Chapter Two: Negotiating Reform and the Nation: English Studies at Baroda in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

The age of reform in India is generally believed to have come to a close in the third quarter of the nineteenth century when the early conservative nationalism dubbed 'revivalism' began to emerge amongst the native intelligentsia.[32] This chapter poses the question whether, as per conventional periodisation of the shifts in nineteenth century responses to colonisation, reform became an irrelevant category in identity-formation processes of individuals and the region as the question of nation(alism) was on the ascendant.

It traces the trajectory of English studies between two significant moments in colonial education policy—the Education Commission of 1882 and the Indian Universities Act of 1904. It analyses how and whether the position and ideological role of English shifted with policy changes, and whether the interconnections between reform and English are affected in the process.

With the shift in power from the East India Company to the British Crown, educational and political policies became more centralised, as opposed to variable applications and adaptations as observed in pre-1857 western India. 1882 marked a point by which colonial education policy of 1854 was believed to have taken root in the native society, and the time was ripe to review its impact.

The chapter traces the fortunes of reform in the period between 1857 and 1882 in England and western India to argue that reform continued to be a central marker of identity in the metropole and the colony. It analyses how its contours shifted as it engaged with question of nation, generating a conflict between moral reform as advocated by the coloniser and institutional reform as demanded by the colonised. It prises open the questions of reform and the nation by specifically focusing on the native state of Baroda in Gujarat which developed a reputation for its modern reforms with a nationalist ruler as its sovereign. It analyses how the domain of English studies was shaped by and in turn shaped these categories by focusing on the Baroda College—an institution of higher education in the state established in 1881—the moment where this chapter opens, and the practices of two English professors within this institution.

[32] See Aloysius 110.

Questions of Reform, Education, and Empire in the Interim Years in England

The 'Conservatism' of 'Liberal' Reform

The 1832 Reform Act had failed to extend franchise to the working classes, and its avowed liberalism was under question. While some movements for the rights of the working class population sustained, they fell apart following the failure of Chartism in 1848 (T. Gallagher 151). Paradoxically, discussions over reform in the British Parliament gained ground prompted by the attitude that when public pressure was at its lowest, reform could be introduced with minimum concessions of a popular nature. Further, as the industrial working class posed a constant possibility of threat, it would be "politically inexpedient" to exclude them entirely from the franchise (T. Gallagher 157). The pressure for reform was created by certain changes in electorates in the wake of the 1832 reform, but equally by the Liberal party's efforts to stabilise itself (while even this party was not in favour of highly radical reforms) (T. Gallagher 159-161). Public pressure was rebuilt by 1866. Yet, "the Act of 1867 produced profoundly conservative consequences, and they were conservative with a large as well as a small "c," conservative in a narrowly partisan as well as a broadly social sense" (T. Gallagher 147).

The death of Lord Palmerston in 1865 led to Lord Russell being reinvited to be the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and to the radical Liberal William Ewart Gladstone assuming the position of the leader of the House of Commons. He polarized the House that was united in the admiration of Lord Palmerston (McCarthy 7).[33] Despite the divided opinions and reservations surrounding these changes, Justin McCarthy observes that, "[o]ne thing was certain: the Government must make a distinct move of some kind in the direction of Reform" (8). However, Lord Russell's Reform Bill of 1866 failed for being both untimely as well as for being a mediocre compromise hardly bringing any significant shift in the number of enfranchised (McCarthy 64, 70). As a result, it offered sufficient ground for the Conservatives to draw on contemporary misgivings regarding popular movements in the country on one hand, while also failing to rally popular sentiment in its favour owing to the token changes in franchise proposed, on the other. This led to the fall of the Liberal government and brought into power the Conservatives in June 1866.

[33] The subsequent section draws significantly on the history of English Parliament from McCarthy's document because it was a contemporary history of Britain, and thus helps understand the responses to the political shifts. While historical detail is drawn from McCarthy, the understanding of which aspects to highlight and their interpretation in the broader understanding of reform is my own.

However, as soon as the Conservative ministry came into power, reform unions, reform leagues, and public meetings being held across the country clearly asserted that the failure of the 1866 Bill did not indicate the waning of the demand for reform of franchise among the working classes (McCarthy 79). When the parliament opened for the session of 1867, the prime minister Lord Derby voiced his misgivings regarding "whether any measure of Reform on which the two great political parties could agree would be likely to satisfy the extreme Reformers, or to put a stop to agitation" (McCarthy 93).

The understanding prevailed with Benjamin Disraeli, then leader of the House of Commons, who proposed to proceed with the route of resolution, that is, requesting the House to come to a common conclusion regarding what would be the conditions either side would like to see on the new Reform Bill, and draft a Bill based on such a resolution. McCarthy observes that this idea was drawn from the course of action adopted by the parliament regarding identifying the principles on which the government of India was to be governed "after the suppression of the Indian Mutiny" (96). McCarthy believes that "[o]nly the curious ingenuity of Mr. Disraeli's mind could have discovered any resemblance between the two cases" (97). However, it is evident that Disraeli identified a structural similarity in the function of reform—that, at the fundamental level, it was a mechanism to contain (popular) revolt/resistance.

Further, while the scheme of forming a common resolution did not succeed, and Disraeli was forced to introduce a Reform Bill on February 25th, several members of the Conservative party resigned owing to differences, one being against "the distinctly democratic character of the bill" (McCarthy 105). They were speedily replaced in the cabinet by other members, and McCarthy describes the ongoing proceedings as: "Then, having thrown their *mutineers* overboard, the Government went to work again at their Reform scheme" (106; emphasis added). This statement, which could as easily be taken to describe the British government's post-1857 policy in India, testifies to the ideological similarity in the function of reform. It repeatedly becomes clear that the nature of reform was constituted less by political principles, and more by political expediency that strived to quell a surge of popular dissatisfaction in a bid to retain political power. McCarthy's remarks attest to this understanding: "…one is still lost in wonder at the boldness, the audacity, with which the Conservative Government threw away in succession every principle which they had just been proclaiming essential to Conservatism, and put on Radicalism as a garment" (120).

At the same time, it underlines that events in the colony impacted the political imagination and anxieties in Britain, and vice versa. It was a transactional, rather than a

unilateral relationship. A deeper analysis of the nature of the political franchise that 'reform' in England aspired to, reveals the structural similarities.

The currency of Reform in England is often understood as referring to political reform, and as based on the fundamental principle of democratizing the political process, and the reform movements in India roughly during mid nineteenth century are understood as focused on socio-moral rather than political-institutional reform. However, the controversies and debates surrounding the Reform Bills in England were centred around the question of who was *qualified* to cast the vote. This engendered an engagement with the social, principally through a state takeover of the education.

Reform as a Pedagogic Enterprise

A notable feature of the Reform Bill of 1867 was that it extended educational franchise, and for the first time, offered a representative to the University of London (McCarthy 117). It is noteworthy that while summing up the discussion on the Reform Bill, McCarthy gives the "the last word of the controversy" to Mr. Robert Lowe who was the first Member of Parliament from the University of London: "The working men, the majority, the people who live in the small houses, are enfranchised; 'we must now,' Mr. Lowe said, 'at least *educate our new masters*.'" (121; emphasis mine). Thus, the idea of political franchise was qualified by the *fitness* of the enfranchised to cast the vote, which in turn was to be developed through education, implying that the voter must have undergone mental-moral reform to be capable of casting the *appropriate* vote.

The return of the Liberal ministry to power in December 1868, brought the radical Liberal William Ewart Gladstone to the office of the Prime Minister. One of the most significant undertakings in the first set of reforms proposed by this government was a complete system of National Education for England and Wales (McCarthy 290), which resulted in the Educational Act of 1870. The act was in response to Lowe's call for a need to educate the new masters.

Thomas F. Gallagher notes how those in support of reform in favour of the working classes in 1867 defended their stance based on the working class's newly acquired qualities of "respectability", "literacy", and "general political quiescence" (148).

This was followed by the Universities Tests Act 1871 which abolished religious tests in the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham, making the admittance of students and assumptions of office in these universities non-denominational.

These shifts indicate, at first, the secularisation of education. However, it consisted more in the secularisation of morality which was relocated from the domain of religious

instruction to secular instruction. In other words, this did not transform the idea of education; rather, imagined that the function of religion could be grafted on to education, much like the question of religious neutrality versus moral reform of the natives was negotiated in India. Gauri Viswanathan has observed how the clash between the missionary and government agenda for native education post the 1813 charter was "productively resolved through the introduction of English literature", as it was "a discipline with a double stance toward knowledge and belief, empiricism and intuition, reason and faith, suppressing at once its affiliation with Christianity on one side and with modern science on the other" (38).

Imperial Instruction(s)

The imperialist Benjamin Disraeli assumed the office of the Prime Minister in 1874 with the fall of Gladstone's government. His interests and ambitions lay more in the domain of foreign policy, and in restoring the glory of Empire, rather than domestic issues (McCarthy 430).[34] This new leadership proclaimed that the "Elizabethan days were to be restored" (McCarthy 434), and "[e]very man who did not proclaim that British influence was to reign paramount over Europe and Asia was anti-English" (McCarthy 435). What followed was a spate of symbolic acts asserting the imperial sovereignty of Britain, represented in India by three significant gestures: the tour of India by the Prince of Wales during 1875-76, the addition of the royal title 'Empress of India' or 'Kaiser-i-Hind' to Queen Victoria's titles in 1876, and the imperial Durbar held in Delhi 1877 to proclaim this new title for the Sovereign, amidst the Great Famine of 1876-78 looming large over the Deccan Plateau. All three gestures had a polarising effect on English and Indian subjects alike.

With respect to the visit of the Prince of Wales, William Wilson Hunter claimed that it "evoked a passionate burst of loyalty never before known in the annals of British India" as "[t]he feudatory Chiefs and ruling houses of India felt for the first time that they were incorporated into the Empire of an ancient and a splendid dynasty" (232-3). Yet, it was deemed ineffectual by the critics in England: "The Prince was taken out to India and introduced to all the Princes and other persons whom officialism thought it convenient for him to meet. He got no nearer to the knowledge of the real feelings of any of the Indian populations than if he had remained at Marlborough House" (McCarthy 439). Regarding the addition of the imperial title, while McCarthy describes the response in England as "[a] strong dislike was felt to this superfluous and tawdry addition to the ancient style of the

[34] See also McCarthy's comments on Disraeli: "He loved to feed his mind on gorgeous imperial fancies. It pleased him to think that England was, what he would persist in calling her, an Asiatic Power, and that he was administering the affairs of a great Oriental Empire. He was fond of legislation on a vague and liberal scale ; legislation which gave opportunity for swelling praise and exalted rhetoric" (432).

sovereigns of England" (441), Richard Temple views this alongside the visit of the heir-apparent as: '[t]he fealty and loyalty of the Native States have been strengthened, their Oriental sense of grandeur gratified and their imaginative faculties stimulated" (61). While these differences may be taken as differences of perspective or opinion refracted by the sympathies of different political groups, the imperial durbar of 1877 left no room for doubt regarding the effect of the polarization, not in any small part represented in the figure of Lord Lytton, the Viceroy of India in 1876.[35]

Lord Lytton not only allowed the extravagant durbar to be held in the backdrop of a major famine, but was also responsible for the Vernacular Press Act of 1879 designed to suppress criticism of British policies by publications and press in the native languages. It is in the same durbar that Ganesh Vasudeo Joshi of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha made a case for granting equal political and social status to Indian and British subjects, which is believed to presage the Indian National Congress ("Delhi Durbar").

Thus, when the Liberal government reassumed power after the general elections of 1880 in England, the situation in India was of a native population polarized over the radicalized imperial sentiment in England, a move to co-opt native royalty within the hierarchy of imperialism with the English sovereign at its apex, and suppression of or indifference towards native response to such policies.

Re-viewing Colonial Higher Education

The new Liberal ministry appointed Lord Ripon the Viceroy of India in 1880 despite misgivings in English political circles regarding his religious affiliation with Roman Catholicism, and Hunter ascribes to him "a series of internal reforms" including the repealing of the Vernacular Press Act and introduction of the scheme of local self-government (234). The most notable of these in the context of the current discussion was Lord Ripon's appointment of an Education Commission in 1882, the purpose of which is identified by Hunter thus: "with a view to the spread of popular instruction on a broader basis, he has sought *to fit the people for the safe exercise of the rights which he has conferred*" (234; emphasis added). Once again, education is identified as the rite of passage to actualize the goal of reform, in a statement that bears strange linguistic and ideological likeness to the comments of Robert Lowe following the Reform Act of 1867. Lowe and the Hunter

[35] See Parekh 27-8, for the native opinion of Lord Lytton's tenure as Viceroy of India; Also see Chiplonkar 34: "The four years of Lord Lytton's administration of India have proved disastrous beyond all precedent…"

Commission were focused on primary education. However, their comments are significant to understand the imagined role and objectives of the enterprise of education.

It is equally important to emphasise that the writer of this sentence is none other than the one who presided over the same Education Commission which was, thereby, also known as the Hunter Commission, as it reveals that the fundamental purpose underlying this review of the state of education in India in the beginning of the 1880s—to create subjects fit to exercise given rights—was entirely clear to its president.

The Education Commission of 1882

The Education Commission was not established in order to reconsider education policy in India, but in order to "enquire how far the superstructure corresponded with the original design" of the educational despatch of 1854 (*Report of the Indian Education Commission*[36] 623). It further asserted that "[t]he Government of India is firmly convinced of the soundness of that policy, and has no wish to depart from the principles upon which it is based" (*RIEC* 624). Further, higher education is exempted from the review which is primarily focused on elementary education. However, comments and deliberations on higher education are offered in the report owing to the belief that "all branches of education…are so closely connected to each other" (*RIEC* 626).

Redefining 'Knowledge'

A significant trend that the Hunter Commission reports is the impact of the education project introduced in 1854 in shifting the perception of knowledge and learning in the native mind. Colonial education institutions functioned to equate modernity with modern languages epitomized in English but also in the vernacular languages which continued to undergo processes of modernisation following the effects of English education. The *modernity* of these languages consisted not only in their status as non-classical languages but also in their ability to expound *modern* knowledge. The first chapter discussed how enlightenment modernity was built on the binary distinction between the traditional/ancient and the modern founded during the Renaissance. Here, one can observe how this binary was structured in the transformations in native education undertaken by the colonial education system, so that ancient/classical-traditional-eastern knowledges formed the opposite of modern-useful-western knowledges. This binary distinction, further, structurally latches onto the regress-progress as well as arbitrary-scientific value distinction.

[36] Henceforth *RIEC*

The purging of traditional knowledge (systems) from educational institutions is evident in the Commission's comments on colleges of Oriental learning. The "steady *progress*" of the Poona Sanskrit College is described as: "Certain branches of Hindu learning were dropped, the study of the vernacular and of English was introduced, and the college was opened to all classes" (*RIEC* 261; emphasis added), while, for the Sanskrit College at Benares, it is observed how "[t]he addition of the English Department quickly altered the character of the institution. The purely Sanskrit classes dwindled in numbers as the study of English became more and more popular"; besides, now "the study of Sanskrit was as thorough and as scientific as it had once been antiquated and uncritical" (*RIEC* 260). The long-term impact of these gradual shifts taking place around the middle of the century have been summed up in a statement on the growing irrelevance of Oriental learning: "Purely Oriental colleges…are so few in number that they scarcely enter into a consideration of collegiate education in its modern development" (*RIEC* 269). Briefly, the report revealed how colonial education in the nineteenth century had contrived to make traditional learning irrelevant, or where continued, recast as per the style and structure of modern/western[37] disciplines and pedagogy.

Thus, the introduction of English departments in higher education also affected the status of other branches of language and literature—both classical and modern. Orientalist scholarship turned the study of ancient systems of knowledge into a *scientific* study of classical language, literature, and philosophy, to suit the modern divisions/categories of knowledge. Sanjay Seth has observed how early colonial interventions in collegiate education made it "possible to study Sanskrit and Arabic "critically" – that is, without reference to the traditions of knowledge with which they were imbricated" and that, in the ensuing decades, the study of Sanskrit became " "critical" and "historical" and "comparative" and "philological" (Seth 175-6). On the other hand, modern Indian vernaculars did not find a place in the curriculum of higher education until the closing years of the nineteenth century.

The 'Moral/Science' of Modern Education

The most significant arguments and observations in the discussion on higher education in the report, occur over the proposed objective(s) of higher education which reveal the conflict at the heart of liberal modernity in the colonial context. On one hand, the Commission identifies a utilitarian purpose for receiving modern (read: western) education justifying the deletion of

[37] I use this term to underline the specific attempt by colonial education to equate the modern with what was western, and thus create an identity between the two ideas. However, I also draw here on Walter D. Mignolo's observation that "modernity is the discourse of Western imperialisms since the sixteenth century" (141).

Hindu and Islamic knowledges from the course of studies, while eliding over the political underpinnings of the shift by employing an evolutionary idiom that identifies these knowledges as having "*naturally disappeared* from a course of studies intended to be of so *practical* a character; [so that] the profound scholarship and lifelong devotion to learning which India once boasted, are sacrifices made to the appreciation of an *active career*" (*RIEC* 269-70; emphasis added).

Elsewhere, the aims are more explicitly defined: "The college of to day aims at giving an education that shall fit its recipient to take an honourable share in the administration of the country or to enter with good hope of success the various liberal professions now expanding in vigorous growth. It follows, therefore, that the advancement of learning in India is in a large measure through science, and altogether according to the scientific method" (*RIEC* 269). The rather lengthy discussion on higher education as a medium of moral education ironically contrasts with these purported aims of the 'advancement of learning in India'.

The "effect of collegiate instruction upon the enlightenment of the people" is estimated through "the objects which it sets before itself" which reveal a reversal from the aforementioned 'practical' orientation of higher education as its avowed primary objective in making a case for irrelevance of Oriental learning (*RIEC* 300). Here, the first object stated is "to raise the moral and intellectual tone of Indian society", followed by "and supply the Administration with a competent body of public servants" (*RIEC* 300).[38] The justification cited for the lack of "high character" in the Indian student in spite of exposure to more than three decades of higher education in English involves a battery of reasons including the lack of intellectual stimulation in his surroundings outside college, "absence of facilities for travel whereby his sympathies and experience might be enlarged," a false sense of superiority arising from increased accessibility to and "intercourse with the ruling race", and inability to introduce religious teaching which is "the most universal basis of morality" in government colleges (*RIEC* 300).

The final reason cited pertinently challenges the idea of higher education in English as a gateway to a modern career. The final censure of the Indian student is "the strong temptation to lay aside his studies so soon as employment supplies his moderate necessities" thereby leaving "scanty inducement to fit himself for higher duties" (*RIEC* 300). It is these 'higher duties' and not more advanced skills for a modern profession that set him apart from

[38] See *RIEC* 301, for how government service is rather considered the domain of the 'second best' set of students issuing out of the university, the best taking up the profession of law. Thus, participating in administration does not emerge as the prized goal of higher education, even from a utilitarian point-of-view.

those who have not received college education. Thus, a civil subordinate "trained in college" is set apart for his "integrity, capacity for work, intelligence, industry", while the "educated native pleader" who needs "strong moral rectitude" is able to "emulate the dignity and self respect which are so pre eminently characteristic of the English Bar" (*RIEC* 301-2).

The secular nature of English education came under scrutiny for its possible neglect towards building morality of the students. The reasons presented to defend the moral bases of secular collegiate education are interesting. They range from the higher inclination of students towards "theistic associations" or "reformed faith" to higher reliability of those in government services, to the welfare initiatives undertaken by the "highly-educated native" which subsume native private enterprise in education, native press, literary and scientific societies "for religious and for social reform", to growth of 'useful' vernacular literature (*RIEC* 303). This range not only reveals what dimensions of native life were attempted to be injected with English 'morality' but also that these domains were interconnected and scaffolded each other in the constitution of 'reform' initiatives since before Woods Despatch formally implemented a centralised education policy. This correlation also confirms that the driving spirit of the 'reform' in early socio-religious movements was the inculcation Yet, the extent of native moral development is qualified.

While its successes are defended in altering the racial deficiencies of Indian natives, education is yet not "a sufficient cure" for them, as while the morality attained is higher in degrees, it continues to be based "upon considerations of a prudent self-interest rather than upon any higher principles of action…and great intellectual attainments are by no means always accompanied by *great elevation of character*" (*RIEC* 303; emphasis added). It is asserted that taking cognisance of the "conditions" of India's "past history", "improvement in this matter…must be the work of several generations" (*RIEC* 303).

Moral Reform, English, Higher Education Institutions

The exact nature of the morality that higher education was expected to be instrumental towards is laid out in the question of moral training in colleges. The *Report* asserts that there is "no dissent" on the necessity of moral training as well as the lack of worth of an education that neglected it (*RIEC* 294). Similar unanimity marks the "moral value of the love of law and order, of the respect for superiors, of the obedience, regularity, and attention to duty which every well-conducted college is *calculated to promote*" (*RIEC* 294; emphasis added). The decision to offer direct moral instruction is adopted as there is no consistency in the "moral influence" exerted by different colleges (*RIEC* 294) and is adopted going against the opinions of "the Principals of Government colleges in Bombay and Madras" (*RIEC* 295).

It is argued that the desire for direct moral instruction in a college course is felt less in "[p]rovinces where Western education has been…established" but is strongly asserted elsewhere (*RIEC* 295). In this statement, once again, English/western education is established as a catalyst in engendering native moral reform.

The place of English studies (as including a study of English literature and language) is well defined in this scheme: "[t]he English and Oriental classics, of course, occupy an important place in the college scheme; but, apart from the *refinement of character* and *elevation of thought* which are incidental to their study, their chief function is to *discipline the intellect*. In history, philosophy, mathematics, and physical science, English is the medium of instruction and the *passport to academic honours*" (RIEC 269; emphasis added). Thus, in spite of the growing significance of science in higher education, English studies retained its crucial role with respect to both the moral and practical gains expected to result from higher education.

Further, the intended effect on the character and thought of the student by English literature was not as incidental as claimed by the above statement. This point shall be taken up later in the chapter and is related to the Minute of Dissent of Kashinath Trimbak Telang—a member of the Commission from Western India, where he opposes the recommendation "regarding moral education in colleges" especially the part prescribing a "series of lectures on the duties of a man and a citizen" to be delivered in each session (*RIEC* 610). Telang resists the claim regarding "mischievous" effects of education on "the morals" students going to State Colleges, effectively referring to the irreverence and questioning of the government generated in educated circles. He argues that this misconception is owing to a "misapplication of that unhappy phrase—educated native" which confines the idea of education to a superficial understanding of English language and literature. Telang's choice of this subject to the exception of others like History, Moral Philosophy, Mathematics, etc., underlines how the domain of English studies had developed an identity with the idea of education in the social imaginary. Moreover, he implies how education stood for a deeper understanding of the values and ideas expounded through the subject of English.

His next argument is based on the nature of college education which, in his view, should no longer "instruct the intelligence" but rather be used to "discipline the will and to cultivate the feelings" (*RIEC* 611). He, further, adds that this would be achieved by "the emotions and the will being worked upon by the histories of great movements, the lives of great men, and the songs of great poets" (*RIEC* 611). Besides the allied subjects of Literature and History, he finds promise of moral stimulus in the pedagogic and social practices of

college life (*RIEC* 611-2). He concludes his argument on this issue by illustrating how any attempt at developing a political morality in students by administering lectures on "submission to the views of Government without a murmur of dissatisfaction" would find opposition in one or the other way amongst the Liberal or Tory factions of the home government (*RIEC* 612). Trimbak's "Dissent" paradoxically bolsters the value of English studies in offering a moral education in colleges, the ability of Literature to couch these values expounding both social and political morality, and fundamentally, the potential of this discipline in covertly constituting ideal colonial subjecthood. Once again, native resistance is shaped within the contours of Ashis Nandy's concept of "'official' dissent" (xii).

This paradox of liberal individualism propagated by such education is couched in the remarks of Sir Charles Turner in the Convocation address delivered at University of Madras in 1881. Turner first establishes "European talent" as the standard against which he judges Indian progress and foresees that India will soon "produce her philosopher, her moralist, her reformer" (*RIEC* 302). He not only confirms that ideas in the latter three domains were borrowed from Europe, or specifically England in the contemporary moment, but makes an estimation of development of original and independent ideas and values out of a system that was designed to develop the native in the shadow of the colonial master. This reality glimmers through a self-conscious remark in the analysis of the mediocre results attained by the present system of education, albeit distorted by its framing as a response to why originality of thought shall take time to develop in the Indian native: "It must be remembered, too, that education is of exotic growth, or, rather, that it has been imposed upon the country by an alien power…the advent of the philosopher, the moralist, the reformer…be still " a far off adorable dream,"…" (*RIEC* 304).

The Interim Years in Western India and Gujarat

Studying the region of Maharashtra and the Presidency town of Bombay, Veena Naregal observes that "through the 1850s,…the discursive gap between the vernacular and English spheres widened" (183n100). This gap was constituted not only along linguistic but also along institutional fault lines. In a note on Marathi literature, M.G. Ranade found most "vernacular authors and publishers" consistent with a background lacking "the rigours of a full English education" (Naregal 185). Dhara Kantibhai Chotai's study on colonial modernity and the public sphere in Gujarat also mentions how Dalpatram differentiated between graduates of the university from "non-graduate native writers" whom he considers "free from the foreign influence both in terms of borrowing words and sentence constructions" (74n28).

Riho Isaka also mentions how "late-nineteenth-century literary pursuits" in Gujarat were dominated by the recipients of higher education from the Western region (68). Thus, the role of institutional practices in constituting discourse was identified by intellectuals across the region.[39]

Colonial (Education) Institutions and 'Modern' Gujarati

At the same time, this did not reflect an anti-institutional, and thereby, anti-colonial stance in the case of Gujarat. The absence of institutional influence and resulting *nativeness* of the vernacular used by non-graduates was not celebrated by Dalpatram for possessing an unadulterated native identity. For him, it was only the lesser of two evils—the alternate being the vernacular used by graduates who only studied English and classical languages in their higher education curriculum. The ideal for Dalpatram is "the Gujarati of the first native intellectuals, who studied from the University both the languages, English and the native language, much better than the latter batch of the natives, who could not have an opportunity to learn the mother tongue along with English in the higher education system" (Chotai 75).

Such ironic preference for a native writer initiated in colonial higher education over one insulated from its influence can be explained through the underlying aspiration for modernity. Modernity established itself as the chief parameter against which self-perceptions of the intellectuals as well as identity of the individual and the region were pivoted. Thus, the desired development of Gujarati was towards making it a *modern* vernacular. It was believed that adoption of the native vernaculars in the university curriculum would encourage the processes of their modernisation—the process that also led to the development of modern European languages.[40]

Narmad's comments regarding requiring works on philological and structural aspects of language in order to deem it "cultivated" scaffold this argument (Chotai 81). The need to improve the vernacular is echoed in the remarks of Alexander Kinloch Forbes in the first annual report of the Gujarat Vernacular Society (qtd. in Chotai 64) and also by Dalpatram in his discussion on the want of a good "dictionary and Grammar of the Gujarati language" (Chotai 74). Even Narmad,[41] in his radically conservative polemic critical of contemporary reform titled "Sudharo ne Sudharawala" published in 1881, appreciated the positive impact

[39] Chotai ascribes the difference between Narmad's views on the lack of cultivation in Gujarati and Dalpatrams's assertion that it was "already a cultivated language", to lack of Dalpatram's explicit exposure to English education so which caused him to "not read any 'lack' or 'want'" in native language or culture (81).
[40] See also Naregal 43, for how the process of modernising European vernaculars informed the colonial ideology.
[41] Same as Narmadashankar Tuljashankar

on modern vernaculars of different provinces brought about by translations, new literature, and print culture consisting of both official and journalistic publications (23-4). This perception built into the language reform initiatives in late nineteenth century Gujarat was motivated by the immediate concern of matching pace with the regions of Maharashtra and Bengal where government patronage had led to language standardization through publications of dictionaries as well as regional literature besides the larger concern of deploying language as the marker of identity of the region as well as its inhabitants, according to Isaka.[42]

As a result, for the intellectuals associated with language reform, "the core problem was how to standardise the language and popularise this 'correct' form" (Isaka 72). On the other hand, "the context of expanding higher education and the introduction of Western literature" (Isaka 75) reinforced the colonial perception of "'lack'" in the native society shared by "the colonizers" and "the native intellectuals in the nineteenth century" (Chotai 100). While Isaka studies the implications of this for language reform in Gujarat, Chotai contextualizes it in the adoption of the "historicist" framework in colonial India (100).

However, what the above implies for the present study is that colonial higher education institutions shaped not only the native intellectuals' self-perceptions, but also their perception of language, literature, and identity which they attempted to instrumentalize in shaping native modernity or a modern identity for the region and its inhabitants. Further, institutional patronage was considered endemic to bringing about the desired reform (whether in language, society, or institutions) that would generate/expedite the process of modernisation.

As a result, language reform in Gujarat came to be executed through institutional reform. With the establishment of higher education in 1857, native languages were excluded from the university curriculum (Chotai 72). However, in 1888, GVS made an application to university authorities to include study of native languages in higher education (Chotai 73). Isaka identifies the 1880s with the rise of Sanskritisation in Gujarati (76, 85), while Kersasp opines that this trend was largely advocated "only in North Gujarat" (Isaka 77). However, Isaka argues that in spite of being geographically delimited, this trend could dominate the representation of Sanskritised Gujarati "as 'correct' Gujarati", owing to the preference attached to its proponents by the government as well as the "dominance" of this group "in

[42] See Chotai for a discussion of Narmad's attempts at formulating "regional identity through linguistic and literary idiom" (84), as well as how centrality of language in reform and modernisation was "[i]nformed by the imperial model of European Renaissance" (72).

literary associations" (77). Thus, while higher education institutions were viewed to aid development of the modern vernacular and its knowledge in the educated classes, the network of institutions and patronage clustered around the colonial education system generated representational power for the form of the vernacular that was to be standardised. Further, these two processes were not parallel but interlinked. D.D. Dalal ascribes partial origins of Sanskritisation to "the importance placed on classical languages in the curricula of higher education" (qtd. in Isaka 77).

The ideological underpinnings of the idea of a 'modern' language are reflected in "the European approach to language" in creating 'scientific' and 'technical' literature on language (Isaka 70), as well as adoption of Western models to develop modern Gujarati literature (Isaka 78, 83, 97).

Modernising the Vernacular and the Classical: Gujarati, Sanskrit, and English

Isaka notes the increasing use of Sanskrit words in Gujarati literature by writers of the Pandit Yug in Gujarati literature beginning in the mid-1880s but finds their use echoing "English models" (85). She, further, identifies the rise of interest in the traditional literature of Gujarat as "clearly influenced by the nineteenth-century British notion of 'national literature'" (Isaka 90). Isaka's observations regarding the rising influence of a classical language seems to be at odds with Chotai's insight that the colonial ideological project displaced native classical languages to establish English in a "new normative position of classical language in relation to native languages in India" in order to create "demand for the Western knowledge" (56). As highlighted in the previous discussion of the *Report of the Indian Education Commission* of 1882, existing pedagogic practices in traditional Sanskrit learning were revised by western scholars of Oriental languages under whose supervision various institutions were restructured. Thus, the contradiction between Anglicisation and Sanskritisation disappears when one takes note of the shaping of not only the vernaculars but also the classical languages in the image of Western learning.

The late nineteenth century, thus, was the period of development not only of the modern vernacular but the modern classical in context of native languages. Illustrating the notice published in English on the back of every issue of the Gujarati journal *Buddhiprakash*, Isaka shows how English "was associated with the idea of *'modernity'* and social *reform*" (80; emphasis added). It was this modern language that set the parameters for development of both the vernacular and the classical. The vernacular took etymological content from the classics but restructured itself in terms of English – thus, even those who criticised

Sanskritisation like Ramanbhai Mahipatram Nilkanth actually felt that Gujarati did not have the means to carry English ideas.[43]

Thus, the post-1857 development of an "anti-colonial stance of native intellectuals" in Gujarat that Chotai observes (63), was not necessarily an anti-English stance, both in terms of English language and culture. Further, insertion into the colonial higher education system was considered endemic to this process of modernisation, as delineated earlier. The anticipated function of the university in the native imagination as arming the student with the arsenal of reform is quite literally expressed in a footnote of the May 1880 issue of the *Gujarat Shalapatra* which presents to its readers a summary of the report of the Department of Education. Reflecting on the number of university graduates from the introduction of higher education until date of the given report, the journal annotates:

> …there must have emerged at least as many graduates as could constitute one troop of a battalion from among the Gujarati Hindus. What is regrettable is that this troop has had no impact on the country's reform. Barring two or three, none of them seem to be making any efforts towards the spread of knowledge or reform, which is both an unfortunate and worrisome situation that calls for discussion.[44] (Kelavni Khatano Report Bhag 2jo." 98 un)

Further, Narmad's essay on reform speaks of the decline of the brand of social reform with which the age of reform was associated and argues that the spread of reformist tendencies to other domains such as economics or politics have only led to criticism (41). He, then, advises "*Gujarati sudharo*" to renounce its distinctive identity and blend with the larger Gujarati society in an effort to increase devotion to *swadharma*, which may be broadly translated as 'traditional native socio-religious structure' in the context of Narmad's essay (41).

Moral reform versus Institutional reform

Thus, the late nineteenth century in Gujarat witnessed the eclipse of the engagement of reform with the social question, and its spread to questions of economics and politics. It could largely be viewed as a transition from reform of individuals to reform of institutions/structures. While Narmad criticizes the new direction of reform, he concedes the movement for native industry gaining some momentum in Surat, Ahmedabad, and Vadodara, in the late 1870s (28-9). Narmad's vision was to enable the native society with an approach where every caste/community-group initiated change and/or improvement in its respective

[43] See Isaka 75.

[44] All translations and paraphrasing from original Gujarati/Marathi sources are mine except where otherwise indicated.

occupational domain; such as, the Vania community should think of ways to reorganise native trade and commerce and help abate the domination of foreign goods (44-5). In clarifying the future direction for reform as envisioned by him, Narmad effectively points out its transformed role: "The flow of reform has stalled and grown weaker; I am getting its direction changed; filtered thus, it will trickle into the community in the form of a pure stream that will fortify it" (45 un).

From an explicit ideological position defining a cluster of actions and approach to the native society, reform became an implicit variable in the discursive redefinition of various domains of the modern society, while persisting to be the ineluctable condition of modernity, as demonstrated in the thrust of linguistic reform towards modernising native languages.

This changed role and character of reform is, further, brought into relief by the tendencies that grate against it. Narmad's conservative revivalist position in 1881 calls for a diversion of the stream of reform into fortifying the traditional dharma of the native society, as opposed to fortifying political consciousness among the natives couched in the idea of *deshabhiman*. He argues that even those who had picked up the idea of *deshabhiman* had not understood it fully (Narmad 36). He reserves the activity of gaining knowledge of various political and military systems for the ruling families and administrators of native states (Narmad 22). During Hargovinddas Kantawala's public lecture in Surat on native industry, Narmad remarked that Gujaratis would claim success in this enterprise owing to their natural talent for trade and business, as opposed to *Dakshinis*[45] who possess a similar talent for politics. Interestingly, Iccharam Suryaram Desai—the editor of the newspaper which carried the article where Narmad expounded the aforementioned ideas, published his novel *Hind ane Britannia* (India and Britain) in 1885 where, while making a case for the *swatantrata* (independence) of Hind, he ultimately concluded that "the latter is not yet ready to rule her-self and thus Britannia's rule should continue" (Isaka 104). Thus, the dominant climate in Gujarat was marked by a belief that the prevailing conditions were unripe for demanding reform of political structures and institutions.[46] As mentioned earlier, this belief in itself was structured by and in turn scaffolded the ideology of reform.

[45] *Dakshin* means 'the South', and the adjective *Dakshini* accordingly refers to 'one from the South'. It is a phrase commonly used among Gujaratis to denote those belonging to the region of Maharashtra (which is to the south of Gujarat and whose territory was contiguous with region of Karnataka in the Bombay Presidency.
[46] See Narmad 20, for his use of the term *prarabdhviveka* which may be loosely translated as the wisdom to understand when something is meant to happen, to refer to a similar idea of unripe-ness of time/circumstances.

Further, in order to attain the *maturity* to take over the reins of native self-rule, what is called for is personal-moral reform through revival of traditions on one hand, and institutional reform to insert native knowledge in the system of colonial higher education and remake it through the processes of Western modernity, on the other, depicting the quintessential paradox of colonialism. Thus, the discourse of reform pushed in the direction of depoliticization at the same moment when the emergence of political consciousness in western India was being evidenced in the rise of institutions such as the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in 1881, and the Gujarat Sabha in 1884, culminating in the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. This ideological perception constituted by reform is consonant with the one undergirding Reform debates in England where reforming the mind was considered the precondition for political reform, and education identified as the tool to yoke these two dimensions of reform together.

Reform, English Education, and the Question of the Nation

While education became the tool to build *fitness* for political reform, the shifts also highlight the growing demand for political reform by the closing decades of the nineteenth century in India. G. Aloysius traces "the origin and development of early Indian nationalism" to "the third quarter of the nineteenth century" (107). In other words, the period between Woods Despatch of 1854 and the establishment of universities in 1857 to the Education Commission of 1881, is roughly identified as the period of the origin of Indian nationalism. This growth of nationalism can be read into the emerging demand for political-institutional reform in the second half of the nineteenth century.

For Aloysius, the origins of nationalism lay in the struggle between the increase in superiority of the traditionally powerful upper-caste elite groups in the colonial power hierarchy on one hand, as well as "attempts to challenge and destabilize the traditional and indigenous socio-political order and religio-cultural value system" (107) required to "bring the traditional society into minimal congruence with the requirements of modern political structure", on the other (108). To retain their power and privilege, "the erstwhile collaborators were changing their position into one of confrontation" (Aloysius 107). However, in the case of Narmad, we see a conservative revivalist acting as a critic of the (rudimentary) nationalist bent of reform activities couched in the idea of *deshabhiman*. Thus, the nationalist stance was not purely confrontational in the political context, and English education had a role to play in this depoliticization.

Alok K. Mukherjee's discussion of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *nationalist* novel *Anandamath* (1882), (published a year after Narmad's essay) as an illustration of the

hegemony of European ideas in late nineteenth century India offers useful insights into the complexity of depoliticised nationalist positions. He observes that, "[t]he notion that *aryadharma* is 'knowledge producing' and not 'action producing', as Chikitsak says to Satya and the spiritual-material duality implicit in it, for example, had its origin as much in Hindu nationalists looking for an answer to the criticisms of Europeans like James Mill, as in the European Orientalists and the English Utilitarians" (A. Mukherjee 104). He, further, adds that:

> [t]he idea of nationalism, too, Bankim had acquired from Europe…*Anandamath*,[47] then, is an example of the way English had been an effective conduit for ideas of racial identity, evolutionism and emancipation through British rule to such an extent that Bankim could use them to argue a case for British rule and English education…There were contemporaries of Bankim in other parts of India who also spoke about the benefits of English knowledge while, at the same time, being critical of colonial rule… (A. Mukherjee 105)

Narmad similarly pits "*nivruttidharma*" against "*deshabhiman*" advocating the former (9). Narmad's comments in the road ahead for reform advocate focusing on language and traditional religious-cultural practices which would revive the lost *sattva*. Thus, he moves from sociomoral reform to personal-moral reform and advocates institutional changes to bring about moral change. Thus, the question of reform or the position vis-à-vis reform continued to qualify the complex revivalist/nationalist positions during this period.

In this context, it is significant to study how reform, higher education, and the question of nation or political sovereignty were negotiated in a native state in the region of Gujarat, that was to develop a reputation for its modernity.

Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad III and Baroda: On the Liminality between Sovereignty and Subjecthood

In her study of native states of Saurashtra under colonial rule, Aarti Bhalodia-Dhanani views them as contiguous and porous spaces: "Though the imperial rulers divided India into British and Indian territories, people frequently crossed boundaries and money flowed with relative ease" (49). However, I argue that as they were recognised as sovereign at least in formal political terms by the British; they equally constituted spaces affording relative independence

[47] Mukherjee is specifically referring to a passage from Anandamath quoted in his discussion that expresses this idea.

from the administrative-legislative, and thereby, direct political control of the British. For the same reason, they merit special significance in an analysis of colonial India.

In the subsequent discussion, I analyse the princely state of Baroda as such a space, specifically under the ruler Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III (1863-1939), for two reasons. Firstly, this ruler ascended the throne with complete powers in the year 1881; thus, the early period of his rule overlaps with the moment in the trajectory of reform and English studies that this chapter analyses. Secondly, he is identified as the ruler who modernized the native State through his reform projects, and thus his territory offers a rich site where the interconnections between reform and English education can be studied within the larger rubric of modernity in the moment of emerging nationalist consciousness in late nineteenth century India.

The previous chapter laid out how, since Baroda became the seat of the Gaekwads in the eighteenth century under the rule of Sayajirao I, the history of the Gaekwads' relations with the British remained chequered. [48]

The Circumstances of Accession

The destiny of Sayajirao III as the ruler of Baroda could be borne out as a conquest of reform over revolt. The young Gopalrao belonging to the clan of Kavlana Gaekwads, residing in a remote village called Kavlana in Maharashtra, unaware of any aspects of the life of the royal branch of his family, could ascend to the most coveted title of the ruler, owing to the pro-British and anti-revolutionary approach taken by the then ruler Khanderao Gaekwad during the revolt of 1857. It was this decision that resulted in the Gaekwads receiving the right to adopt an heir. This right was invoked to adopt Gopalrao as the legal heir to the throne.

Khanderao Gaekwad is considered to be the first ruler in the Gaekwad descent line to initiate certain reforms in the administrative and legal systems of the Baroda state, which were modelled on the English political-administrative system (Apte 175). The Dewan T. Madhavrao who is believed to have prepared the grounds for the modernization project of Sayajirao III also largely adopted a similar approach.[49] Ahead of the transfer of ruling powers to Sayajirao Gaekwad III on 28 December 1881, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha sent him a letter containing suggestions regarding the future constitution of Baroda. The letter acknowledges that having received specific education and circumstances wherein his rule was favoured by the natives and British alike, the young ruler was expected to "lay the foundation of a

[48] See Apte 168.

[49] See Apte 222, for how T. Madhavrao modelled the improvements in the judicial system of the state on the example of England.

reformed and progressive system of administration on enlightened principles which will, with increased experience and maturing judgment, gradually tend towards the consolidation of a constitution containing within itself all that is to be found in indigenous institutions, improved and corrected from time to time, in consonance with the notions of a civilized government, as the progress of your Highness' subjects in intelligence and education may enable them to desire and appreciate such improvements and reforms" (24). The letter however undercuts this officialese with indications on the determined retention of native sovereignty on two occasions. Once, the letter while offering a general characterization of how a Dewan of the state should be, inserts a scathing critique of the pro-British attitude of T. Madhavrao: "The Dewan's office is of the most vital importance in the State and should be filled by a Native gentleman of mature age, of liberal education, of administrative experience in the affairs of Native States, and above all of high character of conservative patriotism as regards the rights and privileges of Native Princes and for independence, honesty, integrity and judgment" (25).

During his reign, Sayajirao III continued to maintain an awareness of and relationship with political activities in Maharashtra, and thus, the moderate reformist attitude largely prevalent in Gujarat besides the politically conservative position of intellectuals like Narmad, was disrupted in the comparatively radical position of Gaekwad emerging out of the Marathi influence.

Educating a "Truly Model Prince"[50]

While making the decision regarding adoption, the British were in favour of a boy quite young in age, so that he could be imparted the appropriate education designed to equip him to become an able ruler (Apte 118). In fact, the intention of the British was to create a model ruler in Sayajirao III, and thus the growth and progress of this task was closely observed in native circles. Sayajirao III was mentored in the art of governance by T. Madhavrao (1828-1891) who was appointed as the Dewan of Baroda in 1875, and initiated the process of systematizing the structure and functioning of various departments of the state.[51] Thus, he brought in the perspective of an administrator to run the state smoothly as a British Residency.[52]

[50] See the Dewan T. Madhavrao's comments in his lecture to Sayajirao II on fundamental principles of governance: "…Your Highness should become a truly model Prince, an example to future Princes and a source of pride to the native community. This is the earnest wish of the great British Government…" (T. Rao 93).
[51] See Apte 128-130, 216-7.
[52] T. Madhavrao's insights and pointers regarding administration were overtly part of Sayajirao III's education. See the remarks on 'The Baroda Administration Report for 1876-77' in the October 1878 issue of *The Quarterly*

Perhaps, the same position caused him to curate the young ruler's scheme of education in ways which drew the ire of the emerging nationalists in western India, such as in the biography of Bal Gangadhar Tilak by Narshih Chintaman Kelkar: "He [T. Madhavrao] objected to him receiving instruments like the quarterlies of the Sarvajanik Sabha so that he does not receive an independent political education" (qtd. in Apte 236). Several other decisions that T. Madhavrao made in the capacity of an administrator also revealed his pro-British attitude often implemented at the expense of the native state, such as giving up the Baroda state's right to manufacture firearms, allowing the replacement of the Baroda contingent with a purely British force alongside a yearly payment from the state for the maintenance of these troops, besides acceding to the controversial policy of the British with relation to the manufacture and sale of salt and opium in the native states (Apte 236-251).

Gopalrao had not received much of an education at his native village Kavlana (Apte 139). The scheme of education of the young maharaja at Baroda was designed by the British Resident in consultation with the Dewan T. Madhavrao and Sayajirao III's adoptive mother Maharani Jamnabai. At the same time, this scheme was subject to the approval of the Governor-General.[53] While his initial education involved the study of Gujarati and Marathi languages, it was soon realised that a separate school should be established for the maharaja under the tutorship and management of a qualified Englishman besides a principal (Apte 193-4). F.A.H. Elliot, the Director of the Education Department in Warhad, was appointed the principal of this school, where children of the nobles and other officials were also admitted, to create a competitive environment for the young maharaja (Apte 193-4). His education continued for six years from 1876 to 1881.

Rupal Upadhyay sums up his curriculum thus:

> The academic curriculum included four languages, Gujarati, Urdu, Marathi and English; later Indian history, chemistry, geography, arithmetic and elements of political economics were added. Training was also given to him in billiards, horse

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Magazine of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha: "Its very diffuseness and tendency to moralize, though they take away to some extent the interest…contribute greatly to the instructive usefulness of the suggestions intended to guide and educate the boy-ruler in the mystery of state policy. We note for instance the suggestion that in future the minister or Dewan should always be a native statesman acquainted with the English language, and able to master the facts of political administration on some pretence of equality with the English residents and rulers of the land, as one which is fraught with the permanent well-being and security of the state" (35). T. Madhavrao also had other motivations in attempting to set up an ideal (in the eyes of the British system. See *The Quarterly Magazine of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha*: "The success of the Baroda administration under purely native agency is a great experiment, and upon its success depends the solution of many great problems of the future, among others,—the extension of cheap and native agency in British India" (37).

[53] See Apte 192, for how the scheme of education devised for Sayajirao III was sent for the approval of the Governor-General on 26 August 1875.

> riding, *farigadgal*, marksmanship, *Malkhambh* (greased), wrestling and other physical exercises. In addition to this were added swimming, shooting, hunting, and military exercise.[52] His education was encompassing all possible knowledge gathering--languages, administration and good governance '*Minor Hints'*, life skills, physical exercise and more importantly of being pro-British. [*sic*] (n.p.)

In an analysis of his political approach, the part of his education most relevant to the current discussion was the series of lectures on the art of governance delivered by the Dewan T. Madhavrao ahead of transfer of full state powers to Sayajirao III. This series was later published under the title *Minor Hints*. While T. Madhavrao's contribution to initial institutional reforms of the Baroda state and systematisation of the duties of the ruler and state officials cannot be disputed, his lessons to a sovereign bore conspicuous guidance on subservience to British supremacy. This was due not only to the political situation of Baroda functioning under close scrutiny of the British, but also T. Madhavrao's personal belief in the ideal quality of English (value) systems.

For instance, on the subject of treating advice from others, he suggests, "[a]gain, the Resident advises the Maharaja to undertake as little of judicial work as possible. The Maharaja should not attribute the advice to a desire on the part of the Resident to weaken the Maharaja, but should attribute it to his desire to save the Maharaja needless trouble and needless responsibilities" (T. Rao 37). Further, recommendations to continue a study of the English language, history and important political-administrative publications related to England are made on grounds such as, "[t]he main object of knowing the English language is to acquire a knowledge of useful truths" (T. Rao 88), and that native princes tend to "confine themselves to a narrow and fossilised world which shuts out the higher lights of a progressive age. The best antidote to this is that they should make themselves conversant with the thoughts of the most enlightened of mankind" (T. Rao 90). His recommendations with regard to education could as well be footnotes on the colonial education policy:

(a) "Those who have acquired high education through the medium of the English language will probably be the *most enlightened* members of the community. They will probably be the most effectual *promoters of progress*: they will probably be the foremost to correct the gross errors of ignorance and superstition" (Rao 216; emphasis added).

(b) "English literature, science and philosophy, are best taught by Englishmen…The temptation to appoint Natives for *patriotical* or economical motives should be *firmly resisted*" (T. Rao 217; emphasis added).

Finally, Madhavrao identified the same fundamental purpose of education (in a broad sense, as identical with the purpose of reform) as identified by the early colonial officials as well as Reformers of England which was moral reform of the populace:

> …the Maharaja should avail himself of the numerous occasions which will often occur, to make known his love of virtue and his aversion to vice. He may easily do this by throwing out remarks…[e]very such remark…will encourage good people, and it will reform bad people…Indeed I think that the Maharaja may thus become a powerful teacher. He may, in a few years, acquire the glory of improving the general moral tone. (222)

With such closely supervised grooming by the British government, and the peculiar nature of his education, Sayajirao III's reforms to modernise the state could be expected to be modelled on the English example and designed to endorse the hierarchy implemented by the colonial rule.

However, I argue that owing to the nature of Sayajirao III's connection with Maharashtra, the Gaekwads' ambiguous relationship with the British, the specific modality of his English education that was designed for a sovereign and yet still a subject, and his individual agency, the Baroda state constituted an instance/space of resistance to co-optation in the colonial ideological project.

Subject to Sovereignty: Reform and the Baroda State

Manu Bhagavan uses the celebrated reforms of the Baroda state which made it an "'ideal and progressive' state" to prise open the reconstitution of Western models by Sayajirao III ("Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 385). He bases his analysis on Homi K. Bhabha's idea of "'colonial mimicry'" that made Baroda "'almost but not quite' Western" (Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 386). In other words, he discusses how reform in Baroda highlighted its positioning at the liminality between sovereignty and subjecthood.

An early example of Sayajirao III's approach that could understand the conditional applicability of western perceptions and concepts in the native context, can be viewed in his response to the British Resident at Baroda—Mr. Melville's pleasantries, on the occasion of laying of the foundation stone of the Laxmi Vilas Palace on 12 January 1880. Sayajirao III observed that the comparative absence of Indian women in the public sphere creates a misguided perception in the minds of the English that Indian women do not carry much value or weight in the native society. However, historically, queens and princesses played key roles in both political and military pursuits. In the contemporary times, these roles were unavailable to such women owing to India being under foreign rule. Yet, the presence of

Marathi and Parsi women in western India who have had the opportunity to avail education would hopefully offer better opportunities for women, here, to showcase their mettle (qtd. in Apte 267).

Bhagavan's remarks also help locate Baroda within the question of nationalism as his central argument is that "the interstitial point of being almost but not there, dislocated the reform measures from their ideological determinant—the West—and freed them for redeployment as part of a 'nationalist' agenda" (386).

Bhagavan's reading identifies the ideological underpinnings of the colonial project that considered reform the precondition for access to political sovereignty. He argues that "the concept of reform in the colonial system was intricately tied to the notion of colonial mimicry, the notion that colonized peoples needed to struggle to become equal to the Western colonizers who were the paradigm of normality. Of course, normalization was simply not possible,…Any reform therefore had to be *almost but not quite* normal" (Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 387). This is because mimicry was a two-pronged process, being "a process for normalizing Western modes of knowledge and providing the justification for the colonial languages of reform and regulation" on one hand, and "a process for codifying colonial authority and revealing its underlying purpose of domination and its assorted means of control" on the other (Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 387). These two aspects are inconsistent with each other.

I, further, argue that this inconsistency is caused by the gap between moral and institutional reform. While institutional reform was depicted as the logical successor to the successful dissemination of moral reform; in other words, assumption of independence was the consequence of inhabiting modern enlightened subjecthood, the actual adoption of institutional reforms generated a cause for anxiety as it threatened to destabilise the existing status quo. Henrik Chetan Aspengren notes this tendency in the phase of the emergence of reform in the nineteenth century, whereby, administrators showed "a deep reluctance for backing up their reformist language with actual use of political power…[for being] wary of what they found to be the corruptive character of power" (51). He, further, finds the political conservatism of post-1857 British India connected to the experience of the revolt of 1857 when he observes that "[c]onservative critics argued that reformist policies were partly to blame for the uprising…Instead of emphasising universalism and essential human similarity, British officials now emphatically pronounced differences between Indians and Europeans as being imperative for the British self-proclaimed right to rule" (52). Naregal argues that in spite of new forms of communal association based on liberal principles were initiated by the

native intellectuals, they did not come to represent all sections of the society (240-244). English education was the condition to "securing a position of control within colonial-modern politics", though not the only condition as it could destabilise the power of the "English intellectual" who already possessed a hegemonic position drawn from his caste status (Naregal 246-7). The same intelligentsia opposed the Hunter Commission's recommendation "to curtail the funds allotted to higher education" (Naregal 248). In negotiating the ambivalences and paradoxes of liberal individualism and modern government in the context of empire, the native intelligentsia arrive at a resolution identical to the coloniser: "Faced with the inevitable question about why the full parliamentary system of government was not practised in India, the intelligentsia responded with the classic liberal-gradualist answer of the majority being as yet 'unprepared' for full political status" (Naregal 245-6). While Naregal seems to approach the question through the Gramscian notion of 'war of position', the question of language is equally important. Barbara Barrow has analysed the role of Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution* (1837) as staging the spirit of revolution through its "anarchic vocabulary" and his acknowledgement that "the available language of history is inadequate to describe the Revolution," identifying the need for "neology" (19-21).

Bhagavan focuses on Sayajirao's reforms in the first decade of the twentieth century, when "Baroda was a state known for its reforms, for a progressive zeal to modernize its government and its institutions" ("Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 386-7). The first half of the decade, roughly from 1902-1907—a period that will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections—is when Bhagavan traces the major and most radical set of reform initiatives undertaken by Sayajirao III including the legislation for remarriage of Hindu widows in 1902; "the Infant Marriage Prevention Act, the Local Self-Government Act, and preliminary investigations into primary education, the penal code, criminal procedure" in 1904; offer of "amnesty and waivers to citizens owing back taxes", free vernacular education, boarding houses for untouchables, creation of five international education scholarships, establishment of hospitals and charities, etc. in 1907 (Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 389-390). Sayajirao III made a crucial statement at the National Social Conference of the Indian National Congress held on 30 December 1904 at Bombay:

> There is, of course some truth in the position that reform must work along lines natural to the country and our national characteristics. *There are some features in our environment which are sufficiently powerful to modify the practical application of any idea, and these account for certain tendencies in national history which persist even through long centuries of foreign influence. It is also true that servile imitation is no*

> *reform and is often worse than the original evil.* But the great truth behind the phrase is, that it is the general advance of the nation which is the aim of reform: that only is national reform which subserves national interests [italics mine][54]. (qtd. in Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 390)

This statement bears the stamp of the shifting meanings of reform and the co-optation of reform by the discourse of nationalism. It also evidences that, in spite of the popular periodisation where the age of reform was followed by revivalism followed by nationalism, reform continued to be a central question that emerging discourses such as nationalism were required to grapple with. Finally, it highlights the changing signification of the term 'national'.

Sayajirao III's propensity to adopt British reforms in relation with his engagement with the 'national' in the early years of his reign can be observed in an undertaking by T.K. Gajjar, Professor of Chemistry at the Baroda College to present a scheme of a national system of education for the Baroda state, for the consideration of the Maharaja. It reflects how professors at the college were an integral part of deliberations on state reforms, as well as Sayajirao III's bent towards aligning the native state with the future course that the nation was taking.

Gajjar's note on national education is stimulated by Sayajirao III's desire that a technical branch of education be introduced in the Baroda state. Gajjar believes that a branch could not be merely added without reorganisation of the entire scheme of education, which indicates that Sayajirao III's reforms were not intended for tokenistic changes. It also confirms what Bhagavan has observed about the ruler's desire to replicate the institutional reforms that British adopted in their own territories. In this sense, institutional reform for Sayajirao III was an ambitious project of replicating a modern polity as one administered by the British, and to stand as an equal rather than in the shadow of the British. This ambition is reflected in Gajjar's proposal to develop a Polytechnic University which would be the apex institution of the system of technical education, just as the Bombay University was the apex institution for non-technical education. He, further, introduces guidelines for revising the entire system of education to attune it to the university, much like the colonial education system was oriented to train students to fulfil the high school and university requirements. Several reforms suggested by Gajjar are based on recommendations made by the Education Commission of 1882 for the institutions in British territories in India.

[54] Italics in the quotations from Manu Bhagavan are by the original author, unless otherwise indicated.

Finally, Bhagavan finds Sayajirao's statement at the National Social Conference "remarkable for aligning the prince of a native state with the 'national'" ("Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 390). He observes that, in doing so, "[t]he Gaekwad allies himself with native leaders of British India and implies that the princely states, rather than being independent countries, are part of the greater nation 'India', though this structure is never specified" (Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 390). In Gajjar's note, however, this structure is clearly specified when he states that:

> I am aware that from various causes, such as the want of appliances, teachers, funds, & c., it will not be possible for any one State to attempt to cover the entire field of knowledge. But for that very reason, I think, it is necessary that the entire should be before the mind of the statesman before he sets his hand to the development of any particular branch of knowledge or skill. With every change in a nation's circumstances, there will be a change in the particular branch of instruction which is considered the most important of all; and if each is attended to separately without regard to the whole, an incongruity may result, which it will require great effort to undo. (1-2)

Gajjar formulates his scheme for the network of independent states within the entire nation and not only for the state of Baroda. In doing so, he acknowledges the joint and allied roles of native states in conferring a character to education which reflected the specific circumstances of the national character, that is, its distinctive socio-geographical circumstances; and also underlines Baroda's definition of itself as part of a larger nation than an independent state. That Gajjar's perspective was allied with Sayajirao III's is endorsed by the latter's statement at "the Dayanand Arya Vedic College in Lahore"[55] in 1903: "I firmly believe that *the progress of one part of the country must affect that of every other*" (qtd. in Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 391).

This was Sayajirao III's distinctive ability for Bhagavan—"a unique capability of transforming the 'Other' into 'Self'" ("Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 390). Clearly, Sayajirao III did not pay much heed to the Queen Elizabeth's exhortation/observation in 1879 that T. Madhavrao had laid down as his "concluding advice" (91) in *Minor Hints*: ""It is in the *gradual* and *judicious* extension, in Native States, of the general principles of government which are applied in British territory that their Rulers will find the surest guarantee of their administrative independence, and the best safeguard against intervention on the part of the

[55] Bhagavan quotes this name from his original source which is the Gaekwad's *Speeches and Addresses*. However, he assumes that this name refers to the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College (fn 391).

paramount power"" (qtd. in T. Rao 92; emphasis added). On the contrary, Sayajirao III's policy adopted rapid and comprehensive extension.

This policy became a subject of consternation for the British. On 31 March 1908. when the Secretary of State for India, John Morley, was asked by a member of the House of Commons whether the former was aware of Baroda's progress and whether similar measures could be undertaken in other native states, Morley refused on the grounds that such measures were impossible to implement elsewhere and would amount to interference in native sovereignty (Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 392). The Baroda reforms challenged the theory of lack that obviated native ability to undertake independent institutional reform (which would be logically succeeded by self-rule), while also presenting the upper hand of the native state in its ability to adapt western systems/categories as per native circumstances:

> …the Baroda reforms might be perceived as original and superior to anything thus far done throughout the Empire. If the English adopted these steps, they would implicitly have to accept native ability to progress and this would strike at the very nature of the colonial project. Mimicking the native was not possible, especially when claims were made that the native reforms were copies of British ideas. The discussion in the English parliament proves that there was a recognition that there was something new, and thus something 'not Western', about Baroda's reforms. The British thus could not use Baroda's reforms out of strategic consideration. (Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 392-3)

In this context, it is significant to study the practice of English studies in an institution of higher education situated in the liminal space between sovereignty and subjecthood of a native state turned into a site of resistant mimicry by a reformist-nationalist ruler, and understand how the English studies engaged with the question of reform and the nation.

The Baroda College

Reform in the region of Gujarat, in the previous chapter, was characterised as charting different trajectories owing to its location within or outside its engagement within the institutional network(s) of colonial education. This section studies the history of an institution of higher education located in a space that went against the grain of the intended ideological function of English.

The Vision of Sayajirao III

Laying the foundation stone of the Baroda College was one of the first public tasks, undertaken as a sovereign, by the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, in 1879 (Trivedi 17, 25, 27). The college received recognition from the Bombay University for the Previous Examination on 1st October 1881, in the same year that the Maharaja was invested with full powers and became an independent ruler of the state. The trajectory of the rule of Sayajirao III overlapped significantly with that of the Baroda College. This institution of higher education remained an important personal project for the ruler for being, in many ways, at the centre of his vision of modernizing the state.

Sayajirao III's vision for the higher education institution parallels the colonizers' imagination of the purpose and structure of (higher) education in the colony. In a speech delivered on the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the college, he recalls the initial rationale of establishing the institution: "My earliest convictions, as far as I can recall them, were concerned with the promotion of education among my people. I had begun to realise that it was the lever—the only lever—by which our country and our people could be moved from the inertia of ages that had weighed them down" (Trivedi 26). Secondly, the utilitarian or instrumental purpose of this institution for him was "a constant supply of men with training and character for carrying on efficiently and economically the administration of the State" (Trivedi 26)—a vision which translates into reality as attested to by the appointments in various important positions of the state of both professors as well as alumni from the institution.[56] Thus, it mirrors the colonial policy of creating a set of educated members who could partake in the administration of the state. Further, he also imagines the structure of education in a top-down flow, that is, those trained in the higher education institutions are imagined as those who will take it to the lower orders of the system: "I have regarded it as the eye of my domains. I should perhaps more correctly call it a beacon from which were to radiate the quickening rays of thought and inspiration to the remotest parts of my dominions…keen as my interest in higher education is, I have always looked upon education as an essential thing to instil the spirit of progress in the people at large. It is not everyone who is fortunate enough to receive the benefits which such a College as this confers. Knowing this, and desiring that every one of my people should enjoy in some measure the advantages of education, I inaugurated a policy of compulsory education throughout my State. *I regard this College as closely related to that policy,* the *men and women who receive*

[56] The first principal of the college, Mr. T.S. Tait also served as the Director of Anglo-Vernacular Instruction of the State

their education here are just those to whom I look to carry it to success" (Trivedi 26; emphasis added).

The difference between the intention of Sayajirao III to generate a set of native administrators and officers educated at this institution, and the object of colonial education policy to generate a set of middlemen, was that these men[57] were able to occupy the highest positions in the state right from Dewan to Minister of Education and were in a position to exercise their education at the highest level with complete authority. They were not imagined as middlemen who, by dint of their function of mediating between the ruler and the ruler, were entitled only to achieve subordinate positions in the civil services of the country.

Further, the difference between the downward filtration policy of the British, and the ideation of Sayajirao III of generating a group of scholars at the College who would carry it to the lower levels was in the different characterization of subjecthood. The colonial education system was designed to reform students into willing subjects of the empire; who would concede submission to the benefits and benevolence of the British rule. However, Sayajirao III's idea of education was to generate a body of subjects who were able to identify their role and position in modern political and social institutions, identify the scope for themselves in new economic structures and professions, and thus inhabit their independent subjecthood in the native State, in a process that in itself was being shaped to match the modernity of the British territories. While the internal logic and structure of the education project remains the same, the difference is spelt by the constitution of subjecthood in the two cases. While monarchy may be viewed as a pre-modern system of rule, in the paradoxical logic of imperialism, it afforded a space to inhabit independent and equal subjecthood, as against the British territories where a subordinate subjecthood for the native could be legislatively enforced by a system modelled on modern English laws and parliamentary procedure. This insight is scaffolded by Bhagavan's arguments towards the nationalistic sentiment underlying Sayajirao III's so-called seditious activities ("Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive'" 392-394). I argue that while the exposure to an English/western education impressed upon Sayajirao III the inevitability of modern forms of governance, he resolved native monarchy within the impending transformations by ideating the native state as a space where a sense of sovereignty and equal citizenship could be rescued/retained and, from there, gradually wrested for the larger nation.

[57] Records do not reflect appointments of women teaching in/graduating from the College, in any state offices.

In the late nineteenth century, when the generation of English educated natives came into its own to constitute the sphere of intellectuals, scholars, and officials, the significance of reform did not dwindle, but was reinvested with the idea of institutional reform to grow into the next advanced stage of the society. The idea of the enlightened citizen was invested less with moral and more with a political significance during this time—the belief in the greatness of British ideas, ideals, and institutions (moral reform) had been established; it was now time to claim the right to inhabit them independently (political/institutional reform).

This remained the chief point of struggle between the colonisers and the colonised during the transitional decades of the nineteenth century. In the age of reform that focused on moral improvement, the difference between the coloniser and colonised was on civilizational terms—one had reached the advanced stage of progress while the other had not and thus needed the former's aid and assistance. However, in the light of rapid restructuring of socioeconomic and political institutions and structures, as well as western education, the ideological space of the native was imagined within the space of modernity, and the former rationale could no longer hold. Thus, the ideology of age was reoriented from the child-adult analogy to child-parent analogy; a child-adult relationship could grow into an adult-adult relationship with the passage of time. However, the child-parent relationship was insurmountable even with passage of time. Recasting the colony-metropole relationship in such patrilineal terms, went against the grain of the enlightenment idealization of the individual. I argue that this transition ideologically parallels the transition in the imagination of the nation from the Romantic to the Victorian outlooks. The nation formed the site over which the struggle over institutional reform was carried out in late nineteenth century India. This struggle can be studied in the figures of two professors of English Literature at the Baroda College at this historical moment.

Negotiating Reform and Nationalism in the English Curriculum

There is something peculiar about the entry of Victorian poetry in the curriculum for Bachelor of Arts in the Bombay University in the 1890s, a curriculum dominated until then by an exclusive focus on Romantic poetry, and in fact, a complete absence of Victorian literature whether in poetry or prose.[58] I study the lecture notes written by a professor of History and English Literature at the Baroda College, Professor Harold Littledale (1853-1930), to understand the implications of this insertion for the larger question under study. The text in question is *Essays on Lord Tennyson's Idylls of the King* (1893).

[58] We do see Matthew Arnold's 'Johnson's Lives of the Poets' on the curriculum of 1885 and several subsequent years, however this work again discusses the work of pre-Victorian poets.

Littledale arrived in Baroda in 1879 and served the education sector in the state for 21 years before moving to England and serving as a Professor of English at Literature at University College of South Wales and Monmouth, Cardiff (Trivedi 17, "Death of Dr. Harold Littledale" 6). During his tenure, he also served as the Vice-Principal of the College until the year of his retirement in 1896. He was also a Fellow of the University of Bombay and often served to mediate between the interests of the College and the University, notably during an occasion when he overcame opposition in the University Syndicate to secure recognition of the Baroda College for the teaching of full graduate courses of the B.A. and B.Sc. degrees respectively (Trivedi 18). It is significant that his name finds a mention in the college reminiscences of each student contributing testimonies to the Golden Jubilee commemoration volume of the college, and several students offer a considerable amount of space to discussing his personality, contribution to the College, or a memorable episode associated with him. His impact and influence on the students as revealed via their testimonies, as well as those of his colleagues, compound the significance of studying his pedagogic practice.

Idylls of the King by Alfred, Lord Tennyson is a "twelve-book epic" or a cycle of twelve narrative poems to constitute the unified epic of King Arthur and was published in instalments from 1859 to 1885 (Barrow 109). The epic is drawn from "a range of source texts (including Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, French romances, and Celtic folklore)" (Barrow 109). Natalie Clare Smith argues that while the history of English literature is replete with retellings of the Arthurian legend, the "most famous and popular retellings occurred in nineteenth-century England during the Victorian era in England, spanning approximately the length of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901)" (2). She traces this renewed popularity to the period surrounding the first Reform Act in England paralleling with a medieval revival in England instigated by the need to find "arguments in favor of the established structures" by "conservative members of the elite and educated classes" to combat the forces of change (Smith 6). The revival of the Arthurian legend was, thus, connected to the reform movement in England.

When the native idea of nation and nationalism were gaining momentum in the closing decades of the nineteenth century in India, and became a site over which the struggle between the coloniser and the colonised over institutional reform was being played out, the appearance in the curriculum of English Literature of a figure considered an English national

hero, in a poetic form designed to glorify national tradition(s), written by one who is considered the national poet of England, is pertinent.[59]

Smith studies the role of the Arthurian legend in education, by analysing its adaptations in children's literature in an era when elementary education was made mandatory in England. She points out that the revival was for expressly imperial purposes: "[a]s Great Britain simultaneously expanded its empire geographically, the idea of a national identity was imperative for a sense of unity to exist" (8). The myth of Arthur served this purpose in two ways. While history-writing gained currency during this period, Arthur provided an emblematic symbol of this history (Smith 8). Secondly, he served to glorify this history in his heroic figure (Smith 9), consisting in his martial prowess as well as moral force in justifying his dominion. She draws on Barczewski's *Myth and National Identity* to elucidate how such a narrative designed to clarify and validate "a community's past and progress" functions in constitution of a national consciousness: "national history serves a variety of functions in constructing history: by operating under the assumption that the nation has existed forever, it validates its authenticity; by giving a nation a specific "place" for its history, it gives it a specific geographical location to feel connected to; and it highlights heroes from the past in order to suggest a treasured lineage extending to the inhabitants of the nation existing at the time" (Smith 11).

However, the revival of the Arthurian legend, whether in literature or history, was never only about the glorification of the English nation, but also always about the glorification of empire. Smith notes the publication of "*The Expansion of England* in 1883" by "John Robert Seeley, a professor of history at the University of Cambridge…which centered on the justification of British imperialism" (11). This book which "sold 80,000 copies within two years" offered "the possibilities for a celebrated past, lending itself to a glorious future" (Smith 11). Seeley avers that history "should not merely gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present and his forecast of the future" (qtd. in Aldrich 27).

In this sense, I analyse Littledale's *Essays* to understand how the past was reconstituted to modify the present and forecast the future in the context of the colony. Littledale notes that the *Essays* "were written as the basis of a course of lectures to an audience composed of undergraduates in an Indian college" (v). The note on editing reveals the specifically pedagogic purpose of the text: "In issuing these notes for the use of English

[59] See Sherwood 13 for reference to "the national myth of King Arthur".

and American no less than Asiatic students of our great poet, a number of merely verbal and grammatical annotations have been omitted, and some alterations have been made to adapt the work for general use" (v). While Littledale claims to have compiled the notes for English and American students, various editorial and critical comments reveal a propensity to use Indian contexts to explain this very English epic.

He often refers to Orientalist studies in comparative mythology or anthropology to explain elements in the Arthurian realm. He quotes from George W. Cox's *An Introduction to the Science of Comparative Mythology and Folklore* to "to show that the Grail and the Table, in their common property of providing all kinds of delicious food, are both forms of the same "vessel of plenty," which may be traced back to the lotus of Egypt and the Yoni of India" (Littledale 31). In another instance, he compares the old chamberlain in the court of Guinevere's father with "the vizier…in oriental tales" (60). The reference to wolf-suckling children in "The Coming of Arthur" is proclaimed to be a "well-authenticated fact in natural history" based on an episode mentioned in the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, Volume I (Littledale 65). The use of the phrase "stick swine" drawn from line 844 of the idyll "Gareth and Lynette" is identified as the potential etymological source of "the Anglo Indian sporting term 'pig-sticking'" (Littledale 100-1). In discussing the fountain-worship mentioned in "Merlin and Vivien", Littledale conjectures whether the practice still found in Ireland and Brittany with respect to wells, "may…not have originally been a part of the Asiatic serpent - worship? In the Kashmiri language sarp still means a serpent, but någ, the Indian word for a cobra, has come to mean in Kashmiri a fountain-head, the spring where the serpent god dwells; and such någs are holy places" (174). Discussing "The Last Tournament", Littledale instantiates the stories of children being carried off by eagles with a reference to "little Surya Bai in Miss Frere's Old Deccan Days" (258). The picturesque description of blue-bells in the woods in line 387 of Guinevere is compared to a similar sight found in the "the valleys of the inner Himalayas" in the month of May when "the forget-me-nots…cover the mountain-meadows till they seem 'A little sky Gulf'd in a world below'" (284).

Such references may be interpreted as arising out of the editor's location, both, in terms of the time spent in India not only as part of the higher education system, but also as an enthusiast of the flora and fauna of India, as well as his position as a colonial educator perceiving the native surroundings with a peculiar Orientalist gaze structured by the emerging 'knowledge'-production in the domains of mythology, anthropology, philology, etc. However, annotations on terms such as "Robin blossoms" explained as "a red

wildflower…common in English hedgerows" (132), or "*Aloft*, in line 438, is a preposition, governing *face*, and meaning 'over'", seem to indicate that the critical notes are inclined to serve an audience unfamiliar with British surroundings or common linguistic usage, and thus designed primarily for Asian (read Indian) students.

Scholars differ as to whether *Idylls of the King* may be referred to as an epic or not. In a letter to his publishers in America in 1858, referring to the four *Idylls* that he was set to publish, the Poet Laureate Alfred Tennyson himself disavowed such generic description: "I wish that you would disabuse your own minds…that I am about an Epic of King Arthur. I should be crazed to attempt such a thing in the heart of the 19th Century" (qtd. in Tucker 2).

However, Littledale proclaims the work to be an epic, and argues that, though the idylls were published individually and in a different sequence over a long period, when taken together they reveal that the poet always had a comprehensive scheme of an epic in his mind while developing the individual idylls: "But now that the poem has come full circle it is clear to us that from the first the poet had a tangible scheme , a beginning , a middle , and an end , working and shaping itself in his mind . In giving us the Passing of Arthur first, he implied the precedent conception of the epical story" (26). He, then, goes on to suggest that doubts over whether Tennyson's cycle of poems consisted of adequate unity which is the hallmark of the epic genre could be overcome if one views it as possessing "spiritual unity rather than dramatic unity"—a point that will be elaborated upon later in the discussion (Littledale 27). Littledale extends the uniqueness that Tennyson lent to the epic genre by concluding that "the poet has here created a new form, which future ages will probably call the Tennysonian or idyllic epic" (27).

In tracing the trajectory of the Arthurian legend, Littledale establishes it as a British/English epic. Marion Frances Sherwood discusses how the adjectives British versus English in definition of national identity has divided scholars of the Victorian era (8-9). However, they "concur" that in the multiple nations that Great Britain was composed of, "England remained the dominant partner and English the dominant language" (Sherwood 9). Littledale highlights this dominance by placing Tennyson's epic in the tradition of English literature.

That Tennyson's epic is based on Thomas Malory's Middle English Matter of Britain cycle of Arthur termed *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) was an evident fact. However, in his critical notes, Littledale consistently established parallels of Tennyson's linguistic usage, imagery, figures of speech, etc., with well-known poets in the canon of English literature. These references are not merely to the treatment of Arthurian subject matter by writers across

different literary epochs in England for whom "the influence of the Arthurian legends has been persistent and strong" even after the decline of medieval age, but involve comparisons with different oeuvres across genres and subject matter by the various poets in question (Littledale 15).

The maximum number of parallels in the critical commentary are drawn with Shakespeare.[60] The question on Tennyson's genius or originality in reviving a centuries old legend is illustrated by comparison with Shakespeare who "never troubled to invent the plots of his plays , but took old stories and ballads and chronicles, modified them in detail, cut out superfluous matter, and made his dramas to all intents and purposes new works, by imparting life to the dialogue and reality and variety to the characters" (Littledale 10). The parallelism in the imagination of the two authors continues as Littledale compares line 96 of "The Coming of Arthur" where Arthur's eyesight is described as having become "preternaturally acute" in the "hope of winning Guinevere" with "Pericles (V. i.)" where "Shakspere [*sic*] similarly makes the hearing of Pericles become so intensified by joy that he can hear the music of the spheres" (67).

The similarities continue to be traced in character and plot. The character of Sir Dagonet who is the dwarf and court jester in Arthur's court "seems to be modelled on the fools of Shakspere, [*sic*] and like them to have a vein of pathos even deeper than his humour" to Littledale (48). This parallel is bolstered later again in discussing Sir Dagonet's lines "I have had my day. The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind Hath foul'd me — an I wallow'd, then I wash'd" in "The Last Tournament", where Littledale identifies "a true Shaksperian [*sic*] ring in the fool's moralising" (265). The plot of the Gareth and Lynette story is characterised as "Tennysonian Taming of the Shrew" (Littledale 83). The description of Vivien's attire in lines 219-223 of "Merlin and Vivien" is considered to possess a "a Shaksperian [*sic*] directness" (Littledale 180).

Tennyson's debt to Shakespeare is traced right down to linguistic usage. In the discussion of "Gareth and Lynette", Littledale observes: "In line 18, "Heaven yield her for it," we have an Elizabethan expression, as in Shakspere's [*sic*] "the gods yield you for it" (Antony and Cleopatra, IV. ii. 33), that is, reward, or bless you" (85). In the idyll "Geraint and Enid", "[t]he beautiful description of pure and noble women— "those gracious things" (line 635)—directs attention to this use of gracious, frequent in Shakspere, [*sic*] to denote a combination of exquisite physical charm with spiritual dignity and holiness" (Littledale 150).

[60] Spelt as 'Shakspere' in Littledale's text.

Similarly, in “Guinevere”, Littledale finds the use of the term “defeat” in “line 622” to have been “used in its Shaksperian [*sic*] sense of ruin or destruction” (287).

Furthermore, the bard is called upon to aid in interpreting the perspective of Tennyson’s characters. Littledale explains Guinevere’s argument that the reason she was not attracted to Arthur was the latter’s “dead perfection” as: ““Shakspere [*sic*] speaks of “simple truth miscalled simplicity " as one of the disjointed things of this world that make him weary of life: Arthur's simple truth, simplicity as it seems to Guinevere, makes her despise him a moral child without the craft to rule” (209).

Tennyson’s literary indebtedness to other canonical poets of English literature is highlighted throughout the critical notes. Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596) is invoked to contextualize the character of the villainous woman Vivienne: “The poet depicts her as a woman in whom all the worse part of woman's nature has gained the upper hand : a false Duessa , minus some of the allegorical significance of Spenser's temptress” (Littledale 166), and again in comparing the treatment of the word “leavened” by Tennyson and Spenser (Littledale 178). This invocation of Spenser’s epic, thereby, also serves to establish the *Idylls* within the tradition of epic writing in English literature.[61] Similar parallels and comparisons over treatment of subject matter, theme, are drawn with Milton,[62] Keats,[63] and Shelley.[64]

The references to authors that were canonical in the English literature syllabus of the Bombay University is equally significant, allowing an insight into Littledale’s attempt to structure Tennyson as conforming to the existing literary canon, in the understanding of the student. In this way, various devices serve to scaffold the validation and glorification of the English national tradition, as represented both by Arthur symbolizing the ideal political-moral order, as well as by the sociomoral order of the English literary tradition. The reinvention of the chivalric order by Tennyson had the purpose of highlighting the best that existed in the past (Littledale 13). Thus, modernisation is understood, here, not as a rejection of older traditions but a preservation of only its best parts.

The act of curation was in service of what Sherwood has termed the “Fabrication of Englishness” which “was a continuing and specific nineteenth-century concern” (6). While placing Tennyson’s *Idylls* within the English literary tradition and establishing its immutable Englishness, Littledale squarely recognizes Tennyson’s text as representative of Victorian ideas and ideals; as the “new wine of Victorian philosophy into the old bottles of Arthurian

[61] See further examples of references to *The Faerie Queene* in Littledale 183, 189.
[62] See Littledale 190, 278.
[63] See Littledale 168-9, 276.
[64] See Littledale 275.

romance" (11). While the Idylls are likened to the Faerie Queene, in the great tradition of English epic writing, and both epics are dedicated to the reigning Queen, the shift in the feminine model spells the crucial difference. Littledale notes that "relations of poets and sovereigns have changed since the times when Spenser addressed the "High and Mightie Empresse Elizabeth," and sang her praises as Gloriana , Queen of Faërie . Spenser dwells on her power, her splendour, and her beauty; but Queen Victoria's laureate blesses her as including a thousand claims to reverence: a good wife, a good mother, and a good Queen" (54). According to John Plunkett, Queen Victoria was the first media monarch and this domestic image idealized in her "gave royal authority to the mid-nineteenth-century domestic ideology personified by Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House* (1854-63)" (Sherwood 11).

Tennyson saturates his female characters with the binaries of angel versus devil. The character of the Lady of the Lake is "a guardian *angel* of Arthur's realm", while Vivien is "a *woman-devil*, false and pitiless, without a conscience and without a heart, an emissary of Mark's and an ally of Modred's, whose aim and purpose is to sap the purity and troth of Arthur's knighthood" (Littledale 41; emphasis mine). Littledale lingers on Vivien's lines "man dreams of fame while woman wakes to love" to address whether it carries a Byronic idea of a woman erring owing to excess of passion rather than inherent villainy (155). However, he authoritatively dismisses it taking into account the pattern of Tennyson's portrayal of women in the remaining work: "the poet always draws a wide distinction between "those gracious things," true women , and those false women who have forfeited that honoured state of perfect chastity. It is of the latter class that Ettarre and Guinevere are types…" (Littledale 155). In fact, Tennyson's emphasis on purity and chastity is carried to an extent in the character of Elaine that even Littledale finds "needless" after a point (202, 204). In the sequence where Elaine tending to Lancelot after the latter's injury, Tennyson portrays her as returning to the home of her kin every evening and going back to Lancelot every morning. Similarly, the dead body of Elaine is portrayed as carrying a lily—an emblem of purity. Littledale also remarks on how Ettare's refusal of Pelleas' love after accepting a circlet from him is transformed into the *Idylls* to emphasise on "Ettarre's moral culpability" (245).

The emphasis on purity is not only in terms of character but also the tempering of passions. This aspect of Victorian society can be viewed in the idealisation of marriage. Littledale notes in his discussion of "Guinevere" that "[t]he old bard's remarkable prophecy (in lines 295-30) of the dependence for complete success of Arthur's aims upon his finding

"A woman in her womanhood as great/As he was in his manhood," indicates Tennyson's profound sense of the supremacy of man and woman in union" (282).

The idealism of marriage drew in no small part from the respectability it lent to sexuality. Littledale observes that "[w]e may say in general terms that the modern poet omits the preposterous, and the more indelicate, elements of the romance; "the knights and ladies whom he paints are refined, graceful, noble, without roughness, without wild or at all events complex or distracting passions"" (10). It is noteworthy that Littledale here quotes from Justin McCarthy's *A History of our Own Times*[65] highlighting the currency of the history in contemporary readership. An example of sanitization of 'wild passions' is the modification of the character of Modred. While in Thomas Malory's version, he is the son of Arthur and his half-sister, "Tennyson has necessarily rejected this horrible story, both as degrading the character of his "blameless king," and as introducing a motive incapable of *chaste* treatment in a *modern* poem" (Littledale 35; emphasis added). Yet, Littledale's and McCarthy's observations cannot be held as entirely accurate.

While the women are contrasted based on their inherent nature (angelic or devilish/ ideal or loathsome), men are often contrasted based on their position within or outside the frame of reform. An example of this is Tennyson's treatment of the story of Edyrn and Yniol. Yniol is an earl who has taken the possessions of his nephew Edyrn. After Edyrn comes of age and grows in strength, he demands his property back, and on Yniol's refusal, wages war and reclaims his property. The original Welsh source of this story is modified by Tennyson to "Yniol the injured person, and Edyrn the wrongdoer" (Littledale 120). According to Littledale, this injustice to the character of Edyrn is tempered later by the transformation that Edyrn identifies in his own character after becoming a part of Arthur's system which helps him to identify his role as a "traitor" (Tennyson 102). He adds that this modification by Tennyson is "to illustrate the humanising effect of Arthur's system" and that later in the *Idylls*, Edyrn is made to "describe at some length the great *reformation* that has been wrought in him" (Littledale 121; emphasis added).[66] Elsewhere, Arthur's 'system' is described as "Arthur's *reformed chivalry*" towards which Modred harbours "implacable hatred" (Littledale 35; emphasis added).

Herbert Tucker has linked the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 with Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* to suggest that "the coincidence in dates between the Second and Third Reform

[65] Littledale's reference comes from vol. ii, p. 245. This is the same book wherefrom the details of English Parliament in the first section of this chapter are drawn.
[66] See Tennyson 144 where Edyrn is again referred to as "the reformed knight of the sparrow-hawk".

Acts and Idylls published in 1869 and 1885…suggests that Tennyson was rehearsing in epic form nineteenth-century England's constitutional transformation" (Sherwood 8). Barbara Barrow echoes Tucker's idea of the *Idylls* as constituted by the specific socio-political climate of England during its years of composition. At the same time, she extends Catherine Hall's thesis that the Reform Acts in the metropole were shaped by the anxieties surrounding the colonies, to argue that Tennyson's poetry imagines "the metropolitan underclass and the unenfranchised colonies…as necessary outlets for the failures of political reform" (Barrow 94). In doing so, Barrow throws lights on the nature of the difference between the metropole and the colony in the Victorian imagination and the race, class, and gender underpinnings of the exalted Arthurian 'reform'—a metaphor for modern Britain's reformed institutions.

According to Barrow, negligible scholarly attention has been paid to "Tennyson's interest in the growing movement for imperial federation that took shape in the mid- to late-Victorian period," adding that "these debates about the political status of the so-called dependent colonies were crucial in shaping his thinking about the empire during the composition of the *Idylls*" (110). Andrew Lynch avers that "[o]n the face of it, the Arthurian tradition seems a prime example of conservative and pro-colonialist attitudes: a white, Western European and Christian affair, male-dominant, aggressively competitive and acquisitive, and centred on the exploits of a small elite group" (307). However, "association of Arthur with empire, or at least with the claims of right to rule a wide area, goes back to the beginning of the Arthurian tradition" (Lynch 309). Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* "most powerfully" turned the "war leader" Arthur into "*King* Arthur" who "soon received an imperial mission" (Lynch 310). Lynch reasons that Arthur's invasion of various territories can be cast as colonisation as "versions of the Arthurian story…tend to invest the peoples that Arthur subjugates with outlandish, barbarian and alien qualities" (313)—a tendency that can also be viewed in Thomas Malory's version from which Tennyson draws directly (Lynch 314). While several versions of the revival and treatment of the Arthurian legend exist across the European continent with varying emphases on the imperial role (Lynch 314-5), Tennyson's imagination of Arthur is "as "a modern gentleman of stateliest port", clearly an Englishman" (Lynch 317).

What distinguishes Tennyson's treatment of the Arthurian legend is its embeddedness in the various Victorian socio-scientific and political narratives. According to Barrow, Tennyson's outlook was rooted in the ongoing developments in the fields of evolutionary biology, ethnography, anthropology, and comparative philology. Rather, the development of these disciplines was interlinked as the "institutional ascendancy" of the former three

"ignited…speculations about man's linguistic past", on one hand (Barrow 111); while one of the most impactful texts on the subject during the period—Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was shaped by the author's keen interest in philological research (Barrow 112). For Darwin, evolution of man and evolution of language were nearly perfectly aligned (Barrow 111-2). Thus, the idea of evolution came to be attached with race, and language came to be employed to mark the difference between "the primitive and the civilized" (Barrow 111). The perspectives on the degree to which language of the primitive and civilized differed was debated. Darwin argued for a higher fluidity between man and beast in terms of use of systems of communication (Barrow 112), while Max Müller argued for "language as the definitive boundary between man and beast" (Barrow 113). Describing language as the ""never-ending autobiography" of a uniquely rational mankind", Müller found that the "infinitely creative" and "free" nature of "earliest primeval languages" reflected the presence of "egalitarian, aboriginal utopias" when "human communality [was] free from the restrictive social divisions of modernity" (Barrow 113-4). Such characterisation of primeval forms of social organisation allowed a structural linkage with the 'pre-modern' state of the colonies, contributing to the movement "for imperial federation that began in the 1870s and reached its peak in the 1880-1890s, when the Imperial Federation League campaigned to present various schemes for a united empire with some form of political representation for the colonies" (Barrow 110). In Barrow's view, Tennyson used the distinction between primitive or beastly and civilized language to distinguish between the characters outside and within the Arthurian system, respectively. In doing so, Tennyson represents the political solution proposed by the imperial federation movement that was "[c]onscious of the inequality that persisted in spite of liberal reform measures and yet wary of revolutionary outbreak in any form" (Barrow 114). Tennyson "looks to colonial territories as fantasy primal spaces that offer forms of expression and democratic participation denied to Arthur's knights, servants, and women" (Barrow 114) and thus tests the possibility of offering democracy to those whom the principles of institutional reform of British nation did not allow accommodation into the expanding political franchise.

However, Barrow observes, that while the testing of "the barbaric outside" is hazarded, the "ideals of democracy" are "reincorporated into a *reformed* liberal state" in the concluding verses (Barrow 114; emphasis added). Catherine Hall has pointed out how the Reform Act of 1867 structured the social questions of England by responding to the Fenian

uprising, the Hyde Park incident, and others.[67] However, in allowing partial/marginal independence to the colonies of Australia and Canada, the same are denied to the Indian and Caribbean colonies as they are not 'white'. Thus, while the marginalisation of the working classes and the colonial Others is viewed as aligned in their exclusion from England's view of political reform, Hall's observation highlights that the question of class was overridden by the question of race in hierarchising the eligible recipients of political liberalism.

In the political context of late nineteenth century India, the Holy Grail of the Arthurian realm becomes an allegory of the right to (self) rule around which struggles between the colonisers and the natives increasingly converged. Littledale characterises the quest for the Grail by Arthur's knights as "but the untimely madness of an hour—it gives but a temporary check to the disintegrating forces of lust and ambition" (207). As seen in the previous chapter, power machinations on the part of the natives came to be cast as *corruption* in the secular colonial vocabulary; the same idea which in the Arthurian realm founded on a Christian moral order comes to be defined in terms of the sin of covetousness—'lust and ambition'. Thereby, such "thoughts of evil" do not affect Arthur's knights as long as they are engaged in the "work of consolidating Arthur's kingdom"—a veritable allegory of the section of natives often viewed as the collaborationists in postcolonial scholarship (Littledale 206).

However, the 'taint' begins to spread in Arthur's kingdom with the moral turpitude of the queen Guinevere. The figure of Guinevere often emerges as a metonym for the colony in a postcolonial reading of the text. In context of the defence of colonisation as the White Man's Burden—a providential responsibility placed on a race towards the cause of establishing a civilizational and moral order in the entire world, Littledale's observation about Arthur and Guinevere's equation that "Guinevere fills his thoughts wholly, and he feels that she is essential to the fulfilment of his dreams of social regeneration" assumes a different significance (60). Louise D'Arcens arrives at a similar reading of Guinevere in her analysis of Reverend John Woolley's lectures on Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* delivered at the Australian colony of Sydney in the 1860s: "Guinevere "represent[s] the jaded, directionless colonial subject who succumbs to the 'temptation to indolence or sensuality' that is the colony's greatest pitfall" (qtd. in Lynch 318). However, for Woolley, this reading serves as a "critique of the mercantilism and utilitarianism underpinning the colonial project" (D'Arcens

[67] See Catherine Hall, "The nation within and without." Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867, edited by Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 179-233.

238), so that "their marital failure points to the potential failure of a colonial community in which the administrative reins are held too narrowly" (qtd. in Lynch 318).

However, Littledale continues to hold the moral taint responsible for the disintegration of Arthur's kingdom, by contrasting it with Arthur who is "a moral child without the craft to rule" in Guinevere's eyes (209). Thus, Arthur represents moral perfection without even a hint of intrigue implying that "Arthur would not have lost her if he had had that touch of earth, the craft to rule her, instead of trusting her to steer a straight course by herself" (Littledale 209). Thus, Arthur's Others are morally inept to 'steer a straight course' by themselves. Thus, the colonial ideologies of race and gender reinforce each other. The colony is incapable of self-governance because it is inherently morally inept as per the ideology of race which cast the colonised as weak and given to corruption; this moral ineptness is owing to the colonised being effete, weaker than the masculine coloniser, and therefore incapable of achieving the same moral strength as him.

The ideologies of race and gender align with the ideology of age in deeming the knights' "unorganised attempt" at fulfilling the quest of the Holy Grail as "doomed to failure" because "the time is not ripe for it, seeing that but few of the knights have even yet reached the lower preliminary plane of perfect manhood. And failure in this means failure in all, for the supreme task having been found impossible, despair must follow the discovery, and utter moral weakness will be the result" (Littledale 217-8). On the other hand, it undoes the moral progress of the past: "This madness of an hour is destructive of the moral growth that has preceded it" (Littledale 218). In "The Passing of Arthur", Arthur's lament confirms this return to depravity: "Arthur has hoped to work God's will upon earth, but he has striven vainly; all those whom he has trusted have proved false to him, and the realm that he has raised is lapsing into barbarism again" (298).

Undertaking an education to understand the ideas of this enlightened culture was not enough until it engendered appropriate subjecthood, as reflected in Arthur's anger at Sir Gawain for "deeming our courtesy is the truest law", which is corrected by Arthur as "the vow of obedience is the one true law, the true truth for a knight to follow" (Littledale 213). The distinction between Arthur and Merlin in rationalising Vivien's sway over Merlin but not Arthur in "Merlin and Vivien" bolsters this thesis: "though she fails to move Arthur, the *man of moral force*, she succeeds in attracting the notice of Merlin, the *man of intellectual power*" (179; emphasis added).

The basis of Arthur's reformed chivalry is a moral code. This is not automatically shared by acquiring knighthood in his court, but only by passing through the necessary

stages: “The achieving of the quest of the Holy Grail is the highest deed that the Arthurian knights can attempt, and it is part of Arthur's scheme of gradually evolved progress that this spiritual task shall not be undertaken before his followers have risen through the indispensable preliminary grades of social order and moral perfection. When these degrees of development have been passed, and not until then, the quest of holiness will be ripe for achievement” (Littledale 217). Thus, socio-moral reform is a necessary prelude to gaining the power to be at par with Arthur and achieve the Grail quest.

For Littledale, Tennyson’s contribution to the Arthurian legend is that his poem has been “imbued with a moral significance fitted to the aspirations of our own days” (10).[68] For Littledale, “in their literal sense, the Idylls…tell of “the momentary likeness to the king” that inspired the knights, and of their subsequent falling away from aims too pure and spiritual for them to live up to” (52). However, in saying so, Littledale highlights that the failure of Arthur’s *system* is not due to Arthur but due to the *lack of fitness* of the knights to be able to shoulder the lofty system albeit trained in the Arthurian realm; for being “radically unfit to rule”—an argument necessary to justify rule over foreign territory (Lynch 314). However, while the same argument is harnessed in the early nineteenth century to justify colonisation and introduce its civilizational ideals in the native society through reform and education, here, the argument forms a cache 22 where the discretion to decide the *fitness* of the native to independently govern modern institutions is exclusively retained by the coloniser for being always-already morally superior to the colonised.

This is what makes Tennyson’s Arthur a Victorian poem discursively configured with colonial anxieties and aspirations with emerging nationalist consciousness in the late nineteenth century. The battle for power and precedence between the knights is relocated from the martial to the moral domain. In the dedication to the Queen, Tennyson avers that the poem depicts a war between the Sense and the Soul, where two sensory sins take precedence over others for the conquest of the soul—“lusts, fleshly desire…and lawless power”(Littledale 55)—the two qualities inherent to the ‘barbaric races’ that continue to lie outside the pale of Arthur’s reform as represented by their language.

Even after their incorporation in Arthur’s system and indoctrination with Arthurian ideals, their morality continues to be ‘almost, but not quite’ like Arthur’s. They inhabit a paradoxical space typified in the nature of Arthur’ ideal kingdom in the interpretation of Elsdale that Littledale quotes: “The city is built to music; for as the harmony and proportion

[68] See Littledale 206, for how Tennyson has “grafted” what Littledale calls “the moral under-plot…upon the old legends”.

of sound constitute music, so the harmony and proportion of all the various elements and powers which go to make up the man will constitute a fitting shrine for the ideal soul. 'Therefore never built at all'; for the process of assimilating and working up into one harmonious whole all the various external elements is continually going on and unending" (88). The logic of morality as a perennial work-in-progress is reinforced in the image of Arthur as having "leavened the world", that is, "spiritualised it by changing its nature in a noble direction" (Littledale 178). Thus, while Arthurian morality spreads incrementally, it can never be possessed in the same proportion as Arthur. As a result, fitness for the Grail quest is precluded by the very structure of Arthur's moral code.

Hence, while the knights must pass the stages of socio-moral perfection before attempting the quest of the Holy Grail, the moral perfection can paradoxically never be achieved by Arthur's knights symbolised by the structure of his ideal kingdom whose harmony can never reach perfection owing to the very nature of morality which must be continually cultivated and developed: "Every generation has to build its own spiritual city for itself—the music has to be kept up by those who come next—and so on: therefore it has continuity, for men are ever building; yet it is not a permanent structure, but depends on the renewed efforts of generation after generation" (Littledale 89). Further, the 'ripeness for achievement' is to not be asserted, but humbly awaited, as highlighted in the lesson Percivale learns through his conflicts with early pleasures: "the Grạil alone—spiritual purity—was worth the seeking, and *humility* was of all things the *needfulest* in the search" (Littledale 229; emphasis added).

Characters such as Guinevere, Merlin, Vivien, and Tristram form a foil to Arthur's idealistic outlook of exalted morality as illustrated in the metaphor of the ptarmigan—the bird that changes the colour of its plumage to white during winter to camouflage with its surroundings. This white is taken as a metaphor for moral purity by Tristram to suggest that if we try prematurely to become whiter than our surroundings, the rest of mankind, our ruin must follow. We cannot change into ""men with budding wings" until the rest of the world is ready to become angelic also" (Littledale 271).

Yet, the *Idylls* do not represent the conflict between moral and practical outlooks of the world and the victory of one over the other. They are rather a moral tragedy. Arthur's antagonists do not emerge victorious; rather the entire realm crumbles following the

breakdown of the moral system.[69] This is what Littledale refers to as "the moral scheme of the epic", to uphold which, Tennyson changes the order of appearance of the character of Pelleas, as well as adds "his meeting with Percivale, and his frantic outspokenness to Guinevere and Lancelot" (Littledale 246). The crumbling of the empire begins with the moral 'taint' of Guinevere that gradually spreads out: "ideal reverence for Guinevere at first possesses Balin wholly; and the moral tragedy of the Idyll lies in the shattering of this image in his heart" (Littledale 163). Morality as the structuring principle also differentiates, for Littledale, the scene of Dalila appearing before Samson in Milton's drama, from the parting scene of Arthur and Guinevere in the eponymous idyll. Littledale argues that "Tennyson is here impersonal and dramatic in the highest degree—Arthur's anger is not so much against the woman's weakness and folly as against the mischief she has wrought by it, for she has spoiled the purpose of his life" (278).

Thus, the tragedy is less a question of personal moral transgression, but more about the consequences of it for the larger structural stability of Arthur's empire. Personal transgression—in other words, an individual stepping outside his/her *given role* causes an imbalance and consequent toppling of the structure. This is where the characterisation of Arthur's realm in terms of 'spiritual harmony' assumes a new significance. Harmony can only be retained when every element maintains its position in the structural hierarchy, as scaffolded by Littledale: "The spiritual harmony that Arthur aims at establishing is expressed in the words in line 74, repeated in line 208—"And move To music with thine Order and the King."" (161). It is equally pertinent that this line occurs in the idyll "Balin and Balan".

Littledale observes that the "essential basis of Arthur's moral system is the supremacy of truth" (160). It is the truth of the unfitness of the knights' eligibility to undertake the Grail quest that they realise on attempting it: "Arthur bade them attempt it, though he foreknew that their endeavour would be in vain. The pity of it was that, while they followed this ignis fatuus, many practicable opportunities of doing good would arise and be neglected, there being no knights left for such work" (Littledale 228). Yet, Littledale argues, that the goal of moral perfection can no longer be pursued by a return to the reclusive asceticism that animates Arthur's medieval era; rather "the true antithesis of asceticism is not pagan hedonism, but the modern industrial spirit" (167).

He supports or perhaps draws his argument from W.E.H. Lecky who compiled histories of rationalism in Europe during the 1860s and 1870s, who views human opinion as

[69] See Littledale 256: "The main object of the poem is to continue the exposition of the decline that is taking place in the spirit of chivalry amongst both the knights and the dames of Arthur's court."

divided along the binaries of asceticism and industrialism producing the most thoroughgoing moral and intellectual philosophies adding that "[t]he first, giving a greater intensity to the emotions, produces the most devoted men; the second, regulating the combined action of society, produces the highest social level. The first has proved most congenial to the Asiatic and Egyptian civilisations; and the second to the civilisation of Europe" (qtd. in Littledale 168). Littledale extends this division to suggest: "May we not add that the first best suited mediæval circumstances, as the second best suits the conditions of modern European life?" (168). Thus, he parallels the Asiatic civilisations with medievalism, while also casting it as an antonym to modernity.

Littledale, thus, effectively *edits* medievalism for his audience—while its values are eulogized, its practices must be adapted for the contemporary modern world, so that a breakdown of the ideal regime does not occur as it does for Arthur.[70] This impasse between idealism and practice is resolved by proposing a 'practical morality'.

Asceticism as an answer to the assault of the Sense(s) over the Soul is bound to fail because "the passions, no less than the intellectual powers and the spiritual yearnings of mankind, must be taken into account in ideal schemes for the regeneration of the world" (Littledale 295). The modern industrial spirit that emerged with the rise of rationalism in Europe offers a foil to it, allowing a counter to asceticism not with "pagan hedonism" but with supremacy of reason in the individual that allowed a rational consideration of the proportion of passions that may be allowed to prevail on the soul. Thus, passions are allowed to factor into the moral system, as opposed to their rejection in the medieval monastic-ascetic system. Yet, it is not the war between the Sense and the Soul—the central spiritual conflict of the epic—that plays the most crucial role in expounding this practical morality, for Littledale. He avers that "the moral lessons of the Idylls must come from their noble song of heroic aspiration and tragic failure, from their representation of the Nemesis that overtakes the sinner", as this would create "a pathetic impression" on the reader (Littledale 296). The pathetic impression that mourns the disruption of Arthur's progress towards perfection would uphold the idea that in the Grail is "once more the higher life symbolised" and concede that "few there be that find it. There is an awful discipline needful…such quests are only for the few; little men must be content to sit by little fires; even Arthur himself, the ordinary noble soul, cannot undertake the Grail at all times—he has a lowlier human task to first fulfil" (Littledale 293). This is how "[i]f art is to teach practical morality…it must do so by

[70] See Littledale 294, for his insistence that the *Idylls* must be read as an allegory although it is not very explicit.

unconscious example instead of by pretentious precept; it must purify the heart by pathetic impression, rather than by didactic interpretation" (Littledale 296).

It is pertinent that Littledale's parting advice to students in the last line of his critical analysis encourages the students to allow the poem to make a 'pathetic impression' on their 'heart', rather than going entirely by his 'didactic interpretation': "we must read poetry, not for the sake of the particles of literary dust that adhere to it, but for its own sake, and for the poet's sake, sincerely and sympathetically. Only by doing so can we really *bring our own small hearts into contact with the large heart of the poet*" (308; emphasis mine). The structural congruence between Arthur's realm as an imperial federation, and the metaphor of many 'small hearts' connecting to one 'large heart' is evident.

Further, the pathos that must impress the heart of the reader are not lofty ideals structured with enlightenment humanism as much as they are saturated with Christian morality. Littledale avers that it is the *Idylls* of 1870 where the spiritual allegory intended in Arthur's story by Tennyson becomes most evident as "a struggle of the Christian Spirit hindered by the Flesh, and by the environment of a naughty world" (291). He, further, observes how Tennyson consistently minimises elements of the supernatural from Arthur's story to make it more congruous "with solemn Christian mysteries" (70), and how the Siege Perilous symbolised "temptations of "sense." for Tennyson (224). The character of Modred who nurses an "implacable hatred of Arthur's reformed chivalry" is turned by Tennyson from the son of Arthur from his half-sister to an inherently satanic character (Littledale 35-6), reminiscent of the racial profiling of the colonised that identified certain qualities as inherent to certain pagan races, here structurally associated with inherent satanism.

Further overlaps with the dominant colonial discourse occur when Littledale describes Arthur's departure from the world for the latter being "unripe for regeneration" (218)—a phrase that could easily be replaced in the discourse that adjudged the Asian colonies as unripe for self-rule. At the same time, this departure of Arthur occurs after the failure of the quest for the Holy Grail, thus casting Arthur into a Christlike figure who departs from a world that is yet not ready for salvation. Thus, not only by the structural similarities between the trajectories of Arthur and Christ, but also by casting Arthur's story into a religious/mythical time punctuated by divine events, Tennyson reinforces the providential argument supporting both the white man's burden and his role in salvation of the colonised couched in the idea of (moral/spiritual) reform—an insight buttressed by the description of Christ as "the spiritual reformer" in paralleling His figure with Arthur's (Littledale 295).

Idylls of the King and its interpretation by Littledale form a distinct instance of the function of the English curriculum in constitution of hegemony, and the mapping of colonial ideological aspirations in its biases, as the studies of Gauri Viswanathan and Alok K. Mukherjee have usefully argued. It also foregrounds the role of language and symbolism in the constitution of a specific sociopolitical imaginary offering a key point of understanding the imbrication of the English curriculum in higher education in the larger debates on power and identity occurring in the colony.

Aurobindo Ghose: Teaching English and the Resistance to Reform

In the same year that Littledale published his notes on the Arthurian epic, there arrived in India a professor of English who would succeed Littledale and challenge the latter's casting of providential time through his alternative vision of national reawakening.

Aravind Acroyd Ghose or Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), the Indian philosopher, spiritual seer, and nationalist, completed his Classical Tripos at the Cambridge University in 1892, and having been disqualified from the Indian Civil Services (I.C.S.) by missing a riding test, received an appointment in the Baroda Service from Sayajirao Gaekwad III who was, then, visiting London (Aurobindo, *Autobiographical Notes* 19-20, 31, 34). He arrived in the Baroda state in February 1893 and remained there until March 1906, serving various positions beginning with the Settlement Department, followed by the Revenue Department, the Secretariat, and finally, the Baroda College. He served at the Baroda College from 1898 to 1906, initially as a lecturer for French, and later as a full-time professor for English.[71] In 1904, he became the Vice-Principal of the College, and also served as the Acting Principal for a brief period.

While Littledale's approach to the Victorian epic that appealed to Arthur's perfect sense of justice was couched in his moral idealism, the largest organised body representing Indian nationalism in the political arena—the Indian National Congress (INC), appealed to this ideal English justice typified in Arthur, in their endeavours for institutional reform. On the other hand, in the same year as Littledale's publication, Aurobindo's scathing criticism of the INC's moderate reformist approach titled *New Lamps for Old* began to be serialised in the Anglo-Marathi periodical *Indu Prakash* in nine parts from 7th August 1893 to 6th March 1894 (*Bande Mataram* 5).

[71] There is some debate with respect to the years Aurobindo spent at the Baroda College. A note in the edited volume of his collected works suggests that Aurobindo served in the administration department, also acting as the Huzur Kamdar, in the interim period between 1901 and 1904 (*Autobiographical Notes* 572, 574). However, Aurobindo himself denies ever having formally served in a secretarial capacity to the Gaekwad and describes his tenure at the College as professor of English as "uninterrupted" (*Autobiographical Notes* 40).

In this series of articles, Aurobindo views the contemporary position of the Congress as a case of "the blind lead[ing] the blind" (*Bande Mataram* 11). He observes that while the early days of the Congress were marked by "a little too much talk about the blessings of British rule, and the inscrutable Providence which has laid us in the maternal, or more properly the step-maternal bosom of just and benevolent England" as well as a "general timidity of the Congress…its fear of too deeply displeasing our masters", these faults did not fade but only became more firmly rooted with time, as what was initially a tendency, later grew into a policy (*Bande Mataram* 14-15). While he lauds the organisation for generating considerable sympathy among diverse classes, he disagrees that the body had played any role in making these classes act together; rather, it had only been able to permeate the middle-class and not the masses (*Bande Mataram* 17). For the same reason, he reasons that the Congress could not be termed "national" (*Bande Mataram* 22). He critiques the Congress' definition of national represented in the views of its president Pherozshah Mehta, and Manmohan Ghose, who believed that the body represented "the thinking portion of the Indian people" who were "educated and enlightened" to shoulder the duty of both identifying the grievances of the masses and suggesting modes of redressal (*Bande Mataram* 22-3). He argues that although some chose to accept this definition, the Congress was certainly not a "popular" body and, more importantly, nor was it attempting to become one (*Bande Mataram* 23).

Thus, in the first three parts itself, Aurobindo attacks three characteristics of the Congress—its reformist approach, its bias towards the 'educated', and an absence of proclivity to be 'national' in an authentic manner. As observed earlier, in the discussion on the career of reform in the closing quarter of nineteenth century in Gujarat, the three variables were not separate traits but were generated and reinforced by each other. The structuring of education within the discursive framework of reform, hampered the ability of the intellectuals to build a strong national discourse in two ways—first, by depoliticising nationalistic inclinations (as observed in Narmad), and by increasing the class/linguistic divide (as observed by Naregal).

Aurobindo criticises how so-called nationalist efforts were inscribed with the reformist approach of moderation, temperance, and ultimate faith in British institutions on one hand, as well as orthodox reinvention of tradition to revive a national past that undoubtedly drew on European ideas of nationalism and progress largely generated from the same English education, on the other.

In many ways, criticism of English education is at the centre of Aurobindo's diagnosis of the problem as well as the solution. In criticising the inability of the Congress leadership in assessing its own faults, he refers to them as "intellects trained at our Universities and in the liberal professions" (*Bande Mataram* 16). This indirect attack on the inadequacy of education delivered in the Indian universities becomes more direct when he describes Pherozeshah Mehta and Manmohan Ghose's idea of 'thinking people' who represent the masses as "those of us who have got *some little idea* of the machinery of English politics and are eager to import it into India along with cheap Liverpool cloths, shoddy Brummagem wares, and other useful and necessary things which have killed the fine and genuine textures" (*Bande Mataram* 24; emphasis added).

Aurobindo elaborates on the absurdity of the English assumption that its 'machinery' would suit every place, climate, and people, for he is conscious of "addressing minds formed by purely English influences and therefore capable of admitting the rooted English prejudice that what is logically absurd, may be practically true" (*Bande Mataram* 35). The most significant handicap of this English-educated 'thinking' class, for Aurobindo, is their dependence on "the English model" and appeal to "the British sense of justice (*Bande Mataram* 24, 19). Thus, Aurobindo's analysis of Indian politics and intelligentsia acknowledged the reification of the English sense of reform in (colonial) English education—a reification evidenced in and promoted by the syllabus of English in a representative text like Tennyson's *Idylls*, as discussed earlier.

Sumita Mukherjee has argued that the Indian students who pursued education in Britain were exposed to British people, ideas, institutions, and contemporary politics in the West and other British colonies and thus, possessed "greater agency in agreeing with or criticising the British than those who were in India" (89). The impact of this experience on early nationalism and development of their political identities was observable (S. Mukherjee 89-92). Aurobindo was also briefly part of the student society called the Cambridge Majlis or Indian Majlis at Cambridge, where many of these students participated in political discussions (*Autobiographical Notes* 32; S. Mukherjee 84). Aurobindo was sent to England at the age of seven to receive a complete training not only in English education but also its society and culture. Thus, longer exposure to British intellectual and political climate could have a role in the development of his nationalism. In spite of an anglicised upbringing, he developed strong ideas against British colonisation of India. In fact, it has been suggested that the "revolutionary speeches" that he delivered at the Majlis played a role in his disqualification from the I.C.S. (*Autobiographical Notes* 32, 68). At Cambridge, he had

written a piece titled "India and the British Parliament" which was later published in the *Indu Prakash* on 26th June 1893, where he criticised the Press for exaggerating ineffectual changes like Simultaneous Examinations for the civil services as major victories for India in the British House of Commons (*Bande Mataram* 5-10).[72] Nandy considers Aurobindo's time at the Indian Majlis as "his break with the West" (90). He acknowledges the period of Baroda as the location where "he first found out his spiritual powers" (Nandy 91), that would feed into his "universal response to the splits which colonialism induced" (Nandy 85). Nandy argues that Aurobindo's agonistic encounter with the West in early life generated his disenchantment with the values that the western culture represented. His withdrawal into the spiritual domain, thus, also constituted an action "to protect values which he would have had to give up in the light of conventional reason" (Nandy 97). Thus, Nandy presents Aurobindo as an example of "the uncolonized mind" (64). In the subsequent discussion, I consider how his early engagement with Indian culture and politics in the context of Baroda indicated and shaped his ability to step aside from the colonial logic and the interconnection of this process with the question of reform.

I argue that Aurobindo's placement in Baroda—that was not only a native state but offered a conducive climate to challenge British hegemony owing to the specific figure of Sayajirao Gaekwad III, encouraged the development of his political philosophy and activity, and generated an impact on the higher education institution of the state—Baroda College. Although his formal appointment at the institution did not occur until 1898, there is evidence of the impact of his ideas through participation in the institution's activities. Mr. N.K. Dikshit, who served in the Educational Department of the Baroda state in various capacities, and studied at the Baroda College from 1895 to 1900, mentions that even before being appointed a lecturer, Aurobindo Ghose and his friend from Cambridge days and colleague in the Baroda service—K.G. Deshpande, who were friends of Prof. Tapidas Naik at the College, used to attend "the Debating Society's meetings", and on the rare occasion that they addressed the meeting, it was "an intellectual feast" for the students (Trivedi 42).

It is, thus, important to investigate his intellectual and political position as enunciated during his tenure in the Baroda state, in order to evaluate his role in challenging the dominant discourse of English studies in the region.

[72] It was a friend Aurobindo made at Cambridge—Keshavrao Ganesh Deshpande (1869-1939) who was an editor of the English edition of the *Indu Prakash* and urged Aurobindo to publish his views in the periodical ("Deshpande/Keshavrao/K.G. Deshpande").

The first point at which Aurobindo positioned himself against the nationalism represented by the Congress was in the unapologetic and unembellished characterisation of the English. Notably, his vocabulary is a direct attack on the two chief ideas enshrined and eulogised in the figure of Arthur representing Englishness in Tennyson's Victorian epic:

> The English are not, as they are fond of representing themselves, a people panting to do justice to all whom they have to govern. They are *not an incarnation of justice, neither are they an embodiment of morality*; but of all nations they are the most sentimental: hence it is that they like to think themselves, and to be thought by others, a just people and a moral people. (*Bande Mataram* 8; emphasis added).

He ridicules the native tendency to vilify "Anglo-Indians" by which Aurobindo means the British colonial officials in India (*Bande Mataram* 18). He finds it to be originating from a disproportionate value attached to people who possessed "narrow hearts and commercial habit of mind" (*Bande Mataram* 19).

Issuing out of the first drawback of undue veneration of the English, is the second point where Aurobindo differs, which is the veneration of English institutions, and the boons issuing out of them—specifically, the Civil Services. He criticises the demand for more and better posts in the colonial civil and state services being viewed as the panacea that would resolve "the Indian question" (*Bande Mataram* 18), as well as the perception of the Anglo-Indians belonging to the Civilian Order of Britain as "demigods" (*Bande Mataram* 58). The boon deriving from English institutions that was more intangible and yet more ingrained in the Indian perception that Aurobindo attacks, is the English sense of justice. He mocks the Congress strategy of 'prayer and petition' to attain political-institutional reform by mocking it as "*a grand suit-at-law*, best described as the case of India *vs.* Anglo-India, in which the ultimate tribunal is *the British sense of justice,* and Pherozshah Mehta, Mr. Umesh Chandra Bonnerji and the other eminent leaders of the bar are counsel for the complainant" (*Bande Mataram* 26; emphasis added).

In doing so, he lays bare the section of the society that the social and ideological bases of the Congress issued from—the class with access to colonial English education and the modern professions, and thereby, interpellated by the European discourse of progress and modernity to be instrumentalised through reform.

The first chapter explored how the idea of reform in England was developed as the converse of revolt. Aurobindo challenged the existing class bias of nationalism represented by the Congress by positioning himself in favour of revolt. He undertakes this by a comparative discussion of various Western nations, but primarily by creating a binary

opposition between England (representative of reform), and France (representative of revolt). At the same time, this comparison emerges out of his criticism of the Congress approach that claims to take its cue from lessons of History. He argues that, given their background, the spokespersons of Congress seem to have studied only the history of England, which leads him "to inquire if high education is after all of any use" (*Bande Mataram* 28).

Citing the example of France and England, Aurobindo argues that, when one looks at history, attainment of progress by slow-moving gradual stages undertaken by the educated and enlightened representatives of the masses is not specific to all nations (*Bande Mataram* 28-9). Further, he not only presents other examples of routes to progress, but questions whether England represents the ideal, whether it is a "desirable exemplar for every nation aspiring to progress, or even for its peculiar pupil, renascent India" (*Bande Mataram* 30).

Aurobindo finds England and France representative of the "two principles" along which European progress has proceeded (*Bande Mataram* 33). England represents progress through political attainments generating an "exaggerated emphasis" on institutions, especially the institution of the parliament (*Bande Mataram* 34). Owing to the focus on institutional attainments, the nature of its progress has remained confined to the fulfilment of immediate wants of the institution(s), resulting in a myopia that fails to detect anything beyond "the visible and material" (ibid.). This emphasis on the material stimulates the complete focus on "mechanical invention", while that on the visible constitutes an inability to move beyond their own experience and a tendency to generalise/universalise it (*Bande Mataram* 35).

Aurobindo uses the metaphor of textile manufacture to make his case which reveals his thoughts were embedded in the contemporary anti-colonial discourse dominated by the question of native economic drain wherein cloth manufacture was a significant concern. In a move that hits at the foundation of the figure of the enlightened English—the dominance of 'reason', Aurobindo views their tendency towards universalisation of the English model as 'irrational', for assuming that if the machinery was good, the quality of the product it manufactures would be the same irrespective of the nature or quality of the raw material (*Bande Mataram* 35-6). Here, the machinery is a metaphor for English (political) institutions, and the raw material for the national-social characteristics of the people for whom the institutions are built.

Aurobindo's analysis conveys a careful negotiation of the racial-national profiling of different colonised peoples by the British, to make a case for cultural relativism. He supports the argument that Indians possessed a different "national temperament" compared to the British or other nations, and thereby, British institutions or ideals could not be

unproblematically imported and adopted in the native society (*Bande Mataram* 35). (The reverberations of Sayajirao III comments on need to adapt reform at the National Social Conference are evident.) Aurobindo, here, makes a keen comment about the warping of English concepts and ideals when (re)located within the colonial discourse.

He concludes his remarks on the English by another attack on a foundational English ideal—progress. He sums up his analysis of the march of English progress exemplified by "high appraisal of sound machinery in preference to a scientific social development" (*Bande Mataram* 36). He contrasts the English with the French whose progress was "towards a social and not a political development" owing to possessing a higher capacity for thought than the "insular" English (*Bande Mataram* 36). He concedes that French political institutions have been adaptations of English but does not find them affecting the nature of progress represented by the French, as "the best blood, the highest thought, the real grandeur of the nation… in the great vehement heart of the French populace" (*Bande Mataram* 36). Its focus on the development of "a sound and highly-wrought social temper" had led France to be adjudged "the happiest, and, taken in the mass, the most civilized of modern countries" (*Bande Mataram* 37-8). As both English and Americans considered traits such as "intellect" and "happiness" to be "luxuries rather than necessities", they focused on the "grosser sphere of commerce and politics" (*Bande Mataram* 38).

Thus, Aurobindo pronounces the French mode of progress more abiding and successful compared to the English or American modes, and argues that Indians as a race were "more nearly allied to the French and Athenian than to the Anglo-Saxon", and thereby, should "purchase an outfit of political ideas properly adjusted to our natural temper and urgent requirements" (*Bande Mataram* 38). He urges Indians not to settle for "threadbare leavings of our English Masters" merely owing to the historical "accident" of British colonisation of India (*Bande Mataram* 38).

Aurobindo finds the French model more amenable for India, owing to the nature of the former's progress, as well as the speed at which it was achieved. Aurobindo describes English progress as glacial rather than torrential and believes India cannot afford the English rate of progress primarily owing to the rapid economic drain accompanying British domination (*Bande Mataram* 28). Finally, he lauds the French revolutionary model for drawing on the participation of the masses rather than a single class or cluster of classes.

He admits the failures of the French in terms of political development, he argues that they possessed originality, while the Indians in importing English political institutions in an unqualified manner instead of "originat[ing] a really effective instrument" invited "a more

disastrous failure" (*Bande Mataram* 48) owing to the "impoverished" state of the "national character" (*Bande Mataram* 39). Besides, while even "an excellent machine" could not "renovate" such a character, the Indians had chosen a machine based "on a rude and cheap model" to undertake the task of national revival (*Bande Mataram* 39).

Thus, originality looms large in Aurobindo's idea of social regeneration for national progress. However, this idea of originality was not orthodox and revivalist in its outlook. He admitted that while influx of "Occidental ideas, methods and culture" was necessary, it must be undertaken using a "judicious, discriminating" approach, to ensure a positive influence rather than an unwitting import of the "the vices and calamities of the West" (*Bande Mataram* 46-7).

It was this fundamental need felt for originality on which national progress—whether social or political—could be based, which framed Aurobindo's views on national education. It is likely that the thoughts on originality may be partly influenced by English Romanticism, as indicated by his notes on Augustan poetry that seem to be prepared for the students at Baroda College. The notes seem to have been drafted in the form of answers to potential examination questions.[73] He refers to the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley as "ordinary poetry" against which Augustan poetry is compared (*Early Cultural Writings* 126). Aurobindo writes that although the "commonplace" could be a justified subject of poetry, it must be "expressed in new and brilliant language, and this should be done by means of true wit. That is to say, while false ingenuity should be avoided, *true ingenuity* should be the rule of poetry"—a trait wanting in Augustan poetry (*Early Cultural Writings* 130; emphasis added). He criticises the excessive binding of poetic expression by rules among the Augustans, to aver that "variation of cadences is a matter not for rules, but for *individual genius* to work out" (*Early Cultural Writings* 132; emphasis added). The summing up of Aurobindo's critique of Augustan and Romantic poetry points to his nascent ideas of nationalism that would later develop into a full-fledged strategy of resistance to colonial rule: "a rational & intellectual rather than imaginative & emotional spirit; a restriction to town society and town life, and inability to deal with rural life, with Nature, with passion or with the supernatural;…a dislike of originality and prevalence of merely obvious ideas and sentiments;" (*Early Cultural Writings* 133).

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[73] The specific question to which the discussion on Augustan and Romantic poetry is addressed is: "*What is meant by the Augustan or eighteenth-century style? In what sense is it less poetical than the poetry of Wordsworth & Shelley?"* (*Early Cultural Writings* 126).

An objection against reading Aurobindo's evaluation of Augustan poetry may be that he is expressing what is the general reading of Romantic poetry and its representative characteristics in English literature and is not driven by Aurobindo's politics. However, these ideas continue to be expressed in his constitution of the Indian 'national character' which forms the basis of his approach to nationalist resistance. He emphasises originality as the constitutive quality of an abiding national literature. It is this quality that makes the literature of the Hindu nation the most abiding representative of its civilisational history among other European and Asiatic nations: "the Hindus have revealed themselves the most perfectly, continuously and on the most colossal scale, precisely because they have been the most indomitably original in the form & matter of their literature" (*Early Cultural Writings* 147).

It seems paradoxical to find Aurobindo's critique of the English nation influenced by the Romantic movement that is often viewed as concurrent with the emergence of European nationalism. Aurobindo, then, much like Sayajirao Gaekwad III, presents an instance of the ambivalence of colonial discourse as theorised by Bhabha. Baroda became the site where this ambivalence generated a pocket of resistance to British rule in Gujarat constituted by the twin influences of originality and the discourse of revolt.

Originality and revolt converged to fortify the ideology of *swadeshi* that had gained ground in Bengal. Aurobindo had remained associated with national politics since his arrival in India, and had become a part of secret revolutionary work in Bengal. He had helped Jatindranath Banerji—a young man from Bengal who came to Baroda in 1899, get enlisted in the Baroda army in spite of the British government's injunction against enlisting of Bengalis. He later made him an emissary to organise secret revolutionary activities in Bengal and establish an order of revolutionaries that later found systematic expression in the pamphlet *Bhawani Mandir* published in 1905 (Heehs 64).

Aurobindo's response to the idea of *swadeshi* is expressed in the speech he wrote for the Gaekwad to be delivered at the industrial exhibition held at Ahmedabad on 15th December 1902. While the publication of articles in *Indu Prakash*, as well as his close association with K.G. Deshpande reveal his association with the intelligentsia in Maharashtra, Aurobindo formally met the nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak only during the eighteenth session of the INC at Ahmedabad on 25th December 1902, where the two leaders discussed their shared revolutionary vision for the future struggle against colonisation (Heehs 68). Thus, it can be seen that he was actively involved in the politics of the country, albeit remaining behind-the-scenes during his tenure at the Baroda College.

However, while he did not take membership or assume leadership of any political group, he found an opportune space for the spread of his political message among the university youth. Mr. R.S. Dalal, vice-president of the Share-Brokers' Association of Bombay, and student at the Baroda College from 1898 to 1902, recounts a talk delivered by Aurobindo and his friend S.C. Mallick to the B.A. class on the importance of *swadeshi* which led many in the class to take the vow of *swadeshi* (Trivedi 46). Peter Heehs notes that one of the texts that was assigned for the Inter examination of the B.A. course during Aurobindo's tenure was Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (77).

Aurobindo's propagation of *swadeshi* to a university class stands in diametric opposition to Littledale's approach to the involvement of politics in education. In a contrasting response to a similar instance, when certain students of the Previous class of B.A. held a meeting to protest the arrest of Tilak on the charge of sedition in 1897, Littledale reprimanded the students for not *consulting* him before holding the meeting and advising that such political discussions and/or activities be held "outside the college hours" to safeguard "the dignity of the College" (Trivedi 24). Littledale's approach echoes the dominant reformist climate that aimed to depoliticise or dilute the political edge of education. The same approach finds an explicit echo in the response of A.B. Clarke (who succeeded Littledale as the Principal of the Baroda College) to a speech delivered by C.M. Doctor at the College Debating Society. Alumnus P.K. Desai recounts Clarke's response: "In his presidential address he advised us that the political progress of a country can best be achieved by evolution and not by revolution, and as an illustration, he cited the example of the British Constitution" (Trivedi 49).

Aurobindo, on the other hand, both acknowledged and struggled to resist the ideological function of colonial education and the nature of agency such education attempted to create. In the eighth part of *New Lamps for Old*, he writes: "The force which they had in mind to construct was a body of grave, loyal and conservative citizens, educated but without ideas, a body created by and having a stake in the present order, and therefore attached to its continuance, a power in the land certainly, but a power for order, for permanence, not a power for disturbance and unrest" (*Bande Mataram* 56). While elsewhere, he equates colonial education with "euthanasia" (*Bande Mataram* 69). He, further, emphasises the hegemonic role of English within this education in a 1906 article speaking about the nature of the group of early social/political reformers: "they had no choice but to borrow their theories and ideas from their English teachers; confined to English books and influence, cut off from the wide wholesome atmosphere of the world's culture they were obliged to accept

Englishmen at their own valuation" (*Bande Mataram* 202-3).[74] While finding the dependence on colonial education wanting, Aurobindo, here, also hints at the need for an alternative.

A pertinent alternative which likely was implemented by Aurobindo during his tenure at the Baroda College is indirectly expressed in an unfinished tract on "Education" that was evidently meant for public address in Baroda as it begins with the address: "Your Highness and Gentlemen" (*Early Cultural Writings* 357). Arguing that the present system of education did not give the students any "real knowledge", he cites the following example:

> What does an average Bombay graduate who has taken English Literature for/ his optional subject, know of that literature? He has read a novel of Jane Austen or the Vicar of Wakefield, a poem of Tennyson or a book of Milton, at most two plays of Shakespeare, a work of Bacon's or Burke's full of ideas which he is totally incompetent to digest and one or two stray books of Pope, Dryden, Spenser or other, & to crown this pretentious little heap a mass of secondhand criticism dealing with poets & writers of whom he has not studied a single line. When we remember that English is the main study of our schools & colleges, what a miserable outturn is this… (*Early Cultural Writings* 361-2).

Aurobindo here is not necessarily criticising the curriculum as much as he is criticising the pedagogy which blunts the force of some highly influential ideas that could be generated from this curriculum. The implication is Aurobindo found a space of resistance in his practice within the classroom and the campus—whether through his participation in the debating society's meetings, introducing students to the political movement of *swadeshi* alongside another leader, or his efforts in making the study of English Literature enabling, rather than an exercise in rote learning.

In his college reminiscences, R. S. Dalal who later went on to become a fiction writer under the pseudonym Vipin writes that he owes Aurobindo "and his notes on "Pride and Prejudice" for [*sic*] my effort in writing a Gujarati novel" (Trivedi 46). For Aurobindo, the goal of education was "training of the three great manipulating faculties, viz. the power of reasoning, the power of comparison and differentiation and the power of expression" (*Early Cultural Writings* 359). As a matter of fact, discussing the efforts to be undertaken by college professors, in his speech delivered to the Baroda College Social Gathering on 22 July 1899, Aurobindo refers "not merely to the professorial work of teaching, not to book-learning only, but to the entire activity of the College as a great and complex educational force, which is not

[74] This idea recurs in his exposition on the Doctrine of Passive Resistance, first serialised in April 1907 (*Bande Mataram* 263).

solely meant to impart information, but to bring out or give opportunities for bringing out all the various intellectual and other energies which go to make up a man"(*Early Cultural Writings* 353).

Dinendra Kumar Roy, who lived with Aurobindo in Baroda from 1898 to 1900/1 remarks that "The students of Baroda looked upon Aurobindo as a god. No one except the English principal of the College received more of their respect and trust than this professor from Bengal. They were really impressed by the way he taught" (17).

Indian Universities Commission 1902 and Indian Universities Act 1904

Aurobindo's tenure at the Baroda College overlapped with intersection of reform with higher education in the appointment of the Indian Universities Commission in 1902 by a resolution of the Government of India in the Home Department. The objective of the Commission was "to inquire into the condition and prospects of the Universities established in British India; to consider and report upon any proposals which have been, or may be, made for improving their constitution and working, and to recommend to the Governor General in Council such measures as may tend to elevate the standard of University teaching, and to promote the advancement of learning" (*Report of the Indian Universities Commission*[75] 1).

The recommendations of this Commission displayed further centralization, norming, and standardization of the universities, displaying its retreat into an exclusive and privileged space, leading even to the disadvantage of the provincial colleges – the regional centres of higher education. There was no change in the exclusivist role ascribed to the university as a space for education from the recommendations of Indian Education Commission of 1882. The recommendations of the Commission translated into the Indian Universities Act of 1904 implemented by Lord Curzon, which became a topic of heated debate in native circles.[76]

Aurobindo's tract on "Education" was, in fact, a direct response to Curzon's university reforms. Aurobindo forcefully asserted that "the Government of India is in the first place not the fit body to formulate the necessary improvements and in the second place not the fit instrument to put them into force. It is not fit to formulate them because it cannot realise and feel as we do where the shoe pinches us and therefore in mending it…" (*Early Cultural Writings* 357).

Baroda and Gujarat remained at the centre of Aurobindo's early nationalism. In the seventh part of *New Lamps for Old*, Aurobindo refers to an incident of communal unrest

[75] Henceforth referred to as *RIUC*.
[76] See Ghosh, "The Genesis of Curzon's University Reform: 1899-1905."

between Hindus and Muslims at Prabhas Patan in Gujarat as an indicator of the growing unrest in the native population, and cautions that while the Congress was not paying attention to the more pertinent issues facing the general population of India, a few more wrong moves by the colonial government could result in "the turbulence that is now religious" becoming "social" in nature (*Bande Mataram* 50). It was in Ahmedabad that he met Tilak after the Congress session where the two leaders exchanged their radical views on the future direction for the body. He was an active member of the *Swadeshi* movement at Baroda and proposed active efforts for sustenance of the movement at a meeting of the body in Baroda on 24 September 1905, which was also published in *Kesari* on 3 October 1905 (*Bande Mataram* 96). He even drew out a detailed plan for maintenance of a sample-room for *swadeshi* articles by the Baroda Industrial Association (*Bande Mataram* 97-99). In the early years of the twentieth century, Aurobindo was also a part of secret revolutionary activities in Baroda which brought him under the scanner of the British government.[77] The pamphlet "Bhawani Mandir" issued in 1905 also shows how he yoked together ideas from nationalist movements in Bengal and Maharashtra. At the same time, these ideas influenced the revolutionary activities undertaken in Baroda such as the Ganganath school which was developed with the aim of imparting a 'national' education, in the sense of an education that would generate nationalistic thought in the youth.

Conclusion

In the late nineteenth century the idea of reform became fully institutionalized in two senses—firstly, it became endemic to the politics and social imagination based on which political institutions such as the franchise was being rebuilt in Britain; and secondly, in the sense of the establishment of more institutions (such as different provincial colleges) which were built to take ahead the project of education—the precondition for access to institutional reform. It was thus shaped to create a class of people that Walter D. Mignolo terms the "*Instituted*" (139). The *Instituted* are constituted by "the three domains of modernity" which include "a field of representation," "a set of rhetorical discourses," and "a set of global designs" (which refers to the universalist claims of the rhetoric), through which modernity hopes to "persuade you" (139).

Baroda offers a rich site for study of the interactions between the question of reform and the nation owing to its political-ideological liminality between sovereignty and

[77] See Mangamma, "Anti-British Activity in Baroda in the First Decade of the 20th-Century."

subjecthood, conformity and resistance, reform and revolt. An institution of higher education located here forms a complex site where the counter-action(s) between English studies and the shifting meanings of reform could be observed.

While Harold Littledale used lectures on a Victorian epic to bolster the imperial discourse on reform and confirms the ideological role of English Studies as justifying the moral role of empire, Aurobindo Ghose advocated relocation of nationalism in the conceptual domain of revolt and turned the university in a space to generate political awakening.

Aurobindo's example, then, offers a key insight that challenges to the reformist ideology encoded into the curriculum of English Studies, could be enacted through pedagogic practice. A radical reading of texts and the space of the classroom as inherently attached to its immediate socio-political concerns could open up a space for resistance to reform.

A criticism that could be levelled against Aurobindo was that, by espousing revolt to counter reform, he remained within the ideological binary built by the coloniser. However, his pamphlet titled "Passive Resistance" of 1907 where he charts out the radical road ahead for Congress delineates his nationalist strategy that was negotiated from the space between reform and revolt, and which anticipated many of the key points of Gandhi's programme for self-rule right from the idea of refraining from violence, to adoption of national education, to boycott of government institutions.

Thus, the region of Gujarat, in the instance of Baroda, became the site for one of the earliest decolonial gestures issuing out of the domain of English education.