit their purpose.

‘Young Bengal’ preferred his middle path to Christianity, Debendranath wrote in his Autobiography.<sup>134</sup> Keshub proposed a universal religion in his faction of Brahma Samaj and caught the attention of British and Indian alike with his oratory skills. Under the leadership of Keshub Chandra Sen, Brahma Samaj played an influential role in shaping the ideologies at Calcutta, the capital of British India. It marked a slow shift from the period of ideological stagnation in the wake of Macaulayism and ended with rising signs of patriotism.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, Christian missionaries used AIT to sympathize with the people in low socio-economic strata. British imperialists dubbed AIT as the ‘furniture of Empire’.

Clearly, AIT was popularized as a ‘scientific’ theory, which was supported by leaders of influential standing across the nation. The first glimpse of this came through Brahma Samaj. At the end, the only remaining question was who belongs to an Aryan race and who does not. Or the question was whether the European Aryans were superior to the branch migrated to India or not.<sup>136</sup> In this confusion, unfortunately, the scientific basis of AIT was never questioned.

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<sup>134</sup>Thakur (1914, S. 100).

<sup>135</sup>Basu (Bagal 1942) In one sense, the waves of romantic nationalism broke shores in India to create new ideologies. By challenging the identity, an identity is formed. Though plurality and integration are an integrated part of Indian culture, it had been subjected to years of oppression. As put by the American historian and philosopher Will Durant—Britain’s ‘conscious and deliberate bleeding of India... [was the] greatest crime in all history’.

<sup>136</sup>Thapar (1996, S. 3–29).

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## Chapter 4

# The Role of Christian Missionaries Towards Formulation and Spreading of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) in India



**Abstract** ‘If in that land you do give the people knowledge without religion, rest assured that it is the greatest blunder, politically speaking, that ever was committed’ proclaimed Reverend Alexander Duff, a Scottish missionary, during his address delivered before the General Assembly of the Church, on 25 May 1835. At this moment actually, Alexander Duff was referring to the evolving methodology of propagating Christianity in India. By advocating for knowledge-based religion propagation, he paved the way for the dissemination of Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT). This single statement connected the three themes of religion, education and politics in colonial India, which crossed paths often. This time, however, the connection ranged from Europe to India. During the nineteenth century, European scholars stumbled upon significant scholarly discoveries, of which, arguably, Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) received the greatest contemporary following. It so happened, naturally, that the long-struggling Christian missions in the land of ‘130 million of idolaters’, to quote the speech of Reverend Duff, AIT would play a central role. In this chapter, I explore the struggle and growth of Christian missions in India, their ambivalence about the best methodology for the propagation of the Christian faith and finally, how they dealt with the emergence of AIT in Europe and its subsequent propagation in India. The main argument in this chapter is that the Christian missions kept in synchrony with the Indian social reform movement and ultimately utilized AIT as a sophisticated method for their mission. This tremendously boosted the sociocultural acceptance of AIT, which otherwise, rested on the flimsy foundation of evidences from the nascent field of philology. In a more general perspective, this brings forth the idea that development and propagation of a theory in nineteenth-century scientific world was intertwined with the social, economic, political and religious landscape. The propagation of AIT is a prime example to that effect.

## 4.1 Christianity in Nineteenth-Century Europe

Nineteenth-century Europe was the centre stage of a turbulent struggle between science and religion. This also has set the stage for the deep battles within different religious groups on whether to accept a more radical approach of defining Christianity and thus, let scientific arguments reign or form a resistance to blatant claims against the Bible. As we will see in this chapter, these conflicts in Europe reached its nadir at the same time when colonial missions were spreading at a rapid pace. The conflicts and contradictions did not help the cause at all.

The rapid-paced innovations led by the industrial revolution in nineteenth century brought science to the appreciation of common men. Scientific education practices started coming into prominence with new models, such as the one put forward by Wilhelm von Humboldt in Germany. New scientific advances led to question the belief system propounded by the churches and thus also by Christian missionaries.

As a prime example, Charles Lyell, a Scottish geologist, published his monumental book *Principles of Geology: being an attempt to explain the former changes of the Earth's surface, by reference to causes now in operation* in three volumes from 1830 to 1833. The book claimed earth to be older than previously suggested by the Bible. Young Charles Darwin read these books during his voyage on HMS Beagle on this trip around the world. Eventually Lyell's propositions led him to propound the theory of evolution by natural selection, a thesis he developed in his book *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, published in 1859. All these and other books made a profound impression on the intellectual community of this time, and most strikingly on the religious scholars. In a letter dated 18 November 1859, Charles Kingsley, a broad church priest of the Church of England, wrote to Darwin that—*'I have gradually learnt to see that it is just as noble a conception of Deity, to believe that he created primal forms capable of self development into all forms needful pro tempore & pro loco'*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Darwin articulated what others thought at the same time, trying to combine the ideas of deity, progress, individuality and social life. On the other hand, Charles Hodge, a Presbyterian theologian and principal of Princeton Theological Seminary, vehemently rejected Darwinism as an atheist viewpoint. Even for Charles Lyell, who had gained significant reputation as the leading geologist of his time, did not yield easily to the evolutionary theories in his *Antiquity of Man*, partly because of his deep Christian faith.<sup>2</sup>

The deliberate reconciliation between Bible and science was not a totally new objective and had already happened earlier, say, during the Renaissance period.

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<sup>1</sup>Kingsley (1859) The idea of accommodating religious beliefs, while slowly pushing the boundary of rational thoughts were to be found also in the studies of philology, ethnology and geology, among others.

<sup>2</sup>Bynum (1984, pp. 153–187).

Several Christian clergymen thought the genesis narrative to be allegorical.<sup>3</sup> Many naturalists from Royal Society made a strong effort in this direction, in the aftermath of the English Civil War (1642–1651), which ended the monopoly of the Church of England. They explained ‘their natural laws’ as in congruence with a divine plan. However, the evolution of species, connecting moral man with immoral, savage primates seemed for many to be irreconcilable and even blasphemous with the divinely appointed social order.<sup>4</sup>

The transformative period of Victorian England in the face of the scientific discoveries led to the nomenclature of this period as an ‘*age of doubt*’.<sup>5</sup> At this time, intellectuals had to master the courage of facing religious persecution and often, in their minds, a pang of religious sin to advance a rationalist cause. The crisis started affecting the complete social strata, including leading intellectuals, missionaries and common folks.

In a well-publicized face-off between the opposing parties over Darwinism, on 30 June 1860, Admiral Robert FitzRoy, who had been Darwin’s captain and companion on the voyage of the *Beagle* was called upon. He purportedly said—‘*I believe that this is the Truth, and had I known then what I know now, I would not have taken him [Darwin] aboard the Beagle*’.<sup>6</sup> Many leading intellectuals such as Adam Sedgwick and Richard Owen were openly hostile to the evolutionary theories of Darwin. Owen notably presented anatomical evidences to suggest that the human brain is significantly different from other mammals, a theory that was dissected and attacked by Darwinians like Thomas Henry Huxley. Huxley formed a club of nine leading intellectuals of the time, termed as X club, which included physicist John Tyndall, philosopher and biologist Herbert Spencer, among others.<sup>7</sup> They formed a strong and influential fraternity lasting for two decades and tried to wrestle the system of natural studies from the stronghold of theologians. John Tyndall, in his presidential address of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, in 1874, was vitriolic. He historically surveyed how scientific advances were made by the likes of Copernicus and Galileo, despite the opposition from Christian Churches. This address, known also as the Belfast address, raged a storm among Protestants and Catholics alike, who branded Tyndall as a *morally corrupt materialist*.

After the Belfast address, the popular magazine of those days, *Punch*, published a poem titled ‘Democritus at Belfast’, which ended with the following poignant lines.

*A black cloud shrouds our future as our past;  
Matter, the wise man’s God: the Crowd’s—no Matter!*

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<sup>3</sup>Forster and Marston (1999, pp. 26–27).

<sup>4</sup>Desmond and Moore (1991, pp. 34–35).

<sup>5</sup>Lane (2012).

<sup>6</sup>Green (1996, p. 231).

<sup>7</sup>Jensen (1970, pp. 63–72).

These lines succinctly summarized the condition of common men, who could not decisively embrace either the scientific naturalism, nor were they prepared to uproot the age-old faith. Christian missionaries, at this time, heightened their activities to gain more acceptances.

## 4.2 Oxford Movement

The age of enlightenment, often associated with the French revolution in eighteenth century, gave rise to the liberal Theology that were open to reinterpretation and closer analysis of Biblical text. John William Colenso, the Church of England Bishop of Natal, sympathized with native Africans and re-examined the contents of *Pentateuch* (the first five books of Hebrew Bible) and the Book of Joshua in a series of treatises from 1862 to 1879. In light of this provocation, the Church of England convened a tribunal, eventually restricting his preaching to Natal and only parts of England. The influential X club, of course, openly welcomed Bishop Colenso and also dined with him.<sup>8</sup> Such outbursts of liberalism, even within Anglican Church, veering towards materialism or scientific naturalism were not too uncommon.

From 1833 to 1841, several High Church members of Church of England, most notably John Henry Newman and Edward Pusey, published 90 theological articles known as '*The Tracts for the Times*'. These articles started the *Oxford movement*, named so since the members were mostly associated with the Oxford University. This movement argued to reinstate older Christian practices and faiths in Anglican theology. They suggested that Anglicanism, along with Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism formed the three major branches of historical Catholicism. Newman eventually joined Roman Catholic Church in 1845, leaving Pusey to rise as the most influential figure in Anglican Church.

Pusey was a gifted scholar, who had won the prestigious fellowship of Oriel in 1823, and studied Oriental languages and German theology in Germany during 1825–1827. He was well versed with Arabic and also became familiar with the rationalistic tendencies in German theology. He apparently supported these tendencies, though; he eventually came around stating that he covertly intended to warn English people of the dangers of rationalism. Through his involvement with Newman, Pusey became a proponent of Oxford movement and entered into the negotiations with Bishop of Oxford supporting the Catholic dogma. After Newman's joining of Catholic Roman Church, the Oxford movement was in charge of Pusey, which also became termed as *Puseyism*. He was unflinching towards his advocacy for reinstatement and reconciliation with older traditions but gained little success. One of his sermons in 1843 to the university audience, though supported by arguments from early Church fathers, was not adjudged to be in conformity with the refined doctrines of the Church of England. As a result, Pusey was banished

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<sup>8</sup>Barton (1998, pp. 411, 434–435).

from preaching for two years. It is argued that the defection of Newman to Roman Catholic Church in 1845 happened under the strong intuition that the established Church and University administration would repress any form of reformation movement, which they deemed as tendency towards heresy. In essence, the authority to interpret the ancient scriptures were still held by the leading Churches, which strongly resisted any internal movement and also undermined strong views from scientific rationalisms with the help of intellectuals with devout following.

Pusey recognized the inevitable growth of the rationalistic thoughts, which, however, he could not transform into a real action inside the Church of England. While studying theology in Germany, Pusey tried to understand the causes of deterioration of Christian culture in Germany. Many years later, he recollected his fears, like a handful others, that *'This will all come upon us in England; and how much utterly unprepared we are for that!'*<sup>9</sup> Clearly the reigning authorities thought otherwise, as well as further, viewed the Oxford movement as a form of *'Romanising'* in disguise, which was partly substantiated by the defection of Newman.

While the European landscape of Christianity was in turmoil, the extension of European powers in the colonial space had to adopt a steady policy towards religious missions. This turmoil, as we will see, started rippling through at a slow pace.

### 4.3 Colonial Missions

On 29 May 1453, the mighty Roman Empire came to accept a defeat in the hands of a young Ottoman Sultan, marking the end of their 1500 yearlong existence. The church of Hagia Sophia was converted to an imperial mosque. The foreign policy of Byzantine Empire that was controlling Constantinople at the time of the fall had *'a sense of cross-cultural, supranational Christian solidarity, in what might become great reservoirs of fighting manpower analogous to Khurasan in the caliphate...to drawing them into a grand anti-Muslim alliance'*.<sup>10</sup> Subsequent development of European empires and their colonial policies were intertwined with missionary programmes. It was noted that, *'Christian missionary activity was central to the work of European colonialism, providing British missionaries and their supporters with a sense of justice and moral authority'*.<sup>11</sup>

For colonial missions, it was necessary to give a unified picture to conquer the common foe—the idolaters, who were to be converted. For this reason, at least initially, the bitter conflict within European powers, and specifically within English Church, was not always reflected in the religious fronts, when different Churches

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<sup>9</sup>Liddon (1894, pp. 76–77).

<sup>10</sup>Elizabeth Jeffreys (Editor) (n.d., p. 952).

<sup>11</sup>Johnston (n.d., p. 1) Of course, this is one of the reasons. Missionaries were also needed to give sermons, perform baptism, marriages and burials.

set out to European colonies for the spread of Christianity. As for an example, Presbyterians, Independents and some Anglican Evangelicals united to found the London Missionary Society in 1795. It selected missionaries to be sent out to newfound colonies, who often also embarked on exploration as well as humanitarian missions. One of the national heroes of Victorian Britain, David Livingstone (1813–1873), was sent out to a mission in Southern and Central Africa. Having a deep passion for the native people, he ardently hoped that Christianity would rescue the Africans from slave trade and raise their dignity in view of the Europeans. Ernest Cromwell Peake (1874–1950) was another English missionary, who was the first person to bring Western medicine to China. The London Missionary Society (LMS) was specifically formed to get across the schisms of the different Churches and gather more financial support for overseas missions.

Shortly before the formation of LMS, in 1792, in Kettering, England, Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) was formed. William Carey, their first missionary, also known as the '*father of modern missions*', was sent to Bengal, India. At that time, Bengal was under a tyrannical rule, which was even attested later by Thomas Babington Macaulay to be the '*place to which Englishmen were sent only to get rich*' and was controlled by '*gang of public robbers*' (referring to East India Company).<sup>12</sup> To avoid interfering with native customs, which might hurt their smooth functioning of commercial despotism, East India Company wanted no piece of Gospel and declared a blanket ban on missionary activities. Carey boarded the ship to India as an undercover Baptist missionary and landed in Calcutta in November 1793. En route, their original vessel had abandoned Carey in a fear that they might be violating the ban of British East India Company by carrying a Missionary. Carey received passage from a Danish ship.

Arriving at such a situation, in 1793, Carey ran out of money and started financially supporting himself with the job in an Indigo plant in a remote village named as Mudnabati, Bengal. There, he lost his son Peter Carey due to dysentery, in 1795. To add to the woes, their neighbours initially refused to support the grieving family as pallbearers or gravediggers. His wife, Dorothy Carey, who was reluctant to go to India at first place, slowly lost her grip of mind and by 1800, was noted by William Ward, another missionary, to be 'stark mad'. East India Company, which managed the colonial activities in Bengal and a large part of Gangetic plain in India, were hostile to missionaries. In 1758, after the closing of Danish mission in Cuddalore, Calcutta remained without a clergyman to perform the burial or baptism. The British Governor General of India officially wrote to the Court of Directors in 1795 '*Our clergy in Bengal, with some exceptions, are not respectable characters*'.<sup>13</sup> East India Company set up a feudal system with local landlords and collected land taxes from them. The oppressive system reached abominable depths, where there was little respite for the natives. East India Company did not allow passports for newly arrived assistants for Carey, who all

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<sup>12</sup>Macaulay (1910, p. 96).

<sup>13</sup>George Smith C.I.E. (1909).

together took refuge in Serampore (natively called Srirampur), a Danish colony near Calcutta. There, he went on to learn local dialects, founded a local college, set up a press and translated the New Testament to Bengali. In 1827, in a royal charter, the King of Denmark, granted Serampore College the authority to give degrees, which were used by Carey to train native ministers in Theology. The turbulent life of Carey ended after spending 41 years in India, with little success in gaining a foothold among the idolaters.

In a bid to change the adversities faced by Missionaries, Charles Grant, a Scottish-origin politician, advocated strongly for social reforms and free passage of Missionaries in India. Charles Grant himself served for long in India as a member of East India Company's board of trade and made a fortune through silk manufacturing. He ardently believed that it is not only commercial interests for which Britain should exploit India but it also must take an active role in propagating western civilisation and Christianisation. To that effect, he successfully presented his case to the directors of East India Company by publishing a tract titled 'Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain' in 1792. His repeated pleas, together with social reformer and abolitionist William Wilberforce, eventually led to the establishment of the following passage in the East India Company's renewed charter of 1813: *'A sum of not less than one lakh of rupees (£10,000, at par) in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories of India'*. Furthermore, the charter permitted Christian missionaries to preach their religion and teach English in India. This paved the way for future missionaries like Alexander Duff to deeply engage with Indian intellectuals and enable the penetration of scientific advances that so fascinated contemporary Europe.

This struggle of Christian missions in India, against colonial administration, against fellow missionaries from other churches and against sceptical natives, forms the perspective of this chapter and hence, is necessary to understand. In the following section, I review in greater detail, how different methods were adopted during early Christian missions, with different degrees of success.

## 4.4 History of Christian Missions in India

The missionary endeavours in India went through myriads of phases, which can be best described as sets of trial and error. In absence of a local autonomy, the missionaries suffered in the hands of unsympathetic colonial rulers; tried unsuccessfully to imitate the Indian custom and culture; before, finally settling in and tasting success with the rise of Indian social reform movements. This section chronicles the phases.

The history of Christian missions in India could be traced as early as the time of Jesus. It is rumoured that one of the direct apostle of Jesus Christ. St. Thomas

landed in Muziris (Cranganore) in AD 52 and was martyred in Mylapore, near present-day Chennai in AD 72. The earliest colonial settlement in India happened due to the Portuguese merchants. Vasco da Gama landed in Calicut, in the southern Indian state of Kerala on 20th May 1498 in search of a trade route to India. Those were high time for maritime exploration, fuelled by competitive European empires. In 1492, intending to reach East Indies, Christopher Columbus arrived at the New World and termed the local inhabitants as *indios*, which is Spanish term for Indians.

In 1502, the Portuguese Empire opened a European trading centre in Kerala. In 1510, Portuguese Viceroy Albuquerque conquered Goa, which was earlier controlled by Muslim rulers. Goa remained a stronghold for Portuguese for next 450 years. As part of the colonial efforts, they willingly promoted Catholic missions. St. Francis Xavier, a Jesuit, arrived at Goa on 6 May 1542 and took up extensive missionary work. He built many churches along the western Indian coast, reached the traditional lower caste Indian people and later sailed towards modern-day Malaysia in 1545. His success with noblemen in India was limited though; he could reach to other Churches in India. He visited the tomb of St. Thomas. St. Thomas Christians (also called Malabar Christians) remained an independent group with close ties to the Syriac tradition of Eastern Christianity. However, the growing political presence of Portuguese Empire threatened their independence. As part of their trading rights, Portuguese also obtained certain evangelical rights with the hierarchy leading to the Pope. In India, they set out to strengthen the hierarchy by attempting to bring other established Indian Churches under the leadership of the Archbishop of Goa, a move that closely reflects the Spanish colonial enterprises freely mixing religion and imperialism. By 1599, the native Church hierarchy was completely brought under Latin Church. The means were not always peaceful. Multiple texts, including the Syriac version of Bible were burnt.<sup>14</sup> However, this forceful subjugation led to resentment in the native Church hierarchy, who eventually defied and formed independent branches, such as, Malabar Independent Syriac Church and Assyrian Church of the East.<sup>15</sup>

The first protestant missions came from the Lutheran sect. German-speaking parts of Europe with Lutheran dominance had no colonies. There was a strong presence of Pietist Church in Danish court. Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, a pietist missionary from Saxony, was appointed for a mission under the patronage of Danish king Fredrik IV, and sailed for India. Ziegenbalg and another missionary, Heinrich Plütschau, arrived at the south Indian region of Tranquebar (modern-day Tharangambadi) in 1706. Ziegenbalg mastered the local language—Tamil, wrote numerous texts in Tamil and translated the New Testament in Tamil. For effective dissemination, he requested for a printing press from Denmark, which was eventually supplied by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1712. SPCK was affiliated to Anglican Church, still, however, decided to support the Lutheran mission due to the difficulties it faced in gaining a stronghold in the

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<sup>14</sup>Buchanan, LLC (2007).

<sup>15</sup>Neill (2004).

British Empire controlled by East India Company. SPCK was instrumental in gaining support for Missionaries in India by lobbying in East India Company and Parliamentary members in Britain. However, East India Company was still reluctant to interfere with the faith of natives, partly due to the fanatical zeal of missionaries, which might cause dissent and unrest. Thus, SPCK sought alternative means to establish an ecumenical cooperation with Lutheran priests by supporting Ziegenbalg. The mission in the kingdom of Tanjore was highly successful, which was used later to exemplify the good effects of Christianity. Much later, in 1787, the King of Tanjore '*made an appropriation for ever of land...for the support of Christian missionaries in his dominion*'.<sup>16</sup> Ziegenbalg, in 1714, was honoured with an audience by King George, who later corresponded with Ziegenbalg and praised for his work '*of converting the heathen to the Christian faith*'.

The conflict of European churches slowly reached the shores of the Eastern world, as evidenced from the Portuguese missions. The Missionaries fought against the lack of knowledge in local languages, customs and traditions. They also had to raise their own financial support and often had to seek the help of contesting European empires for their free passage and protection. These effects did unite them for some time. Nevertheless, the will to gain bigger ground for conversion as well as fundamental opposition between Churches did occasionally surface, even in the earlier days of Christian Missions. Ziegenbalg was vocal about the inter-caste rift among the native Indians, drawing irk from some of them. In 1708, some Roman Catholic Christians, receiving maltreatment from the King of Tanjore, sought refuge at the Danish colony of Tranquebar, which Ziegenbalg denied.<sup>17</sup> Later, when the Danish colonial authority imprisoned Ziegenbalg over his inciting remarks on slave trade, he received little support from other Churches.<sup>18</sup> The Danish colonial Governor, Hassius, was afraid of any move made by Missionaries that costs his commercial interests. He had a friendly arrangement with Catholic Church. Ziegenbalg lamented later, when mentioning about the prejudices that he had to fight against during the preaching—'*One of the most obstinate prejudices is the abominably wicked life of Christians here*'.<sup>19</sup>

In his influential tract, published in 1792, William Carey, made a similar observation, '*They must also pay a great attention to the views of those who undertake this work; for want of this the missions to the Spice Islands, sent by the Dutch East India Company, were soon corrupted, many going more for the sake of settling in a place where temporal gain invited them, than of preaching to the poor Indians. This soon introduced a number of indolent, or profligate persons, whose lives were a scandal to the doctrines which they preached; and by means of whom the gospel was ejected from Ternate, in 1694, and Christianity fell into great*

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<sup>16</sup>Buchanan (1766–1815, p. 65).

<sup>17</sup>Beyreuther (1955, pp. 54–55).

<sup>18</sup>Edited by Klaus Koschorke (2007, p. 51).

<sup>19</sup>Ziegenbalg (2010, p. 57).

*disrepute in other places*'.<sup>20</sup> Carey's tract played an important role behind the formation of Baptist Missionary Society and later his letter to Baptist Minister, John Ryland, stirred up the evangelicals to form a missionary society along the lines of anti-slavery society, leading to the formation of London Missionary Society in 1795.<sup>21</sup>

With stronger support from home and increased knowledge of the local customs, culture and language, the scenario started changing and opened up the field for a greater intellectual battle.

#### 4.5 Missionary Interest in India: Methods and Outcome

The diverse missionary efforts across different parts of India and in different ages were marked by their unique methods of disseminating the Bible. Modern Christian missions to India stemmed from a general colonial Missionary activity of different European powers. This originated from the Arab invasion in Constantinople, threatening the dominance of Christianity. The missions in India, like other colonies, went through several upheavals and, heated debates over the best possible methods to be adopted.

For different European powers, in the mould of paternal colonialism, it was seen by learned men as the duty of their kingdom to export civilization to the colonies and their indigenous natives. Religion was an important part of this culture. Early imperial interests from Spanish and Portuguese saw a spread of Catholicism, while Protestant churches were divided regionally with their individual ideologies. It changed with the growing interest of British Empire, as observed here—'*In reality, it is only when the Dutch and the English begin to push their commercial ventures to the ends of the earth that Protestantism begins to breathe a freer missionary air*'.<sup>22</sup> This rise of missionary activity was a result connected to the growing confusion from scientific advances and French revolution, as '*infidelity eclipsed the glory of truth*'.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Victorian society had a deep sense of morality and religion, which was manifested in its strong views of anti-slavery movement, concern for indigenous rights, and a belief in rising superiority fuelled by the industrial revolution. As Livingstone believed, he would be taking three things to Africa—Christianity, Commerce and Civilization.

While there was a growing concern over the need for missionary activities, the means were not readily clear. In particular, the Church was not prepared to handle the significant expansion towards the colonies, while accounting for the internal

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<sup>20</sup>Carey (1792) A part of the duty for the newly arrived missionaries was to send home tracts with arguments and pleas that would gather financial aid to spread the activities further.

<sup>21</sup>Hiney (2001).

<sup>22</sup>Neill (1982, pp. 189–190).

<sup>23</sup>Cox (1792 to 1842, p. 2).

divisions among the different Protestant groups. Expensive operations of overseas Missionary societies depended fully on the donations from congregations, where a single Church denomination would not accumulate sufficient operating funds. The early British missionary societies, such as Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK, established 1698) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG, established 1701), were rather formed to support the Europeans settled in the colonies, though they cooperated with expansionist activities when necessary, as done by SPCK for Lutheran missions. The later establishment of LMS, BMS and CMS were therefore prudent to be formed across denominations. Protestant missions also provided large scope for local autonomy, allowance of married ministers and they were *'acutely aware of class relations, both between themselves and their native populations, between mission communities and the surrounding white society, and between evangelical 'workers' in the field and the home society. They sought to consolidate and codify new, local social structures'*.<sup>24</sup> David Livingstone worked 12 h a day in a cotton mill at the age of 10. William Carey worked as a shoemaker in England. The deeply ingrained class distinction in the British society offered many Christian missionaries a chance to rise in the social setting. They had a natural empathy for the indigenous people and often derived their own methods to gain entrance in their systems. However, the methods of propagating Christianity were not always clear. In fact, development of such methods for propagation of Christianity remained a central debate starting from the early Christian missions to India, which continued well into the later times of Alexander Duff.

#### 4.6 Initial Setback of Missions: Insurmountable Obstacles

When the missionaries mastered the language and even, the knowledge of local customs, it did not lead to the mass conversion. On the contrary, the failure of many missions led to heated debate from missionaries on the best methodology to advance the causes of the missions.

French Jesuit Jean Calmette (1692–1740) and later his disciple Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux (1691–1779) undertook in-depth studies in Indian languages due to their interest in Philology. Coeurdoux spent 37 years in India, until his death, during which, he compiled a Telugu–French–Sanskrit dictionary and also showed the similarity between the languages. This sparked several Indologists in Europe to start studies along this line, leading to comparative philology that culminated with Max Muller's efforts much later. Jean-Antoine Dubois later took up these studies. A French missionary, Dubois was member of Missions Etrangères de Paris, who delegated him to an Indian mission in 1792. Dubois, unlike his predecessors, took to a complete submerging in the Indian society. He adopted the dress, codes and

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<sup>24</sup>Cox (1792 to 1842, p. 17).

rituals of a Hindu monk as well as abstained from eating meat. Dubois was not unique in that way. Charles Stuart (1758–1828), an officer in East India Company, posted in Calcutta, prayed to Indian deity, took a regular bath in the holy river of Ganga, eventually earning the nickname Hindoo Stuart. Much earlier, Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) wore wooden sandals and strings across chest to match local customs. His actions led to controversy that had to be eventually settled by Pope Gregory XV, easing the paths for later Jesuits like Dubois.

Dubois published influential collections of essays upon his return to France. Lord William Bentinck, on behalf of British East India Company, purchased the first one, named, ‘Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies’ in its original French manuscript for a sum of 2000 star pagodas.<sup>25</sup> This helped Dubois to earn a modest interest for his livelihood upon return to Paris. He gained significant knowledge of Indian matters, which were held at high esteem, as evident from the interest from British East India Company about the local knowledge that he mastered. In 1823, Dubois published a book titled—‘Letters on the State of Christianity in India’, which contained a short phrase—‘In which the conversion of the Hindoos is considered as impracticable’.

The book led to fierce debate in the missionary circles. The missionary, who possessed the most comprehensive knowledge of India and Hindus, thought that the task at hand presents itself with an insurmountable obstacle. However, his viewpoint was not accepted without rejoinder. Within a year, Henry Townley, a missionary in Bengal on behalf of LMS, wrote a rebuttal with a title phrase—‘The evangelization of India, is, both on sound principle and by sound fact, demonstrated to be practicable’. The candid and bold confession of Dubois is the first accepted setback of Missionaries, leading to introspection. The fallacy of methods introduced by early missionaries is a study in itself. Dubois pointed to several insurmountable obstacles, such as, ‘*manners and prejudices of natives*’. The methods adopted by Christian missionaries at an early stage were simply to overcome this obstacle, as Dubois himself did but, without much success. Dubois mentioned how they ‘*announced themselves as European Brahmins come...for the double purpose of imparting and receiving knowledge from their brother Brahmins in India*’.<sup>26</sup> Their methods of adopting local customs led to much furore in Rome, noted Dubois, leading to a strict regulation on which custom can be adopted for the sake of proselytization and which not. It did not help that there were enmity between European powers and suppression of the orders of Jesuits, leading the native to grow aversion and contempt for Christian missionaries. Finally, the act of conversion leads a native to be outlawed and forsaken by her/his own family, and ‘*the proposal alone to become a convert to Christianity is considered by well-bred Hindoo as a very serious insult*’.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>One star pagoda is equivalent to £7 in 2015, according to [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagoda\\_\(coin\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagoda_(coin))] and was the most valuable coin introduced by British East India company at that time.

<sup>26</sup>Longman (1823, p. 5).

<sup>27</sup>Longman (1823, p. 14).

With his knowledge about other Christian sects in India, Dubois went on to give an account for each of them, painting a very gloomy picture—*‘Behold the truly industrious, the unaffected and unassuming Moravian brethren! Ask them how many converts they have made in India during a stay of about seventy years by preaching the Gospel in all its naked simplicity? They will candidly answer, “Not one! Not a single man!”’*<sup>28</sup>

The facts provided by Dubois were not without supporting argument. He clearly stated that ‘the naked text of bible’ does not cater to the expectations that a Hindu has from religious scriptures. On the contrary, it increases their ‘aversion to it’.

Dubois went on to give specific examples, where the cultural practices of the Christian and Hindu conflict with each other, such as Abraham entertaining his guests by killing a calf; Jesus being the son of a carpenter and teaching among fishermen. Caste system was strictly in place in the Indian system when Dubois was preaching Biblical stories, giving rise to unpleasant reactions from the congregation. In fact, a few well-wishers suggested him that, it is better to mention that, Christ and his apostles were born in the noble tribes. Having taken the pains of absorbing a different outward appearance, learning the language and mastering the customs, the missionaries reached the final stage, where the scriptures needed to be adapted to suit the local taste. The method was lacking and Dubois termed this to be an impossible goal. When hearing about the success achieved by the missionaries, like William Carey, in Serampore, through widespread translation of Bible in native languages, Dubois doubted its ultimate success. He opined that these translations will ‘expose the Christian religion and its followers to the ridicule of the public’.<sup>29</sup>

The problem of methods did also pose new challenges for the few Hindu people who have become outcaste after adopting Christianity. For one case, it was not clear, if they would be retaining their old caste or not.

In Serampore, a carpenter named Krishna Pal dislocated his arm and visited Dr. John Thomas, who also happened to be a missionary affiliated to BMS. Krishna pal was eventually drawn to Christianity and was baptized by William Carey on 28 December 1800. Krishna Pal belonged to a caste with lower social order. However, on 5 April 1803, the second daughter of Krishna Pal was married off to a Brahmin, a person of higher caste standing. This was described by William Carey as a ‘glorious triumph over the caste!’<sup>30</sup> This lack of social rigidity in observing the caste hierarchy is also something that Hindu people could not quickly appreciate in the new religion that they are exposed to.

It was clear at this time that there exists a major gap between the cultures, which prevents a unanimous and acceptable method for the propagation of Christianity.

There were, nevertheless, continuous experiments with methods, sometimes digressing from the original tenets or even adapting completely new methods. To perform this momentous task, the knowledge of Hindu customs were essential,

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<sup>28</sup>Longman (1823, p. 25).

<sup>29</sup>Longman (1823, p. 37).

<sup>30</sup>Smith (1885, p. 145).

which prompted Lord Bentinck to pay Dubois for acquiring his priceless book on the customs. This was also partly the reason for opening up centres of scholarship for gathering knowledge about India. Reverend Claudius Buchanan, who served as the vice principal of the Fort William College in Calcutta, wrote in his memoir, published in 1805—*‘New sources of information on all Oriental subjects, have been opened by the College of Fort William in Bengal Those persons who have held official situations in that institution during the last four years, have had constant opportunities of observing the conduct, and of learning the opinions, of the most intelligent natives’*.<sup>31</sup> This book was very positively reviewed in the General Assembly’s missionary magazine, in 1806. Buchanan bolstered the idea of a Christianity-backed civilization to uplift the natives and their religions by stating that—*‘Now it is certain that the morals of this people, though they should remain subject to the British government for a thousand years, will never be improved by any other means than by the principles of the Christian religion’*.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the contemporary accounts of Dubois and Buchanan paint very different pictures. Buchanan was much more optimistic on the future of Christianity among idolaters.

Buchanan even commented, *‘the communication of Christian instruction to the natives of India is easy’*, which will result in inestimable benefits, through *‘happiness diffused’* and the native peoples *‘consequent attachment to our government’*. The supreme confidence of Buchanan apparently resulted from his knowledge about the growing studies about the foundations of Hindu religion, via the studies on Oriental literature that was happening at Fort William College. He stated that by translation of the antique Sanskrit manuscripts, *‘the former gloom, which was supposed to obscure the evidence of our religion’* will soon be removed and the Sanskrit records would be considered as *“attestation to the truth of Christianity”*.<sup>33</sup> Dubois did not have access to such manuscripts and possibly have not considered the method of defeating Hindus by showing deficiency in their own scriptures. Buchanan was amused to recollect that the *‘Missionary is always followed by crowds’*, who enjoy the disputation between the Missionary and the Brahmins.<sup>34</sup> The mere fact that Brahmins were taking missionaries seriously was a point that made Buchanan enthusiastic.

This shows a shift of methods from propagating Christianity as the only truth to a different method—simultaneous preaching of Christianity while exposing Hinduism as false. Further, the methods, having surpassed the initial barriers of languages, customs and cultures, reached the level of intellectual discourse. This needed longer and more intense preparation by the Missionaries.

At this juncture, Missionaries also got support from unexpected quarters—the Indian social reformers, many of who were also keen to rip off Hinduism from its roots.

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<sup>31</sup>Buchanan (n.d., p. 2).

<sup>32</sup>Buchanan (1766–1815, p. 37).

<sup>33</sup>Buchanan (1766–1815, p. 45).

<sup>34</sup>Brahmins belong to priest class having a strong command over Hindu scriptures.

## 4.7 Interaction with Indian Social Reformers

Benares (also known as Varanasi) is considered one of the holiest places in the Hindu religion. Situated in the northern Gangetic plains, the history of Benares goes deep in Indian mythology, epics and religious scriptures. James Robert Ballantyne (1813–1864) was a Scottish Orientalist. Having mastered the Sanskrit grammar, he wrote authoritative translations of such grammatical expositions and served as the principal of the Government college of Benares. Ballantyne participated in an essay contest with 300 lb of prize money donated by a member of Bengal Civil Service. The winning entry was to be judged on the basis of ‘*for the best statement and refutation, in English, of the fundamental errors (opposed to Christian Theism) of the Vedanta, Nyaya, and Sankhya Philosophies, as set forth in the standard native authorities, in the Sanskrit language*’.<sup>35</sup>

Ballantyne’s essay was adjudged winner by a panel of judges comprising of Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishops of London and Oxford. The subsequent publication of the essay as a book had a clearly relevant title phrase of ‘with practical suggestions tendered to the missionary among the Hindus’. In his studies, he found a pundit named Vitthal Shastri, also a Professor in the Sanskrit college, to help him. The methods used by Christian missionaries at that time included propagating the fears of being subjected to God’s wrath and not attaining supreme peace. Such sayings were often presented in leaflets with Hindi or Sanskrit language,<sup>36</sup> however, with little effect. On the contrary, in a local Hindi periodical, the *Brahman*, the editor recalled how he silenced a Missionary by asking questions about the comparative analysis between Indian epics and Bible.

There was no strong intellectual challenge to the learned men of Benares, who chose the path of mere ignorance to the missionaries. Vitthal Shastri put that clearly to Ballantyne that—‘*our silence is not a sign of our admission of defeat which the Missionaries think to be so*’.<sup>37</sup> Still, the process of inter-religion debate and dialogue was slowly opening, which led to the conversion of Nilakanth Goreh. Nilakanth was an orthodox Hindu with deep learning as well as zeal to confront the Missionaries but eventually admitted to Christianity. Apparently, it showed the fruits of the method that Ballantyne advocated though, it is arguable whether Nilakanth was convinced by his own seeking of religion or by the arguments put forward by the Missionaries. Nilakanth went on propagating Christianity, to which his prior knowledge was of considerable aid. In a letter to the leading social reform movement in Bengal, Goreh writes—‘*men remain in a most deplorable state in respect of religion wherever the light of Christianity does not shine*’.<sup>38</sup> He followed the developments of the most prominent social reform movement in Calcutta via the Brahma Samaj at that moment, and he also knew that leading members of Brahma

<sup>35</sup>Ballantyne (1813–1864 Published 1859, p. 1).

<sup>36</sup>Young (n.d., pp. 14–20).

<sup>37</sup>Young (n.d., pp. 14–20).

<sup>38</sup>Goreh (1868, p. 2).

Samaj were taught in schools set up by Christian missionaries. Thus, Goreh further proclaimed—‘Brahmoism ... has made appearance only under the light of Christianity, and has been taught and professed, at first, only by those men ... who have been educated at the school of Christianity, is it not clear that it is altogether borrowed from Christianity?’<sup>39</sup> It was indeed a fact that Brahma Samaj had very close ties with Christian missionaries but, even there, a strong intellectual debate was ongoing without any clear conclusion in sight.

Calcutta being the traditional stronghold of British East India Company, it was home to the strongest socio-religious torrents during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries of British rule.

At the forefront of the social reformation movement in Calcutta was Rammohun Roy (1772–1833), who is regarded as the father of Indian Renaissance. Rammohun set up the first broad socio-religious reform movement in Bengal, with a formal establishment of society named Brahma Sabha.

The political situation of that time needs a short recollection here. India was experiencing a transition and confusion at the end phase of Mughal Empire. Due to the lack of matching strength from fragmented regional rulers, such as Maratha, the sovereignty of the land was clearly passing onto the East India Company. Unfortunately, the East India Company was more interested in commercial fruits than to take charge of the responsibility for the good of the common people. Thus, the Mughal administration system, through its tributaries like Nawabs, was still persistent. Indeed, there was a deep apprehension of the British rulers that they might generate any unrest spoiling their commercial interests. Further, given the unknown customs, rituals and religious practices of orient, they decided to maintain a truce and never interfered with it, even though being aware of the inhuman cruelty of such practices. Education was not a priority for the government, which let the prevalent teachings with Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit continue as usual.

Rammohun Roy grew up in an environment of orthodoxy though, he found his interests ranging from ancient Indian thoughts on Vedanta to Islamic religious texts. He mastered Arabic, Persian and was drawn to monotheism advocated in Quran. His Persian knowledge led Islamic scholars of Calcutta to offer him the honorific title *Maulavi*. In his formative years, Rammohun travelled to Benares, where he mastered Sanskrit along with gaining interest and knowledge in Buddhism. Rammohun was fiercely critical of age-old demonic rituals in Hinduism, such as burning of widows after the death of their husband. He regularly took up debates with upper caste Brahmins, which resulted in much unrest in his home. His father was an orthodox Hindu Brahmin, who eventually asked Rammohun to leave home.

Rammohun’s linguistic skills were quite useful at that time. British merchants needed assistants with skills of language as well as experience of local cultures and norms to help them navigate through the complex sociocultural layers. Rammohun took the job of a Serestadar, collection agent, under William Digby, who was a collector in the British Civil Service at that time. Digby was well acquainted with

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<sup>39</sup>Gore (1868, p. 2).

Rammohun earlier, and accepted Rammohun's condition that he will be treated as a gentleman. Rammohun had acquired the knowledge and standing to earn this respect. A later incident of his life recorded his refusal to see Governor General, unless he is called upon with proper courtesy. In company of Digby, Rammohun grew aware of European politics and also mastered the English language. Rammohun continued his earlier zeal of challenging religious dogma during his service at Rungpur, defying traditional Hindu scholars of local influence.<sup>40</sup> Rammohun had to officially take stand against his faith, when his father died in 1803 and his mother initiated legal proceedings in court, *'to disinherit him as an apostate and infidel, which according to strict Hindu law, excludes from the present and disqualifies for the future, possession of any ancestral property'*.<sup>41</sup> In 1811, his eldest brother died, when his sister-in-law had to face death as the widow. According to one biography, *'Rammohun, unable to save her, and filled with unspeakable indignation and pity, vowed within himself, then and there, that he would never rest until the atrocious custom was rooted out'*.<sup>42</sup>

Rammohun moved to Calcutta in 1815, after relinquishing his duties with British East India Company, thereby fully embracing the role of a social reformer. He established Atmiya Sabha (*Gathering of Relatives*), with a few like-minded people, which would later blossom into Brahma Samaj. Several illustrious men of Calcutta, including Dwaraka Nath Tagore and Sanskrit scholars, Siva Prasad Mishra and Hariharananda Tirthaswami joined the Sabha. He also established Vedanta College for propagating Hindu monotheistic ideas according to Vedanta, a collection of ancient Hindu scriptures. They held a weekly gathering in a garden house, where a memorable debate between Rammohun and Subrahmanya Sastri of Madras took place in 1819. It is reported that Rammohun completely defeated his challenger on the question of idol worship in the presence of dignitaries and leading intellectuals of Bengal.<sup>43</sup> Over the next years, Rammohun stirred up the orthodox Hinduism by releasing a series of pamphlets using 'the art of printing' that became available in India. The writings challenging the popular, but in his opinion, flawed views of Hindu traditions. He claimed that Brahmins, the upper caste Hindus kept tight control over the practices like idol worship and Sati, to merely serve self-interest. Vedanta does not support these practices, and worse, these are the practices that keep Hinduism in such a degraded condition. These views led to a series of controversial publications, eventually alienating Rammohun from a large section of Indian society. He had to keep bodyguard in fear of being bodily harmed. In his own words, *'This raised such a feeling against me, that I was at last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends'*.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Collet (1914, p. 18).

<sup>41</sup>Collet (1914, p. 19).

<sup>42</sup>Collet (1914, p. 22).

<sup>43</sup>Pruthi (n.d., p. 191).

<sup>44</sup>Anon (1833, p. 636).

Rammohun realized that without the support of colonial rulers, it is impossible to uproot the traditional views. He started distributing his works, in English translation, to leading magazines in Britain. He received help from his earlier employer, William Digby, who in 1817 edited a two-volume work of Rammohun in London. London-based Monthly Magazine published several of Rammohun's manuscripts in 1817 and 1818. Recognizing the dissent within the Hindu societies, Missionaries started to take up the cause for Rammohun, even though Rammohun did not submit himself to any denomination of Church so far. His publications were communicated by Bengal Missionaries to Europe; with subsequent reporting in leading magazines. Some of his pamphlets reached Germany, France and even North America.<sup>45</sup> Rammohun was a gifted scholar with excellent command over English. Missionaries, who easily saw these arguments to attack the Hindu bastion, in all their moral degradations, abhorrent rituals, idol worship, and internal conflicts, applauded his well-articulated views. However, the relation of Rammohun with Missionaries was not as smooth as they could have imagined.

#### 4.8 Intellectual Conflict Between Missionaries and Social Reformers

Since moving to Serampore in January 1800, William Carey had become a well-known name in the Missionary groups as well as among the learned men in Bengal. He mastered the local language, Bengali, which was recognized by his appointment as the Professor of Sanskrit and Bengali in newly established Fort William College. Joshua Marshman, a schoolteacher and William Ward, a printer, joined Carey—forming the Serampore Trio. Together, they run the chief missionary activity in Bengal.

Carey's account of Rammohun in 1816 goes like the following—"Rama-Mohuna-Raya, a very rich Rarhee Brahmun of Calcutta, is a respectable Sanskrit scholar, and so well versed in Persian, that he is called Mouluvee-Rama-Mohuna-Raya: he also writes English with correctness, and reads with ease English Mathematical and metaphysical works'.<sup>46</sup> Carey also noted that—"He is at present a simple theist, admires Jesus Christ, but knows not his need of the atonement'. It is not clear how Rammohun was associated with the Serampore trio during that time though; in a contemporary Missionary news article, he was given an welcome space among Missionaries,—'*Dum-Dum, A Military Station, a few miles north of Calcutta, Baptist Missionary Society, 1816, Rammohun, Native. The Missionaries from Calcutta regularly visit this station. Rammohun, who is supported by a pious*

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<sup>45</sup>L. Zastoupil(2010, pp. 27–28).

<sup>46</sup>Collet (1914, p. 60).

*officer in India, resides here; preaching to his countrymen, and conversing with inquirers, not without an evident blessing*'.<sup>47</sup>

Rammohun was always encouraging interreligious dialogues and at the same time was deeply curious about the spiritual roots of different religions. Being a prominent scholar with command over multiple languages, he started helping two members of the Baptist Mission at Serampore, Rev. William Yates and Rev. William Adam for translating few Gospels into Bengali. The available translations, done by Carey, were full of 'flagrant violations of native idiom' according to Rammohun Roy. The effort of translation did not remain limited to solely linguistic discussions. There was a lack of unanimity on accepting a specific translation, resulting in the complete withdrawal of Rev. Yates from the enterprise altogether.

Rammohun, the ardent supporter of monotheism, challenged the Trinitarian doctrine propagated by Serampore Missionaries. His arguments also left a deep impression on Rev. Adam. According to his biographer, this episode '*drew "heretic" and "heathen" into an intimacy more frequent and confidential, with the result that Mr. Adam finally renounced his belief in the doctrine of Trinity and avowed himself a Unitarian*'.<sup>48</sup> The evangelical orthodoxy preached by Baptist Missionaries of Serampore was shaken to its core by this incident of a missionary being converted by a heathen and raised a storm in Bengal and Britain alike. The convert was referred to as 'the second fallen Adam'; a fresh phase of animosity and duel of intellectual debates started between Serampore Trio and Rammohun. The Unitarians were, of course, delighted to gain new stronghold from a native social reformer.

Around the same time, Rammohun was offered the bribe of 'world-wide fame' if he would accept Christianity. This incidence, occurring in 1820 or 1821, is narrated first-hand by Rev. Adam.<sup>49</sup> On a hot afternoon, the Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Middleton, tried at length to persuade Rammohun Roy to embrace Christianity, which would ensure that '*he would be honoured in life and lamented, in death, honoured in England as well as in India; his name would descend to posterity as that of the modern Apostle of India*'. The offer of fame and glory against his subjugation to a religion abhorred Rammohun Roy, who vowed to never meet the Bishop again. This also reflects the multitude of tactics that Missionaries of various tracts applied to propagate their faith. This method of attracting social reformers to their cohort was a prominent technique that came into force at this time. Clearly, it did not work with Rammohun.

Baptist Missionaries, naturally, severed all ties with Rammohun, including declination to print any material from Rammohun. Undeterred, he purchased his own print, and started publishing a series of pamphlets with 'an appeal to the Christian public'. The title pages of these works declared that those are 'Printed at the Unitarian Press, Dhurmtollah, Calcutta'. He was refuted by Rev. Marshman,

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<sup>47</sup>Seely (n.d.).

<sup>48</sup>Collet (1914, p. 68).

<sup>49</sup>Collet (1914, pp. 70–72).

who attacked Rammohun stating that ‘May his eyes be opened ere it be for ever too late!’<sup>50</sup> Rammohun’s final appeal, supporting Unitarianism over a voluminous document of 256 pages, was released in 1823. While reviewing his Final Appeal to the Christian Public, the editor of Indian Gazette described Rammohun, as ‘a most gigantic combatant in the theological field a combatant who, we are constrained to say, has not met with his match here’. Rammohun realized the narrow doctrines preached by Missionaries of less intellectual calibre, and at the same time, he was deeply reverential about the Christian morality and the modern scientific education in England. Rammohun quickly grew familiar with the Christian denominations in England and America and started persuading them ‘*to send as many serious and able teachers of European learning and science and Christian morality unmingled with religious doctrines as your circumstances may admit, to spread knowledge gratuitously among the native community*’.<sup>51</sup> While Christian Missionaries were struggling to find the right method for propagating the Gospel, Rammohun could convince a few Missionaries, notably Rev James Bryce, the first Scottish Chaplain in Calcutta, that a Hindu can be made a true Christian and the ‘*success was largely owing to the inaptitude of the means employed*’.<sup>52</sup> This began a new phase of Missionary activities in India, where educational efforts gained priority.

#### 4.9 Educational Reform Movement: A New Strategy

In contrast to the antagonism that was developed between contemporary missionaries and Rammohun Roy, Rev. Alexander Duff took a very different path and quickly gained acceptance in the inner circles of Indian social reformers. In effect, what Duff started, marked the beginning of modern *educational missions*. He met with much more success, eventually forcing the missionaries across India to start adopting this new methodology. In turn, this led to the elevation of the battleground between Christianity and Hinduism to purely intellectual levels, thus paving the way for Indologists, like Max Müller to join the fray.

Rev. Alexander Duff (1806–1878) was the first overseas Scottish Missionary from Church of Scotland. In 1830 he finally arrived at India after a perilous journey of eight months and surviving two shipwrecks.<sup>53</sup> Duff was cordially welcomed by Rammohun Roy, who at that time was planning for a visit to England for participating in the discussions over the upcoming renewal of the Charter of the East India Company.

Rammohun was also in the midst of an educational debate regarding whether the vernacular languages should be used as the medium of propagating education.

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<sup>50</sup>Collet (1914, p. 78).

<sup>51</sup>Collet (1914, p. xlili).

<sup>52</sup>Smith (1879, p. 40).

<sup>53</sup>Smith (1879, p. 85).

British sovereign already allocated a fund for spreading education in India in 1813, thanks to the effects of William Wilberforce and Charles Grant. How to use that was an open question. In particular, there was an exchange of arguments between ‘Orientalists’ and ‘Anglicists’, arguing for vernacular and English education, respectively. Rammohun wrote a letter to Lord Amherst, Governor General to adapt English education. Rammohun was also instrumental in inspiring David Hare to start an English seminary, named Hindu College, in 1817. Lord Bentinck would eventually endorse the ‘Anglicist’ view after the famous minutes of Macaulay in 1835. During the meeting of Duff and Rammohun in 1830, however, it was still far from being settled.

Duff held the opinion that education holds the key to conversion, which found an eager supporter in Rammohun. They immediately started to work on the challenge. Among the difficulties that they had to overcome were, to find a suitable place for starting the institute and gathering youth from respectable social classes. Rammohun offered him a hall that he had rented for Brahma Sabha. Rammohun also helped to gather a few students. Furthermore, he presented himself along with Duff for a few days at the beginning of the school to ensure smooth operations. This educational institution, named General Assembly’s Institution, started operations on 13 July 1830 with five students and soon grew to a daily attendance of 600. Duff did his homework thoroughly. With his usual zeal he minutely observed each active mission around Bengal, including a visit to the ageing Carey in Serampore. He arrived at the conclusion that his ‘operations must be different from that of all his predecessors in India’.<sup>54</sup>

Duff realized that ‘*the prevailing missionary method had failed both in immediate results and in self-developing power. The logical, if also anti- spiritual conclusion, was undoubtedly that of the Abbe Dubois, who knew no other method—that it was impossible to convert the Hindoos, and needless to try*’.<sup>55</sup> He developed the ‘downward filter theory’, which suggested that the knowledge of Christianity would eventually trickle down the social ladder and therefore, to convert the upper caste Hindus, the best method is to open up the European education for them. Naturally, Duff warmly welcomed the support of English education by Governor General of India in the 1835 act. What is important to note here, is that, behind his support, there was always an unwavering goal of achieving the success of his Mission. He wrote a detailed exposition in the Church of Scotland Magazine, 1836.<sup>56</sup> He reasoned in detail with theory and facts on the possibility of achieving ‘*one grand effect, wherever such an education is imparted, will be the demolition of the superstitions and idolatries of India*’.<sup>57</sup> Duff claimed that all the sacred books of India are ‘thickly interspersed with glaring errors’, which makes it ‘impossible for young men to complete a course of high English education’, without coming to ‘fatal collision with

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<sup>54</sup>Smith (1879, p. 105).

<sup>55</sup>Smith (1879, p. 107).

<sup>56</sup>Jonstone (n.d.).

<sup>57</sup>Jonstone (n.d., p. 38).

the opposing errors in their own systems'.<sup>58</sup> Duff presented several facts like a worried father withdrawing his son from the school in apprehension that he might adopt Christianity. He also quoted the editor of a leading newspaper, who himself was a converted Brahmin—'*No missionary ever taught us, for instance (meaning himself, the editor) to forsake the religion of our fathers; it was Government that did us this service*'.<sup>59</sup> The editor was educated at Hindu college, which, Duff elaborated with another quotation, has become the 'fountain of a new race of men'. He had no doubts about the absolute supremacy of Christianity over the native superstitions, and at last found a way to successfully achieve the task that was considered impracticable by Dubois little more than a decade earlier. The method seemed simple, 'Wherever a government seminary is founded, which shall have the effect of battering down idolatry and superstition'; a seed of Christianity needs to be planted to grow a 'superstructure'.<sup>60</sup>

The events of conversions caused a great furore in Calcutta. A young man and his bride, belonging the wealthy families of Sirkar and Mullik decided to convert and sought refuge in the house of Duff. Once the news spread, the families initiated violence causing Duff to be in house siege for a few days. The matter moved to Supreme Court, who gave the ruling in favour of would be converted. Both were baptized with a crowd raging outside the house.<sup>61</sup> The wealthy clans like Seels and Mulliks resolved to establish a rival college, which would be run by Christians, who would agree to teach English and European science purely along secular lines. This caused much surprise to Duff, who believed that English education suffices to destroy the Hinduism, and commented, 'It is sure to prove absolutely ruinous and suicidal as regards Hindooism!'<sup>62</sup> The orthodox Hindus were disturbed to the extent that there were life threats to Duff, who issued a statement to the 'native gentlemen of Calcutta' in 1847. He warned that the 'first actual missionary blood that is violently shed in the peaceful cause of Indian evangelization, will prove a prolific seed in the outspreading garden of the Indo-Christian Church'.<sup>63</sup>

One may take a step back to understand the influence, which resulted in the actions of Duff. Rev. John Inglis, minister of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh was a progressive Missionary, who was influential in planting the seeds of foreign missions for the Church of Scotland. As early as in 1818, he delivered a sermon that placed education as the foremost divine agency for preaching Christianity by referring to the conquest of the Roman Empire by the Church. While sending the first chaplains to India, he argued that this method may not bear immediate fruits in

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<sup>58</sup>Jonstone (n.d., p. 38).

<sup>59</sup>Jonstone (n.d., p. 39).

<sup>60</sup>Jonstone (n.d., p. 41).

<sup>61</sup>Smith (1879, pp. 56–57) No single missionary shook up the life of Calcutta like Rev. Duff. He narrated many such accounts first-hand on how the students in his school grew steadily, how they broke the ritualistic traditions and how they questioned the age-old Hindu belief systems. However, the scientific education prompted them to question the Christian narratives as well.

<sup>62</sup>Smith (1879, p. 63).

<sup>63</sup>Smith (1879, p. 75).

conversion, stating ‘*establishments for the instruction and civilization of our benighted brethren might not be rendered signally effectual*’.<sup>64</sup> Dr. Inglis was updated about the state of education in Bengal by Rev Bryce and Rammohun Roy, who issued a letter ‘to the People of Scotland’ in 1825. This letter moved and inspired Duff to take up his Mission to India.

Duff acted on these principles and achieved success on spreading English education. Later, on his own methods, Duff commented—‘we directed our view not merely to the present but to future generations’,<sup>65</sup> which, according to his biographer, ‘became the most evangelical and evangelistic agency ever adopted against the ancient Aryan faiths’.<sup>66</sup> I note the term ‘Aryan’ used here that would become an accepted knowledge by 1879, as we will see later.

Duff was influential in setting up Bengal Medical College in 1837. In October 1844, the new Governor General, Lord Hardinge opened the offices of public service to educated natives, thus acknowledging the value of English education in India, to much delight of Duff. He was able to navigate among learned and upper caste Hindus, a few of who got baptized and many of them openly supported social reform movements initiated by Rammohun Roy.

However, the means adopted by Duff was not above criticism among Missionary societies. A lengthy letter was sent by an anonymous missionary to the editors of Madras Missionary Register in February 1836, in response to a widely circulated speech of Duff on the topic ‘On the means to be adopted for publishing the Gospel of Christ in India’. In the letter, the anonymous Missionary contested if all missionaries in India ‘ought immediately to abandon all their former plans’. He commented further Lord Jesus commanded his disciples, to “go and preach Gospel...” instead of which he is now “exhorted to go and teach science”. The missionary presented numbers to his support on how many natives have denounced idolatry and embraced Christianity in different centres of Christian societies in the Madras presidency.

Nevertheless, Calcutta set forth examples that were followed throughout India and the methods of Duff were replicated in many places (such as new English seminaries and Medical colleges). Spreading the English education had become the method of choice for Missionaries and also received the active support from Indian social reformers as well as British monarchy via British East India Company.

Most importantly, Duff found an ally in the social reformers of Bengal, which was enthusiastically noted and summarized by his biographer, including the conflict that Rammohun had with Serampore Trio. ‘The Serampore missionaries, indeed, had taken a part in the conflict, and their quarterly Friend of India had given voice to Christ’s teaching on all subjects, human and divine. But they were not on the spot; and, as we shall see, they made the mistake of fighting Rammohun Roy instead of first using him as an ally against the common foe, and then educating him

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<sup>64</sup>Smith (1879, p. 39).

<sup>65</sup>Smith (1879, p. 108).

<sup>66</sup>Smith (1879, p. 109).

up to the revealed standard. If Rammohun Roy had found Christ, what a revolution there would have been in Bengal! But God works by His own method, and He sent Alexander Duff to its people and its government, when He had thus prepared the Hindoo to help him'.<sup>67</sup> The works of Duff also received deep praise from the colonial rulers. Sir Charles Trevelyan, one of the zealous supporters of propagation of European education in India, was deputy secretary of the government in political department and resided in Calcutta from 1831 to 1838. Trevelyan observed that Duff 'clearly appreciated the new intellectual and moral power which had appeared on the field' and he understood that 'the receptive plastic minds of children might be moulded from the first according to the Christian system'.<sup>68</sup> Another interesting connection to note here is that, Trevelyan was a close friend of Macaulay, and also married his sister in 1834. Thus Duff, through his educational Missionary method, earned the respect of natives, won over the fiery social reformer and achieved the support of colonial rulers via the charter of 1835 by Lord Bentinck and opening up of public offices for the natives in 1844 by Lord Hardinge.

#### 4.10 Christianity and Colonialism in India

*'How peculiar is that policy, which reckons on the perpetuity of an Empire in the East, without the aid of religion...will flourish forever in the heart of Asia, by arms or commerce alone!'*<sup>69</sup>—lamented Reverend Claudius Buchanan, a Scottish theologian, who also served as the vice provost of the college of Calcutta. Reverend Buchanan echoed the sentiments of many early Missionaries, who had to bear the brunt of colonial rulers and their clearly antagonistic policies towards the Indian subjects. It should be important to note that Reverend Buchanan was a Chaplain officially attached to the British East India Company, and still could not gather enough official support for his ecclesiastical activities.

The policy of East India Company towards Missionaries were simply ignorance and in cases, strict opposition. When Reverend Duff and his wife sailed for India in 1829, Dr. Inglis had to secure permission from the Court of Directors of British East India Company to let them enter as 'interlopers', a passport that declares them not to be in any designated service of the East India Company. This passport was deemed unnecessary after the charter of 1833.<sup>70</sup> William Carey reached India as an undercover Missionary. Even after the well-recognized success of Duff, he wrote that—*'We are aware that plausible views of political expediency, and certain admitted peculiarities in our position in India, seem to forbid the interference of*

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<sup>67</sup>Smith (1879, p. 117).

<sup>68</sup>Smith (1879, pp. 195–196).

<sup>69</sup>Buchanan (1766–1815, p. 195).

<sup>70</sup>Smith (1879, p. 61).

*Government in directly communicating a knowledge in Christianity to its native subjects. Into such views we could never enter.*<sup>71</sup>

The rationale from East India Company was simple. They did not tolerate any kind of turmoil in public life that might endanger their commercial interests. It is interesting to observe that during the same time, they did not take any proactive step towards ensuring the loyalty of their subjects through welfare, raising health standards, paying heed to the complete economic turmoil that many parts of India was subjected to since the late Mughal era. East India Company, however, did everything to minimize the interference of religious and cultural standpoint, even if that appeared ‘uncivilized’ in their eyes. The case of burning of widows is a prime example of this. There was only one reason for the initial Christian missionaries to be authorized by East India Company that was to serve the Europeans residing in India, as part of their duty. ‘*The CMS and SPCK...felt that a full ecclesiastical establishment should be set up in India. The Church of Scotland...felt that it too should have an ecclesiastical establishment in India particularly as so many Company servants were Scots*’.<sup>72</sup> It was noted uniformly in every memoir of that time that the East India Company was ‘*particularly inimical to Christianity*’.<sup>73</sup> Until the open acceptance of the religion by several upper class natives and the strong establishment of the value of inculcating western education, the missionaries had to simultaneously appease the colonial rulers, field arguments in favour of Christianity and ensure the acceptance of Bible among the natives.

During this process, Missionaries argued in favour of the spread of Christianity in myriads of forms. Buchanan perhaps echoes the sentiments of a few officials in the East India Company, when he states that—‘*It is easy to govern the Hindoos in their ignorance*’ and immediately adds, reassuringly—‘*In ten centuries the Hindoos will not be as wise as the English*’.<sup>74</sup> He also warns that the natives always thought, ‘*the English have no religion*’, which Englishmen infidel in their eyes, in absence of a stronger ecclesiastical presence.<sup>75</sup>

East India Company tiptoed around these suggestions but slowly yielded to the demands of native enlightenment. When the Governor General Wellesley banned certain cruel practices in the Hindu pilgrimage of the Gangasagar, he sought for the pundits about its textual validation. The pundits unanimously declared the ritual to be a custom from some people due to their barbarous ignorance and had no support from the sacred texts. This enlightenment was also coming from a rising tide of educated Indian intellectuals though, in cases, misinterpreted to be solely due to the Christian teachings. As such, Buchanan commented, ‘*The civilized world may expect soon to hear of the abolition of this opprobrium of a Christian administration*’, which led him to believe that even forcible changes in local customs are

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<sup>71</sup>Jonstone (n.d., p. 40).

<sup>72</sup>Penelope Carson (n.d., p. 111).

<sup>73</sup>Penelope Carson (n.d., p. 111).

<sup>74</sup>Buchanan (1766–1815, pp. 39–40).

<sup>75</sup>Buchanan (1766–1815, pp. 13–14).

acceptable.<sup>76</sup> Only once when it was emerging that India is going to be a long-term colony under British rule, a deeper intermingling of cultural issues was handled.

In some cases, the policies of the Company had detrimental effects towards the spread of Christianity. Reverend Duff draws a comparison between French and English policies in this sarcastic passage—*‘The French persecuted the Hindoo faith and upheld the Romish by unlawful means; the English persecuted the Christian faith and upheld the Hindoo by unlawful means. The French admitted Native Christians into their service, in every department; and so far well. But such admission was effected in a way not only to encourage proselytism, but to necessitate a vast amount of hypocrisy. The English, again, with the perfection of unreasonableness, prohibited Native Christians from entering their service in any department, and thus obtrusively and unwarrantably discouraged all conversion from Hindooism—in other words, the progress of the blessed gospel among this benighted people.’*<sup>77</sup>

In a nutshell, the Missionaries struggled at home to raise funds and work across the factions of faith. They also had to continuously raise a voice against the antagonistic behaviour of East Indian Company, which slowly subdued after observing the acceptance of Missions in the native cultures and seeing their ‘educational’ methods to be conducive to the colonial systems.

However, the grand challenge of winning over the religious bastions of the upper caste natives remained at bay. The intellectual struggle moved at a higher plane, as evidenced by the conflict between Rammohun Roy and the Serampore Trio. Rammohun Roy was openly supportive of Alexander Duff and several Scottish missionaries. He regularly attended many church prayers in India but did not openly profess himself to belong to one. He refused the promise of fame and glory offered by Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Middleton. He also raised a religious platform separating from the Hinduism that was practised in those days, decrying many customs including idolatry. At the same time, his fierce criticism of Trinitarian doctrine drew attention from the British and the world. The problem of winning over Rammohun Roy, and the Brahma Sabha that he founded, became the symbolic problem of winning over the native intellectual elites. We see a glimpse of that in the last days of Rammohun Roy, which he spent in England. According to his biographer—*‘he worshipped with his friends at Lewin’s Mead Chapel; and they showed no slight desire to secure from him a confession of Christian faith. Mr. Estlin recorded in his diary...that Rammohun had in his hearing declared “he denied the Divinity of Christ,” but “distinctly asserted his belief in the Divine mission of Christ.” Rev. John Foster bore witness to the fact that ...Rajah “avowed unequivocally his belief in the resurrection of Christ and in the Christian miracles generally’.*<sup>78</sup> Obviously, Rammohun himself gave enough evidence of his inclination towards Christianity that ignited the serious attention from the Missionaries. Metaphorically, Rammohun

<sup>76</sup>Buchanan (1766–1815, p. 49).

<sup>77</sup>Smith (1879, p. 130).

<sup>78</sup>Collet (1914, p. 222).

Roy represented the intellectual elite of India, Rev. Duff embodied successful missions that reach for such elites and the Serampore trio represent the failed attempts of missionaries.

“As a youth”, Rammohun said to Duff, ‘*I acquired some knowledge of the English language. Having read about the rise and progress of Christianity in apostolic times, and its corruption in succeeding ages, and then of the Christian Reformation which shook off these corruptions and restored it to its primitive purity, I began to think that something similar might have taken place in India*’.<sup>79</sup> This succinct phrase eventually became the key ingredient of the tool that Christian Missionaries got their hands on in the form of the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT).

### 4.11 Discovery of AIT

The term *Aryan* was associated with Indo-European since Indo-Iranian languages represented this group and Indo-Iranian speaking people referred themselves as Aryan in many places. The same term came to be used for the new group, i.e. Proto-Indo-European language. The term Aryan can be traced to ancient Sanskrit word *ārya*, which occurs multiple times in different verses of Rig Veda, the oldest Vedic manuscript. According to the translation in 1872 by Monier-Williams, Boden professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, the word had diverse meanings but generally attached to a person, who is noble and follows Vedic traditions. The word *Arya* is also found in the ancient Iranian texts, particularly in Avesta, the collection of sacred texts in Zoroastrianism. Unlike the Indian reference, the Iranian texts ascribed to Aryans in a clear ethnic context.

The first reference of *Aryan Race* in linguistic research occurs in page 262 of the lectures on the Science of Language, by Müller, delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1861. Müller comments—‘*while examining its ramification, learn at the same time why that name was chosen by the agricultural nomads, the ancestors of the Aryan race*’ It might, very well, be an unintentional mistake as in the same lecture he mentioned several times ‘Aryan dialect’, ‘Aryan verb’, ‘Aryan speech’ and ‘Aryan languages’. Nevertheless, the overlapping of language-speaking group with the race continued. The blurring of language-speaking group and race continued to gain momentum due to his proposition of linguistic evolution and the assertion that language represents the key intellectual faculty. Taking all prevalent causes at this point, it is most likely that Müller’s assertion of language-speaking group as race has its roots in his public opposition of Darwin, who refused to accept language as a faculty that marks qualitative separation between different species. The race is mixed throughout the lecture with connotations to other countries and other language-speaking groups as well. For example, he mentions that—‘*this could be done only by the same careful and minute*

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<sup>79</sup>Collet (1914, p. 261).

*comparison which enables us to class the idioms spoken in Iceland and Ceylon as cognate dialects*'.<sup>80</sup>

Even though the 1861 lecture strongly established the connection between race and language, the relation was gaining momentum already, thanks to the earlier works of orientalist Friedrich von Schlegel. For example, Swiss philologist Adolphe Pictet stated in 1859—*'The religion of Christ, destined to be the torch of humanity, was adopted by the genius of Greece and propagated by the power of Rome, while Germanic energy gave it new strength, and the whole race of European Aryas, under its beneficent influence, and by means of endless conflict, raised itself little by little to the level of modern civilization...It is thus that Aryas, more favoured than any other, was to become the main instrument of God's plan for the destiny of mankind*'.<sup>81</sup> The romantic fervour is apparent in another quote from the same book—*'Is it not perhaps curious to see the Aryas of Europe, after a separation of four or five thousand years, close the circle once again, reach their unknown brothers in India, dominate them, bring to them the elements of a superior civilization, and then to find ancient evidence of a common origin*'.<sup>82</sup>

At much later point of time, Müller repented the mixing of notions—*'I have declared again and again that if I say Aryas, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair, nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language. To me an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar*'.<sup>83</sup> However, the fact that he had to repeat his words *'again and again*' shows how deeply these words got ingrained into the popular usage. In fact, on other numerous occasions, Müller extended the application of the term Aryan to nations, such as, *'Thousands of years have passed since the Aryan nations separated to travel to the North and the South, the West and the East*',<sup>84</sup> and *'It treats of the history of the civilization of the Aryan nation before the fifteenth century B.C, as one can construct it from the researches of comparative philology*'.<sup>85</sup> It is important to note that Müller's first public opposition of the theory that he created, even if inadvertently, came on the occasion of an inaugural lecture at the newly found Kaiser Wilhelm University in Strasbourg. It was during the aftermath of 1870/71 Franco-Prussian War. Perhaps Müller was concerned about the overzealous growth of German nationalism, which is fuelled by the Aryan race theory. In the inaugural speech, he stated that *'The Science of Language and the Science of Man cannot be kept too much asunder...I must repeat what I have said many times before, it would be wrong to speak of Aryan blood as of*

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<sup>80</sup>Max Müller (1861, p. 47).

<sup>81</sup>Poliakov (1878, p. 260).

<sup>82</sup>Poliakov (1878, p. 151).

<sup>83</sup>Müller (1888, p. 120).

<sup>84</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 172).

<sup>85</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 97.98).

*dolichocephalic grammar*'.<sup>86</sup> However, the damage was done long ago. At this stage, he could possibly do nothing to prevent the proponents of Aryanism to go wild with their speculative theories. Thus, unintentionally or intentionally Müller abated the origin and growth of the Aryan myth. His later day oppositions did little to arrest that growth.

## 4.12 Müller's Role in Linguistic Studies: Colonial Ties

Linguistic research in Europe took shape partly due to political and military motivations, and partly because of the rising fervour of romantic nationalism. Russo-Turkish war ended in 1774. With the defeat of Ottoman Empire, the eastern border of Europe was the heart of political, military and diplomatic activities, involving all the major European powers. The fiery political situation of that time, naturally, fostered the study of Oriental languages in England, though partly from a military–political perspective. This is reflected by a letter dated March 21, 1854, just three days before war was declared against Russia, Max Müller received a letter from Sir Charles Trevelyan (then Assistant secretary to the Treasury), that how to study the languages of the northern division of the Turkish empire and the adjoining provinces of Russia. Sir Charles requested Müller to prepare at once a treatise, showing which language are spoken in that part of the world, their general structure, and the alphabets used, and what would be the most useful books on the respective languages. By May 16 1854, Max Müller was able to send his suggestions.<sup>87</sup> In his first letter to Sir Charles, Müller called attention to a subject that continued to occupy his thoughts almost to the end of his life. He writes—'*It is undoubtedly high time that something should be done to encourage the study of Oriental languages in England*', '*other Countries which have any political, commercial, or religious connections with the East, provision has been made, by Government or otherwise, to encourage young men to devote themselves to this branch of studies*'. He strongly maintains '*In England alone, where the most vital interests are involved in a free intercourse with the East, hardly anything is done to foster Oriental studies*'.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, Müller was well known and highly regarded for his linguistic skills in the European diplomatic circle. Book traders also put his knowledge in good use with an active interest in India. Of particular interest here is a letter that he wrote in response to Messrs. Longmans, who intended to gain a foothold in the schoolbook trade in India.

*'I believe these book departments have not answered well, and in several cases they are to be discontinued. Dr. Leitner, Registrar of the Punjab University, told me*

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<sup>86</sup>Chaudhuri (n.d., p. 313).

<sup>87</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, pp. 153, 154).

<sup>88</sup>ibid (n.d., p. 154).

so, and I see from the papers that the Punjab University has just appointed me Honorary President of a Publishing Committee, to be established in connection with the Oriental College at Woking. Agitated at the present moment, and an able agent might do good service. I dare say you know Mr. Grant Duff and Lord Reay. I know the Registrar of Bombay, Mr. Peterson, and at Lahore, Dr. Leitner, and at Benares, Dr. Thibaut. The Missionary Schools might also be approached through the Missionary Societies in London'.<sup>89</sup>

This letter shows that he was acquainted with the Indian administration, the works of Christian missionaries and their growing success through the missionary schools. Due to his linguistic knowledge, he was called forth on many occasions to give his commentary over India, though he never visited India himself. On 1883, Board of Historical Studies at Cambridge invited him to deliver a course of lectures, specially intended for the candidates for the Indian Civil Service. Those lectures, titled 'What India Can Teach Us?' begins with his deep appreciations over India. He emphasized on the rich intellectual treasure that India holds in the fields of Botany, Zoology, Geology, Ethnology, Archaeology, History, Mythology, Law and of course, Language. His romantic nationalism is in full blossom, when he mentions, in this lecture that '*We all come from the East—all that we value most has come to us from the East, and in going to the East, not only those who have received a special Oriental training, but everybody who has enjoyed the advantages of a liberal, that is, of a truly historical education, ought to feel that he is going to his "old home"*'.<sup>90</sup> Müller was aware of India and India was aware of him, too. Leading Indian intellectuals regularly corresponded letters with him, especially after his monumental work—Sacred Books of the East—came into fore. His deep admiration for Indian people was also reflected in his lecture titled 'Truthfulness of the Hindus', which drew acerbic comments from some Indian newspapers. He was criticized for never having been to India and merely passing a superfluous judgment. However, several prominent Europeans, who lived in India, such as, Sir Lewis Pelly, supported him. This lecture was printed in a leading Indian newspaper, which drew numerous appreciative letters and definitely increased the affection of Müller in view of Indians.<sup>91</sup>

Given his wide reach in the intellectual circles of the English-speaking world, Missionaries were clearly aware of the importance and influence of Müller's discoveries. Nevertheless, he was not always taken without question, even in the fields of his core expertise. One may note particularly of the translation controversy that originated pertaining to some of the texts in the Sacred Books of the East. Bishop of Colombo wrote to Müller about some '*objectionable character of parts*' of Vinaya Pitaka, which forms the core of Buddhist religious scriptures. These were translated from Pali. Bishop of Colombo noted that some parts are totally absent in the English texts. Whether this omission was intended or not was never clear. Müller

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<sup>89</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 123).

<sup>90</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 49).

<sup>91</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 122).

defended himself by saying that *'either the originals had been left, or, for the guidance of missionaries, Latin renderings had been given'*.<sup>92</sup> In 1895, Professor T. M. Lindsay of Edinburgh, revived the subject by stating—*'The fault I find is that, so far from giving complete translations, Professor Max Muller has omitted large portions without letting his readers know that these have been omitted, and has, in consequence, allowed his readers to misunderstand the more objectionable sides of these religions.'*<sup>93</sup>

In 1845, William Knighton wrote a book titled *'History of Ceylon from the Earliest Period to the Present Time'*. In this book, he portrayed an account of the island's past. He used the Pali chronicles as the basis and tried to reconstruct the evolution of Ceylon similar to India. According to Knighton, Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus appeared as an inherently distinct race. In the 1885 volume of the *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch*, Bishop of Colombo referred to how the Tamils vandalized the island's cultural heritage, restoration of which was apparently the mission of British colonialism. Thus, Aryan myth dominated the European thought process and *'legitimization of the colonial state became bound up with the intertwining of archaeology, anthropology and the Aryan theory of linguistic and racial origins'*.<sup>94</sup> This brief account of the growth of Aryan myth and its usage in building colonial stronghold became a recurrent theme, applying for India as well. For the strengthening of Aryan myth, the major arguments were provided by Max Müller. Perhaps the biggest support came from the British Monarchy, who continued to support the Sacred Books of the East project after British East India Company. Given the importance of Aryan Invasion Theory as a tool, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India (1899–1905) had famously remarked, *'AIT is the furniture of the Empire'*.

### 4.13 Reactions of Christian Missionary Groups to Aryan Myth

The relation of Müller with European Missionaries was not always at the best. The fact that Müller was from Germany, a centre stage of rationalistic tendencies in the Theological studies always had him at a position of mixed trust. He wrote to his mother in a letter, dated 10 March 1854—*'I have still a good deal of*

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<sup>92</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 204) One may in fact wonder if these omissions were intentional. For his contest in the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit in 1860, he wrote in the application letter—*'I shall lose no time in collecting Testimonials from the most eminent Sanskrit scholars in Europe and India, and submitting them to Members of Convocation. I shall likewise submit Testimonials from Missionaries in India, explaining the assistance they have derived from my publications in their endeavours to overthrow the ancient systems of idolatry still prevalent in that country, and to establish the truths of Christianity among the believers of the Veda.'*

<sup>93</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 204).

<sup>94</sup>Silva (2013, p. 89).

*correspondence with missionaries, who are not always easy to deal with*.<sup>95</sup> Missionary societies wielded great influence in the university education as well as policy-making, for which, Müller were in regular interaction with them.

Müller had formed a long-lasting friendship with Pusey, the leading member of Oxford movement. Pusey was sceptical of the German rationalism, however, was deeply supportive of Müller.

The confrontation of Müller with the orthodox members of Church came into prominence several times. The most notable was during the contest of Boden Professorship in Oxford. Boden Professorship was established, in 1832, based on the donation of Joseph Boden, an officer in East India Company. In his will, it was stated that—‘...towards the erection and endowment of a Professorship in the Shanskreet [sic] language, at or in any or either of the Colleges in the said University, being of opinion that a more general and critical knowledge of that language will be a means of enabling my countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian Religion...’<sup>96</sup> After the death of first Boden Professor, H. H. Wilson, in 1860, Müller announced himself a candidate for the position. He eventually lost due to the perceived disadvantage of being a German and also being a liberal Christian.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, during this contest, he got active support from many members of prominent Christian groups, such as Bishop of Calcutta and Pusey.

‘When I heard of the great loss which Sanskrit literature had sustained by the death of Professor Wilson, my thoughts naturally turned to you as his obvious successor’—wrote Bishop of Calcutta to Müller while ending the letter with the statement that—‘You are at liberty to make any use that you please of this letter’. Dr. Pusey was full of praise when writing to him—‘great philological talent, beyond the knowledge of Sanskrit itself—are the greatest gifts which have been bestowed on those who would win to Christianity the subtle and thoughtful minds of the cultivated Indians’.<sup>98</sup> Pusey wrote many letters to the electorate in favour of Müller. It was evident that the minds of ‘cultivated Indians’ can only be won by sophisticated means, which Müller could provide. Even then, Müller was not considered a pure, orthodox Christian, who will sustain the long-running efforts towards conversion in India. If one goes by the earlier letters of Müller, this appears to be a false apprehension.

As early as in 1850, he wrote to Bunsen ‘...if Wilson would write from the standpoint of a missionary, and would show how the knowledge and bringing into light of the Veda would upset the whole existing system of Indian theology, it might become of real interest’.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Müller’s (1902, p. 152).

<sup>96</sup>Anon. 19 November (1827, p. 2).

<sup>97</sup>Dowling (n.d., p. 164).

<sup>98</sup>Müller’s (1902, pp. 236–238) (this letter 13th July, 1860).

<sup>99</sup>Müller’s (1902, p. 112) This brings also another case of the fallacy of presumption, to which Müller succumbed multiple times.

His linguistic skills were of course, of regular use to the Missionaries. In 1854, in a convention of Missionaries assembled at the house of Bunsen, Müller proposed a uniform alphabet for the Missionaries.<sup>100</sup> The proposal tried to address the chief obstacle of conversion—‘the diversity of language’ and a practical solution was sought so that a uniform system is developed that is ‘acceptable to the scholar, convenient to the missionary, and easy for the printer’.

He imagined himself to be a Missionary roaming in India, while writing the letter in 1856 *‘India is much riper for Christianity than Rome or Greece were at the time of St. Paul...I should like to live for ten years quite quietly and learn the language, try to make friends, and then see whether I was fit to take part in a work, by means of which the old mischief of Indian priestcraft could be overthrown and the way opened for the entrance of simple Christian teaching, that entrance which this teaching finds into every human heart, which is freed from the ensnaring powers of priests and from the obscuring influence of philosophers. Whatever finds root in India soon overshadows the whole of Asia, and nowhere could the vital power of Christianity more gloriously realize itself than if the world saw it spring up there for a second time, in a very different form from that in the West, but still essentially the same’*.<sup>101</sup>

Apparently, this ‘very different form’ of Christianity, which Müller envisioned, did not find an agreement with the orthodox Christians. This divergence of views was apparent when he assessed Pusey to be falsely afraid of the heresy that he experienced in Germany. Pusey could not stand the questions on unhistorical characters of Christianity, while Müller viewed everything in Christianity to be real. If anything sounds heretic, it must be faced with a brave heart. This position, elicited a response from Pusey that ‘I know you are a German’.<sup>102</sup> He also found the theological atmosphere at Oxford to be puzzling. There was little interest about the historical accuracy of Biblical events. Rather, there were discussions on ‘...the altar being made of stone or wood, of consecrated wine being mixed with water...’.<sup>103</sup>

Even then, Müller took an active interest in the propagation of Christianity and his views always had an eager audience, from many groups of the Missionaries. He took special interest to present a copy of the Sacred Books of the East to the Papal library. In 1887, at the request of Vicar of St. Giles, he presided at a Missionary meeting. The subject of his discourse was the Christian Missionary in his relations to other religions. Like Pusey, he had many patrons and sympathizers. He found his ideas resonating earlier in the writings of Bishop Beveridge (1636–1707), which he used as the motto of the Sacred Books of the East. The quote includes—‘*I may*

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<sup>100</sup>Müller (2012).

<sup>101</sup>Müller’s (1902, p. 182).

<sup>102</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 95).

<sup>103</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 95).

*make diligent and impartial enquiry into all religions and so be sure to find out the best, I shall for a time, look upon my self as one not at all interested in any particular religion whatsoever, much less in the Christian religion*'. To an orthodox Christian, these utterances were nothing short of heresy. To Pusey, it was the trace of German rationalism. Thus, while Müller was convinced of the Christian superiority and willing to face the questions with a brave heart, it did not find general acceptance in the European Christianity. His findings supporting the Aryan myth were interesting but, neither his detailed scientific analysis of religion nor his vision of a new form of Christianity gained ground.

In 1888, Müller was appointed Gifford lecturer at the University of Glasgow, the first one to hold this title. His lectures tried to establish the evolution of religion according to scientific methods. Christian Missionary organizations did not take this lightly, who even attempted to remove him from the Gifford lectureship. In 1891, at a meeting of the Established Presbytery of Glasgow, the Minister of Ladywell moved a motion that Müller's teaching was '*subversive of the Christian faith, and fitted to spread pantheistic and infidel views amongst the students and others*' and questioned Müller's appointment as lecturer.<sup>104</sup> Monsignor Alexander Munro in St. Andrew's Cathedral declared that Müller's lectures '*were nothing less than a crusade against Divine revelation, against Jesus Christ, and against Christianity*'. The blasphemous lectures were, he continued, '*the proclamation of atheism under the guise of pantheism*' and '*uprooted our idea of God, for it repudiated the idea of a personal God*'.<sup>105</sup> In the university of Glasgow, which was conducting the Gifford lectures, there was a petition from the faculty of Theology that desired the senate to make it clear to the general public that the 'sole responsibility for the mode in which the subject may be treated rests with the Lecturer'. There were serious protests about the content of the lectures.<sup>106</sup>

Despite these controversies, Müller was active in the dissemination of his ideas. These reached the 'cultivated Indian' minds as well as the Christian Missions in India. Since the success of Duff, there has been a steady growth of Missionary educations, which, however, did not necessarily result in growing rates of conversion. Indian social reformers, like Raja Rammohun Roy, did not openly profess Christianity and rather promoted his own Unitarian views. In this complex maze of religious dilemma, AIT offered a new tool to the Christian Missionaries.

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<sup>104</sup>Müller (1848, 13th June, p. 262).

<sup>105</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 263).

<sup>106</sup>Max Müller (1892) Müller pointed out that his plan in framing these lectures was 'to show that, given the human mind such as it is, and its environment such as it is, the concept of God and a belief in God would be inevitable'. The proofs that he cited, by drawing examples from older religious texts, were doubted by his critics as outcomes of mere human intelligence and thus, his entire effort leading to nothing but heretical thoughts of challenging divine revelation.

## 4.14 AIT and the Role of Christian Missions in India

The myth of Aryan invasion quickly spread through the European intellectual world, the only point to ponder was—from where the invasion originated and—what was their migration path. Different opinions emerged to favour the romantic nationalism viewpoint of different researchers. Based on the existing data and assuming that the scientific methods can be applied to language and religion with absolute confidence, AIT was established as a firm theory than a debatable proposition. The proposition raised a serious argument within European religious scholars and missionaries. First, AIT was supported within a framework of the science of religion, which also allowed other outcomes those were not palatable to the Biblical worldview. Second, the theory implicitly assumed other religions, even the ones coming from the heathen world, to be placed at the same footing, only differing in the terms of the evolution. This caused similar difficulty of acceptance, as was triggered earlier by Darwin's proposition that humans originated from apes. The fact that Müller was a key proponent of this theory made conservative missionaries look into it with increases suspicion since he was tolerant, or even encouraging, towards the rationalistic viewpoints.

While this debate raged on in Europe, the Christian Missionaries in India faced a hard task at hand, whether to accept AIT or not. In case of either, they had to align this with the current methods since, it was difficult, if not impossible, to stop the proliferation of the theory among the intellectuals. The foremost reason was that India was opening up to receive every bit of intellectual progress happening in England, via the educational missions as well as from the social reformers.

We will see, at the end, the Indian Christian missionaries took the easier approach and advanced with the line of argument that best helps their purpose of evangelization.

## 4.15 Vedantist Movement in Calcutta After Rammohun

Compared to the atmosphere in England, the challenge was quite different for the Christian Missionaries in India, primarily due to the growing voice of the social reform movements. Rammohun Roy, the chief proponent of the movements and also an eager supporter of educational mission in India, died in Stapleton, a small village in England, in 1833. After a brief lull, his followers slowly took up his cause and diverse societies, with and without strong religious inclination, were formed across the entire nation. This made the task of propagating Christianity hard since there was no dearth of competing religious preachers to draw the crowd for their own society.

In 1846, a report of the Calcutta Corresponding Committee by an itinerant missionary named De Rozario paints an interesting picture. De RoZario observed first-hand the growing Vedantist influence in suburban towns, where the Brahmo

newspapers were widely circulated. There were Brahma preachers, akin to Christian missionaries. De Rozario recounted an incident when a young and progressive son called his father a 'bigoted idolator' and Hinduism a 'damnable system', all in the name of Vedantism, instead of Christianity that De Rozario expected.<sup>107</sup>

In 1861, Müller delivered his convincing arguments favouring Aryan migration, in his lectures on Science of Language. Around the same time, Brahma Sabha (Sabha in Bengali/Sanskrit means gathering or association), the foremost social reform movement established by Rammohun Roy was going through a phase of internal schism. Dwarakanath Tagore was contemporary of Rammohun Roy and one of the trustees of the Brahma Sabha. In 1843, the Brahma Sabha was merged with Tatwabodhini Sabha, another society formed by Debendranath Tagore, son of Dwarakanath Tagore. Debendranath Tagore headed the new society, named as Calcutta Brahma Samaj, referred to as Brahma Samaj, too. Compared to Rammohun Roy, Debendranath had more conservative mindset keeping a good distance from Christian missionaries. This also had a history of personal bitterness. During the heated times of religious conversions initiated by Alexander Duff, in 1845, the young man and his wife, who took shelter at Duff's home, were son and daughter-in-law of an employee in the Tagore family. His father tried to force, and then a legal battle to win over his son from Duff, to no avail. Gyanendramohan Tagore, related to Debendranath, and son of Prasanna Kumar Tagore, one of the close companions of Rammohun Roy, converted to Christianity in 1851. *'It was now that the members of the Brahma Samaj commenced a war with Christianity... The Tatwabodhini Patrika violently attacked Christianity; and the missionaries made bold retorts. They attempted to show that Brahmism had no reasonable basis, and that it was but an endeavour to effect a compromise between Hinduism and Christianity; while the editor of the Patrika said that the religion the cause of which he advocated was founded on the infallible teachings of the Vedas.'*<sup>108</sup>

In 1855, Charles Dall, an American Unitarian missionary, arrived in Calcutta and challenged the command of Debendranath. He formed 'Friends of Rammohun Society' in 1857, in which several notable Indians took membership. In 1866, Keshub Chandra Sen became the protégé of Charles Dall and took the centre stage of a new movement with strong inclinations towards Christianity. Eventually, a new division of Brahma Samaj was born, in November 1866, under the sole leadership of Keshub Chandra Sen. This new organization was named as Brahma Samaj of India. The Brahma Samaj, founded by Debendranath Tagore, was then referred as Adi Brahma Samaj. The word *Adi* means original in Sanskrit. In Brahma Samaj of India Keshub is appointed 'Secretary for Life' and he declares that 'God shall always be President of his Samaj'.

Keshub Sen certainly had a strong inclination towards Christianity though, he never openly professed to a Christian church. He was intellectually closest to

<sup>107</sup>Rozario (1846, pp. 11–12) Kopf (n.d., pp. 164–165).

<sup>108</sup>Lahiri Ramtanu (1907, pp. 109–110).

Müller in that both imagined a glorious merging of the east and the west, and for that reason, he was also the earliest to admit that the British and Indian are lost kin. Keshub Chandra Sen proclaimed ‘We see a re-union of parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race’, in a mass gathering in Calcutta in March 1877.<sup>109</sup> Even earlier, in a lecture delivered on May 5, 1866, in Calcutta Medical Colleges, Keshub spoke on the topic of ‘Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia’. He identified Christ as Asiatic and by that bonded himself with him. He went on to protest the mix of nationalism and religion by stating ‘I must therefore protest against that denationalization which is so general among native converts to Christianity’. He reminded Europeans of the high moral values of Christianity and finally ended on an universal note—‘Let my European brethren do all they can to establish and consolidate the moral kingdom of Christ in India. Let them preach from their pulpits, and exhibit in their daily life, the great principles of charity and self-sacrifice. And, on the basis of these principles, may brotherly intercourse and co-operation be established between them and my countrymen’.<sup>110</sup> In 1870, Sen visited England with a few friends, where he received warm welcome and created a lively interest about the developments of Brahma movement of India.<sup>111</sup> Keshub was also vocal about the benefits of British rule in India. In a lecture delivered in London, April 12, 1870, he maintained—‘the Lord in His mercy sent out the British nation to rescue India’.

In 1878, the third faction, named Sadharan Brahma Samaj, was formed reacting on the controversy of Keshub’s pro-British and Christian leanings and also due to the underage marriage of his daughter that violated the principles that he himself propagated earlier.

Regardless of the schisms, the social reform movements and the sentiments against the religious superstitions gained steady ground, prominently in Bengal. However, as De Rozario noted, the educational missions served more the cause of the Brahma movements in general, rather than spreading the doctrines of a Trinitarian/Unitarian Christian church. It serves to recount an incident outlined in the life of Ramtanu Lahiri, who studied at David Hare’s school and later joined Hindu college, was a disciple of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio. Derozio was a firebrand educator and leader among young students, propagating western education and science as an assistant headmaster of Hindu College. He left an array of zealous reformers, like Lahiri. Ramtanu Lahiri helped set up a college in Krishnanagar, his hometown 100 km away from Calcutta. In the words of his biographer, Sivanath Sastri—‘*In course of time, there arose a number of young men in Krishnanagar, who commenced a war against popular Hinduism. These had not to fight unaided. They received fresh recruits from the Missionary School close by, most of the students of which, under the influence of their teacher, Babu Brajanath Mukerji, a Brahma, had publicly forsaken the religion of their forefathers and*

<sup>109</sup>Sen K. C., Keshub Chunder Sen’s Lectures in India (1901).

<sup>110</sup>Sen K. C., The Brahma Somaj: lectures and Tracts (1870).

<sup>111</sup>Hem Chandra Sarkar (S. 13, 14).

accepted the doctrines of Monotheism...They attacked it with a force which its champions found difficult to resist, the more so as Raja Siris Chandra warmly took the side of the young reformers. He opened a Brahma Samaj in the palace, and was delighted to see the spread of Vedic Theism in his Raj'.<sup>112</sup> This supply of 'fresh recruits' did not explicitly help the cause of Missionaries although, they were educated in a Missionary school.

Even Keshub was in favour of a Universal religion, guided by monotheism, as intended by Müller. To remove the discontent generated among missionaries, Müller supported Keshub openly. He recollected his memories of Keshub stating, 'They (Rammohun and Keshub) both tried very hard to come to an understanding with the representatives of Christianity in India'.<sup>113</sup> Müller quoted Keshub at length—'*But the very idea of an eclectic Church, it will be contended, is anti-Christian. To mix up Christ with hundred and one creeds of the world is to destroy and deny Christ. To mix Christ with what? With error, with impurity? No. Mix Christ with all that is Christian in other creeds*'.<sup>114</sup> Keshub further commented, in an article quoted by Müller—'*It is Christ who rules British India...None but Jesus ever deserved this bright, this precious diadem, India, and Jesus shall have it*'.<sup>115</sup>

Müller clearly believed that the leaders of the Brahma movement held the key to the propagation of Christianity, however, which requires broader acceptance from the Christian missionaries, too. Due to the doctrinal closeness, when Keshub paid a visit to England, he was 'received with open arms, particularly by the Unitarians'. To win other grounds, Müller arranged for a meeting between Keshub and Pusey in Oxford, representing the prime philosophical forces between the two religious schools. This momentous meeting's parting moments were vividly recollected by Müller—'*I remember, however, very distinctly, how at the end of their conversation, the question turned up, whether those who were born and bred as members of a non-Christian religion could be saved. Keshub Chunder Sen and myself pleaded for it, Dr. Pusey held his ground against us*'.<sup>116</sup> It is also important to note that Pusey, despite the scholarly interactions with Müller and his support for the Sacred Books of the East project, did not allow inclusion of Old and New Testament to it. Therefore, as in the earlier cases of Christian missions, it was again believed to be a failure of method, when there was not enough success in Christian missions in India. Müller emphasized it repeatedly. He wrote—'*he (Rammohun Roy) used language far too deprecatory, as it seems to me, of the religious and philosophical inheritance of India. Then was the time to act, but there were no Christian ambassadors to grasp the hands that were stretched out. Such missionaries as were in India then, wanted unconditional surrender and submission, not union or*

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<sup>112</sup>Lahiri Ramtanu (1907, p. 112).

<sup>113</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 75).

<sup>114</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 76).

<sup>115</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 80).

<sup>116</sup>Müller (n.d., pp. 86–87).

*conciliation*'.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, the opportunity was not completely lost. Müller was in regular correspondence with all the prominent leaders of Brahmo movement as well as several other social reformers in India and possibly imagined the glorious rise of a church combining the eastern origins and western evolved variant. Little did he imagine that the Aryan myth would also lead to the development of the very sectarianism that he was trying to abolish with a universal religion.

#### **4.16 Reactions of Social Reformers: Dayanand Saraswati, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jyotirao**

Though Brahmo movement remained at the forefront of Indian social reform movement, they were certainly not the only ones stirring up the Indian social movement.

Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883) was a religious leader, who formed Arya Samaj, a reform movement in the tradition of Veda, the ancient Indian scriptures. He denounced superstitions in Hinduism, protested against the corrupt practices associated with priesthood, and often faced a risk of life from orthodox Hindus. His views of Christianity were purely from a rational point of view, raising a query on his miraculous power and his depiction as a peace loving person.<sup>118</sup> Like his contemporary reformer, Dayanand Saraswati was aware of the AIT proposition, which he clearly denied to have any truth. In fact, he was amongst the first proponents of an 'Indigenous Aryan' theory, arguing that the ancient home of Aryans was in Tibet.<sup>119</sup>

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920) was a social reformer and an extremist nationalistic leader, known for his fierce advocacy of Swaraj (self-rule). He was learned in Sanskrit and ancient Vedantic texts. In 1903, he wrote the book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*. In it, he argued that the Vedas could only have been composed in the Arctics, and the Aryans brought them south after the onset of the last ice age. He proposed a new way to determine the exact time of the Vedas and calculated the time of Vedas by using the position of different stars. Later day Hindu nationalists, such as Savarkar, who was eager to construct a Hindu identity for the nation, followed the examples of Dayananda and Tilak. Savarkar argued held that the original Hindus were the Aryans and that they were indigenous to India. There was no Aryan invasion and no conflict among the people of India. The Aryans spoke Sanskrit and spread the Aryan civilization from India to the west. This nationalistic perspective reminds one of the similar debates in Europe during the period of romantic nationalism, where multiple claims on the original Aryan homeland was laid.

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<sup>117</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 77).

<sup>118</sup>Jose Kuruvachira (n.d., p. 20).

<sup>119</sup>affrelet (1996, p. 16).

Regardless of the position taken up by prominent social reformers, it was undeniable that the two nations, Indian and Britain shared a racial connection, which ended up strengthening the Aryan myth. None questioned the basis of linguistic science that spilled over to the racial connotations. This was apparent when Müller introduced Rammohun Roy, '*Ram Mohan Roy was an Arya belonging to the south-eastern branch of Aryan race and he spoke an Aryan language, Bengali... We recognise in Ram Mohan Roy's visit to England the meeting again of the two great branches of the Aryan race, after they had been separated so long that they had lost all recollection of their common origin, common language and common faith*'.<sup>120</sup> Such racial connotations have been, rightfully, severely criticized by modern historians.<sup>121</sup>

Perhaps the most damaging development of the Aryan myth was that, the assumption of Aryans to possess certain physical features, as promoted in the concepts of scientific racism by physician Charles White and Christoph Meiners. The proposition was thus, Aryans were fair-complexioned Indo-European speakers who conquered the dark-skinned dwellers of India. The upper castes, particularly the Brahmins, were thought to be of Aryan descent whereas the lower castes were thought to be the descendants of aborigines.<sup>122</sup> Several groups of colonized Indians, like the intellectual elites associated with Brahma movement, believed that they are of the same stock as the colonizers, linguistically and racially, which was also accepted by scholars like Max Müller.

Jyotirao Phule (1827–1890) was an activist and social reformer in the western province of India. Together with his wife, he pioneered female education, eradication of caste system and removal of the horrific custom of untouchability in India. Phule utilized the AIT to his own advantage, while leading the lower caste people against the upper caste oppression. He argued that the Aryans are invaders, while the lower caste people are rightful owners of the land. The ideologies of Phule found quick acceptance in the southern part of India, where untouchability and caste discrimination reached horrible proportions at that time. Under the leadership of E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, alias Periyar, a non-Brahminical movement with Dravidian identity grew steadily. In fact, when in 1883, Pandita Ramabai, a woman of learning, converted to Christianity, Phule openly supported his departure citing the oppression of the caste system.

Christian missionaries and Indologists certainly helped fuel this dissent. John Muir and John Wilson drew attention to the plight of lower castes, who they said were oppressed by the upper castes since the Aryan invasions.<sup>123</sup> John Muir, a Scottish Indologist, wrote a monumental four-volume book on *Original Sanskrit texts on the origin and history of the people of India, their religion and institutions* during 1852–1870. In the first volume, he traced the origin of the caste system and

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<sup>120</sup>Roy (1884, p. 11).

<sup>121</sup>Arvidsson (2006, p. 298).

<sup>122</sup>Thapar (1996, pp. 6–7).

<sup>123</sup>Thapar (1996, pp. 6–7).

argued that it did not exist in Vedic age. John Wilson was a Scottish Missionary in Bombay. He worked extensively towards female education and certainly had influenced the Phule with his book *India Three Thousand Years Ago* that was published in 1838. In this book, he drew from the works of Orientalists like Müller, quoting him many times, to argue that the lower caste people were defeated by Aryan-Brahmins in a war during the migration, thus producing the caste system. Wilson wrote, '*They [the Aryans] probably conquered these earlier inhabitants; and it becomes manifest from this circumstance, that it was from the conquest of the Aborigines in the interior part of the country, that afterwards, the name [Shu'dra] was extended to the whole servile caste*'.<sup>124</sup> It is to be noted that this assertion of Aryan invasion occurred much earlier than the lectures of Müller on Science of Language that indiscriminately mixed language and race in 1861. This shows that though Müller was slow to appreciate the ramifications of his linguistic research, many people assumed the mix of language-speaking people and race to be obvious and drew from Müller's arguments to propose a racial migration theory. Wilson's book also shows that Missionaries, in different parts of India, were free to take their own course of action. The connotation of supporting AIT would bring more complex issues in the heart of the Brahmo movement in Calcutta. In contrast, Wilson could quickly alienate the upper caste Brahmins and gain the support of Jyotirao Phule through the adoption of AIT.

Having attained significant learning about Hinduism, Wilson was the centre of attention for important discussions. For example, in 1831, he engaged in a week-long public debate with learned Brahmin and later published the entire discussion in the book titled 'An Exposure of the Hindu Religion: In Reply to Mora Bhatta Dandekara'.

At the end, Jyotirao Phule did not profess to Christianity, since he found the blind beliefs that were associated with Biblical teachings. He was drawn into rationalism under the influence of Thomas Paine's book *Rights of Man*. The situation was similar in this case to the Brahmo leaders. They openly denounced Hinduism but did not accept Christianity either. However, there was a subtle difference. In the case of Jyotirao Phule, there was no religion and no church, whereas for the Brahmo movement, there was a church with all formal methods of religion associated with it.

## 4.17 Divide and Rule

It is hard to not notice the policy of British Imperialism, 'Divide and Rule' to have the same effects on native Indians, as was propagated by John Wilson with his migration theories. This was particularly evident after the rise of native soldiers against British rulers during 1857 mutiny. It was realized that the growth of

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<sup>124</sup>Wilson (n.d., p. 56).

nationalism has to be countered. Sir John Strachey observed, ‘the existence side by side of the hostile creeds is one of the strongest points in our political position in India’.<sup>125</sup> The effect of this was particularly visible in the Bengal army, which acted as the first spark to trigger the revolution. Before the mutiny, a general mix of men from different caste and religion created Bengal Regiment. In order to prevent their fellow feeling across the community barriers, which perceived British as a single enemy; there was unanimity across the colonial officers to enforce a strict policy of dividing the platoons as per caste and creed. Lord Elphinstone commented, ‘Divide et impera was the old Roman motto, and it should be ours’.<sup>126</sup> The same thought was echoed by Brigadier John Coke, ‘Our endeavor should be to uphold in full force the (fortunate for us) separation which exists between the different religions and races, and not to endeavor to amalgamate them. Divide et impera should be the principle of Indian government’.<sup>127</sup>

It is highly likely that the Christian missionaries active in India were aware of the growing separatist policies that British rulers applied. A strikingly similar tone was observed when they ignited the anger of lower caste Indians against the Brahmin oppression by utilizing AIT as a tool.

#### 4.18 Adoption by Christian Missionaries: A New Method

Prior to the spread of Aryan myth, Christian missionaries solely concentrated on the educational method prominently utilized by Alexander Duff.

Even earlier than that, Bishop Middleton, who arrived in Calcutta in 1818 and at one point tried to persuade Rammohun Roy to adopt Christianity, thought along the same lines. He found that ‘*native Christian is a necessary link between European and pagan*’.<sup>128</sup> He also suggested that ‘*to afford to native children instruction in useful knowledge, and especially in the English language, without any immediate view to their becoming Christians...It is conceived, therefore, that one great instrument of the success of Christianity will be the diffusion of European knowledge*’.<sup>129</sup> Accordingly, he made successful requests to SPCK in London, who granted a fund for setting up a college, named as Bishop’s College. It received a lukewarm response. ‘Although the College was built for seventy students, they still only had eight students fourteen years after it opened’.<sup>130</sup> Eventually, the Christian missionary causes had to wait until the arrival of Alexander Duff and his forceful

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<sup>125</sup>Strachey (1888, p. 225).

<sup>126</sup>Society, Winter (1951, pp. 49–57).

<sup>127</sup>(ibid).

<sup>128</sup>Bas (1831, p. 20).

<sup>129</sup>(Ibid, p. 21).

<sup>130</sup>Hawes (2013, pp. 85–6).

arguments in the pamphlet published in 1836.<sup>131</sup> During uproars in the native society after the Biblical teachings of Duff to the students of Hindu college, he quietly sought a private interview with Governor General William Bentinck. Bentinck, himself ‘an individual Christian man...approved of the operations of all who carried them on in the genuine spirit of the gospel’.<sup>132</sup> Duff left a strong impression about the success of his methods to Sir Charles Trevelyan and on Thomas Babington Macaulay. In the fierce debate on the ‘Anglicist’ against ‘Orientalist’ education, he commented, ‘*I see the morality, the philosophy, the taste of Europe, beginning to produce a salutary effect on the hearts and understandings of our subjects*’.<sup>133</sup> Macaulay spent several years in India, when he observed first-hand the results of Duff’s efforts. He wrote to his father in a letter, ‘*Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. We find it difficult, indeed in some places impossible, to provide instruction for all who want it. At the single town of Hooghly fourteen hundred boys are learning English. The effect of this education on the Hindoos is prodigious. No Hindoo who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to confess it as matter of policy; but many profess themselves pure deists, and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence*’.<sup>134</sup> He argued emphatically in favour of renewing the company charter of 1813, and in 1835 proposed strongly to adhere to the English education in his capacity as the president of the Committee of Public Instruction. He remarked, ‘*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*’.<sup>135</sup> He also noted that the ‘the natives are desirous to be taught English, and are not desirous to be taught Sanscrit or Arabic’ in his minutes. Indeed, this reminds of the ardent desire of Ramtanu Lahiri to get admitted as a free student in David Hare’s school, by running alongside his palanquin and repeating ‘*Me poor boy, have pity on me and take me into your school*’. While all these were going forward as per the expectations of the native education, the conversions to Christianity was not high. Instead, as observed by De Rozario or accounted in the life of Ramtanu Lahiri, the English-educated youth strengthened the Vedantist or Brahma movements. Indeed, it was noted by Lal Behari Day, who converted to Christianity in 1843 that ‘*he (his father) did not intend to make of me a learned man, but to give me so much knowledge of English as would enable me to obtain a decent situation; and that long before I was able to understand lectures on the Christian religion, he would withdraw me from the Institution, and put me into an Office*’.<sup>136</sup> After a conversion,

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<sup>131</sup>Jonstone (n.d.).

<sup>132</sup>Smith (1879, p. 148).

<sup>133</sup>Babington (2013, pp. 566–567).

<sup>134</sup>Smith (1879, p. 193).

<sup>135</sup>Macaulay (1835, 2nd Feb, pp. 107–117).

<sup>136</sup>Day (n.d., p. 474).

the school is emptied at once, and only after a slow and painful process, regains its former condition—as was observed by a colonial officer.<sup>137</sup> Orthodox Hindu groups were shaken up by the Biblical teachings of Duff, however timid those teachings were, compared to the vast amount of non-religious education he was conducting. At one point, it was urged that all who attended the General Assembly's Institution are to be excluded from caste.<sup>138</sup> Krishna Mohan Banerjee, an upper caste Hindu, was among the first converts under the influence of Duff. The number of converts went to 33, which is hard to appreciate given the tremendous effort put up by him.<sup>139</sup> Arguably, the conversions caused by Duff were from upper caste compared to the earlier missionary efforts in India, who solely influenced people from economic and social backward classes. Nevertheless, by the sheer quantitative argument, missionary efforts were not leading to a success. This was possibly the reason that led Bishop Middleton to engage in a discussion with Rammohun Roy, so as to win him over to Christianity in exchange of fame and eternal glory.

On the other hand, the rising tide of the Brahmo movement could not be ignored at all. In 1846 a letter from Reverend James Long on January in which he referred to the growing influence of Vedantism as evidenced by his '*frequent and interesting conversations with educated Natives in Calcutta*', leading him to conclude, 'a momentous change has taken place in Bengal'. He wrote '*A few years ago an educated Native repudiated Hinduism and admitted the truth of Christianity, now I find that they resort to Vedantism as a kind of half way house in which they lay outside the gross errors of Hinduism without admitting the Divine origin of Christianity*'.<sup>140</sup>

The strategy of Missionaries to gain ground in evangelization of socio-economically backward groups of people was rather straightforward, as performed earlier by St. Francis Xavier, the 'Apostle of Asia' in the sixteenth century by only preaching or by 'wholesale conversion' through political means.<sup>141</sup> He wrote that, 'often in a single day I have baptized whole villages'.<sup>142</sup> The only difference in the method of Wilson was that he used AIT as a tool to further the same cause.

The case for upper caste elites was quite different. At one end of the spectrum were reformers like Tilak and Dayanand, who laid direct claim on the original homeland of Aryan race and also argued for their superiority over the 'Aryans', who arrived from outside. The force of argument against them required significant

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<sup>137</sup>((Correspondence Relating to the System of Education in the Bombay Presidency, 1860, Bombay, Education Society's Press, 65. For such an incident at the General Assembly's Institution in Madras, see Correspondence Relating to the System of Education in the Bombay Presidency, 1860, Bombay, Education Society's Press, 65. For such an incident at the General Assembly's Institution in Madras (Suntharalingam 1974, pp. 35–36)) (Smith 1879, p. 147).

<sup>138</sup>Smith (1879, p. 142).

<sup>139</sup>Millar (1992).

<sup>140</sup>Kopf (n.d., p. 164) Kopf (1846, p. 9).

<sup>141</sup>Coleridge, Published (1872, p. 145).

<sup>142</sup>Coleridge, Published (1872, p. 153).

learning in both western and eastern religious texts, which was clearly out of reach for most of the missionaries. The only hope left, for Christian missionaries, was to convince the Brahma leaders, who adopted a Unitarian theism of oriental variation, unanimously accepted the Aryan myth and yet stayed away from assimilating with an established Christian church.

To put them in the 'right path', Missionaries heavily relied on the first-generation of prominent native Christians. In particular, Reverend Lal Behari Day and Reverend Krishna Mohan Banerjee played a leading role in the intellectual debates. Naturally, they were aided by Christian missions in India, like Reverend Morton, of the Church Mission Society, who warned Vedantists that there was no compromise with a system which through the ages has '*debased the minds of men, deadened their consciousness, clouded their understanding, corrupted their hearts and countenanced very species of vice and immorality*'.<sup>143</sup> They clearly wanted '*unconditional surrender and submission, not union or conciliation*'.<sup>144</sup> In this context, Lal Behari Day, one of the first students of Duff, and later a converted Christian missionary, introduced a personal note on Morality, which Missionaries would use to their advantage in later decades. Day admitted that '*I myself was a Brahma thought not in name yet in reality but I enjoyed no peace of mind...I could be sure He would pardon my sins*'.<sup>145</sup> Missionaries closely followed the developments in the Brahma movement. When in 1843, Brahmos declared the acceptance of Vedanta to be a revealed source; Duff attacked the 'self-delusion' of Brahmos in leading dailies reiterating the arguments put forth by Banerjee. In this intellectual fistfight, Missionaries made ample use of printing press that they themselves pioneered in India. Baptist Mission Press of India published a Bengali newspaper called *Khrista-Bandhab* (The Christian Friend). Lal Behari Day published a fortnightly magazine—*Arunodaya* (Sunrise). Further, '*books printed in the Anglophone world via the new age ships would arrive in Calcutta in a comparatively short span of time*'.<sup>146</sup>

Reverend Banerjee was influenced by the rationalism of Derozio and then converted to Christianity under the influence of Duff. He taught in the Church Missionary Society School and was also later appointed Professor of Oriental studies at Bishop's college that was established by Bishop Middleton. He was among the ideal elite Christian converts. In the words of Duff, '*What man, woman, or child, in Calcutta, had not heard the name, and some of the doings of Krishna Mohan Banerjee! Hence his baptism, in particular, became the theme of conversation and discussion with every group that met on the street or in the bazaar; in*

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<sup>143</sup>Mazumdar(n.d., pp. 206–208).

<sup>144</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 77).

<sup>145</sup>Macpherson (n.d., p. 55).

<sup>146</sup>Mukherjee (2000, p. 112).

*every snug coterie reposing under the shade from the mid-day sun; in every school, and in every family circle*.<sup>147</sup>

Banerjee argued that Christianity reflects an advanced form of religion, while Aryan settlers in India are ‘*arrested at a rudimentary level*’.<sup>148</sup> He profusely quoted Müller in his book titled ‘The Arian Witness, Or, The Testimony of Arian Scriptures: In Corroboration of Biblical History and the Rudiments of Christian Doctrine’, where he mentioned Müller to be the ‘most eminent scholar of the day’.<sup>149</sup> Banerjee used linguistic evidence in the same manner as Müller to ‘prove’ that Aryan migrants came from ‘northern regions, within the same precincts with the ancestors of the Greeks, the Italians, Slovians, Germans, and Celts’. As per his argument, Jesus is the ‘true Prajapati, the diamond, the true Sun’ and ‘*The Vedas foreshaw the Epiphany of Christ. The Vedas shed a peculiar light upon that dispensation of Providence which brought Eastern sages to worship Christ long before the Westerners even heard of him*’.<sup>150</sup> Reflecting a strong influence of the evolutionary religion from Müller, he tried to establish terms of the same religious thoughts in Vedic scriptures and Semitic religions.

Brahmos countered the plea of Banerjee by stating that Christianity is a foreign religion and the adoption of Christianity is ‘an act of treachery to India’.<sup>151</sup> Even moving further, Raj Narayan Bose, a prominent Brahma leader took up the rationalistic arguments of Rammohun Roy to challenge the consistency of the Biblical history. Raj Narayan Bose got acquainted with Dayanand Saraswati, and such leaders together created a growing nationalistic overtone in the social reform movement. While the Arya Samaj movement of Dayanand and Brahma movement could not be merged due to differences in certain opinions, their ideology regarding Hindu superiority gained momentum.

To this challenge, Banerjee could only maintain the nationalistic fervour when appealing to his fellow countrymen in the name of their ancestors, ‘*Embracing Christ, you will find in Him a strength and comfort which your ancient Rishis would have regarded as a most valuable treasure had they lived in these days, You will find in him everything worthy of your lineage, worthy of your antiquity, worthy of your tradition, and at the same time just to your children and to your successor, in life*’.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>Duff (1840, p. 679).

<sup>148</sup>Kopf (n.d., p. 171).

<sup>149</sup>Banerjea (1875, p. 88).

<sup>150</sup>Banerjea (18881, p. 19).

<sup>151</sup>Kopf (n.d., p. 172).

<sup>152</sup>Banerjea (18881, pp. 23–24).

## 4.19 Müller's Communications with Social Reformers in India and the Propagation of AIT

Throughout the developments of AIT debate, Müller maintained close correspondence with reform movement leaders. Though he never met all, such as Dayanand Saraswati, he was fully aware of the developments. Further, he took a keen interest to see the growth of a universal religion, combining the religions at different stages of evolution, as he imagined in his lectures on the Science of Religion. He was especially close to the Brahmo movement. He met Rammohun Roy and grew a long friendship with Keshub Chandra Sen. He resented the fact that the orthodox Christianity did not admit them openly. Reminiscing about Rammohun Roy later in his life, he recounted, *'Though after his death the Brahmanic thread was found on his breast, this does not prove that he would not have been willing to surrender that also, if he had met with a real response from his Christian friends'*.<sup>153</sup>

Müller clearly appreciated the nuances of Indian systems, castes and the thread that signifies a membership of upper caste Hinduism. Speaking of Ramtanu Lahiri, he wrote appraisingly, *'The Brahminical thread which was retained by the members of the Brahma Samaj as late as 1861, was openly discarded by him as early as 1851. And we must remember that in those days such open apostasy was almost a question of life and death, and that Rammohun Roy was in danger of assassination in the very streets of Calcutta'*.<sup>154</sup>

While detractors of Müller often argue that he acted as the agent of Missionaries and for the welfare of the British colonialism, however, in reality, he held his ground of rationalist approach to religion though, with a favour to Christianity. He indeed took an active part in spreading his own ideologies about the religion and in that, he wholeheartedly supported the Brahmo monotheism. He tried to establish the common ground between Puseyism and rationalism to accept the Indian version of Church. In many cases, the missionaries, especially in India, approached him to engage in dialogue with more radical and orthodox groups in the social reform movement. In that, he served as the intellectual fountainhead. For example, we see that in 1867, Dean of St. Paul's *'asking him to furnish a list of books that might be of interest and use to his nephew, Dr. Milman, the new Bishop of Calcutta'*.<sup>155</sup> Müller did not let the opportunity to pass like that. Upon furnishing the list, he also forwarded a letter that he received from Satyendra Nath Tagore, who was leading the Adi Brahmo Samaj, the one that was more conservative compared to the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj of Keshub. He summarized the difficulty in convincing an enlightened Indian, *'They have certainly put an end to idolatry, they have broken with caste, and they hold the essential points of natural religion. I need not tell you that I find it difficult to meet his arguments, and to remove his doubts with regard to*

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<sup>153</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 78).

<sup>154</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 91).

<sup>155</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 330).

some points of the Christian religion which are his stumbling-blocks. I have not written to him for some time, simply because I feel I cannot grapple with him, and he is not a man to be satisfied with words'.<sup>156</sup> Müller's failure to 'grapple' with the intellectual stronghold that India represented, led him to surmise, '*Christianity which conquered the world was very different from our hardened and formularized Christianity, and that the old tree will never bear transplanting into a new soil, though the young seed would probably grow up on Indian soil into as wonderful a tree as anything we have seen as yet in the history of Europe*'.<sup>157</sup>

Müller was also well aware of the plight that the Indian converts have gone through. The difficulty of immediately being outcaste in a tightly knit society was nothing sort of 'a man more like the martyrs of old'.

Müller kept regular correspondence with many social reformers across India. Behramji Malabari, an Indian poet, nationalist and social reformer actively working towards rights of women, was from the western province of Gujrat. To him, in a letter dated September 4, 1881, Müller wrote, '*we must look for that religion which is at the root of all religions, and of which every historical religion is but an imperfect expression*'. Supporting this point he referred his publication of the Sacred Books of the East '*that of the world, for all religions come from the East*'. As several times we can look that at the time of superiority Müller always use the word 'Aryan' here we can see again he compare Kant as an Aryan that '*The bridge of thoughts and sighs that spans the whole history of the Aryan world has its first arch in the Vedas, its last in Kant's Critique. While in the Veda we may study the childhood, we may study in Kant's Critique of pure Reason the perfect manhood of the Aryan mind*'.<sup>158</sup>

Müller hardly ventured into the topic of possible migration of Aryan and their supposed battle producing caste system in India, even though Missionaries like Wilson were using his works. Müller was also well aware of the developments regarding diverse theories of Aryan home as well as indigenous Aryan theory. In 1885, William Fairfield Warren, published a book that argued that the original centre of mankind once sat at the North Pole. The book, titled *Paradise Found: The Cradle of the Human Race at the North Pole*, was 'respectfully dedicated, with friendly permission, to Professor F. Max Muller, of the University of Oxford'.<sup>159</sup> In the book, he clearly wrote, '*even the modern relics of the non-Aryan aboriginal tribes of India, as for example the Gonds, have retained this ancient ecumenical ethnic belief*', suggesting a migration. Bal Gangadhar Tilak used materials sent to him by Müller during his imprisonment, while preparing for the book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* that supported a home of Aryans in Tibet and superiority of Indo-Aryan culture. Based on astrological evidence, Tilak pushed the date of composition of Vedas to 4000 BC, much earlier than that suggested by Müller at

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<sup>156</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 331).

<sup>157</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 331).

<sup>158</sup>wife (n.d., pp. 105,107, 108).

<sup>159</sup>Warren (n.d.).

1200 BC. In his book, Tilak repeatedly cited his dialogue Müller, by quoting, and at many a times, refuting him. Emboldened with the findings, Tilak went on further to establish 'a history that established the sophistication and superiority of Vedic India'.<sup>160</sup> Thus, in contrast to the call of Brahmo movements, which welcomed the colonial rulers as 'reunion of parted cousins', Tilak and several social reformers used the same Orientalist findings to establish supremacy of the Indian Hindus as the 'true Aryans'. This fuelled the rapid growth of nationalism, especially in the early twentieth century. It was asserted by a new anti-colonial sentiment that '*Indian Hindus were the most superior Aryans...All the discoveries of western science and technology had been anticipated by the ancient Aryans*'.<sup>161</sup> The theory continued to gain new interpretations, such as nationalistic leaders like Aurobindo Ghose and Lala Lajpat Rai attempting to include Dravidians and Indian Muslims in a more inclusive definition of Aryan race. Müller's communications, in favour or against such racial interpretation in India, are absent. In contrast, he was openly vocal about the misconception of 'Aryan blood' during 1872, right after the Franco-Prussian war, in the face of a growing German nationalism.

In a letter Müller to W. E. Gladstone wrote about spreading the Christianity in India, for this he refereed Pratap Chandra Mazumdar as the right hand of Keshub Chandra Sen who was most loyal to his leader and second was over-excited and occasionally strange in his utterances. Müller said 'Still they are working in the right direction, and it is a pleasure to help them in ploughing, sowing and watering, though we can never hope to see the harvest'<sup>162</sup>

Though lacking the hope to 'see the harvest', he attempted all methods of integrating the two cultures by seeking to answer 'why then should there be no Christian Vedantists'.<sup>163</sup> The only question that mattered is what would be the best process of integration. He wrote—'It is most interesting to watch the compromise made between Hinduism and Islam four hundred years ago and to compare it with the compromise between Hinduism and Christianity that is now so eloquently advocated by the followers of Rammohun Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen'.<sup>164</sup> He also was assured of the loyalty of Keshub to Christian church and quoted his letter stating—'*Woe unto us, if I ever conceived the project of setting up a movement against the Church of Christ! Perish these lips if they utter a word of rebellion against Jesus*',<sup>165</sup> which reflects that in some earlier letter Müller made a suggestive query. The difficulty was always in reconciling the society, philosophy and religion,

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<sup>160</sup>Ballantyne (2002).

<sup>161</sup>Raychaudhuri (1988).

<sup>162</sup>wife (n.d., p. 120).

<sup>163</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 71).

<sup>164</sup>Müller (n.d., p. 79).

<sup>165</sup>(ibid p. 82).

for which neither Müller nor Keshub had a definite answer. Keshub died in 1884, deeply mourned by Müller, who wrote in an obituary, '*India has lost her greatest son*'.<sup>166</sup>

Müller's age prevented him to be more active though as late as in 1897, he campaigned for the release of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was prisoned on the charge of sedition. He appreciated India and its customs after a lifelong association. His letter to Malabari in 1887 reflects a mixed tone of helping to advance the cause of Christianity and at the same time appreciation, '*Your idea of founding a Mission of Social Reform with your friend Dagaram Gidumal is excellent. Only do not let people think that by Reform you mean Europeanization. On many points your native customs are excellent, and far better adapted to your country than English customs. I do not know much about great towns, like Calcutta or Bombay, but in your villages and smaller towns the tone of morality seems to me much higher than in Europe, your family life much happier, your criminal statistics much lower. If I can be of any use, you know I am always ready to help. But remember, your countrymen do not like advice from outsiders, and they are quite right in that. Remember also that I am getting old, and my time is much occupied*'.<sup>167</sup>

Despite the best effort from the intellectual forces behind Christianity, it could never gain the stronghold in the intellectual minds, as it was imagined at the beginning of Indian social reform movements. The growth of the Christian population in India was appreciable, however, was mostly due to the mass movements among the depressed classes and aboriginal tribes. From 1831 to 1881, the Christian population among Kols, a tribe in Bihar, grew from 31 to 441,000.<sup>168</sup> In an article published in the Calcutta Christian Advocate, following the census of 1840, it was noted that, '*Captain Birch, expressed his surprise at the statement made in reference to the number of native Christians in the city, which the census gives at 30!*'<sup>169</sup> The numbers were disproportionate compared to the fear of conversion that was observed in Calcutta, or from the premonition of success noted by Duff. The key goal of establishing Christianity through the intellectual classes, as per the 'downward filter theory' of Duff, failed miserably. To quote Muhammed Mohar Ali, '*Young Bengal was first an encouragement, then a enigma and ultimately a disappointment to the missionaries*'.<sup>170</sup> To quote the theory of S. K. Bhattacharya in the context of Christian conversions in the colonial era, 'When two societies or two cultures come in contact, it is expected that the weaker culture will borrow elements from the dominant one'. Thus, the Missionaries merely acted as a link between the cultures in the form of spreading the knowledge via English education.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>Müller's (1902, p. 160).

<sup>167</sup>wife (n.d., p. 216).

<sup>168</sup>Philip (n.d.) Sharma (2004, p. 186).

<sup>169</sup>Advocate (1840, p. 35).

<sup>170</sup>Philip (n.d.) Sharma (2004, p. 186).

<sup>171</sup>Bhattacharya (1999, p. 2).

## 4.20 Conclusion

Christian missions in India went through a multitude of high and low phases. Since the arrival of St. Thomas till the times of British East India Company, it met with temporary successes, wrath of the local rulers and also acclaim from the Governor General. At many points it appeared to be on the verge of converting the country within a few decades. Again, at times, missionaries like Abbe Dubois claimed the task of conversion to be impossible. He pointed out to the invincible barrier of 'intellectual Hindusim' and recollected the stories of the collapse of Church in Madura. It is not that Dubois did not try. He deeply observed the Hindu life, which he wrote down in detail helping many generations of Missionaries arriving in India. He mastered the local languages, practiced the customs himself, akin to De Nobili, who did the same earlier. Nevertheless, their success was limited to natives from lower strata of social and economic standing. The indifference and in cases, opposition from the colonial rulers did not help their cause. Simultaneously, the missionaries had to understand the native custom, appease local and colonial rulers and also fend for themselves by raising funds in the west amidst a continuous sectarian animosity among various schisms in West.

All through the times, there was constant search for the right method to be adopted by the missionaries. The initial idea of submerging in the native customs met with opposition from the evangelical orthodoxy. The method of learning the local language, then translating and preaching the Bible revealed a significant gap of the deeply immersed prejudices in native minds.

The scenario changed for better of the missions, when the close contact of English-educated natives with the colonial administration created the space for a social reform movement. Prominent Indians rose against age-old superstitions, and at the same time, exchanged dialogues with missionaries. It appeared that the Hindu religious bastion was about to fall under the immense cracks that it generated from within. It helped considerably, given that at the same time, Scottish Missionaries in Calcutta promoted the English education to prepare the native mind for adopting Christianity. Educational missions were hugely successful, which also coincided with the favourable act, in 1835, from the monarchy to support English education in India. Indeed, in 1845, a letter from Alexander Duff contains, '*...a storm which has continued to rage for two months with scarcely a single lull...Rajas and Zemindars, Baboos and Brahmans, have all combined, counselled, and plotted together...An eye-witness, at one of the great Sabbath meetings at which not fewer than two thousand were present assured me that several hundreds consisted of Brahmans, who, at times, literally wept and sobbed, and audibly cried out, saying 'that the religion of Brahma was threatened with destruction, and that, unless energetic measures were instantly adopted, their vocation would soon be at an end!'*'<sup>172</sup>

In England, following the industrial revolution, intellectuals from diverse disciplines created a storm by calling age-old Biblical faiths into question. Everything

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<sup>172</sup>Smith (1879, p. 60).

and anything were tested under a scientific lens, causing an 'age of doubt' to unfold. Max Müller, a prominent orientalist and philologist, applied scientific methods to the study of languages, and then to the study of religion. The outcome of his studies, along with many more supporting evidences with loose assumptions, was that the ancient residents of the Indian subcontinent were actually migrants from their homeland. The homeland, in accordance with the growing sentiment of romantic nationalism, belonged somewhere in Europe. This idea quickly gained momentum through the popular articles of multiple notable personalities in Europe, which eventually got coined as the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT). The theory struck a chord with colonial rulers and different groups of social reform movements, though for different reasons.

Meanwhile, Christian missions in India found their momentum to be seized completely by the growing enthusiasm in the Indian social reform movements, which also established their own monotheistic Church. To orthodox Christian missionaries, the idea of an eclectic Church was not conceivable. On the other hand, their diligent efforts in persuading the leadership of Brahma movements to profess to a Christian church did not meet with success. However, the communication of Müller with contemporary leaders of the Brahma movement and the universal nature of Christianity that they all admired gave a quick impetus to the propagation of Aryan myth. At this juncture, Christian missionaries had little option left but, to develop new methods to the tune of AIT. In this ironical turn of events, the missionaries, who triumphantly adopted the Anglican systems against the Oriental methods, had to lean back to the most prominent Orientalist for a solution to their conundrum in the evangelical efforts. To that effect, Müller's efforts were in vain. He could not bring the orthodox Christianity to an agreement with the Brahma leadership, and thus the stalemate continued. Nevertheless, in this process, Christian missionaries repeatedly asserted the Aryan myth, for better or worse, to different groups of the social reform movements across India. Such efforts, eventually, strengthened the acceptance of AIT as a fact, instead of a historical proposition based on dubious evidences. In fact, many social reformers seized the opportunity by claiming that, Aryans deprived them of their rightful land by coming from outside. Another group of reformers laid elaborate claim of Hindus being the most advanced Aryan stock and promoted indigenous Aryan migration theory. Christian missionaries played a prominent role in the spread of AIT in India, by passively or actively supporting these claims.

The most striking fact to note here is that in England, Müller met with the strongest opposition from missionaries on account of heresy when he proposed a scientific evolution of religion. On the other hand, missionaries in India hardly raised a voice on the authenticity of AIT since; it gave them their best hope at that time. At the end, the Christian missionaries adopted two separate strategies targeted for the upper caste elites and lower caste *dalits*.

This two-pronged methodology garnered mixed success in lower caste social strata and gross failure among upper caste elites, falling far short of the ambitious plans of Christian missionaries.

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# Chapter 5

## Summary



It is a difficult undertaking to arrive at an unbiased judgement on historical events. More so in the case of the current undertaking, which involves myriads of characters and events spread across continents and several centuries. In this setting, what one can reasonably hope for is to create a fresh perspective. This was the prime goal of this work. Summarily, I intended to draw attention to the origin and propagation of almost mythical theory of Aryan invasion in contrast to the plethora of research studies conducted on the topic of whether the invasion actually happened or not.

There have been some unique outcomes of this study.

First, it was interesting to uncover the germination of AIT in the letters, writings, seminars of Max Müller along with other European intellectuals, notably German Indologist Friedrich von Schlegel, French aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau and Swiss linguist Adolphe Pictet. Looking back at those heady periods of Europe's *Indomania*, formed directly as a result of Romantic nationalism, one gets a tinge of the sense of how Max Müller himself might have felt by establishing the connection between languages so disparate. Though there were multiple scholastic tributaries strengthening the notion of Aryan race, Max Müller is still regarded as the key proponent of this—possibly because he created the most ornate theories on the science of religion, which described an apparent evolutionary trace between Rig Veda and Bible. How much of that was motivated by colonialism and how much was due to his willingness to spread Christianity in India; is hard to judge. Rather, it is easier to observe that the strongest motivation of Müller was to create a rich theoretical foundation of the subjects that he created. He argued vehemently against the Darwinian Theory on the ground of linguistic faculties and he, ironically, ended up developing a similar theory for comparative linguistic and comparative religion.

Second, it is clearly established that it takes the effort of multiple parties to accept and propagate a theory. AIT was a theory that turned out to be extremely valuable, with different perspectives, for different parties. Those were, British imperialists, Christian missionaries, Indian social reformers, among others. Each of these parties played a distinctive role to argue in favour/against the theory, thereby,

burying the scientifically dubious fact that there is no necessary connection between a race and a language-speaking group. AIT served a purpose for all the parties and they have conveniently moulded it for their own purpose. The appeal of this all-encompassing theory was such that the debate around it lasted more than a century. It clearly showed that without the active interest of these parties in appreciating this theory, it is inconceivable that AIT would have proliferated so rapidly. This serves as a testament to the growth and proliferation of any scientific theory in general. More specifically, the theories in the realm of social sciences are often beyond the scope of absolute judgement. As a result, those are accepted or rejected as needed in a social fabric.

Third, AIT did only not get propagated; it also helped the causes of the involving parties to a large extent. The theory was therefore like a spring of flexible knowledge; every group drew their favourite interpretation from it. In that aspect, AIT represents an early example of how society takes an active part in the construction of a theory or SCOT. Indeed, the public seminars of Keshub Sen indicating the oriental nature of Christ; the public debates around Darwinism or the show-off between missionaries and Indian social reformers in Calcutta and Bombay deeply signifies that the acceptance of the theories not always remain in establishing a scientific fact but, on how the audience reacts to it.

Fourth, and most importantly, the observations made in this work are not only applicable to the scenario presented here but transcends the barrier of space and time. The proliferation of a scientific theory follows a pattern. The construction of a theory follows a pattern. The evangelization efforts of religious missionaries follow a pattern. The methods of spreading colonialism follow a pattern. This book rediscovers and substantiates such patterns in the currents of historical trends.

## 5.1 Extending the Research on Max Müller

Among other observations, in my opinion, this study offers a balanced view of the role played by Müller in AIT. Historical studies, especially those originating from India, often took a rather harsh stand against Max Müller and create a monolithic story. On the other hand, European studies on Max Müller painted him as one of the influential nineteenth-century intellectuals but never delved deep in unravelling his contributions on AIT. There, the prevailing opinion is that he built a theory without solid foundations and at later point of life denounced, even repented, it. Indian writers, however, associate him solely with this theory. This is not true. As I discussed through the chapters, Müller was only one character in the origin and spread of AIT.

It is true that he was pro-Christian but it is also true that he was one of the most radical Christians of his time.

It is true that he did develop his theories on shaky foundation but it is also true that he developed that with the best of the evidences available at that time. It is unfortunate that unlike other scientific theories that kept on getting refuted and

refined, AIT went on to become a mainstream theory too fast and had too few researchers questioning it on serious academic grounds.

It is true that Müller served colonial rulers with the development of comparative linguistic studies but it is also true that he was in deep love with India and Indians. There is no simple reason by which one can explain his involvement in releasing Tilak from British imprisonment, his long-lasting friendship with many social reformers, his deep appreciation of Indian spiritual leaders like Sri Ramakrishna, who was a strong advocate of idol worship,<sup>1</sup> and his interactions with many reformers, who did not agree with the AIT at all. Perhaps nothing is more surreal than reading his lecture in front of budding Indian civil servants on the topic of ‘What India can teach us?’

*If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts\*, a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them, which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.<sup>2</sup>*

Müller was definitely one of the most ardent admirers of Indian heritage and in an ironical fate ended up earning much more criticism from pro-nationalistic Indian writers and in public perception. This work is an attempt to set straight some of the misconceptions.

It is also interesting to note that it is partly due to Müller that social reformers in India searched, using available historical tools, of the origin of India. The romantic nationalism in Europe challenged the origin of India, to which it responded with vigour. Thus, the growth of nationalism in India can be directly traced back to Dayanand Saraswati, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rammohun Roy and Keshub Sen, all of whom were familiar with AIT, either by accepting of by refuting it.

## 5.2 Future Directions

The generic nature of ideas dealt with in this book can be easily extended to cover a large variety of future research topics, a few of which are outlined in the following.

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<sup>1</sup>Müller (1896).

<sup>2</sup>Müller (1883).

To start with, one may study further in the interconnection between modern SCOT theories and AIT and derive general principles that guide the rise of theories in a popular perception. It would indeed be interesting to chart the growth and proliferation of Darwinism against AIT—both of which started around the same time and had long and deep impacts around the world.

The rise of nationalism in many countries was directly caused by a military, economic or social challenge from the oppressor. In the case of India, it started with an intellectual battle, of which AIT was the centrepiece. It remains interesting to analyse the causes behind the rise of nationalism in other modern nations and correlate the same with India. Further, whether such a deep-rooted nationalistic feeling does affect the growth of society in a free nation is a topic that calls for further attention.

The effects of AIT on the evangelical efforts of other colonies are not well studied. It is indeed true that AIT had strong connections to India; however, there were many other nations through which Aryans apparently passed, as per Müller. One could study if such nations were, in fact, subjected to similar experimentation with methods for successful propagation of Christianity.

Apart from Müller, there were several linguists in other European countries, most notably in France and Germany, who also argued in favour of an Aryan immigration theory. It is not well known whether the French colonial administration used the theory to advance its causes in Africa. This could be studied in depth to strengthen the ideas of entangled history that this work advocates.

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# Index

## A

Actor–Network Theory, 5, 7  
Adam Sedgwick, 101  
Adi Brahma Samaj, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 72, 134, 145  
Albuquerque, 106  
Alexander Duff, 12, 99, 105, 109, 118, 124, 134, 140, 149  
Alexander von Humboldt, 16, 18  
Allan Octavia Hume, 60  
Anglican Church, 41, 83, 102, 106  
Anglicanism, 102  
Ariovistus, 23, 58  
Arthur de Gobineau, 43, 56, 155  
Aryan Immigration, 3, 4, 6, 12, 158  
Aryan Invasion Theory, 1, 3, 6–10, 15, 42, 51, 52, 99, 125, 129, 150  
Ashoka, 41  
Asiatic Society, 10, 22, 28, 30, 33, 34, 57, 129  
August Wilhelm von Schlegel, 20, 25, 28  
Aurobindo Ghose, 147

## B

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 81, 137, 146, 148, 157  
Baptist Missionary Society, 80, 104, 108, 116  
Baron von Bunsen, 15, 30, 34, 54, 85  
Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, 106  
Benjamin Disraeli, 54  
Bernard S. Cohn, 2  
Bipin Chandra Pal, 89  
Boden chair, 40  
Brahm Dutt Bharti, 1  
Brahmo Marriage Act, 66

Brahmo Samaj, 4, 30, 51–53, 61–69, 71–73, 75–77, 79, 80, 86, 88, 90, 91, 93, 94, 113–115, 134, 136

## C

Charles Dall, 65, 69, 80, 134  
Charles Darwin, 16, 17, 33, 56, 100  
Charles Kingsley, 100  
Charles Lyell, 15, 56, 100  
Charles Trevelyan, 24, 54, 122, 127, 141  
Charles Wilkins, 22  
Christian Missionaries, 9, 12, 13, 52, 53, 59, 61–63, 68, 69, 71, 74, 76, 80, 86, 90, 91, 93, 94, 100, 102, 103, 105, 107, 109, 110, 113, 114, 118, 123, 125, 128, 129, 131–134, 136, 138, 140, 143, 150, 155  
Christopher Lane, 17  
Church Missionary Society, 10, 143  
Constantinople, 103, 108

## D

David Friedrich Strauss, 20  
David Hare, 119, 135, 141  
David Kopf, 4, 6, 89, 90  
David Livingstone, 74, 104, 109  
Dayananda Saraswati, 75  
Dean Stanley, 32, 79, 83  
Debendranath Tagore, 64–66, 68, 74, 75, 134  
Derozio, 135, 143  
Dhulip Singh, 85  
Dravidian, 23, 78, 138  
Dubois, 109–112, 119, 120, 149  
Dubois, J. A., 10, 109  
Dwaraka Nath Tagore, 115

**E**

- Eastern Question, 53  
 East India Company, 22, 25, 30, 59, 60, 104, 105, 107, 110, 114, 115, 118, 121–123, 129, 130, 149  
 Edward Pusey, 102  
 Edward Said, 2, 4, 6, 52, 53  
 Entangled History, 6, 8, 13, 158  
 Eugène Burnouf, 25, 28  
 European rationalism, 20

**F**

- Feuerbach, 17, 20  
 Francis Xavier, 12  
 Franco-Prussian War, 45, 54, 126, 147  
 Franz Bopp, 25, 28, 32  
 French Revolution, 18, 102, 108  
 Friedrich Max Müller, 1, 10, 15, 31  
 Friedrich Schleiermacher, 20, 24  
 Friedrich von Schlegel, 20, 23, 44, 58, 126, 155

**G**

- Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux, 22, 109  
 George Eliot, 17  
 Gifford lecture, 38, 42, 55  
 Gustav Klemm, 23, 58  
 Gyanendramohan Tagore, 134

**H**

- Hegelianism, 26, 27  
 Heinrich Roth, 21  
 Helena Blavatsky, 40  
 Henry Townley, 110  
 Herbert Hope Risley, 2, 23, 43  
 Herbert Spencer, 101  
 Hermann Brockhaus, 25  
 Hermann Weisse, 27, 28  
 Higher criticism, 20, 27, 28  
 Hindoo Stuart, 110  
 Humboldtian education, 17–19

**I**

- Indian mutiny, 71  
 Indo-European, 15, 29, 32, 43, 47, 57, 78, 125, 138  
 Indo-Iranian, 43, 47, 57, 125  
 Indomania, 22, 155

**J**

- Jagadish Chandra Bose, 67  
 James Hutton, 56  
 James Long, 68, 142  
 James Martineau, 79

- James Robert Ballantyne, 113  
 Jean Calmette, 109  
 Jena Romantics, 20  
 Johann Ernst Hanxleden, 22  
 John Henry Newman, 102  
 John Stevens, 4  
 John Stewart Mill, 16  
 John Tyndall, 101  
 John William Colenso, 102  
 John Wilson, 90, 138, 139  
 Justice Party, 78  
 Jyotirao Phule, 77, 90, 138, 139

**K**

- Karl Marx, 59  
 Keshub Chandra Sen, 4, 10, 11, 51, 62–67, 69, 70, 72–74, 80, 83, 86, 93, 94, 134, 135, 145, 147  
 Keshub Sen, 10, 12, 41, 61, 73, 134, 156, 157  
 King Leopold, 21  
 Koenraad Elst, 6  
 Krishna Mohan Banerjee, 142, 143  
 Krishna Pal, 111

**L**

- Lala Lajpat Rai, 147  
 Lal Behari Day, 141, 143  
 Lal Bihari De, 68  
 London Missionary Society, 104, 108  
 Lord Cranborne, 71  
 Lord Dufferin, 61  
 Lord Hardinge, 121, 122  
 Lord Lawrence, 71, 90  
 Lower criticism, 20  
 Lutheranism, 19, 20

**M**

- Mahendranath Datta, 61  
 Majumdar, P. C., 70  
 Martin Luther, 19, 41  
 Max Müller, 2–4, 13, 16, 19–21, 23–26, 29, 31, 33–35, 39–42, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 61, 70, 72–76, 78, 79, 81, 83–86, 88, 92, 93, 118, 127, 129, 132, 138, 150, 155, 156  
 Messrs. Longmans, 127  
 Michel Foucault, 2, 52  
 Missionary Herald, 80  
 Monier-Williams, 40, 44, 52, 57, 88, 125  
 Mughal Empire, 60, 114

**N**

- Nabagopal Mitra, 91  
 Narendranath Datta, 61  
 National Paper, 66, 89, 91

- Nilakanth Goreh, 113  
 Nirad C. Chaudhuri, 1  
 Nripendra Narayan, 66, 91
- O**  
 Oriental despotism, 59  
 Orientalism, 2, 4, 10, 22, 26, 52, 86  
 Orientalists, 2–4, 6, 23–25, 29, 30, 33, 35, 36,  
 40, 44, 52, 53, 58, 59, 72, 89, 92, 93,  
 113, 119, 126, 139, 141, 147, 150  
 Ottoman Empire, 53, 54, 127  
 Oxford movement, 13, 102, 103, 130
- P**  
 Panikkar, K. M., 74  
 Paul De Lagarde, 35  
 Peary Mohun Sen, 64  
 Pitti Theagaraya Chetty, 78  
 Prasanna kumar Tagore, 134  
 Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, 67  
 Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, 63, 92, 147  
 Proto-Indo-European, 22, 23, 44, 57, 58, 125  
 Punjab University, 127, 128
- Q**  
 Queen Victoria, 32, 60, 61, 70, 85–89
- R**  
 Radhakanta Deb, 81  
 Ramakrishna Paramhansa, 30, 84  
 Rammohun Roy, 41, 62–64, 68, 72, 74, 75, 81,  
 82, 94, 114, 117, 118, 121, 122, 124,  
 125, 132–134, 136, 138, 140, 142, 144,  
 145, 147, 157  
 Ramtanu Lahiri, 135, 141, 145  
 Richard Owen, 101  
 Robert FitzRoy, 101  
 Roman Catholic Church, 102, 103  
 Romila Thapar, 6, 10, 77, 90  
 Rozario, D., 10
- S**  
 Sacred Books of the East, 2, 15, 26, 34, 38, 41,  
 42, 47, 128, 129, 131, 136, 146  
 Sadharan Brahma Samaj, 10, 64, 66, 72, 74,  
 91, 135, 145  
 Samadarshi party, 66  
 Samuel Cox, 71  
 Samuel George Morton, 43, 56  
 Sanskrit, 15, 20–23, 25, 26, 28–30, 32, 33, 35,  
 36, 40, 44, 47, 52, 55, 57, 62, 64, 65, 77,  
 81, 86, 88, 90, 109, 112–116, 125, 129,  
 130, 134, 137, 138  
 Sanskrit college, 113  
 Satyendra Nath Tagore, 73, 145  
 Savarkar, 137  
 Seeley, J. R., 87  
 Serampore Missionaries, 117, 121  
 Sibnath Sastri, 88  
 Sigmund Freud, 16  
 Sivnath Sastri, 63  
 Social Constructionism, 5, 7  
 Social Construction of Theory, 6  
 Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,  
 106, 109  
 St. Francis Xavier, 106, 142  
 St. Thomas, 12, 105, 106, 149  
 St. Thomas Aquinas, 18, 19  
 Subrahmanya Sastri, 115  
 Suniti Devi, 91
- T**  
 Tapan Raychaudhuri, 3, 4, 6  
 Taravath Madhavan Nair, 78  
 Tattwabodhini Sabha, 64  
 Thomas Henry Huxley, 101  
 Thomas R. Trautmann, 2, 6, 52, 53
- U**  
 Utilitarianism, 16
- V**  
 Van Boxhorn, 22  
 Vedic, 3, 29–32, 39, 40, 44, 55, 57, 64, 77, 79,  
 81, 125, 136, 139, 144, 147  
 Vitthal Shastri, 113  
 Voltaire, 22
- W**  
 William Adam, 117  
 William Bentinck, 110, 141  
 William Carey, 104, 107, 109, 111, 116, 122  
 William Digby, 114, 116  
 William Jones, 22, 25, 28, 57  
 William Yates, 117  
 Winston Churchill, 78  
 Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee, 61
- Z**  
 Zoroastrianism, 44, 57, 125