



# Colonial Discourse and the Suffering of Indian American Children

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A Francophone Postcolonial Analysis

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Kundan Singh · Krishna Maheshwari

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*Dedicated to Kundan Singh's father  
Ram Chandra Singh  
(1938–2019)*

# Preface

This work goes into the very roots of psycho-social consequences that Indian American children face after they are exposed to the school textbook discourse on Hinduism and Ancient India, sixth grade onwards. In the early nineteenth century, James Mill, who eventually became one of the topmost officials in the imperial East India Company, wrote a three-volume work titled *The History of British India*.<sup>1</sup> In volume one, he wrote seven chapters on the Hindu people with the thesis that they are savage, uncivilized, brute, primitive, uncouth, rude, coarse, etc. Making their primitiveness and savagery the defining characteristic of his work, he wrote on topics about their social structure and social laws, their governance and taxation systems, and their manners and customs. In addition, he devoted considerable space to arguing that Hinduism was a primitive and pagan religion that was irrational, superstitious, incoherent, and child-like. Backed by the massive imperial power that Britain eventually exerted on the world, this colonial-racist discourse set the narrative on Hindus, Hinduism, and Ancient India, which continues to get regurgitated, surprising as it may sound, in the middle-school textbooks in the United States, albeit in politically correct and sanitized ways. There is an intimate connection—an almost exact correspondence—between James

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<sup>1</sup>James Mill, *The History of British India: Volume 1*, ed. Hayman Horace Wilson (London: James Madden and Co., 1840).

Mill's colonial-racist discourse and the current school textbook discourse. The parameters and coordinates on which James Mill constructed the discourse currently describe Hinduism, Hindus, and Ancient India in the textbooks. Consequently, this archaic and racist discourse, camouflaged under the cover of political correctness, produces in the Indian American children a psychological impact quite similar to what racism is known to have: shame, inferiority, embarrassment, identity confusion, assimilation, and a phenomenon identical to racelessness where the children dissociate from the tradition and culture of their ancestors. This is in addition to the mocking, teasing, and bullying they begin to encounter right after they are exposed to the discourse in the sixth grade.

The irony of it all is that Mill's discourse is one of complete fabrication and projection, given that there also is an exact correspondence between his British social and political writings on the one hand and his noxious discourse on Hindus and Hinduism on the other. Mill was a utilitarian and, as one of the foremost disciples of Bentham, was actively involved in bringing about a social and political transformation of British society, which resulted in the parliamentary reform of 1832 that put Britain on the road to representative governance and other liberal values such as the freedom of the press, separation of Church and State, freedom of religion among others. Mill brought these laudable, emancipatory, and much-needed reforms through his voluminous writings in the *Supplement to Encyclopaedia Britannica* and other British journals. Unfortunately, Mill concocted his narrative on India, Hinduism, and Hindus in light of the social and political conditions that he wanted to reform and expel from British society—at the expense of India and Hinduism, as this work thoroughly reveals. Mill's characterization of Hinduism is in the shadows of the practices of the Church of England—the *Church of Englandism* as he called it. His description of the Hindu society bears an exact correspondence with his description of the British society that he did not want in Britain to exist. The Hindu form of governance and taxation structure he describes in the *History* mirror the regressive British form of governance and taxation that the Utilitarians desperately wanted to dismantle. In short, Mill projected onto the Hindu society the shadows of British society as he curated his narrative in the *History*. Given that his discourse got the backing of the imperial East India Company, it became the normative

discourse as time passed. It now finds a reproduction in the school textbooks in a politically correct and sanitized form, causing damaging psycho-social consequences for Indian American children. The container of the analysis, both in terms of the discourse of James Mill and the psychological consequences that the Indian American children experience, comes from the writings of Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, and Albert Memmi—the Francophone postcolonial thinkers as they are called in the postcolonial canon.

## Chapter Breakdown

To understand the structure of this work, we need to visualize concentric circles with the bigger ones encompassing the smaller ones. The largest concentric circle is the framework of colonialism and postcolonialism in which we have positioned our work. It gives an outline of the consequences of colonization, especially in the realm of discourse production and discourse dissemination. It discusses the effects of “epistemic violence,”<sup>2</sup> where the knowledge worldview of the colonized by the colonizer was completely mauled and distorted. The colonizer then ensured that the perverted knowledge on the colonized became part of what Gramsci calls civil society (schools, colleges, and universities) and political society (the bureaucracy and the police), with the most sinister effects.<sup>3</sup> Postcolonialism is about uncovering those distortions and perversions so that the postcolonial society can undo the damage. As a part of the postcolonial recovery, we have identified James Mill as the distorter *numero uno* of representations on India and Hinduism—the consequences of which are pervasive in academia and media with his now politically correct and sanitized discourse beginning in the sixth grade. We close the chapter by giving a brief biography of Mill, specifically on how his *magnum opus*, the *History of British India*, came to be written.

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<sup>2</sup> Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> In Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).



In the next concentric circle, Chap. 2, we expand upon the framework of colonialism and postcolonialism, constructing it with the insights provided by the Francophone postcolonial thinkers Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, and Albert Memmi. After giving a brief biography of each of these thinkers while showing how their paths have crossed with one another, we outline the central thesis of each of these thinkers: That the colonizers spent considerable time, energy, money, and intellectual power in characterizing the colonized as uncivilized, primitive, and savage. The colonizer took every measure to describe himself as civilized and the colonized as savage and primitive. This is not something that happened to one or two colonized nations: Every European imperial power engaged in the construction of the colonized in every country as barbarian and uncivilized. Memmi and Fanon point out that the colonizer puts himself in a dialectical relationship with the colonized where the colonizer, as he posits himself as civilized, (mis)represents the colonized as savage in as many ways as possible. This misrepresentation is essentially racist, and the intellectuals of the colonizing nations were more than complicit in the generation of such kinds of myths, which, over a period due to the sociological and institutional control over the colonized, have become facts. The complicit intellectuals also provided the rationale for the continued colonization.

The above two concentric circles give rise to further concentric circles. If Chaps. 1 and 2 make universal contentions as to how the colonized were characterized and described by the colonizers, Chaps. 3 and 4—the next concentric circle—go into specifics as to how James Mill treated the Hindu people and Hinduism (and by extension Ancient India) in his writings. Chapter 3 discusses in considerable detail how James Mill characterized the Hindu people as savage, barbarians, uncouth, and uncivilized, among many other choicest epithets. One of his chief refrains in showing the Hindus as primitive and savage was that they are hierarchical and oppressive: their social structure is hierarchical and oppressive; their governance structure since antiquity has been hierarchical and oppressive; their taxation structure is hierarchical and oppressive; their laws, culture, and mores are hierarchical and oppressive; the Hindu males are oppressive towards Hindu women; Hindu teachers are oppressive towards their students, etc. He concludes the discussion by describing the Hindus

as inhuman, villainous, timid, weak, cowardly, lazy, pernicious, greedy, filthy, superstitious, and fatalistic. Similarly, he castigates Hinduism as irrational, incoherent, immoral, childlike, and pagan.

Chapter 4 shows that Mill's contentions are sheer projections and fabrications—myths that colonials were prone to creating. We have demonstrated this by putting side by side Mill's writings on Hindus, Hinduism, and India in the *History* with the writings that he did for transforming the British society, in particular the writings that he produced for the *Supplement to Encyclopedia Britannica* at the invitation of Macvey Napier. Given that Mill had never visited India, he imagined the Hindu society, its governance and taxation structure, and its laws, manners, and customs in the light of the British society he was experiencing. To be sure, he constructed the image of Hindu society and Hinduism in light of those practices and structures of the British society that he wanted to transform under the aegis of the Utilitarian reform movement. The correspondences are stark, and we have conclusively exposed the “hierarchy and oppression” framework in which he curated the picture of Hindus and Hinduism as the structure that Mill wanted to expel from British society.

Chapter 5, the fourth concentric circle, exposes how the narrative of Mill, in which he did not hold back in calling the Hindus primitive and uncivilized—it would not be a misnomer to call it a piece of hate literature—is getting mirrored in the middle-school discourse in the United States, although in politically correct and sanitized ways. The narrative on Hindus and Hinduism is pegged on and revolves around hierarchy and oppression—in explicit and implicit ways. Even the sequence that Mill followed in unfolding his discourse is reflected in the middle-school narrative. The Hindu society is described on the parameters of caste, hierarchy, and oppression; the Hindu kings are described as authoritarian and oppressive; Hinduism as a religion is defined as hierarchical and oppressive against which the image of Buddhism as emancipatory and liberatory is constructed; Hindu epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata are described along caste lines so that the students unconsciously begin to conflate them with hierarchy and oppression. Minus the vitriol of Mill against the Hindus, that the middle-school textbook discourse is a regurgitated version of the colonial discourse is the subject matter of this

chapter. We expose the underbelly of the middle-school discourse in that it is nothing but a cleaned-up version of the colonial and racist rant of Mill.

There is an academic consensus now that racism and racist discourse negatively impact the psyche of the children who are at the receiving end. A racist discourse produces inferiority, shame, and embarrassment vis-à-vis one's own "race" and ethnicity and the culture and tradition of one's ancestors. It produces self-hatred, self-rejection, and lack of self-worth, leading to marginalization and withdrawal on one hand and assimilation and *racelessness* on the other hand. The colonial-racist discourse on Hinduism, Hindus, and India, which the Indian American children encounter in their school textbooks, impacts them in the ways above in varying measures. We gain this insight from their testimonies delivered at the California State Board of Education hearing that undergoes a syllabus revision for the History and Social Science curriculum in public schools every ten years. Chapter 6, the fifth concentric circle, analyzes the impacted students' testimonies and reports the damaging psychological consequences of the school textbook's racist portrayal. We qualitatively analyzed these testimonies by dividing the student population into four categories: pre-sixth graders, sixth graders, seventh and eighth graders, and high schoolers. In terms of consequences, their statements reveal specific themes which we enumerate in the chapter by classifying them into four sections: pre-sixth graders report fear of bullying based on the experiences that they have seen their elder siblings and older friends undergo; sixth graders report negative portrayal of the Hindu tradition; seventh and eighth graders report contempt and bias against Hinduism; and high school students report racism and Hindu-hatred against Hinduism. We conclude our work by arguing how the current school textbook discourse on Hinduism and India needs to change so that Indian American children do not become victims of overt and covert racism. And that for the change to occur, the first step is to recognize the overarching and pervasive influence of the colonial-racist discourse of James Mill on the textbooks. For the reconstruction of the discourse to occur, the first step is to engage in a thorough deconstruction, which is what our work attempts.

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# List of Abbreviations

AIT	Aryan Invasion Theory
AMT	Aryan Migration Theory
HAF	Hindu American Foundation
HMH	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
HSS	History Social Science
IQC	Instructional Quality Commission
SBE	State Board of Education
WHIAAPI	White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders



# 1

## James Mill and the History of the *History of British India*

Colonialism is not about geographical and political control only; it is a systematic and systemic intervention through which the knowledge systems and culture of the colonized are mauled, deformed, twisted, transformed, and destroyed. At the core of the colonial project is epistemological violence, where not only is the knowledge worldview or paradigm of the colonized destroyed, but also an alternative knowledge on the colonized is generated by the colonizer, which is permeated with falsehoods and projections. This knowledge is generated through translations, commentaries, books, journal articles, travelogues, newspaper reports, etc., which acquires the tag of putative or received knowledge over a period. For, the colonizer ensures that not only the knowledge systems of the colonized are obliterated, but also the centers of the dissemination of the indigenous knowledge systems, like schools and colleges, are shut down and laid to waste. In their place, he (the choice of “he” is deliberate) also ensures that new institutions—schools, colleges, and universities—are erected, where the falsehoods generated on the colonized, masquerading as knowledge, are taught and disseminated. Colonialism thus fundamentally alters the discourse of and on the colonized. Colonization writes Ania Loomba, “refracted the production of knowledge and structured the

conditions for its dissemination and reception”<sup>1</sup> and “restructured, often violently, the world of the colonized, and birthed new worlds and practices.”<sup>2</sup> Over a period, colonization also causes a profound inferiority complex within the colonized, which creates a sort of vortex that sucks into itself the colonial discourse leading to its regurgitation by the colonized themselves. The colonial discourse comes full circle and acquires a life of its own where the colonizer and the colonized become complicit in regurgitating and reproducing the colonial discourse.

Colonial attempts to classify, record, represent, and educate non-European societies where efforts to re-order words that were often incomprehensible to the masters and make them more manageable and available for imperial consumption and exploitation. Legal, medical, military, bureaucratic and economic institutions are readily recognized as part of the repressive apparatus of any society, but in recent years there has been a rich scholarship showing how ethnography, cartography, translation, and education were also crucial to colonial control and governance, as indeed were museums and other collections.<sup>3</sup>

Postcolonialism, with many objectives about understanding and analyzing the consequences of colonization, investigates and uncovers the falsehoods, deformities, and deformations imposed by the colonizer on the colonized. It is an accepted idiom of postcolonial studies and theory that the consequences of colonialism exist and linger in the erstwhile colonized population and the culture far after the colonized have gained political independence. The most sinister effects are experienced and seen in the regurgitation of the colonial discourse, which, by the time the colonies gain political independence, acquire the label and stamp of objective and true knowledge. The colonial discourse of the colonizer on the colonized at the time of the political independence and later also acquires the facade and veneer of political correctness, where all the earlier coordinates and descriptions explicitly suggesting the savagery, barbarianism, uncivilization, and brutishness of the colonized are suppressed

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<sup>1</sup> Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

and made invisible. In other words, the colonial discourse becomes politically correct. It becomes the task of postcolonial studies to genealogically expose the veneer of the colonial discourse to show its inherent ugly face.

[Postcolonialism, therefore,] refers to a mode of reading, political analysis, and cultural resistance/intervention that deals with the history of colonialism and present neocolonial structures. It is a mix of rigorous epistemological and theoretical analysis of texts and a political practice of resistance to neocolonial conditions. It is, in short, a critique.... It asserts the formerly colonized subjects' "agency"—defined as the ability to affect her/his present conditions in the face of continuing oppression. Postcolonialism as well as its more "dense" (in more ways than one) companion, postcolonial theory—is a method of reading and discussion.... Postcolonialism refers to any strategy that resists not *colonialism* as such but *colonizing* (or oppressive, exploitative) practices.... Postcolonial theory explores how colonial ideology, strategies of representation, and racial prejudices are coded into the literary texts, and how these informed concrete political military and social "operations" in colonialism.<sup>4</sup>

In *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Leela Gandhi says that colonialism produces a "mystifying amnesia" that can only be remembered by a critical interrogation of the past. Postcolonialism "is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past," and if "postcoloniality is to be reminded of its origins in colonial oppression, it must be theoretically urged to recollect the compelling seductions of colonial power."<sup>5</sup> Further,

The colonial archive preserves those versions of knowledge and agency produced in response to the particular pressures of the colonial encounter. The colonial past is not simply reservoir of "raw" political experiences and practices to be theorized from the detached and enlightened perspective of the present. It is also the scene of intense discursive and conceptual activity,

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<sup>4</sup> Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* (Chennai: Pearson, 2008), 17–18, italics in original.

<sup>5</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 4.



characterized by a profusion of thought and writing about the cultural and political identities of the colonized subjects. Thus, in its therapeutic retrieval of the colonial past, postcolonialism needs to define itself as an area of study which is willing not only to make, but also to gain, theoretical sense out of that past.<sup>6</sup>

The interrogation and analysis of literature produced by the colonizer on the colonized, particularly when it involves the latter's representation, becomes crucial if the patterns of oppression and the subjection to racism of the erstwhile colonized and their progenies must cease in the postcolonial world. The critical examination of the colonial past becomes important, most specifically because of their continued operation in the postcolonial present. Postcolonialism "names a theoretical and political position which embodies an active concept of intervention within such oppressive circumstances. It combines the epistemological cultural innovations of the postcolonial moment with the political critique of the conditions of postcoloniality."<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, our work involves a deep, systematic, and critical examination of the discourse on Ancient India and Hinduism produced in the nineteenth century. We bring under critical interrogation and microscopic scrutiny James Mill's *History of British India*: more specifically, the seven chapters he wrote on the Hindu people and Hinduism in volume one of this three-volume work.<sup>8</sup> These chapters describe the manners and customs of Hindus to their social structure, modes of governance and taxation, legal ordinances surrounding governance and society, and religion. This textual interrogation of the past is highly crucial because it is hurting the present of the Indian American children who are being subjected to a sanitized and politically correct version of the same discourse in school textbooks, which our work exposes elaborately, extensively, and conclusively. The sanitized discourse negatively impacts them psychologically and socially, which is the teleological point of our

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>7</sup>Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 57.

<sup>8</sup>James Mill, *The History of British India: Volume 1*, ed. Hayman Horace Wilson (London: James Madden and Co., 1840).

discourse analysis. In other words, the textual representation of Hinduism and Hindus in the colonial past continues in the postcolonial present that profoundly impacts the Indian American children. Within the canopy of postcolonialism, this work, therefore, involves textual analysis that critically interrogates the colonial past to show how the colonial representation is still alive and kicking and how it is negatively impacting the Indian American children in the present.

The teleology above has also determined the choice of Francophone postcolonial thinkers whose theories have formed the container for our discourse analysis. Though the intellectual resistance to colonialism is almost as old as colonialism itself, postcolonial theory owes its origins to the writings of Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, and Albert Memmi that began in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Since these thinkers came from regions colonized by France, their writings originally appeared in French; hence Francophone. Postcolonial theory got a significant boost with the publication of *Orientalism* by Edward Said<sup>10</sup> in 1978. Said's work has been critiqued and refined by two other thinkers, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, who, like Said, write in English, and therefore, their work falls in the category of Anglophone postcolonial theory. Robert J. C. Young, in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, makes a significant observation that buttresses our choice of Francophone postcolonial thinkers. He says:

Whereas Anglophone activists tend to focus their interventions on the objective realm, the realm of history, economic history, sociality and materiality, Francophone activists...were distinguished by balancing attention to those aspects of the history of oppression and exploitation with a concern for the human attitudes towards them, in other words, with the subjective realm. This comprised a desire to articulate the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism as they were experienced by those subjected to them.... How does it feel today to be a "postcolonial subject," whether in the three continents or as a part of an immigrant minority in a dominant western culture? What in short has been the human experience

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<sup>9</sup> Nayar, *Postcolonial Literature*.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

of colonialism and decolonization? What are the psychological effects of colonialism?<sup>11</sup>

Since one of the chief objectives of our work is to discuss the damaging psychological consequences on the Indian American children—as reported by themselves, as we will see in the closing pages of the book—it made absolute sense to use the framework provided by Francophone postcolonial thinkers for discourse analysis. Discourse analysis of the writings of James Mill, its continued regurgitation, and circulation in school textbook contents on Hindus, Hinduism, and Ancient India, leading to a commentary on its negative impact on the psychological health of the Indian American children, are the focal points of the work.

Before we proceed further, however, it would be good to provide a brief background of British colonialism in India in which James Mill's *History* was written and published. We will then proceed to give his short biography surrounding its publication.

The East India Company began trading in India in 1600 and gradually became the ruler of a substantial part of its territory till 1858, when an Act of the British Parliament ended its rule, allowing the British Crown to take over. The first significant inroad into India's administrative and political control by the East India Company occurred in 1757 when it won the Battle of Plassey, which gave it the right to collect taxes directly in the provinces of Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa. In 1817, after a decisive battle with the Marathas, which the latter lost, the East India Company became the ruler of most parts of India. In the same year, James Mill's *History of British India* in three volumes was published,<sup>12</sup> which radically changed the representation of India and Hinduism. These three volumes became textbooks for training the Company civil servants at Haileybury College who were to serve in India.<sup>13</sup> The contents became a part of the

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<sup>11</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, 274.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Bain, *James Mill: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882); Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians: Volume 2: James Mill* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1900); George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India: 1784–1858* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John Marriott, *The Other Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992).

curriculum of Oxford and Cambridge universities.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the *History* set in motion an alliance where administrators and subsequent academics could converge in the misgovernance of India. Ronald Inden calls it a hegemonic text.<sup>15</sup> With this said, however, it would be good to know who James Mill was and how his writings exemplify the perverted relationship between the colonizers and the colonized: writings, the nefarious, hideous, and sinister impact of which is being felt by the Indian American children even today.

## James Mill and the Making of His *Magnum Opus*

James Mill was born on April 6, 1773, to James Milne and Isabel Fenton at Northwater Bridge in the parish of Logie Pert in Scotland. His father was a shoemaker, and his mother was a farmer's daughter. It is said that Isabel had an aristocratic background, but her paternal financial situation fell to bad times because of her father participating in the Stuart rising of 1745.<sup>16</sup> It is surmised that Isabel never forgot her ancestral leanings and therefore engaged in the following: (1) Changed the last name of her husband from Milne, which was quite common in the surroundings, to Mill, and (2) was determined to raise her eldest son, James, as a "gentleman." It is due to the latter that she put an enormous effort into seeing that James Mill not only got a good education but was also kept away from the family shoemaking business. Mill was good in studies, and after completing his education at the local Grammar School, he was sent to Montrose Academy, one of the best-known burgh schools in Scotland.<sup>17</sup> Mill was a precocious child and was brought to the notice of the local Fettercairn aristocrats, the Stuarts: Sir John Stuart (on whose name James

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<sup>14</sup> Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Bain, *James Mill*.

<sup>17</sup> Bain, *James Mill*; Terence Ball, ed., *James Mill: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); W. H. Burston, *James Mill on Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Bruce Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill: Father and Son in the 19th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

Mill was to name later his first child, the famous John Stuart Mill) and Lady Jane Stuart (on whose name also Mill named his one of the nine children that he eventually had). It is conjectured that Jane Stuart wanted to raise James Mill to become a preacher at the ministry, because of which he was not sent to the nearer University of Aberdeen but to the University of Edinburgh. Mill became the tutor to the daughter of the Stuarts, Wilhelmina, and spent a lot of time with them, both in Edinburgh and Fettercairn, which was only five miles from the Northwater Bridge. Wilhelmina Stuart was three years younger than Mill, and the legend has it that romance bloomed between the two, but Mill was not allowed to marry Wilhelmina because of his humble background.<sup>18</sup> Wilhelmina was married off to Sir William Forbes and died young in 1810 after the birth of their second son, with the name of Mill on her lips. Mill's relentless tirade against the aristocracy, as we will see in the later chapters, was undoubtedly related to this incident, in addition to the many insults that he had to bear as a tutor to the children of the aristocrats.<sup>19</sup>

Mill joined the University of Edinburgh in 1790 and, after completing his studies in the Arts, enrolled for the Divinity studies, which he finished in 1797.<sup>20</sup> He became licensed as a preacher as per the Presbytery of Brechin's records but needed help finding a permanent job with any of the parishes. He made a livelihood teaching the aristocrats' children when, in 1802, he decided to move to London. Mill chose to earn a living through pen in London, a city of opportunities. He began by writing for the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Along with writing, he was interested in politics and would follow closely the speeches made in the House of Commons. By the end of 1802, Mill came in close contact with the publisher Baldwin and became the editor of and contributor to the *Literary Journal*, an association that lasted for the next four years. The materials of the *Literary Journal* were divided into four sections: physics, literature, manners, and politics. The "literature" section included the subjects: history, theology, mental philosophy, geography, biography, chronology, travels, poetry, criticism, etc. This editorial experience contributed significantly to the

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<sup>18</sup> Bain, *James Mill*; Ball, ed., *James Mill*.

<sup>19</sup> Bain, *James Mill*; Ball, ed., *James Mill*; Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*.

<sup>20</sup> Bain, *James Mill*; Ball, ed., *James Mill*.

production of the *History of British India*. In 1805, another engagement was added to Mill's career: the editorship of the *St. James's Chronicle* newspaper, which continued till 1808. The paper was owned by the Baldwin publishing company, the publisher of the *History* when it first appeared in early 1818.<sup>21</sup>

Mill began writing the *History* in 1806. He had earlier thought the project would take a maximum of three to four years, but little did he know that it would keep him engaged for the next twelve years. By then, his involvement with the *Literary Journal* had stopped; There is no evidence of his contributions to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Mill, however, was writing articles for the *British Review*, the *Monthly Review*, the *Eclectic Review*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. For *Edinburgh Review*, he wrote on jurisprudence, politics, political economy, and tolerance. In 1811, he began contributing to the *Philanthropist*, though it seems that he wrote more for the *Philanthropist* than for the *Edinburgh Review* because there is no evidence of Mill's hand in the *Edinburgh Review* writings after 1813. The *Philanthropist* was stopped in 1817; however, by then, Mill had contributed significantly to it. In 1814, Macvey Napier invited Mill to contribute to the *Supplement of Encyclopedia Britannica*, which appeared between 1815 and 1823.<sup>22</sup> These articles in the *Supplement* will benefit our analysis in the following chapters.

The *History* was a roaring success, which endeared Mill to the Board of Directors of the East India Company, who had him appointed to the India House, its headquarters in London.<sup>23</sup> Almost everyone of any influence or consequence in the Company favored Mill's appointment, which took place in May 1819. By 1821, he was fourth in the hierarchy of the topmost home positions in the East India Company. By 1823, he rose to the post of Assistant to the Examiner of India Correspondence.<sup>24</sup> His meteoric and quick rise made possible the employment of John Stuart Mill as a Junior Clerk at the young age of 17 years in the East India

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<sup>21</sup> Bain, *James Mill*.

<sup>22</sup> Bain, *James Mill*; Stephen, *The English Utilitarians: Vol. 2*.

<sup>23</sup> Antis Loizides, *James Mill's Utilitarian Logic and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Bain, *James Mill*; Stephen, *The English Utilitarians: Vol. 2*; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*.

Company.<sup>25</sup> By December 1830, he was the chief of the office—the Examiner of India Correspondence—and remained one till his death in 1836.<sup>26</sup> There were four departments at the India House, and till he became the Examiner, when he superintended all the departments, he was heading the Revenue Department almost all along. Bearce says Mill was a “virtual Under Secretary of State for India.”<sup>27</sup> Mazlish sees it differently but agrees in spirit with Bearce, for he states:

To put his position in perspective, we must realize that his post during all these years was equivalent to a Secretary, or Assistant Secretary, of State for the East India Company, in a sort of private version of a foreign office administering a huge empire. In short, Mill in the East India Company had become a very high-ranking civil servant with a very respectable salary, able now to afford his own house, summer vacations, and a most comfortable style of living.<sup>28</sup>

The *History of British India* is indeed a hegemonic text as described by Inden<sup>29</sup> because Mill wrote it to assist the British governance of India. He felt that the knowledge of the British on India was defective and that he needed to correct the error. We can safely say that the *History* was a governance manual, intended to be used by the British East India Company officials operating in India. To wit, the *History* is a colonial text. His own words in the preface of the work make it more than amply clear:

There will be but one opinion, I suppose, with regard to the importance of the service, which I have aspired to the honour of rendering to my country; for the public are inclined to exaggerate, rather than extenuate, the magnitude of the interests which are involved in the management of their Indian affairs. And it may be affirmed, as a principle not susceptible of dispute that good management of any portion of the affairs of any community is almost always proportional to the degree of knowledge respecting it

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<sup>25</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.

<sup>26</sup> Bain, James Mill; Stephen, *The English Utilitarians: Vol. 2*; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*.

<sup>27</sup> Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India*, 66.

<sup>28</sup> Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*, 140–41.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

diffused in that community. Hitherto the knowledge of India, enjoyed by the British community, has been singularly defective. Not only among the uneducated, and those who are regardless of knowledge, but among those who are solicitous to obtain a competent share of information with respect to every other great branch of the national interests, nothing is so rare as to meet with a man who can with propriety be said to know anything of India and its affairs. A man who has any considerable acquaintance with them, without having been forced to acquire it by the offices he has filled, is scarcely to be found.<sup>30</sup>

Mill's colonial arrogance is also evident in the preface of the work in that he did not feel the need to visit India even once to write the piece. He defends his choice quite vehemently:

It will not, I presume, admit of much dispute, that the habits which are subservient to the successful exploration of evidence are more likely to be acquired in Europe than in India.... A man who is duly qualified may attain more knowledge of India in one year in his closet in England, than he could obtain during the course of the longest life, by the use of his eyes and ears in India.<sup>31</sup>

James Mill's influence on restructuring India during the colonial times has been momentous, and the *History* served as the resource book for inducing those changes.<sup>32</sup> As early as 1810, Mill had already begun advocating an authoritarian form of governance for India.<sup>33</sup> The British civil servants, trained at Haileybury College with the *History* as their required reading,<sup>34</sup> ensured that such a form of governance came into existence in India. Given, however, that this work is not about the transformation of the Indian governance, culture, and social structure in the light of the Millian imagination, we will restrict our discussion purely to the realm of representation and misrepresentation of the Indian and Hindu scenario

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<sup>30</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, xvii.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi–xxii.

<sup>32</sup> Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India*; Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*. For details, see Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>33</sup> Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India*, 68.

<sup>34</sup> Inden, *Imagining India*.



by James Mill. The *History* became the paradigmatic text that found reproductions in all the books on the history of India that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge subsequently published: it became the paradigm determiner of studies on Ancient India and Hinduism. Once Mill set the ball rolling on the misrepresentation of Hinduism and Ancient India and it found traction in academia, its effect continues and finds reflections in the school-textbook discourse that we analyze. Nicholas Dirks describes the text as canonical.<sup>35</sup>

The *History* undeniably is an imagination,<sup>36</sup> given that Mill did not visit India even once as he wrote his *magnum opus*: imagination that affected India significantly after it got published<sup>37</sup> and an imagination that continues to affect the Indian American children even today. Our work unequivocally shows that Mill's characterization of Hinduism and Hindus is nothing but a sleight of hand rooted in projections and fantasies. How the *History of British India* changed, transformed, and restructured India is a work we will save for later. For the moment, the task undertaken is to expose thoroughly the projections that undercut his discourse on Hinduism and Hindus—their customs and manners, social structure, governance, jurisprudence, taxation, etc. Once we establish that Mill's enunciations and contentions are fabrications, falsehoods, untruths, lies, fantasies, concocted inventions, fictions, fairytales, and myths, we show conclusively how Mill's narrative is reproduced and regurgitated in sanitized and politically correct forms in sixth-grade school textbooks in the United States. Though this problem is all-pervasive and involves all publishers in greater or smaller measure, for brevity, we have chosen the writings of just one publisher: McGraw-Hill. The final section of the book discusses the negative psychological and sociological consequences that Indian American children experience due

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<sup>35</sup>Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>36</sup>Inden, *Imagining India*.

<sup>37</sup>Jennifer Pitts, "Jeremy Bentham: Legislator of the World?" in *Utilitarianism and Empire*, eds. Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis (New York: Lexington Books, 2005), 81, writes: "[James Mill] both foreshadowed and influenced political developments that were to become prominent in the East India Company and intellectual developments among the colonialist vanguard."

to the toxic nature of this discourse, which, on the surface, is touted as veritable and putative knowledge of Hinduism and Ancient India.

We begin the next chapter with a short biography of each of the three Francophone postcolonial thinkers and then discuss their contentions as we shape a container to discuss James Mill's colonial narrative on the Hindu people and Ancient India in the subsequent two chapters.

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# 2

## The Francophone Postcolonial Thinkers and the Colonizer-Colonized Dialectic

Aimé Césaire was born in Martinique, one of the French Caribbean islands, on June 26, 1913. He was a precocious child, born in conditions that bordered on poverty. He won a scholarship to study at one of the elite schools, Lycée Schoelcher, in Fort-de-France, the capital city of Martinique. Once he completed his secondary school education, he went to France for higher education. On reaching Paris, he enrolled in Lycée Louis-le-Grand to get into the Ecole Normale Supérieure, where he completed his thesis on African American writers involved in the Harlem Renaissance. In Paris, he met Senghor, who later became the president of Senegal and, with other like-minded intellectuals from Africa, coined the term “Negritude.” The concept of black identity, which was opposed to getting assimilated into the dominant European civilization, began to take shape in his consciousness. In 1937, he married a fellow Martinican, Suzanne Roussy, and a couple of years later, in 1939, returned to Martinique to begin a teaching career in Fort-de-France. In the same year, France fell to the fascist regime of Vichy, which sent countless French soldiers to Martinique. The blatant racism of the French soldiers solidified the anticolonial stance of Aimé and Suzanne, who by then had begun working with some other intellectuals like René Ménil, Lucie Thèse, and Georges Gratiant, among others. A study of their literature

reveals that their anticolonial views were an interesting mix of Modernism, precolonial African past, Surrealism, and Marxism.<sup>1</sup>

In 1950, Césaire published his famous work, *Discourse on Colonialism*, in French, which was translated into English by Joan Pinkham in 1972.<sup>2</sup> Césaire not only critiqued colonialism but also linked colonialism with racism, Fascism, and Nazism. Fascism and Nazism, in his view, were not aberrations in the European context; instead, they were colonialism and racism turned inwards. He held that when the substratum that drove colonialism was applied to the European people as opposed to the non-European people, Fascism and Nazism were born. He also exploded the myth of the “White man’s burden” of civilizing the “primitives.” He contended that the civilizing mission almost wholly eradicated the colonized societies, which were far more sophisticated than the colonial societies in terms of peaceful coexistence with one another—and many of these colonized societies were pretty advanced with the knowledge and wherewithal to build cities, forge steel, make textiles, mine minerals, cultivate fields, among other things.

Césaire, despite being an intellectual, was also a politician—perhaps due to the Marxist influence. He became a leader of the Communist Party of Martinique in 1945 and contested elections to get elected as the Mayor of Fort-de-France and as a Deputy to the French National Assembly. He was instrumental in transforming Martinique’s status from a Colony to a Department of the French government. His idea was that as a Department, Martinique would be equal to other metropolitan Departments and that the Martinicans would have rights equal to those of the French people. Unfortunately, the dream for equal rights remained a dream, leading to disillusionment in Césaire. Departmentalization of Martinique did not lead to a reduction in racism, and he would often find that the white French bureaucrats enjoyed a greater status than the black Martinican bureaucrats. In 1956, Césaire resigned from the Communist Party, and the letter that he wrote to then Secretary General of the party, Maurice Thorez, has become famous where he argued,

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<sup>1</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “Introduction: A Poetics of Anticolonialism,” in *Discourse on Colonialism*, by Aimé Césaire, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

among other things, that the question of race could not become subservient to class interests.<sup>3</sup> In 1958, he founded his own party, Parti Progressiste Martiniquais, and was many times re-elected as Mayor of Fort-de-France and Deputy to the French National Assembly. He retired from active politics in 2001 and passed away in 2008.

One of his bright students, whom Césaire taught in Fort-de-France, was Frantz Fanon.<sup>4</sup> Fanon was born in Martinique in 1925. After his education in Fort-de-France, he went to Metropolitan France for higher education—a pathway that seems natural and standard for the intellectually oriented in Martinique. The Second World War broke out, and he was drafted into the French Army, which took him to North Africa for the first time. At the war's closure, he returned to finish his education in medicine and psychiatry at the University of Lyon. He completed his education in 1951 and two years later took an appointment to head the psychiatry department at Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algeria.<sup>5</sup> The Algerian War began soon after, which led him to witness firsthand the violent consequences of colonization. The war involved not only massacres but also tortures of the Algerian people, the surviving victims of which landed in Fanon's hospital for treatment. That the perpetrators of colonization also become its victims became evident to Fanon when he found many of the people involved in policing, massacres, or tortures coming to him for psychiatric treatment. With time, his sympathies grew towards the Algerian people fighting for independence, and he joined the National Liberation Front (FLN), secretly making literary contributions to its mouthpiece, *al-Mujahid*. He was soon found out and was expelled from Algeria by the French Authorities in 1957, which made him find asylum in Tunisia, where he continued practicing psychiatry and helping the FLN cause. The provisional Algerian government appointed him the ambassador to Ghana in 1961, but he contracted leukemia that same year and died a premature death.<sup>6</sup> Fanon, however, has attained

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<sup>3</sup> Kelley, "Introduction: A Poetics of Anticolonialism."

<sup>4</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, by Franz Fanon, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008); Nigel G. Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

immortality through two of the three compelling books that he has written: *Black Skin, White Masks*, and *The Wretched of the Earth*.<sup>7</sup> The fourth one, *Toward the African Revolution*, recently released in 2020, is a compilation of his unpublished articles and papers.<sup>8</sup>

*Black Skin, White Masks* is predominantly about the damaging consequences of colonization and racism on the psyche of the colonized people. He speaks at length on the inferiority that colonization causes and the various ways in which the inner life and behavior of the colonized get shaped because of the relentless misrepresentation of the colonized people in the organized literature of the colonizers, which in turn also shapes the behavior and thoughts of the colonizers towards the colonized. For the colonized, the outcome is that their inner life gets shaped in the light of the glorification of the colonizing civilization and demonization or denunciation of the colonized one, leading to a peculiar situation where the colonized begins to turn on themselves—a condition which Fanon calls “affective erethism.”<sup>9</sup> Fanon named the work as such because of the psychological condition in the colonized that colonization creates: whiteness within—due to the internalization of negative messages of the colonizer towards the colonized—through an organized body of literature denouncing the colonized and non-whiteness without, where whatever the colonized may do, they would never be equal or superior to the colonizer. As we will see later, this work will be highly beneficial to us in our analysis.

Fanon wrote *The Wretched of the Earth* in the dying moments of his life. In a certain sense, it was his swan song, borne out of his understanding of colonization and the steps needed for the decolonization process. Fanon finished it in about three months. Though the psychological never receded in the writings of Fanon, the *Wretched* is also a sociological and cultural analysis. It most certainly is shaped by his experiences in Algeria

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<sup>7</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008); Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Franz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 41.

and his analysis of the postcolonial situation in Africa and Asia.<sup>10</sup> A few countries in Africa and Asia had already gained political independence at the time of completing the work; the steps or missteps of the erstwhile colonized gave him ideas as to what should or should not be done in the decolonizing process. Political independence is only the beginning of decolonization. The colonizing history leaves behind a colonized elite—both politicians as well as intellectuals—who carry forward the colonizer's paradigm for two reasons: 1. They fill the gap left behind by the erstwhile colonizers and are beneficiaries of the colonial machinery that is still up and running at the time of the departure of the colonizer. 2. They do not know any better, for their entire education and political experience has occurred in the colonial framework. Fanon's insights on the colonized elites are still valuable for critiquing a postcolonial situation. For Fanon, the success of decolonization can be gauged from a bottom-up-empowering participation of masses or people in governance. Depending upon the context, we will dive into the contents of this work as well.

The mention of Tunisia brings us to our third choice of postcolonial thinkers: Albert Memmi. Memmi was born in December of 1920 to a Jewish family in Tunis, Tunisia (French Tunisia back then). Being a bright student, Memmi won a scholarship to get educated in one of the French public schools in Tunis, from where he went to the University of Algiers and Sorbonne in France. Memmi had a sumptuous literary career with many works and novels. He taught as a teacher first in Tunis and then in Paris. He concluded his teaching career at the University of Nanterre in 1970. Memmi died in 2019 at the age of 99.

His most famous work, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, which we will be using considerably, was an undertaking to understand his own situation fundamentally.<sup>11</sup> He was Tunisian and hence colonized by the French. He experienced colonization firsthand; he suffered from it; he

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<sup>10</sup>Gibson in *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* makes a similar point in distinguishing the two works of Fanon. He states that whereas *Black Skin, White Masks* explains inferiority based in the assimilation of colonial narratives, the *Wretched of the Earth* is about a revolt against the settler colonialism of Europe.

<sup>11</sup>Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfield (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003).

also saw paradoxes within the colonized, for instance, how the colonized hated and admired the colonizer simultaneously. He was Jewish, and the Jewish people in Tunisia, instead of finding themselves more in closeness with the Muslim majority, given that both these groups were colonized, found greater solidarity with the French. This peculiar situatedness also gave him an insider's view of the colonizers. He, therefore, paints the picture of the colonizer and that of the colonized by putting them in a dialectical relationship, making a profound observation that the colonized and all the attributes of the colonized are constructs by the colonizer, fabricated through the work of an army of scholars claiming rationality and objectivity—an observation that vibrates through Césaire and Fanon also. Understanding the centrality of this observation for our work, we will considerably expand on it in the pages below.

The Francophone postcolonial literature in contemporary times is dominated by references to Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, but we do not find much mention of Memmi, though one can say that the foundations of Postcolonial thought can be found in the writings of Memmi as well. Memmi was one of the first to vociferously argue that though it is critical to analyze the economic impact of colonization on the colonized civilization in terms of deprivation and dispossession, it is the cultural, psychological, and moral where the impact of colonization is the greatest. In the preface of his much-celebrated book of its times, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi writes in the preface:

I have been criticized for not having constructed my portraits entirely around an economic structure, but I feel I have repeated often enough that the idea of privilege is at the heart of the colonial relationship—and that privilege is undoubtedly economic. Let me take this opportunity to reaffirm my position: for me the economic aspect of colonialism is fundamental. The book itself opens with a denunciation of the so-called moral or cultural mission of colonization and shows that the profit motive in it is basic. I have often noted that the deprivations of the colonized are the almost direct result of the advantages secured to the colonizer. *However, colonial privilege is not solely economic.* To observe the life of the colonizer and the colonized is to discover rapidly that the daily humiliation of the colonized, his objective subjugation, are not merely economic. Even the



poorest colonizer thought himself to be—and actually was—superior to the colonized. This too was part of colonial privilege. The Marxist discovery of the importance of the economy in all oppressive relationships is not to the point. This relationship has other characteristics which I believe I have discovered in the colonial relationship. But, one might ask, in the final analysis, don't these phenomena have a more or less hidden economic aspect? Isn't the motivating force of colonization economic? The answer is maybe—not certainly.<sup>12</sup>

## Colonized: The Constructed “Other” of the Colonizer

The colonizer and the colonized are bound in a reciprocal and dialectical relationship. They are not independent categories but mutually dependent or contingent categories. The former creates the latter. The former manufactures the latter. The former conceptualizes the latter and then, in the image conceptualized, foments the latter. All the three Francophone authors—whose writings we are considering to create the container in which the writings of James Mill and their continued effects on school textbooks will be investigated—have made assertions in accordance with the above.<sup>13</sup> The colonizer creates a particular image of the colonized, a mythical image far removed from reality. The image involves the colonizer exalting himself (the use of “him” everywhere without “her” is deliberate since colonization was essentially a European man's project, though ably supported and taken advantage of by European women) and devaluing the colonized. For the colonizer to be civilized, the colonized had to be savage, primitive, uncivilized, brute, and barbaric.

Just as the bourgeoisie proposes an image of the proletariat, the existence of the colonizer requires that an image of the colonized be suggested. These images become excuses without which the presence and conduct of a colonizer, and that of a bourgeois, would seem shocking. But the favored image

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<sup>12</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 8, italics ours.

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre has written the preface to some of the books by Memmi and Fanon—we will also take excerpts from his writing.

be comes a myth precisely because it suits them too well.... *It occupies an important place in the dialectics exalting the colonizer and humbling the colonized.*<sup>14</sup>

The colonizer-colonized relationship is based on the privileges of the colonizer. The privileges of the colonizer are dependent on the colonized—in fact, they are inversely proportional. The more privileged the colonizer is, the more dispossessed the colonized is. His wealth is directly proportional to the deprivation of the colonized. His comforts are in stark contrast to the suffering of the colonized. His magnificence can only shine in the ordinariness of the colonized:

It is this [colonial] relationship which is lucrative, which creates privilege. He finds himself on one side of a scale, the other side of which bears the colonized man. If his living standards are high, it is because those of the colonized are low; if he can benefit from plentiful and undemanding labor and servants, it is because the colonized can be exploited at will and are not protected by the laws of the colony; if he can easily obtain administrative positions, it is because they are reserved for him and the colonized are excluded from them; the more freely he breathes, the more the colonized are choked.<sup>15</sup>

As per Memmi, the colonizer knows he is a usurper—he has usurped the land and imposed his privilege upon the colonized. He is also aware that the privilege he has accorded himself is unethical and immoral. However, the colonizer takes every measure to maintain and defend his hegemony. He suffers from a Nero complex. The colonizer is familiar with the illegitimacy of his action—illegitimacy borne out of his criminal activity of having usurped the land and the resources of the colonized. This illegitimate act gnaws the conscience of the colonizer, and he engages in every action to subdue or transform his guilt. By misrepresenting the colonized, he can assuage his guilt. He, therefore, gets profoundly involved in efforts that can convince himself and others that his colonizing efforts are justified. He, therefore, does not shy away from painting a picture of the

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<sup>14</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 123, italics ours.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

colonized as immoral and unethical people, having laws that border savagery and immorality. If he has to rewrite history to exalt himself and show the colonized in a poor light, he will. Memmi comments:

Accepting the reality of being a colonizer means agreeing to be a nonlegitimate privileged person, that is, a usurper. To be sure, a usurper claims his place and, if need be, will defend it by every means at his disposal. This amounts to saying that at the very time of his triumph, he admits that what triumphs in him is an image which he condemns. His true victory will therefore never be upon him: now he need only record it in the laws and morals. For this he would have to convince the others, if not himself. In other words, to possess victory completely he needs to absolve himself of it and the conditions under which it was attained. This explains his strenuous insistence, strange for a victor, on apparently futile matters. He endeavors to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories—anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, rewriting history and transforming the image of the colonized becomes his central preoccupation. And given that the colonizer and the colonized are in a dialectical relationship, he must slam the colonized to the ground to uplift himself. The saga of the colonizer depicting the colonized savage, uncouth, brute, rude, etc., begins:

How can usurpation try to pass for legitimacy? One attempt can be made by demonstrating the usurper's eminent merits, so eminent that they deserve such compensation. Another is to harp on the usurped's demerits, so deep that they cannot help leading to misfortune. His disquiet and resulting thirst for justification require the usurper to extol himself to the skies and to drive the usurped below the ground at the same time. In effect, these two attempts at legitimacy are actually inseparable.<sup>17</sup>

The colonizer cannot elevate himself without depressing the colonized; he cannot be virtuous without showing the colonized filled with vice; for him to be white, the colonized has to be dark:

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 96–97.

Having become aware of the unjust relationship which ties him to the colonized, he must continually attempt to absolve himself. He never forgets to make a public show of his own virtues, and will argue with vehemence to appear heroic and great. At the same time his privileges arise just as much from his glory as from degrading the colonized. He will persist in degrading them, using the darkest colors to depict them. If need be, he will act to devalue them, annihilate them. But he can never escape from this circle. The distance which colonization places between him and the colonized must be accounted for and, to justify himself, he increases this distance still further by placing the two figures irretrievably in opposition; his glorious position and the despicable one of the colonized.<sup>18</sup>

Fanon characterizes this opposition that Memmi describes as the Manichean world. The world of the colonized comes to be represented by the colonizer as the world of evil—a world in which values do not have any place; a world in which humanistic concerns with one another do not have any home; a world in which sympathy with one another is not accounted for; a world in which divinity does not find any sanction. The colonized is described and represented as the antithesis of human values.

The colonial world is a Manichaeian world. The colonist is not content with physically limiting the space of the colonized, i.e., with the help of his agents of law and order. As if to illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil. Colonized society is not merely portrayed as a society without values. The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The “native” is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil. A corrosive element, destroying everything within his reach, a corrupting element, distorting everything which involves aesthetics or morals, an agent of malevolent powers, an unconscious and incurable instrument of blind forces.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 98–99.

<sup>19</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 6.

The colonizer thus does not shy away, at times, from representing the colonized as animals. The entire lexicon to describe the animal kingdom is brought to the service of the portrayal of the colonized. One is reminded of the phrase “breeding like rabbits,” which the colonial Prime Minister of Britain, Winston Churchill, was very fond of using against the Indians.

Sometimes this Manichaeism reaches its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the colonized subject. In plain talk, he is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms. Allusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the “native” quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations. In his endeavors at description and finding the right word, the colonist refers constantly to the bestiary. The European seldom has a problem with figures of speech. But the colonized, who immediately grasp the intention of the colonist and the exact case being made against them, know instantly what he is thinking. This explosive population growth, those hysterical masses, those blank faces, those shapeless, obese bodies, this headless, tailless cohort, these children who seem not to belong to anyone, this indolence sprawling under the sun, this vegetating existence, all this is part of the vocabulary.<sup>20</sup>

Sartre agrees that the colonizer establishes his superiority by “debas[ing] the colonized to exalt themselves, deny[ing] the title to the natives, and defin[ing] them as simply absences of qualities—animals not humans.”<sup>21</sup>

The colonizer thus dehumanizes the colonized. The colonized’s culture, language, and cosmology are entirely transformed and substituted with the colonizer’s. They are trampled upon, and the resources that sustain them are withdrawn and replaced with those that will allow the colonizer’s language, culture, and traditions to graft and grow roots. Not separating himself from the colonizers and showing them a mirror, Sartre writes: “Colonial violence not only aims at keeping these enslaved men at a respectful distance, it also seeks to dehumanize them. No effort is spared

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, introduction to *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, by Albert Memmi, trans. Howard Greenfield (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003), xxvi.

to demolish their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs, and to destroy their culture.”<sup>22</sup>

The colonized is the “other” of the colonizer—a polar opposite on whom the desires, fantasies, and imaginations could be projected. The colonizer imagines or constructs the colonized. Analyzing the Black experience in the light of European colonization, Fanon writes: “Projecting his desires onto the Black man, the white man behaves as if the black man had them”<sup>23</sup> and “confronted with...alterity, the white man needs to defend himself, i.e., to characterize ‘the Other,’ who will become the mainstay of his preoccupations and his desires.”<sup>24</sup>

How does this projection work? This unconscious domain is the home of all kinds of savage, lowly, beastly, irrational, and animal-like impulses. Given that these are unconscious, unacknowledged, and repressed (for most part because they cannot be given expression in a “civilized” “society which tends to suppress these impulses, particularly when it does not have the tools to sublimate and transform them), they are projected onto the colonized other, for there is a thumb-rule in psychology: what is repressed and unconscious gets projected onto someone else who essentially becomes a scapegoat of one’s own unconscious “stuff.” Within the European context, this repressed unconsciousness is conflated with evil and darkness. This “evil” and “darkness” got projected onto all the non-European people of color in varying degrees during the colonial era.

Commenting specifically on the experience of a black man in relationship to the European civilization<sup>25</sup> and commenting on how a black man was represented in the colonial era, Fanon writes:

*In Europe, evil is symbolized by the black man. We have to move slowly—that we know—but it’s not easy. The perpetrator is the black man; Satan is black; one talks of darkness; when you are filthy you are dirty—and this*

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<sup>22</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Franz Fanon, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 143.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 147–48.

<sup>25</sup> For complete details on the European and later Euro-American representation of the Black people in a historical context beginning with the sixteenth century, see Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

goes for physical dirt as well as moral dirt. If you took the trouble to note them, you would be surprised at the number of expressions that equate the black man with sin. In Europe, the black man, whether physically or symbolically, represents the dark side of the personality. As long as you haven't understood this statement, discussing the "black problem" will get you nowhere. Darkness, obscurity, shadows, gloom, night, the labyrinth of the underworld, the murky depths, blackening someone's reputation; and on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical heavenly light. A beautiful blond child—how much peace there is in that phrase, how much joy, and above all how much hope! No comparison with a beautiful black child: the adjectives literally don't go together. Nevertheless, I won't go into the stories of black angels. In Europe, i.e., in all the civilized and civilizing countries, the black man symbolizes sin. The archetype of inferior values is represented by the black man.<sup>26</sup>

The European "civilization" projected all its shadows onto the colonized "other." For the Europeans to be civilized, the non-Europeans had to be savages, uncivilized, and animal-like. For them to be rational, the non-Europeans had to be irrational, emotional, bodily, mystical, poetic, or somatic. Nowhere in the world the colonizers gave the colonized an iota of civilization or rationality. Across the world, they created an image of primitiveness and savagery of the colonized:

Deep down in the European unconscious has been hollowed out an excessively black pit where the most immoral instincts and unmentionable desires slumber. And since every man aspires to whiteness and light, the European has attempted to repudiate this primitive personality, which does its best to defend itself. When European civilization came into contact with the black world, with these savages, everyone was in agreement that these black people were the essence of evil.... The black man will, unfailingly, remain in his hole. In Europe the black man has a function: to represent shameful feelings, base instincts, and the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *Homo occidentalis* the black man—or, if you prefer, the color black—symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, and famine.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 165–66, italics in original.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 166–67.

A poignant observation from Fanon is pertinent here: “The scapegoat for white society, which is based on the myths of progress, civilization, liberalism, education, enlightenment, and refinement, will be precisely the force that opposes the expansion and triumph of these myths. This oppositional brute force is provided by the black man.”<sup>28</sup> If we take the colonial experience of non-European people into consideration and account, we can safely say that it was the non-European “other” from around the world, who was providing an antithesis to the European conceptualization of civilization and by default itself—the antithesis of myths of progress, enlightenment, refinement, education, liberalism, etc., etc.

The non-European “other” are nothing but barbarians. They cannot possess any semblance of civilization. If they do, all traces of culture from their records and, consequently, memory must be wiped out. Intellectuals become the henchmen for performing such activities. The colonized is reformulated and imagined, or, as Robin G. Kelley, writing the introduction to Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, describes, “reinvented.”

Césaire reveals, over and over again, that the colonizers’ sense of superiority, their sense of mission depends upon turning the Other into a barbarian. The Africans, the Indians, the Asians cannot possess civilization or a culture equal to that of the imperialists, or the latter have no purpose, no justification for the exploitation and domination of the rest of the world. The colonial encounter thus requires a reinvention of the colonized, the deliberate destruction of the past—what Césaire calls “thingification.”<sup>29</sup>

## Racism and the Portrait of the Colonized

The colonizer, to ossify and encrust the superiority of his ilk over the inferiority of the colonized, resorts to racism: “It is significant that racism is part of colonialism throughout the world; and it is no coincidence. Racism suns up and symbolizes the fundamental relation which unites colonialist and colonized.”<sup>30</sup> Colonialism is about racial superiority—the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 170–71.

<sup>29</sup> Kelley, “Introduction: A Poetics of Anticolonialism,” 9.

<sup>30</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 113–14.



superiority of the “white race” over the “non-white races.” This conceptualized, fostered, fomented, and sustained the colonizer-colonized relationship. The institutions and residential areas ensured the divide was firmly established. Even today in India, most cities that were under colonial domination have two distinct areas: areas beautifully built for the colonial masters and the colonized folks who were willing to serve them and not question their authority (though even there the hierarchy between the colonizing “race” and colonized “race” was demarcated), and areas, poorly developed or undeveloped, for the colonized and dispossessed souls. For instance, the French created two divisions in Pondicherry, India, which still bear the names White Pondicherry and Black Pondicherry. We have already seen that the colonizer, due to various psychological factors as pointed out by Memmi and Fanon, constructs two mutually independent categories, the colonizer and the colonized (paradoxically unaware of the interdependent dialectics that exist between the two), and then begins to engage in ways in which the division could be streamlined, stratified, and hardened. The imagination of the colonized as an antithesis to the colonizer is laced with racism, and the perpetuation and ossification of the division are also driven by racism. The imagined superiority of the colonizer comes from his belief in his racial superiority. Memmi explains the characteristics of colonial racism well: “Colonial racism is built from three major ideological components: one, the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; two, the exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonialist; three, the use of these supposed differences as standards of absolute fact.”<sup>31</sup>

The colonizer, ably supported by intellectuals from his mother country, does not look for the characteristics that may show similarities with the colonized but accentuates the differences—sometimes real but mostly fabricated. Even if the similarities exist because of historical and contextual factors, they are never emphasized. On the contrary, the differences are made time-independent and fixed from antiquity to perpetuity:

To search for differences in features between two peoples is not in itself a racist’s characteristic, but it has a definitive function and takes on a

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 115.

particular meaning in a racist context. The colonialist stresses those things which keep him separate, rather than emphasizing that which might contribute to the foundation of a joint community. In those differences, the colonized is always degraded and the colonialist finds justification for rejecting his subjects. But perhaps the most important thing is that once the behavioral feature, or historical or geographical factor which characterizes the colonialist and contrasts him with the colonizer, has been isolated, this gap must be kept from being filled. The colonialist removes the factor from history, time, and therefore possible evolution. What is actually a sociological point becomes labeled as being biological or, preferably, metaphysical. It is attached to the colonized's basic nature. Immediately the colonial relationship between colonized and colonizer, founded on the essential outlook of the two protagonists, becomes a definitive category. It is what it is because they are what they are, and neither one nor the other will ever change.<sup>32</sup>

To be sure, in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, racism does not play a peripheral role; on the contrary, it plays a central role. The fixing of racial inferiority also fixes the difference between them. Conversely, the accentuation of the difference between the colonizer and the colonized, which is the outcome of the colonial exploitation of the colonized, entrenches the "racial" difference, leading to a vicious loop:

Racism appears then, not as an incidental detail, but as a consubstantial part of colonialism. It is the highest expression of the colonial system and one of the most significant features of the colonialist. Not only does it establish a fundamental discrimination between colonizer and colonized, a *sine qua non* of colonial life, but it also lays the foundation for the immutability of this life.<sup>33</sup>

Memmi develops this concept further in his work *Racism* where he categorically states the following: "It seems to me justified to conclude that *racism illustrates, summarizes, and symbolizes the colonial relation.*"<sup>34</sup> The

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 115–16.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>34</sup> Albert Memmi, *Racism*, trans. Steve Martinot (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 35, italics in original.

operation of racism not only creates differences but also puts a value on those differences, which are exploited for the benefit of the colonizer. It isn't that differences do not exist in the human world, but what distinguishes racism from the study of difference is the value that is put on those differences on hierarchical lines or on the binary of inferior/superior:<sup>35</sup> "If the difference is missing, the racist invents one; if the difference exists, he interprets it to his own advantage."<sup>36</sup> The "racial" difference and the superiority of the White population create the White Man's burden of civilizing the inferior "race." And for the enormous task that the European Man undertakes, the privileges he accords to himself in terms of power, wealth, and riches is only a just remuneration!

Custodian of the values of civilization and history, he accomplishes a mission; he has the immense merit of bringing light to the colonized's ignominious darkness. The fact that this role brings him privileges and respect is only justice; colonization is legitimate in every sense and with all its consequences.<sup>37</sup>

Nadine Gordimer, who wrote the "New Introduction" to Memmi's *Colonizer and the Colonized*, substantiates—the testimony gains further

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<sup>35</sup>In George S. Schuyler, "Our Greatest Gift to America," *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, ed. V. F. Calverton (New York: Random House, 1929), the author argues that the greatest contribution of the Black Americans to the US was not bridges and buildings but the feeling of superiority that the Euro-Americans gained at the expense of the Black Americans. It was this superiority generated in the backdrop of the inferiority of the Black Americans that gave the Euro-Americans the confidence to achieve great things. See, Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of White Race* (New York: Verso, 1994) and Valerie Babb, *Whiteness Visible: The Meaning of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) for the creation of the white "race" in the United States as a contrast and opposition to the black "race." Also see, Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of the Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) and Tony Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). The constructed inferiority of the Native Americans described them as people not having political consciousness and lacking the capacity to self-govern. This narrative allowed the treaties between Euro-Americans and native Indians to be broken, the lands of the latter to be taken, and their almost complete extinction. See for details, Maureen Konkle, "Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism," in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, ed. Amarjeet Singh and Peter Schmidt (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

<sup>36</sup>Memmi, *Racism*, 172.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.* 119.

credibility because of her experience growing up as a colonizer's child in South Africa: "I speak as a colonizer's offspring; that the colonizer justified his/her situation by asserting that the colonizers brought enlightenment, technical as well as religious, to the indigenous people living in the heart of darkness."<sup>38</sup>

The racial difference is created on binary lines, where every privileged half of the binary belongs to the colonizer. In the representation of the colonized by the colonizer, the following and more are found: The idea of civilization belongs to the colonizer, whereas savagery and primitiveness characterize the colonized. Culture belongs to the colonizer, and its lack belongs to the colonized. Order is in the domain of the colonizer; chaos marks the colonized. Being disciplined is the nature of the colonizer; the colonized do not have any discipline—the colonized are lazy and impetuous. The colonizer is the epitome of governing skills; colonized for the life of them cannot govern. The colonizer is the messiah of values; values the colonized have never known. Humanity sprouts from the colonizer; inhumanity defines the colonized. The colonizers are the apostles of God, whereas the colonized are the children of evil. The colonized are not humans; if not animals, they are subhuman:

Racism is ingrained in actions, institutions, and in the nature of the colonialist methods of production and exchange. Political and social regulations reinforce one another. Since the native is subhuman, the Declaration of Human Rights does not apply to him; inversely, since he has no rights, he is abandoned without protection to inhuman forces—brought in with the colonialist praxis, engendered every moment by the colonialist apparatus, and sustained by relations of production that define two sorts of individuals—one for whom privilege and humanity are one, who becomes a human being through exercising his rights; and the other, for whom a denial of rights sanctions misery, chronic hunger, ignorance, or, in general, "subhumanity."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Nadine Gordimer, new introduction to *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, by Albert Memmi, trans. Howard Greenfield (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003), 32.

<sup>39</sup> Sartre, introduction to *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 20–21.

Without caring for consistency in the colonial discourse on the colonized where virtues always belong to the colonizer and vices to the colonized, even the positive attributes of the colonized are turned into negative ones: It is thus of the essence of this process that “*the other’s traits all have a negative evaluation.*”<sup>40</sup> It is a totalizing discourse in which the positive characteristics of the colonized, if at all reluctantly accepted, are explained away as an exception rather than as a rule. The colonial discourse is a racist discourse in which “it is the oppressed who have nothing but faults, while the dominant have all the virtues.”<sup>41</sup> The objective of the discourse is to oppress, reject, and injure. Therefore, as per Memmi, “*racism is always both a discourse and an action; it is discourse that prepares an action, and an action that legitimates itself through a discourse.*”<sup>42</sup> He also compares it to a theater where nothing but lies are concocted and fed to the gullible masses: “Racism is a theater, a querulous polemic that makes everything about the other something it is not, whether physique, customs, history, culture, religion.”<sup>43</sup> The “relationship” that gets established between the colonizer and the colonized leads to what Fanon calls the “objectification” of the colonized. Schmitt categorizes the numerous ways in which “objectification” of the colonized happens as described by Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks*: infantilization, denigration, distrust, ridicule, exclusion, rendering invisible, scapegoating, and violence.<sup>44</sup> What drives “objectification” or “thingification” is racism: “The racist describes to his victim a series of surprising traits, calling him incomprehensible, impenetrable, mysterious, strange, disturbing, and so on. Slowly he makes of his victim a sort of animal, a thing, or simply a symbol.”<sup>45</sup> Intellectuals, through their pseudo-scientific and “objective” theories, have been prodigiously complicit in the creation of a picture or portrait of the colonized that gave an unrestrained sanction to the practice of racism, for as per Memmi

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<sup>40</sup> Memmi, *Racism*, 95, italics in original.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 142, italics in original.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Schmitt, “Racism and Objectification: Reflections on Themes from Fanon,” in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renee T. White (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Memmi, *Racism*, 176.

*Racism is a generalizing definition and valuation of differences, whether real or imaginary, to the advantage of the one defining and deploying them [accusateur], and to the detriment of the one subjected to that act of definition [victim], whose purpose is to justify (social or physical) hostility and assault [aggression].*<sup>46</sup>

## Colonialism, Racism, and the Complicity of Intellectuals in Perpetuating the Nexus

To perpetuate the racial inferiority of the colonized, certain myths of the colonized had to be fabricated. The myths, given that they are myths, have no bearing on any objective reality. They are pure and sheer imaginations regarding the colonized: lazy, weakling, hyper-sexual, irrational, effeminate, etc. etc. Memmi Comments:

In colonial relationships, domination is imposed by people upon people but the pattern remains the same. The characterization and role of the colonized occupies a choice place in colonialist ideology; a characterization which is neither true to life, or in itself incoherent, but necessary and inseparable within that ideology.<sup>47</sup>

He makes his observations and voice crisper in his later work *Racism*:

One thing is blindingly clear: the entire machinery of racism, which is nourished on corruption, whether shameless and blatant or whispered and elusive, and which produces a vast lexicon of official words, gestures, administrative texts, and political conduct, has but one undeniable goal: the legitimization and consolidation of power and privilege for the colonizers.<sup>48</sup>

Fanon mentions at great lengths how the Algerians were described as criminals and inherently violent people—people who kill when suffering

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 100, italics and brackets in original.

<sup>47</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 131.

<sup>48</sup> Memmi, *Racism*, 38.

from melancholia, having the capacity to grasp only a fragmented and not a complete picture of a situation; people who have no sense of analysis and are “mentally retarded” and child-like; people who are “pointilistic, attracted to objects, lost in detail, insensitive to ideas, and closed to concepts.”<sup>49</sup>

An organized body of intellectuals and professionals become complicit in such representations. For instance, the French researchers found a biological cause for the aforementioned “characteristics” of the Algerian people. The psychiatrist “proved” that the cortex is poorly developed in the Algerians and that their lives are primarily governed by diencephalon. The cortex is held responsible for finer cognitive abilities, whereas the diencephalon is held in charge of automatic responses. Given that the diencephalon is one of the most primitive parts of the brain, they held that an Algerian, by default, is primitive. The researchers thus “scientifically proved” that the Algerians were primitive people incapable of ruling themselves. Therefore, they had to be ruled over and governed, preferably by people with well-developed cortices, namely the European people. The brutal colonization thus could be “scientifically” justified.

In the postcolonial situation, we now know that the above is a blatant lie, for when we bring the literature of the colonizer on the colonized from around the world together, we find that the themes of primitiveness, savagery, and uncivilization are common to all of them. They were used against the people from the Americas, Africa, and Asia with minor variations here and there. For instance, what was stated against the Algerians was also said against the other Africans. The African was considered a “lobotomized European,” basically a being with no frontal lobes—again, within the brain, it is held by neuroscience even today that complex cognitive functions take place within the frontal lobes.<sup>50</sup>

One of the major causalities is the representation of the colonized people in history. They do not participate in history as free agents. And the colonizer denies them any history. He mutilates it, transforms it, and transfigures it. History is tied to identity. It roots an individual in geography, culture, and continuity. It grafts a people to the soil. By destroying

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<sup>49</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 225.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

and mutilating the history of the colonized, the colonizer essentially implodes the colonized from within. The colonized become fragmented, uprooted, and atomized. Destruction and mutilation of history help the colonizer subjugate the colonized and hold them in suzerainty. Therefore, if any history is at all taught to the colonized, it is the history of the motherland of the colonizer. The colonized, with the passage of time, begin to lose their history:

We should add that [the colonized] draws less and less from his past. The colonizer never even recognized that he had one; everyone knows that the commoner whose origins are unknown has no history. Let us ask the colonized himself: who are his folk heroes? his great popular leaders? his sages? At most, he may be able to give us a few names, in complete disorder, and fewer and fewer as one goes down the generations. The colonized seems condemned to lose his memory.<sup>51</sup>

Through his keen insights, Césaire was able to identify the involvement of European intellectuals in erasing and mutilating the history of the colonized. Writing an introduction to Aimé Césaire's *Discourses on Colonialism*, Robin D. G. Kelley writes:

An entire generation of “enlightened” European scholars worked hard to wipe out the cultural and intellectual contributions of Egypt and Nubia from European history, to whiten the West in order to maintain the purity of the “European” race. They also stripped all of Africa of any semblance of “civilization,” using the printed page to eradicate their history and thus reduce a whole continent and its progeny to little more than beasts of burden or brutish heathens.<sup>52</sup>

These intellectuals were explicit about the superiority of the “white race”: clear about the enslavement of the inferior “non-white races,” finding it as natural as one domesticates a horse or an ox; candid about the contention that civilization is the creation of the “white race” and no other, and

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<sup>51</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 146–47.

<sup>52</sup> Kelley, “Introduction: A Poetics of Anticolonialism,” 22.



that there could never be a scientist, mathematician, philosopher, or logician amongst the non-Europeans; assertive that tropical climates could not produce civilizations, which could only be created in temperate climates—in other words where “white” people reside.

Through an organized enterprise, these intellectuals, as they “brought” civilization to the imperial nations, removed all traces of civilization in the colonized. The colonized did not have science and philosophy—understandable, isn’t it, given that they did not have reason and logical mind! They did not have ethics and morals, as they were savage. They used all the epistemological and methodological tools of Modernism to advance their utterances: rationalism, objectivity, universalism, and psychoanalysis, among others. Césaire calls them the “watchdogs of colonialism.”<sup>53</sup>

Césaire, Fanon, and Memmi came from their contextual conditions to reveal the nature of the colonizer/colonized relationship. Their readership, however, expanded way beyond their immediate locale, as the colonized across the world could identify, verify, and substantiate the veracity of their contentions. Memmi explicitly states that he had not anticipated the popularity that his work gained. He writes:

It was clear that the book would be utilized by well defined colonized people—Algerians, Moroccans, African Negroes. But other peoples, subjugated in other ways—certain South Americans, Japanese and American Negroes—interpreted and used the book. The most recent to find a similarity to their own form of alienation have been the French Canadians. I looked with astonishment on all this, much as a father, with a mixture of pride and apprehension, watches his son achieve a scandalous and applauded fame.<sup>54</sup>

With the above container—coming from the writings of Césaire, Fanon, and Memmi—in place, we will analyze the writings of James Mill in the *History of British India: Volume One* on Hindus and Hinduism to show

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<sup>53</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 55.

<sup>54</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 7.

that he as an intellectual, first as ably supported by and later as hired by the East India Company, misused the power of pen to demonize and primitivize the Hindus and Hinduism, and set a racist narrative in motion which continues in academia even today from grade-school to the graduate-and-beyond levels—though we will only examine the grade-level discourse in this work.

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# 3

## Primitivizing the Hindus: Hindus as Oppressive and Hierarchical

The Francophone postcolonial writers, as we saw in the previous chapter, spoke about the universal trends emerging from the “relationship” between the colonizers and the colonized. They explained in detail how and why the colonizers constructed the image of the colonized as the primitive “other.” Their central thesis is that the “civilization” of the colonizer was reciprocally dependent on the “savagery” of the colonized. Therefore, the colonizers went to great lengths in terms of the expenditure of time, money, and resources to represent the colonized in print as uncouth, savage, and primitive. These universal trends that the Francophone writers recognized in terms of the European colonizers representing the non-European colonized as primitive are not figments of imagination, for their contentions can be proven fair and square when we take the example of how James Mill represented Hindus and Ancient India in his *History of British India* writings. This chapter also exposes all the coordinates and parameters on which Mill constructed the savagery and primitiveness of the Hindus. One of his chief refrains in showing the Hindu people as primitive and savage was that they are hierarchical and oppressive: their social structure is hierarchical and oppressive; their governance structure since antiquity has been hierarchical and oppressive; their taxation structure is hierarchical and oppressive; their laws, culture,

and mores are hierarchical and oppressive; the Hindu males are oppressive towards Hindu women; the Hindu teachers are oppressive towards their students, etc.<sup>1</sup> He concluded the discussion by describing the Hindus as inhuman, villainous, timid, weak, cowardly, lazy, pernicious, greedy, filthy, superstitious, and fatalistic. In the process, he slammed Hinduism as irrational, incoherent, immoral, childlike, and pagan. We undertake this exercise in this chapter not only to confirm the veracity of the contentions of the Francophone postcolonial thinkers but also to show in a later chapter how Hinduism, Hindus, and Ancient India continue to get discussed in the middle-school textbooks on the same parameters as developed by Mill.

## Savage and Primitive Hindus: No Sense of History

In complete accord with the enunciations of the postcolonial thinkers, Mill launched himself into proving how the Hindus were savage, uncivilized, brute, rude, uncouth, unsophisticated, barbarian, and primitive. He wrote seven chapters on Hindus in his *History of British India: Volume One*, and one would have to stretch oneself to find a single positive representation of them. As we will see in the discussion below, his agenda was explicit: to primitivize the Hindus to such an extent that no scope for any claim of civilization remained with them. He begins his agenda-driven narrative with the following statement, for he has already presupposed that the Hindus are savages and primitive, and all that he must accomplish is to establish his preconception from as many vantage points as possible: “Rude nations seem to derive a peculiar gratification from pretensions to a remote antiquity. As a boastful and turgid vanity distinguishes remarkably the oriental nations, they have in most instances

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<sup>1</sup> The impact of Mill’s representation on Hindus has been so strong that despite its production some two hundred years ago, we still find it difficult to speak about it in the past tense. Also, Mill has blurred the past/present dichotomy in the context of Hindus, as we will see in the chapter, to such an extent that his representations of Hindus have acquired an eternal character. It is, therefore, here, as well as later, that we speak about his representation in the present tense.

carried their claims extravagantly high.”<sup>2</sup> And then uses one of the Puranas, *Matysa Purāṇa*, in which the age of the universe is described in astronomically high numbers as a signifier of savagery and rudeness since the Hindus claim remote antiquity to cosmic history and the age of the universe.<sup>3</sup> The savage Hindus, Mill contends, do not have any sense of history:

The offspring of a wild and ungoverned imagination, they mark the state of a rude and credulous people, whom the marvellous delights; who cannot estimate the use of a record of past events; and whose imagination the real occurrences of life are too familiar to engage. To the monstrous period of years which the legends of the Hindus involve, they ascribe events the most extravagant and unnatural: events not even connected in chronological series; a number of independent and incredible fictions. This people, indeed, are perfectly destitute of historical records.<sup>4,5</sup>

As per Mill, by the “historical” records that he was examining—to wit, the *Matysa Purāṇa*—the Hindu history ended towards the close of the Gupta period, only to be continued after the Muslims set foot in India. Mill holds that humanity has not lost much, for it does not matter whether the savage Hindus wrote history or not. In fact, it is better that the records do not exist because the world is spared of their barbarity and savagery. Quoting Hume’s<sup>6</sup> *History of England*, Mill writes:

An acute and eloquent historian has remarked, “that the sudden, violent, and unprepared revolutions incident to barbarians, are so much guided by caprice, and terminate so often in cruelty, that they disgust us by the uniformity of their appearance, and it is rather fortunate for letters that they

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<sup>2</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 154.

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Modern Science is very close to the number of years described in the Purana as to the universe’s age.

<sup>4</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 166–67.

<sup>5</sup> We have not edited his British English for American English.

<sup>6</sup> David Hume, *The History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, Vols. 1–6 (London: A. Miller in the Strand, 1754–1761).

are buried in silence and oblivion,” [and therefore] we have perhaps but little to regret in the total absence of Hindu records.<sup>7,8</sup>

Mill has no doubts that all peoples and nations in their antiquity have been barbarians. However, given the Indian subcontinent was bountiful and full of forest, the savagery of Hindus continued for a much longer time than it did for the rest. In other words, whereas the Egyptians, the Greeks, or the European people could advance, the Hindus remained stuck in antiquity and savagery. The conclusion that he draws is that the Hindus were nomads and wanderers for a much greater period than their Middle Eastern and European counterparts, which is amply evident in the following quote. It is a long quote, but it is essential to go through it in completeness as it would help substantiate the central thesis of our work, namely that the colonial narrative which was put in place to characterize and picturize the Hindus as barbaric and savage people continues even today, albeit, in politically correct ways—most notably in how the Aryan invasion/migration is discussed in school textbooks currently.

If we suppose that India began to be inhabited at a very early stage in the peopling of the world, its first inhabitants must have been few, ignorant, and rude. Uncivilized and ignorant men, transported in small numbers, into an uninhabited country of boundless extent, must wander for many ages before any great improvement can take place. Till they have multiplied so far as to be assembled in numbers large enough to permit the benefits of social intercourse, and of some division of labour, their circumstances seem not susceptible of amelioration. We find, accordingly, that all those ancient nations, whose history can be most depended upon, trace themselves up to a period of rudeness. The families who first wandered into Greece, Italy, and the eastern regions of Europe, were confessedly ignorant and barbarous. The influence of dispersion was no doubt most baneful, where the

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<sup>7</sup>Mill, *History of British India*, 171.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 162–63, footnote, the commentator and editor Horace Hayman Wilson states that “the Puranic accounts bring down the traditional history of the Hindus in Gangetic Hindustan to the eighth and ninth centuries. In the south of India original accounts of different dynasties are preserved from an early to a very recent period, and the chronicles of Rajputana, assuming the appearance of authenticity in the first ages of Christianity, offer a connected narrative to times long subsequent to the establishment of the Mohammedans in India. These various records are illustrated and confirmed by coins and inscriptions discovered and deciphered.”

natural disadvantages were the greatest. In a country overgrown with forest, which denies pasture to cattle, and precludes husbandry, by surpassing the power of single families to clear the land for their support, the wretched inhabitants are reduced to all the hardships of the hunter's life, and become savages. The difficulties with which those families had to struggle who first came into Europe, seem to have thrown them into a situation but few degrees removed from the lowest stage of society. The advantages of India in soil and climate are so great, that those by whom it was originally peopled might sustain no farther depression than what seems inherent to a state of dispersion. They wandered probably for ages in the immense plains and valleys of that productive region, living on fruits, and the produce of their flocks and herds, and not associated beyond the limits of a particular family. Until the country became considerably peopled, it is not even likely that they would be formed into small tribes [and consequently no civilization would begin].<sup>9</sup>

The Francophone postcolonial thinkers observed that one of the chief concerns of the colonials was to obliterate the history of the colonized people. Mill not only wrote the history of India but also denied any historical consciousness to the Hindu people. In one sweep, he not only made the past records of the Hindu people insignificant but also deposited them in the heap of superstition and imagination.

We want to clarify at the very outset that the objective of this work is not to examine the veracity of evidence from Indian sources that Mill has used to make his claims. On the contrary, it will lay bare in front of us the discourse in all its comprehensiveness and completeness, the numerous ways in which he has characterized the Hindus as savage. The work, particularly this chapter, will scrupulously expose the various coordinates on which Mill's representation of the savagery and barbarism of Hindus were pegged so that in subsequent analyses, we can see their play in the contemporary middle-school discourse. In the next chapter, we will also show how Mill's contentions are fabrications, imaginations, and projections—garnered from the paradigm of European culture and history—that were grafted onto the Indian situation. Though the “evidence” used

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 173–75.

by Mill from the Indian texts and Indian scenarios to make his case are extremely faulty, we reserve their critical examination for a later time.

We want to underline, however, that despite Mill's discourse becoming the dominant discourse, it was a contested scholarship back in the day, too. Horace Hayman Wilson, who added a volume to Mill's *History of British India*, covering the period from 1805 to 1835, also edited the three volumes of Mill's *History* after Mill's death. He has disputed almost every Mill's (mis)characterization of Hindus and the evidence that the latter used from the Indian sources, arising out of "inaccuracies both of fact and opinion."<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, such was the power that Mill's work acquired due to the backing of the East India Company that Wilson could not junk the work and write his own series on the *History of British India*. He could only contest Mill's work in footnotes and add another volume to the *History*, which had already become an authoritative work on the history, culture, manners, laws, and governance of the Hindu people by the time Wilson published his work in 1840—this is a very short period, given that Mill published his work in 1817 and died in 1836. Wilson downplayed those inaccuracies by outlining Mill's lack of immediate knowledge of India and familiarity with Indian languages and by pointing out the appearance of new research since the publication of *History* in 1817. What is staggering, however, is that Wilson was fully aware that Mill's characterization of Hindus as savage and barbarous was plainly wrong and that his views were highly jaundiced, inspired by the utilitarian party line that the latter had undertaken and the disastrous consequences that it would have and was already having in the governance of India by the East India officials:

With very imperfect knowledge, with materials exceedingly defective, with an implicit faith in all testimony hostile to Hindu pretensions, he [Mill] has elaborated a portrait of the Hindus which has no resemblance whatever to the original, and which almost outrages humanity. As he represents them, the Hindus are not only on a par with the least civilized nations of the Old and New World, but they are plunged almost without exception in the lowest depths of immorality and crime. Considered merely in a literary

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, ii.



capacity, the description of the Hindus, in the History of British India, is open to censure for its obvious unfairness and injustice; but in the effects which it is likely to exercise upon the connexion between the people of England and the people of India, it is chargeable with more than literary demerit: its tendency is evil; it is calculated to destroy all sympathy between the rulers and the ruled; to preoccupy the minds of those who issue annually from Great Britain, to monopolize the posts of honour and power in Hindustan, with an unfounded aversion towards those over whom they exercise that power, and from whom they enforce that honour; and to substitute for those generous and benevolent feelings, which the situation of the younger servants of the Company in India naturally suggests, sentiments of disdain, suspicion, and dislike uncongenial to their age and character, and wholly incompatible with the full and faithful discharge of their obligations to Government and to the people. There is reason to fear that these consequences are not imaginary, and that a harsh and illiberal spirit has of late years prevailed in the conduct and councils of the rising service in India, which owes its origin to impressions imbibed in early life from the History of Mill.<sup>11</sup>

Wilson, after all, was a colonial. Despite inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and the lack of any generosity that Mill showed towards the Hindus, he still held that

The history of Mr. Mill as the most valuable work upon the subject which has yet been published. It is a composition of great industry, of extensive information, of much accuracy on many points, of unrelaxing vigour on all; and even where the reader may not feel disposed to adopt the views it advocates, he will rarely fail to reap advantage from the contemplation of them, as they are advanced to illustrate the relations between India and Great Britain.<sup>12</sup>

Wilson's stance is illuminating. It did not matter that he massively contradicted himself in the above two quotes. What mattered was that Mill's *History* was the East India Company manual of India's governance, which still had to be upheld by suggesting modifications in footnotes.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., vii–ix.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., ix.

Interestingly, these footnotes comprehensively destroy Mill's arguments, enough in our considered opinion to junk Mill's *History*.<sup>13</sup> But knowledge production in a colonial setup has almost nothing to do with truth; instead, it almost always has to do with power. Who cares for truth when the power is absolute! Had it mattered, Mill's *History* would have been a relic of the past, consigned to a long list of forgotten books. The revealing truth is that despite copious arguments against Mill's descriptions of the Hindu people as savage and barbarous, Wilson did not alter Mill's central thesis when he had the chance to rewrite the *History of British India*. On the contrary, he kept the ball rolling.

We have, however, decided to include some of those Wilson's footnotes in the footnotes of our work. This is for the following three reasons: 1. Despite that we are not controverting Mill's narrative based on "evidence" that he used, we still want the readers to be aware that not only is Mill's work biased, agenda-driven, colonial, and orientalist but also the evidence used was faulty. 2. The contestations are not by an Indian person, who can quickly be slammed as holding nationalist biases and prejudices. 3. To reveal that when a work got the backing of colonial power, truth and evidence were its first casualty.

Wilson's contestations are extremely important, for unlike Mill, who never visited India and had no knowledge of Indian languages, Wilson lived in India for numerous years, having arrived there at the young age of twenty-three and had an in-depth understanding of Sanskrit. He served as the secretary of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, appointed by none other than the successor of William Jones, Henry Colebrooke. His works included a Sanskrit-English dictionary and a grammar on Sanskrit. He was instrumental in establishing a Sanskrit college in Calcutta in 1824 and is known for the translations of the Rigveda, Sanskrit dramas, Puranas, and a text on the history of Kashmir, *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*. He was the first occupant of the Boden Chair of Sanskrit Studies, established at Oxford University in 1832. His mastery of the Sanskrit language meant that "he could eventually lay claim to be the leading Sanskritist of the

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<sup>13</sup>As they say, the test of the pudding lies in tasting it. We recommend that the readers go through these footnotes, which we have included in the footnotes of our work, and they will come to the same conclusion as we did.

age.”<sup>14</sup> Still, given that our work is not about how things were or not in Ancient India but purely about a particular discourse on Ancient India, Hinduism, and Hindus imbued and permeated with descriptions of savagery and barbarianism, the refutations and contestations of Mill by Wilson are peripheral and ancillary to our work; useful, therefore, only to be footnoted.<sup>15</sup> Our focus will remain on Mill’s discourse, the coordinates on which he painted the barbarity and savagery of the Hindu people, and their reproduction in school textbooks, causing damaging psychological consequences for the Indian American children.

## Hindu Society: Hierarchical and Oppressive

After having argued extensively about how Hindus are savages because they are devoid of any sense of history, Mill proceeds to the next chapter, “Classification and Distribution of People.” The underlying objective in this chapter is based on a circular logic: because the Hindus are barbaric and savage, they have created a social system that is essentially hierarchical and oppressive—a system from which they never moved beyond. He can say so without suffering from any pangs of human or scholarly conscience because in the earlier chapter, Mill has already fossilized the Hindu society in timeless antiquity by stating the following:

From the scattered hints contained in the writings of the Greeks, the conclusion has been drawn, that the Hindus, at the time of Alexander’s

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Allen, *Ashoka: The Search for India’s Lost Emperor* (London: Abacus, 2013), 75.

<sup>15</sup> We have not used Wilson’s contestations in the main text and only in footnotes because we hold that all European writers, in greater or smaller measure, have projected their European “stuff” onto the Indian and Hindu situation. The projection of a writer nestled in the framework of Enlightenment will differ from that of a writer embedded in the Romanticist framework. The elaboration of this distinction is the subject matter of our future work. In terms of the present work, it is evident that Wilson, based on the critical evaluation of Mill’s use of Indian sources, annihilated Mill’s discourse on Hindus, Hinduism, and Ancient India. From that perspective, his footnotes are essential. The point to be noted is that Wilson perpetuated Mill’s work despite all the contestations, which strike at the very root of Mill’s thesis. The veracity of Wilson’s contestations is not the issue here; the point is that Wilson carried it forward despite such a summary dismissal of Mill’s work. We want to add, however, that Wilson’s contestations in our evaluation are closer to truth, given his long association with and mastery of Sanskrit texts and his residence in India.

invasion, were in a state of manners, society, and knowledge, exactly the same with that in which they were discovered by the nations of modern Europe; nor is there any reason for differing widely from this opinion. It is certain that the few features of which we have any description from the Greeks, bear no inaccurate resemblance to those which are found to distinguish this people at the present day. From this resemblance, from the state of improvement in which the Indians remain, and from the stationary condition in which their institutions first, and then their manners and character, have a tendency to fix them, it is no unreasonable supposition, that they have presented a very uniform appearance during the long interval from the visit of the Greeks to that of the English.<sup>16</sup>

He consequently introduces the paradigm of viewing Hinduism, Hindu studies, and Hindus through the prism of caste, and thus hierarchy and oppression—a narrative that he would regurgitate over and over throughout his seven chapters from as many angles as possible. At the very outset, he claims that the forms of government and classification of people are based on divine authority, and it is the priests who, by considering themselves closest to God, exert the most significant power in barbaric and savage societies. The Hindu society, since antiquity, is one where there is no idea of freedom, and liberty is sacrificed at the altar of authority. He creates a representation of the Hindu society, reducing its societal and cosmological complexity, where the Brahmins are at the top of the social hierarchy consisting of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, and Chandalas. His representation and the basis of evidence on which he is making such contestations are controversial, but we will not engage in examining the evidence. We want to reiterate that it is not the objective of this work to engage in such a venture, however desirable or inspired we may feel. On the contrary, our focus will remain on the postcolonial container coming from Césaire, Memmi, and Fanon to analyze the contentions of Mill on Hindus and Hinduism: what was the paradigm or the framework in which Mill has made the characterizations and portrayals of the Hindu people, Hindu society, and Hinduism? What was the agenda that Mill had in writing the work?

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<sup>16</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 170–71.

It may be regarded as a characteristic of this primary institution of government, that it is founded upon divine authority. The superstition of a rude people is peculiarly suited to such a pretension. While ignorant and solitary, men are perpetually haunted with the apprehension of invisible powers; and, as in this state only they can be imposed upon by the assumption of a divine character and commission, so it is evidently the most effectual means which a great man, full of the spirit of improvement, can employ, to induce a people, jealous and impatient of all restraint, to forego their boundless liberty, and submit to the curb of authority. No where among mankind have the laws and ordinances been more exclusively referred to the Divinity, than by those who instituted the theocracy of Hindustan. The plan of society and government, the rights of persons and things, even the customs, arrangements, and manners, of private and domestic life; every thing, in short, is established by divine prescription.<sup>17,18</sup>

The classification instituted by the author of the Hindu laws is the first and simplest form of the division of labour and employments. The priest is a character found among the rudest tribes; by whom he is always regarded as of the highest importance.... On this division of the people, and the privileges or disadvantages annexed to the several castes, the whole frame of Hindu society so much depends, that it is an object of primary importance.<sup>19</sup>

In today's scholarship, whether it is at the grade-school level or the undergraduate and graduate level, Hinduism is associated with caste. Caste is the second name of Hinduism: actually, its signifier, descriptor, and identity provider. What is important to note and emphasize is that the description of Hindus and Hinduism along caste lines has not happened in a vacuum. Mill located this narrative in the container of primitiveness, savagery, and uncivilization. *In the current context, any discourse on Hindus and Hinduism that is essentialized along caste, hierarchy, and oppression fundamentally conveys that Hindus and Hinduism are savage and primitive without saying so in explicit terms. It is essentially a racist discourse.* The current milieu of political correctness bars any author from explicitly

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 178–79.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 180, footnote, the editor Wilson writes: “The whole of this is imaginary; there is no such legislation, there are no such assertions in Hindu tradition.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 182–83.

saying that Hinduism is primitive and Hindus are savage. We must nevertheless recognize the implicit or invisible hue surrounding such a narrative. *The conflation of Hinduism with caste, oppression, and hierarchy should be essentially seen in the context of the colonial discourse* of people like Mill, whose scholarship was not agenda-free, was not objective, and was loaded with the desire to paint the colonized “black” and “dark.”

As we saw earlier, Mill claims that in primitive and savage societies, priests hold unfettered power. Given that the Hindu society is a primitive society—which he has determined *a priori*, as is evident from the opening lines of his rendition of the Hindus—he dives deep into the vilification of the Brahmins, thereby creating a picture in which the Brahmins are at the top of the social and power hierarchy where they rule the roost with impunity:

The priesthood is generally found to usurp the greatest authority, in the lowest state of society. . . . It is only in rude and ignorant times that men are so overwhelmed with the power of superstition as to pay unbounded veneration and obedience to those who artfully clothe themselves with the terrors of religion. The Brahmins among the Hindus have acquired and maintained an authority, more exalted, more commanding, and extensive, than the priests have been able to engross among any other portion of mankind. As great a distance as there is between the Brahmin and the Divinity, so great a distance is there between the Brahmin and the rest of his species.<sup>20</sup>

And how do Brahmins exert power on society, as per Mill? He contends that it is through the performance of rituals that all primitive societies are prone to engage in extensively. By controlling the exclusive right to perform rituals for the entire community, the Brahmin privileges himself over all the rest:

As the greater part of life among the Hindus is engrossed by the performance of an infinite and burdensome ritual, which extends to almost every hour of the day, and every function of nature and society, the Brahmins, who are the sole judges and directors in these complicated and endless

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 184–85.

duties, are rendered the uncontrollable masters of human life. Thus elevated in power and privileges, the ceremonial of society is no less remarkably in their favour.<sup>21,22</sup>

Once the Brahmins have been derided and vilified, Mill turns his gaze on the Kshatriyas. In the hierarchy, the power-hungry Brahmins are succeeded by the power-hungry and oppressive Kshatriyas—the “warrior” class of the Hindu society. The reason he gives for the social status of the Kshatriyas is that in primitive and rude societies, fear is the primary emotion against which people need protection. Any class of people willing to offer them protection automatically receives the people’s reverence. He does not mince any words in establishing that the status of the Kshatriyas was developed, nurtured, and fostered in the undeveloped context of the Hindu society, which incidentally has been rude and primitive since time immemorial.<sup>23</sup> He also claims that the more savage a society, the more significant the respect and esteem in which the warriors are held:

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 191–92, footnote, Wilson disagrees vehemently: “Notwithstanding the view given in the text of the position of the Brahman in Hindu society, is founded upon authentic texts, yet, upon the whole, it is calculated to produce wrong impressions. The Brahmins are not priests in the ordinary acceptance of the term, nor have they, as Brahmins only, such influence in society as is here ascribed to them. The Brahmins, in the early stages of Hindu society, were an order of men who followed a course of religious study and practice during the first half of their lives, and spent the other in a condition of self-denial and mendicity. They conducted for themselves, and others of the two next castes, sacrifices, and occasionally great public ceremonials, but they never, like the priests of other pagan nations, or those of the Jews, conducted public worship, worship for individuals indiscriminately, worship in temples, or offerings to idols. A Brahman who makes offerings to idols is held as degraded, and unfit to be invited to religious feasts. Menu, ii. 152, 180. —Again, though acceptance of gifts is one mode of subsistence, Brahmins are prohibited from taking gifts indiscriminately, habitually, or excessively, and for receiving any reward for teaching, or any fixed wages or reward for sacrifices. *Ib.* iii. 156, iv. 33, 186, 214, &c.—If possessed of wealth, a Brahman is enjoined to give liberally, and whatever property he may possess, he is commanded to abandon it in the prime of manhood, for a life of religious solitude and meditation. *Ib.* vi. 2, et seq.—The whole tenor of the rules for the conduct of a Brahman is to exclude him from everything like worldly enjoyment, from riches, and from temporal power. Neither did the Brahmins, like the priests of the Egyptians, keep to themselves a monopoly of spiritual knowledge. The Brahman alone, it is true, is to *teach* the Vedas, but the two next orders, the Kshatriya and Vaisya, are equally to study them, and were, therefore, equally well acquainted with the law and the religion. Even the Sudra was, under some circumstances, permitted to read and teach; for it is said, ‘a believer in scripture may receive pure knowledge even from a Sudra.’ Menu, ii. 238.”

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 180, Mill makes this claim on more than one occasion: “The leading institution of the Hindus bear evidence that there were devised at a very remote period, when society yet retained its rudest and simplest form.”

Among the castes of the Hindus, the next in dignity and rank to the priestly tribe, is that of the Kshatriyas, or the military class. In the rude and early state of society, as man has provided few securities against the evils with which he is assailed, and his wisdom has enabled him to draw few general rules respecting the order of their recurrence, he lives in a perpetual expectation of unhappy events, as well from nature, as from his fellow men; and fear is the passion which chiefly usurps the government of his mind. The priest soothes his imagination, in regard to the first and most awful source of his apprehensions, by undertaking to procure for him the favour of the mysterious powers of nature. The soldier, from whom he expects protection against the ravages of hostile men, is the second object of his veneration and gratitude; and in the history of society, it will be generally found, that the rank and influence of the military order are high, in proportion as the civilization of the people is low. To all but the Brahmens, the caste of Kshatriyas are an object of unbounded respect. They are as much elevated above the classes below them, as the Brahmens stand exalted above the rest of human kind. Nor is superiority of rank among the Hindus an unavailing ceremony. The most important advantages are attached to it. The distance between the different orders of men is immense and degrading.<sup>24</sup>

After creating the category of the oppressors in Brahmens and Kshatriyas, Mill describes the oppressed in Vaishyas, Shudras, and Chandalas, further entrenching the equation of Hinduism with caste, hierarchy, and oppression. He describes the Vaishyas as follows:

The Vaishyas are the third caste of the Hindus. Their duties are to tend cattle, to carry on merchandize, and to cultivate the ground. They are superior only to the Sudras, who owe to them, however, the same awful respect and submission, which it is incumbent on them to pay to the military class.<sup>25</sup>

Mill next describes the category of Shudras as the “radical other” of the Brahmens. He picturizes them as utterly subjugated and degraded humans, without having any advantages within the Hindu society.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 191–93.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.



As much as the Brahmen is an object of intense veneration, so much is the Sudra an object of contempt, and even of abhorrence, to the other classes of his countrymen. The business of the Sudras is servile labour, and their degradation inhuman. Not only is the most abject and grovelling submission imposed upon them as a religious duty, but they are driven from their just and equal share in all the advantages of the social institution.<sup>26,27,28</sup>

Mill wraps up the narrative by describing the fifth caste, the Chandalas, thus completing the discourse on Hindu sociology as one of being inflexible, rigid, fixed, stratified, hierarchical, graded, and layered:

This tribe are denominated Chandalas, and are regarded with great abhorrence. Their profession is to carry out corpses, to execute criminals, and perform other offices, reckoned to the last degree unclean and degrading. If, by the laws of Hindustan, the Sudras are placed in a low and vile situation, the impure and mixed classes are placed in one still more odious and degrading. Nothing can equal the contempt and insolence to which it is the lot of the lowest among them to see themselves exposed. They are condemned to live in a sequestered spot by themselves, that they may not pollute the very town in which they reside.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 194–95.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 194, footnote, Wilson remarks: “The law does not justify the term ‘abhorrence.’ In what follows, Mr. Mill has collected the extreme texts, and has passed over all the favourable or qualifying passages. The condition of a Sudra, in the Hindu system, was infinitely preferable to that, of the helot, the slave, or the serf of the Greek, the Roman, and the feudal systems. He was independent, his services were optional: they were not agricultural, but domestic and personal, and claimed adequate compensation. He had the power of accumulating wealth, or injunctions against his so doing would have been superfluous. He had the opportunity of rising to rank, for the Puranas record Dynasties of Sudra Kings; and even Manu notices their existence, iv. 61.—He might, as we have seen above, study and teach religious knowledge, and he might perform religious acts. ‘As a Sudra, without injuring another man, performs the lawful acts of the twice-born, even thus, without being censured, he gains exaltation in this world, and the next.’ Menu, x. 128.”

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 198, footnote, Wilson states, “The Sudra has a resource not permitted to the others—emigration—a sufficient proof of his personal liberty.”

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 200–1.

## Hindu Governance: Despotic, Authoritative, Absolutist, Hierarchical, and Oppressive

Not satisfied with showing how the primitive and savage Hindus designed a hierarchical and oppressive social structure, Mill now turns his guns on their governance structure. He consequently paints it as absolute and hierarchical, with a despotic King as the lord. This is a classic orientalist way of describing the governance structure of the non-European “other” as absolutist and despotic:<sup>30</sup>

Among the Hindus, according to the Asiatic model, the government was monarchical, and, with the usual exception of religion and its ministers, absolute. No idea of any system of rule, different from the will of a single person, appears to have entered the minds of them, or their legislators.... The pride of imperial greatness could not devise, hardly could it even desire, more extraordinary distinctions, or the sanction of a more unlimited authority. The plan, according to which the power of the sovereign was exercised in the government of the country, resembled that which has almost universally prevailed in the monarchies of Asia, and was a contrivance extremely simple and rude.<sup>31,32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Also see Inden, *Imagining India*; Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj*.

<sup>31</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 202–4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 203–4, footnote, Wilson contradicts it by stating the following: “Had Mr. Mill sufficiently considered several passages which he presently quotes, or to which he refers, he would have been satisfied that these descriptions of kingly power are mere generalities, and that in practice Hindu despotism did not exist. The Raja was not above the law. ‘Law,’ says Sankara, ‘is the king of kings, far more powerful than they.’ Preface to the Digest. He was not a lawgiver: the laws to which he was amenable, as well as the meanest of his subjects, emanated from a higher, ‘God having created the four classes, lest the royal and military class should become insupportable through their power and ferocity, produced the transcendent body of law.’ *Ibid.* He was not even permitted to administer it without legal advisers, ‘let not a prince who seeks the good of his own soul hastily and alone pronounce the law.’ *Manu*, viii. 281. The authority of the Brahmans, was not a nominal restraint. In early times, they undertook to depose princes for tyranny and impiety, see the legends of Vena, Parasurāma and Devāpi, *Vishnu Purana*, 99. 401. 458, and the *Mudrā Rākshasa*, *Hindu Theatre*, vol. 2. There were also other checks upon regal power in a hereditary nobility, ‘men of high lineage, whose ancestors were servants of kings,’ for at a very early period, offices of state seem to have become hereditary, and the hereditary minister was often more powerful than his master. The great Kshatriyas, represented by the Samants of Prithu Rai and the present Thakurs of Jaypur and Jodhpur, seldom allowed despotic power to their prince. See *Mudra Rākshasa*; *Tod’s Raja’sthan*; *Duff’s Mahrattas*.”

He contends that all the powers—legislative, executive, and judicial—were invested in the King. As the King divided and subdivided the Kingdom, all the fragments had his image replicated in a diminished form in the princes and viceroys: fundamentally, an absolutist form of government at every subordinate level where the three forms of power would be concentrated in one individual:

Among the less instructed and less civilized inhabitants of Asia, no other plan has ever occurred to the monarch, for the administration of his dominions, than simply to divide his own authority and power into pieces or fragments, as numerous as the provinces into which it was deemed convenient to distribute the empire. To each of the provinces a vicegerent was dispatched, who carried with him the undivided authority and jurisdiction of his master. Whatever powers the sovereign exercised over the whole kingdom, the vicegerent exercised in the province allotted to him; and the same plan which the sovereign adopted for the government of the whole, was exactly followed by the vicegerent in the government of a part. If the province committed to his sway was too extensive for his personal inspection and control, he subdivided it into parts, and assigned a governor to each, whom he intrusted with the same absolute powers in his district, as he himself possessed in the administration of the greater department. Even this inferior deputy often divided his authority, in the same manner, among the governors, whom he appointed, of the townships or villages under his control. Every one of those rulers, whether the sphere of his command was narrow or extensive, was absolute within it, and possessed the whole power of the sovereign, to levy taxes, to raise and command troops, and to decide upon the lives and property of the subjects.<sup>33,34</sup>

Mill further avers that the absolutist governance structure of the Hindus also maintained a vast army—a conjecture he draws from an assumption that the entire population was equally divided in numbers amongst Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras—and at the same time, perpetuates the notion that India has been a land of the invading armies and

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 204–5.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 205, footnote, Wilson disagrees: “This is not correct; even Manu separates the military from the civil authority. ‘Let him place a division of troops, commanded by an approved officer, over two, three, five, or a hundred districts, according to their extent.’”

that it hasn't successfully averted and resisted invasions. Implicitly, he insinuates that to maintain a vast army, the King would have to tax his subjects heavily, resorting to iron hand and oppressive measures.

As, in the original division of the people, a fourth part of them were appropriated to the profession of arms, and destined from that alone to obtain their subsistence, the great difficulty of government must have consisted, not in obtaining troops, but in finding for them maintenance and employment. When so great a proportion of the population were set apart for the business of war, with nothing to do, from year to year, and from generation to generation, but to improve its principles, and acquire the utmost dexterity in its exercises, it appears extraordinary that the nation was not of a formidable and warlike character. Yet has India given way to every invader; "and the rudeness," says Mr. Orme, "of the military art in Indostan can scarce be imagined but by those who have seen it." The precepts in the ancient and sacred books of the Hindus, which lay the foundation of their military system, are few in number, simple, and rude.<sup>35,36</sup>

The despotic Hindu King ruled following his whims and fancies, as is the case in primitive societies, as per Mill. What was privileged was the pleasure of the King and not the responsibility of administering justice. The Hindu King would administer justice if time were left after sufficiently engaging in amusement.

In the first place, there are hardly any laws: and he alone is entitled to judge, who is entitled to legislate, since he must make a law for every occasion. In the next place, a rude people, unused to obedience, would hardly respect inferior authority. In the third place, the business of judicature is so badly performed as to interrupt but little the business or pleasures of the

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 211, footnote, Wilson argues against this assertion also: "The laws of Menu, it is true, touch but slightly upon military arrangements, but there is no reason to believe that the Hindus cultivated the science of war less carefully than the arts of peace. Much curious illustration of this subject may be gleaned from the Mahābhārata. That they have been unfortunate in their military history, is attributable more to want of union and to mutual dissension, than any deficiency of skill or valour."

king; and a decision is rather an exercise of arbitrary will and power, than the result of an accurate investigation.<sup>37,38</sup>

As per Mill, the above occurred in all primitive societies but with the advancement of time, whereas in other societies, there was a development of subordinate courts and an order of men who specialized in the adjudication of justice. The Hindu society, as it remained stuck in the past, did not advance any further than mere primitive moorings:

The administration of justice by the king in person, and in the provinces of course by his deputies, as in the subordinate districts by theirs, stands in the sacred books as a leading principle of the jurisprudence of the Hindus; and the revolution of ages has introduced a change in favour rather of the prince who abandons the duty, than of the people, for whom hardly any other instrument of judicature is provided.<sup>39,40</sup>

Mill, in his deep desire to show the Hindus as primitive and savage people, does not mind if he must contradict himself. We noted earlier how,

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 212, footnote, Wilson disagrees: "It is very doubtful, if this view of the progress of legislation was ever applicable to the Hindus. Certainly we have no grounds whatever for such a description. The code of Menu recognises no right or necessity in the king to make laws—the laws are administrable by judicial authorities other than the King; decisions are never the result of arbitrary will, but are enjoined to be founded on diligent investigation; and although applications for judicature might not have been numerous, yet other reasons might be assigned than the adjustment of disputes by force or cunning. We may conjecture what we please of a stage of society of which we know nothing, but it is conjecture only, and little calculated to extend real knowledge."

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 213, footnote, Wilson negates the contention once again: "This is not correct. At a period not long subsequent to the Code of Manu, if not contemporary, various regulations were in force for the administration of the laws, and various courts and officers were established for the adjudication of causes, so that the king presided at pleasure only in the court of the capital, or in a court of appeal.—See Colebrook on Hindu Courts of Justice.—Tr. R. As. Soc. ii. So, also, Mr. Ellis observes; 'Mr. Mill makes a considerable mistake if he supposes that in Hindu states it is, or was, the practice to administer justice only in the presence of the king. It is true that in the Hindu Governments there was always an *Aula Regia*, or court at the seat of Government, in which the king was supposed, according to the letter of the law, to preside in person, though he might appoint a deputy, and always had assessors; but it is doubtful how the practice was kept up, and it is certain that there were three other principal courts known to the Hindu laws, and fifteen sorts of inferior courts, all having their several jurisdictions well defined, and many of them bearing a striking resemblance to the courts of the English common law.' Trans. Madras Literary Society II."

in order to show the absolutist and oppressive nature of the Hindu form of governance, he claimed that all the three powers of government—administrative, legislative, and judicial—were collapsed in the King who ruled like an uncontested monarch. A few pages later, he contradicts himself. His argument is something like this: The Hindu society is a religious society. Sacred texts govern a religious society. Brahmins control the sacred texts, and given that legislation must come from sacred texts, Brahmins must provide the legislation. The legislative powers thus belong to the Brahmins.

As the Hindu believes, that a complete and perfect system of instruction, which admits of no addition or change, was conveyed to him from the beginning by the Divine Being, for the regulation of his public as well as his private affairs, he acknowledges no laws but those which are contained in the sacred books. From this it is evident, that the only scope which remains for legislation is confined within the limits of the interpretations which may be given to the holy text. The Brahmins enjoy the undisputed prerogative of interpreting the divine oracles; for though it is allowed to the two classes next in degree to give advice to the king in the administration of justice, they must in no case presume to depart from the sense of the law which it has pleased the Brahmins to impose. The power of legislation, therefore, exclusively belongs to the priesthood. The exclusive right of interpreting the laws necessarily confers upon them, in the same unlimited manner, the judicial powers of government.<sup>41</sup>

Either the King can have a hold over all the three powers, or the Brahmins can have absolute control over the judiciary—it cannot be both. But who cares for logic when the *a priori* stage against the Hindus has already been set? Who cares for correct representation when the game has already been fixed?<sup>42</sup> The hatred of the Hindus is so intense and the desire to show them brutish so inflaming that notwithstanding contradiction of his own

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 218, footnote, Wilson notices the same contradiction when he states, “This state of things then is very different from that which, a few pages back, (p. 203, &c.) was described as applying, apparently, to the Hindu system; in which the king was represented as the sole source and administrator of the law.”

assertions, Mill claims that even the executive powers are in the hands of the Brahmin:

They who possess the power of making and interpreting the laws by which another person is bound to act, are by necessary consequence the masters of his actions. Possessing the legislative and judicative powers, the Brahmens were, also, masters of the executive power, to any extent, whatsoever, to which they wished to enjoy it. With influence over it they were not contented. They secured to themselves a direct, and no contemptible share of its immediate functions. On all occasions, the king was bound to employ Brahmens, as his counsellors and ministers; and, of course, to be governed by their judgment. . . . It thus appears that, according to the original laws of the Hindus, the king was little more than an instrument in the hands of the Brahmens. He performed the laborious part of government, and sustained the responsibility, while they chiefly possessed the power.<sup>43,44</sup>

But when “facts” do not square with theory, Mill, the theorist, makes the “facts” surrender to the *a priori* thesis he already has. And when one has the imperial authority backing one with power and money, one can always make a mockery of facts. Mill cannot decide on whom to designate an absolute authority in which all the three powers could be collapsed: the Brahmin or the King. The *a priori* conclusion is that Hindus are primitive and savage, and because they are primitive and savage, they are hierarchical and oppressive. Therefore, as he began this chapter on “Form of Government,” he contends it was the King. He then realizes that he has already been claiming that the Brahmins are at the top of the *Hindu food chain* and that they have already been described as oppressors *numero uno*. Therefore, he concentrates all the powers in the Brahmins.

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 220, footnote, Wilson does not agree: “The authority of influence, of advice, the Brahmans necessarily retained, and they were the only competent expounders of the laws which they promulgated. They had no other means of protection than the character of sanctity with which they invested themselves, and which was equally necessary to ensure attention to their instructions. They laboured to deserve the opinion of sanctity by imposing burdensome duties on themselves, of a domestic and religious character, and it was probably in the true spirit of contemplative devotion, as well as from motives of prudence and policy, that they divested themselves of temporal rank. Every thing in the Hindu Institutes indicates their originating not from political but religious principles.”

He then notices his contradictions and thus settles down for the following, where he states that because the King controls the army and purse, he is eventually able to control the Brahmins:

The monuments of the Hindus, imperfect as they are, convince us, that their monarchs enjoyed no small share both of authority, and of that kind of splendour which corresponded with their own state of society. They had two engines entrusted to them, the power of which their history serves remarkably to display; They were masters of the army; And they were masters of the public revenue. These two circumstances, it appears, were sufficient to counterbalance the legislative, and the judicative, and even a great part of the executive power, reinforced by all the authority of an overbearing superstition, lodged in the hands of the Brahmens. These threw around the sovereign an external lustre, with which the eyes of uncultivated men are easily dazzled. In dangerous and disorderly times, when every thing which the nation values depends upon the sword, the military commander exercises unlimited authority by universal consent; and so frequently is this the situation of a rude and uncivilized people, surrounded on all sides by rapacious and turbulent neighbours, that it becomes, in a great measure, the habitual order of things. The Hindu king, by commanding both the force, and the revenue of the state, had in his hands the distribution of gifts and favours; the potent instrument, in short, of patronage; and the jealousy and rivalry of the different sets of competitors would of their own accord give him a great influence over the Brahmens themselves. The distribution of gifts and favours is an engine of so much power, that the man who enjoys it to a certain extent is absolute, with whatever checks he may appear to be surrounded.<sup>45</sup>

Mill may think he has resolved the contradictions, but given his deep desire to show the Hindu form of governance as hierarchical and oppressive by either hook or crook, he leaves the ends loose. Wilson notices this when he states in the concluding note of the chapter: “What is here said, however, of the absolute power of Hindu princes is wholly inconsistent with much that has been previously advanced of the unbounded authority of the Brahmans; neither is quite true. Hindu princes and Brahmans

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 221–22.



are held in check by many considerations, and, in the original system, their several powers were evidently designed to control and balance each other.”<sup>46</sup> The unresolved contradictions, however, gave birth to the narrative that the Hindu form of governance was thoroughly hierarchical and oppressive, with Kings and Brahmins colluding to generate and accord maximum advantage to themselves. We will fully see their reflection when we analyze the grade school materials.

It would be immensely contradictory, an oxymoron, even to imagine that a hierarchical and oppressive system governance structure would create a taxation system that would be fair, humane, and equitable. Mill, consequently, is predictable when he analyzes the taxation system of the Hindus. Arbitrariness is the name of the game in which the taxes are collected. There is unpredictability and uncertainty, which induce fear in the people from whom the taxes are collected. These factors contribute to the misuse and abuse of power by the tax collector who represents the King.

Uncertainty may arise from two sources; 1. Uncertainty in the meaning of the words, by which the tax is defined; 2. Uncertainty in the circumstances upon which the amount of the tax is made to depend; as if it were made to depend upon the weather, or the state of a man's health. Uncertainty in the meaning of the words opens a door to oppression and fraud, on the part of the collector. He will exact the largest sum consistent with the words, if he is not bribed; the lowest, if he is. Uncertainty, from whatever source, is a cause of uneasiness. The mind is continually haunted with the idea of the worst, and with all the fears which attend it; fears, often very great and tormenting. As often as a source of chicanery is opened about the amount which the contributor should pay, a source of extortion is opened, and a source of oppression, necessary to effect the extortion.<sup>47</sup>

The Hindus had a variable taxation system; therefore, taxation was not uniform and included contextual factors such as soil productivity, climate, etc. A humane approach where tax was not supposed to put the governed under duress gets misrepresented and conceptualized as one where the possibility of favor, bribery, and corruption was rampant:

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid. 222, footnote.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 292–93.

The variation is made to depend upon circumstances the uncertainty of which opens a boundless field to all the wretched arts of chicanery and fraud on the part of the people, and all the evils of oppression on the part of the collectors. As the determination of the circumstances on which the amount of the assessment depends belongs of course, in such a state of society as that of the Hindus, to the agents of the treasury, a free career is afforded to all the baneful operations of favour and disfavour, of bribery and corruption. Whenever an option is granted between a less exaction and a greater, the violent propensity of all imperfect governments to excess in expense is sure in time to establish the greater.<sup>48,49</sup>

In 1810, a committee of the House of Commons in the British Parliament submitted a report that investigated the affairs of the East India Company. The report explored the revenue collection system in India, amongst other things. By comparing and contrasting areas that had not come under Muslim rule with the ones that did, the report concluded that an inhumane and exacting revenue system based on authority and oppression was introduced in India by the Muslims through what is known as the Zamindari system. Despite this candid observation by a group of senior East India company officials, who were writing from the advantageous position of first-hand experience, unlike James Mill, who never visited India, the latter dismissed the report and continued with the hierarchical and oppressive picture of Hindu governance and taxation that he had painted in the previous pages. Mill writes:

The committee say, that a rate of taxation much more severe than that which existed under the Hindu governments was introduced by the Mahomedan rulers, and amid the abuses of modern times. For this opinion they have no authority whatsoever. It is, therefore, a mere prejudice. The rate which they mention goes far beyond the scale of the ancient ordinances: And what reason is there to believe that the ancient Hindu

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 294–95.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 295, footnote, Wilson controverts: “This is a wholly gratuitous assumption, and unwarranted by the text referred to, which indicates sufficiently the kind of distress intended—invasion or war. Circumstances not of the king’s contrivance, and obvious to his people. Nor was there much uncertainty in the amount of the assessment in times of peace. The division of the country into townships and village communities, which appears to have existed from the time of Manu, rendered the business of valuation easy, and protected individuals from exaction.”

governments did not, as the Mahomedan, levy assessments to the utmost limits of the supposed ability of the ryots [peasants]? In those parts of India which Europeans have found still remaining under Hindu governments, the state of the people is worse, if there is any difference, than where they have been subject to the Mahomedan sway.<sup>50,51</sup>

## Hindu Laws: Primitive, Savage, Undeveloped, Hierarchical, and Oppressive

It would be utterly irrational even to assume that when Mill would speak of the laws of the Hindu society he would not speak of them as perpetuating oppression, suppression, violence, coercion, domination, tyranny, subjugation, and repression. We, therefore, will now focus on the various ways in which Mill has made the Hindu Laws coercive, authoritative, and repressive.

The Hindus have divided their life according to four *puruṣārtha* or efforts—dharma, *artha*, *kāma*, and moksha. For different *puruṣārtha*, they have different texts: for dharma, *Dharmaśāstra*; for *artha*, *Arthaśāstra*; for *kāma*, *Kāmasūtra*; for moksha, the Upanishads. These four areas have had a litany of texts, but unfortunately, in the areas of *kāma* and *artha*, only one in each category remains extant: *Kāmasūtra* and *Arthaśāstra*. As far as the *Dharmaśāstra* lineage is concerned, quite a few are extant. In early British Indology, the translation of one of the numerous *Dharmaśāstra*—*Manusmṛti*—by William Jones gained centrality in Mill's representation or misrepresentation of the laws of the Hindus. He tortures this text to the hilt and misuses it to the fullest to continue with his caricature of the Hindu society as hierarchical and oppressive. But

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 318–19.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 319, footnote, Wilson harshly rejects Mill's formulations: "For this opinion, the writer 'has no authority whatever.' The contrary opinion, formed by individuals of high talent, and ample opportunities of observation, is authority. In the south of India, Hindu governments have all along been extant, as well as Mohammedan; and in the contrast between the two, the officers, whose statements are so completely disregarded, speak not from report, but from personal knowledge. To say of their deliberate affirmation, therefore, it is mere prejudice, without being able to produce any proof to that effect, is an irrational rejection of unexceptionable testimony, of which Mr. Mill would not have been guilty, had not his own prejudices been too strong for his judgment."

before he gravitates in such a direction, it becomes pertinent for him to paint a picture of the Hindus where they could be yet again characterized as people with undeveloped minds, who cannot think clearly—as people who would muddle up things and classify issues without any degree of precision: one should be surprised that he even thought that Hindus have the classifying ability. This is consistent with his larger objective of representing Hindus as savages, and savages, as per the European understanding, did not have developed minds. Accordingly, Mill thinks that the Hindus could not distinguish between the civil and criminal laws:

Another topic, which it will be convenient to detach and premise, is, the division and arrangement which the Hindus have given to the matter of law. In marking a stage of civilization, this is a very characteristic circumstance. As the human mind, in a rude state, has not the power to make a good distribution of a complicated subject, so it is little aware of its importance; little aware that this is the groundwork of all accurate thought.... It is not easy to conceive a more rude and defective attempt at the classification of laws, than what is here presented [in the *Institutes of Menu*—translation of *Manusmṛiti* by William Jones]. The most essential and obvious distinctions are neglected and confounded. Though no arrangement would appear more natural, and more likely to strike even an uncultivated mind, than the division of laws into civil and penal, we find them mixed and blended together in the code of the Hindus.<sup>52,53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 224–26.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 224–25, footnote, Wilson remarks: “More importance is attached to this subject than it merits. Confessedly, the laws of Manu were intended for an early stage of society, when it is more important to devise than to classify. Classification is the business of high refinement, and then, according to our author’s own showing, is never very successfully performed: as observed by a competent writer on this subject, commenting on Mr. Mill’s survey of Hindu law, ‘the most refined and enlightened countries in Europe partake with Hindostan in this symptom of barbarism. In England, till the appearance of Wood’s *Institutes*, or Blackstone’s *Commentaries*, the law lay over a mass of authorities, from which its principles were to be extracted by the practitioner as well as they could be. Yet who would have objected to England in the middle of the 18th century, that she had not arrived at advanced stage of civilization, because her jurisprudence was dispersed and unmethodized.’ *Asiatic Journal*, p. 12. By this test, the attempt to classify would place the Hindu higher in civilization than the English. That the later writers on Hindu law have not improved upon the method of Manu, is to be explained by the sanctity of the primitive code: it would have been irreverent to have disarranged the scheme there laid down, had it occurred to them as possible or advantageous to alter the classification.”

It would be stretching our intelligence to the extreme even to imagine or think that an individual whose objective was quite explicit in representing the Hindu society as a primitive one even trying to understand the society from the coordinates of its paradigm or worldview—Well! For Mill, a paradigm or worldview at work would require a certain intelligence or rationality on the part of the Hindus, which they did not have. Consequently, Mill either evaluates the Hindu society from the vantage point of his own, which he, of course, takes as highly civilized, or equates it with his own in its earlier and rudimentary stages—*confirming the thesis of the Francophone postcolonial thinkers that the primitivizing of the colonized is directly proportional to the upliftment of the civilization of the colonizer*. The discussion below concerns how purchasers acquire rights over a property they have bought. The discussion as such is innocuous, but what becomes significant is how he engages in a cross-cultural comparison to show the Hindus as savage and primitive:

The laws of our Saxon ancestors prohibited the sale of every thing above the value of twenty-pence, except in open market; and it is with a pleasing kind of surprise we find, that similar circumstances have suggested a similar expedient to the people of Hindustan. “He,” says the law of Menu, “who has received a chattel by purchase in open market, before a number of men, justly acquires the absolute property, by having paid the price of it.” The right, however, conveyed by a *bonâ fide* purchase, is not, among the Hindus, carried to that extent, which is found requisite in a commercial and highly civilized society. If the goods were not the property of the person by whom they were sold, the right of the purchaser becomes absolute only if he can produce the vendor.... This is quite sufficient to throw so much uncertainty into the great class of transactions by purchase and sale, as would prove, in a civilized state of society, a ruinous obstruction of business.<sup>54</sup>

In the European representation, primitiveness and savagery have been equated with childishness and child-like behavior. Mill, of course, does not abstain from such conjunctions vis-a-vis the Hindus:

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 230–31.

Among children, and among rude people, little accustomed to take their decisions upon full and mature consideration, nothing is more common than to repent of their bargains, and wish to revoke them: Among the Hindus this has been found an affair of sufficient importance to constitute an entire head in the classification of their laws. A variety of cases are enumerated, in which, if dissatisfied with his bargain, a man may insist upon having it annulled; and in general any sale and purchase of things, not perishable, may be rescinded within ten days, at the will of either of the parties.<sup>55,56</sup>

Given that the Hindu mind is primitive, childlike, unevolved, imaginative, and irrational, Mill holds that the Hindu society, after having come to a certain “development,” never evolved beyond it. As we have pointed out earlier, he does not let go of any opportunity to petrify the Hindu society in antiquity, creating a silhouette of a timeless Hindu society encrusted in simplicity and unsophistication. Apparently, the Hindus had a law that they pledged property or gold of equal value when they borrowed money or resources. Nathaniel Halhed,<sup>57</sup> in the *Code of Gentoo Laws*, speaks about the peculiarity of such ancient Hindu manners. Mill points out that given the custom that prevailed in Hindu society even when he was producing his work, the Hindu society is still ancient; it follows traditions from the bygone era of the Jewish and Egyptian people. Mill comments:

When Mr. Halhed, however, informs us that this law “reflects a strong light upon the simplicity of *ancient* manners,” it is necessary to add that whatever light it reflects upon *ancient*, it reflects the same upon *present* manners, as this is not a law anciently in force, but long ago repealed; it is a law now in operation, and as suitable as ever to the purely Hindu state of society. Mr. Halhed too is mistaken when he supposes that this is an institution peculiar to the Hindus. It was familiarly known to the Jews in the time of

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>56</sup> The return policy in most stores in the United States is not very different currently.

<sup>57</sup> Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, *A Code of Gentoo Laws; Or, Ordinations of the Pundits: From a Persian Translation, Made from the Original, Written in the Shanscrit Language* (1776; repub., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Moses, and was probably a common practice in the nations around Judea, as well as in Egypt, from which the Jews had recently departed.<sup>58</sup>

Mill's hatred for the Hindus blinds him to such an extent that he fails to mention that such a practice existed in contemporary London. Wilson does not eschew the opportunity to rub it in: "Lending on pledges, can scarcely be regarded as proof of a state of barbarism, or the multitude of pawnbrokers in London would witness our being very low in the scale of civilization."<sup>59</sup>

It is but natural to suppose that if Mill conceptualizes the governance and taxation structures as arbitrary and ambiguous, he would extend a similar description to the Hindu Laws. He certainly does not disappoint: "Vagueness and ambiguity, the source of endless dispute, which distinguishes the laws of all ignorant people...forms a most remarkable feature in those of Hindustan.... Inconsistency, and even direct contradiction, is a characteristic of the Hindu laws, which it does not appear to have been thought even requisite to avoid."<sup>60,61</sup>

The Hindus have had a system of joint ownership of property where the property left by parents went to all their children, and the parent could not pick one or two to be the beneficiaries through the system of Will. Mill makes this a signifier of a savage society and the transfer of property through Will as a descriptor of an advanced civilization. In Mill's characterizations, the primitive Hindu society is either equated with designated "savage" cultures of Africa and Latin America or is shown to be equal to the early beginnings of the European civilization. In almost every comparison, however, it is shown as inferior to the Greek and Roman societies. Pronouncing his judgment on the Hindu society yet again, on the value of transfer of property through Will, Mill claims:

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<sup>58</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 238.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 236, footnote.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 245–46.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 247, footnote, Wilson does not support Mill in his assessments of the Hindu Laws: "There is no incompatibility or contradiction. It is not the part of candid criticism to contrast detached passages without reference to those by which their purport is to be explained."

It is only in stages of society, considerably advanced, that the rights of property are so far enlarged as to include the power of nominating, at the discretion of the owner, the person who is to enjoy it after his death. It was first introduced among the Athenians by a law of Solon, and among the Romans, probably, by the twelve tables. The Hindus have, through all ages, remained in a state of society too near the simplicity and rudeness of the most ancient times, to have stretched their ideas of property so far. The power of disposing of a man's possessions, by testament, is altogether unknown to their laws.<sup>62,63</sup>

At other times, he depicts the Hindu society as inferior to even the rudimentary beginnings of the Anglo-Saxon culture:

Perhaps of all the rude nations of whom we have any account, our own Saxon and German ancestors were the most distinguished for the mildness of their punishments; a singularity, however, to be accounted for, by the use of a very barbarous expedient, a compensation in money for almost every species of crime. Yet in various instances, particularly that of theft, their laws were not only severe, but inhuman. Notwithstanding the mildness which has generally been attributed to the Hindu character, hardly any nation is distinguished for more sanguinary laws.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 249–50.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 249–50, footnote, Wilson yet again disagrees: “The right of devising property by will is clearly no proof of advance in civilization, by the instances given. The Athenians, in the days of Solon, the Romans, in those of the twelve tables, and the Arabs, at the birth of Mohammed, were certainly less refined than the Hindus, at the time that the Code of Manu was compiled. The case is imperfectly weighed. It would have been very inconsistent to have given a man power to do that on his death which he might not do whilst living. In ancestral property the occupant had joint right only with his sons, analogously in some respects to our entailed estates, which, with all our high civilization, we have not acknowledged to be disposable of by bequest; and therefore he could not have the right to bequeath at his pleasure. It is also to be recollected that the laws of the Hindus are to be looked at not with the eye of a jurist only, but with reference to their religious origin. One of the great objects of the descent of property is to provide for the perpetual performance of obsequial rites to the whole body of deceased ancestors. These cannot be properly discharged by aliens to the family, and therefore they cannot have a valid claim to succeed. A man cannot will that a stranger shall perform his family rites in preference to his kinsmen, and cannot, therefore, make away with property essential to their celebration. The state of the law is not a question of greater or less social refinement, it arises out of, and is inseparable from the religious origin of the code, and would remain the same, whatever degree of social civilization might be attained, so long as the religion was unchanged.”

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 253–54.



Post Enlightenment, the lack of reason and propensity to superstition have been the essentials in characterizing a society barbaric. Mill does not abstain from applying them in representing the Hindu society as uncivilized. In chapter two on the Hindus, Mill establishes how the social structure of the Hindus is hierarchical and oppressive; in subsequent chapters, he establishes how the Hindu form of governance and taxation are hierarchical, oppressive, arbitrary, despotic, and absolutist. Consistent with this narrative, the Laws of the Hindus could not be any different. The following passage, which he enumerates in six counts, elucidates:

1. It creates a great many rights which ought to have no existence; and acts, which ought not to be erected into offences, it does so erect in great numbers.
2. It abounds in extraneous matter.
3. The division and arrangement of the matters of law are highly imperfect.
4. The definitions are so far from excluding darkness and doubt that they leave almost every thing indefinite and uncertain.
5. Punishments are not repressed, but abound; while there is the most enormous excess in the quantity of punishment.
6. The form of the judicatory is bad, as are a certain proportion of the rules for the mode of performing the judicial services.<sup>65</sup>

He is not satisfied with enumerating the six points in the above. He has more words to underline arbitrariness and despotism in the Hindu judiciary. Given that Hindu laws were written laws, captured and encapsulated in lawbooks, one would think that they would not be arbitrary, but that does not matter to him. As we have seen earlier, he made them inconsistent with one another—written by people who were not advanced enough to reason correctly to construe a coherent narrative.

In one sense, therefore, all their laws are written. But as the passages which can be collected from these books leave many parts of the field of law untouched, in these parts the defect must be supplied either by custom, or the momentary will of the judge. Again, as the passages which are collected from these books, even where they touch upon parts of the field of law, do so in expressions to the highest degree vague and indeterminate, they commonly admit of any one of several meanings, and very frequently are

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 284.

contradicted and opposed by one another. When the words in which laws are couched are to a certain degree imperfect, it makes but little difference whether they are written or not.<sup>66</sup>

Uncertainty reinforces arbitrariness and despotism, which in any case has been the defining feature of Hindu governance, taxation, and laws, is the indictment of Mill:

Among them the strength of the human mind has never been sufficient to recommend effectually the preservation, by writing, of the memory of judicial decisions. It has never been sufficient to create such a public regard for uniformity, as to constitute a material motive to a judge. And as kings, and their great deputies, exercised the principal functions of judicature, they were too powerful to be restrained by a regard to what others had done before them. What judicature would pronounce was, therefore, almost always uncertain; almost always arbitrary.<sup>67,68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 286–87, footnote, Wilson not only disagrees but also cites F. W. Ellis of the Madras Literary Society: “This passage has been subjected to the especial animadversions of Mr. Ellis, who makes some severe remarks upon the positiveness with which these comprehensive but ill-founded assertions are made. ‘The main source of Mr. Mill’s error,’ he continues, ‘seems to be sufficiently disclosed by himself, in the first sentence of his chapter on the Hindu laws. It is the common one of having judged of the whole from a small part. The materials on which he founds his opinions, seem to have been merely Sir William Jones’s institutes of Menu, Mr. Halhed’s Code of Gentoo Laws, and Mr. Colebrooke’s translation of Jagannatha Panchanana’s Digest. That they were utterly insufficient for his purpose, the section to which this note is appended sufficiently shows. When he supposes that there are no definitions on Hindu law, he has never seen even in a translation, any one book of the second great class of Hindu law-books, namely the Vyakhyanas or commentaries, and only the translations of two very imperfect works out of the great multitude of digests, and he relies mainly upon the institutes of Menu; which being a mere text-book, is never used as an authority in Hindu courts, but when accompanied by an explanatory commentary, or incorporated into a Digest. It is true that the Hindus have not preserved “Reports,” after the English fashion, of the decisions of their courts of justice. But when the “definitions” of the English common law are sought for, no less regard is paid to those which are found in Lyttleton’s Tenures, or perhaps in Lord Coke’s Commentary, than to those which appear in the “reports of cases;” and the commentaries of the Hindus, are considered more decidedly by them to be integral parts of the body of their law, than any commentary is in England.”

## Hinduism: Primitive, Savage, Irrational, Incoherent, Immoral, Childlike, and Pagan

Mill, not satisfied with making the Hindu society, and laws, governance, and taxation structures savage and primitive, then trains his guns on the religion of the Hindus. The religion of the Hindus, according to Mill, is vague, incoherent, imaginative, contradictory, imprecise, and chaotic:

No coherent system of belief seems capable of being extracted from their wild eulogies and legends; and if he who attempts to study their religion is disposed, like themselves, to build his faith on his imagination, he meets with little obstruction from the stubborn precision of Hindu expressions and tenets.<sup>69</sup>

It is all vagueness and darkness, incoherence, inconsistency, and confusion. It is one of the most extravagant of all specimens of discourse without ideas. The fearless propensity of a rude mind to guess where it does not know, never exhibited itself in more fantastic and senseless forms.<sup>70</sup>

All is loose, vague, wavering, obscure, and inconsistent. Their expressions point at one time to one meaning, and another time to another meaning; and their wild fictions... seem rather the playsome whimsies of monkeys in human shape, than the serious asseverations of a being who dignifies himself with the name of rational.<sup>71</sup>

No people, how rude and ignorant soever, who have been so far advanced as to leave us memorials of their thoughts in writing, have ever drawn a more gross and disgusting picture of the universe than what is presented in the writings of the Hindus. In the conception of it no coherence, wisdom, or beauty, ever appears: all is disorder, caprice, passion, contest, portents, prodigies, violence, and deformity. It is perfectly evident that the Hindus never contemplate the universe as a connected and perfect system, governed by general laws, and directed to benevolent ends; and it follows, as a

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 330.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 334.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 348–49.

necessary consequence, that their religion is no other than that primary worship, which is addressed to the designing and invisible beings who preside over the powers of nature, according to their own arbitrary will, and act only for some private and selfish gratification. The elevated language, which this species of worship finally assumes, is only the refinement, which flattery, founded upon a base apprehension of the divine character, ingrafts upon a mean superstition.<sup>72</sup>

Every tradition and religion has a cosmology and a rationale—whether one agrees with it or not is a different story altogether—for seeing and explaining the cosmos and the universe the way it does. Concerning Hinduism, Mill is not interested in exploring it. On the contrary, given that he is *a priori* convinced that the Hindu universe was a primitive worldview, he avers that just as a child in its imagination projects life onto everything that moves, the sun, the moon, the wind, etc., become divinities for the childlike savage people. After a passage of time, the savage people begin to think about the maker of the universe. The earlier most powerful among the various deities becomes the maker of the universe. When there is relative tranquility and peace in the world of the savage, which is otherwise filled with conflict and bloodshed, the Sun becomes the prime deity. When war dominates, War God becomes the prime deity. In their primitiveness, the Hindu people have consequently had both—the Sun and Indra—as their principal deities. The primitive people, as they advance further—though not in any way having become civilized yet—add more divinities to their pantheon. This is what the primitive Hindu people, only slightly advanced beyond the rudimentary stages of human existence, have achieved:

The Hindus had made considerable progress beyond the first and lowest stage of human society. It seems common, however, to retain for a long time the ideas which are then implanted; and, rather than eradicate the old to make of them a heterogeneous compound with the new. The Greeks and the Romans did not reject their Jupiter, and Mars, their gods of the mountains, trees, and rivers, when they rose to more comprehensive views of the universe; they only endeavoured to accommodate to these primary

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 385–87.

conceptions their new apprehensions and conclusions. In like manner, the Hindus have still their Indra, or the god of the firmament, Varuna, or the god of the waters, Rembha, the goddess of love; in the whole, a long and splendid catalogue of thirty-three crore.<sup>73</sup>

Praise of divinity abounds in the Hindu sacred lore. Mill uses that as a descriptor of the backwardness of the Hindu people. He holds that the loftier is the praise of the divine or deities, the ruder is the extent of the civilization:

Human language does not supply more lofty epithets of praise than are occasionally addressed to their deities by the Hindus.... It is well ascertained that nations, who have the lowest and meanest ideas of the Divine Being, may yet apply to him the most sounding epithets by which perfection can be expressed.... It is well known how vile and degrading were the notions of the Divine Nature presented in the fictions of the Greek poets; insomuch that Plato deemed them unfit to be read; yet the Brahmens themselves do not surpass the Greek poets in elevated expressions concerning the Deity.... Thus it appears how commonly the loftiest *expressions* are used concerning the gods, by people whose *conceptions* of them are, confessedly, mean.<sup>74,75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 332–33.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 338–42, italics in original.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 339, footnote, Wilson remarks: “In this theory of Mr. Mill’s, there is a palpable fallacy, for it involves the impossible supposition, that words are devised not only to express ideas that do not exist, but to express the very contrary of the ideas that the mind conceives. Expressions, according to this view of the subject, are lofty, not because the conceptions are lofty, but because they are base, as if we should say ‘tall,’ when we meant ‘short,’ or ‘little,’ when we intended ‘large.’ This is utterly contradicted by every theory of language yet contrived: we must take the sign as indicative of the thing signified, or speech would be of no more use in the interchange of thought, than the inarticulate ejaculations of the bird or brute. It is very clear, however, where Mr. Mill errs; he has lost sight of the progress of opinion, and confounded different states of social feeling. It is possible, that the loftiest epithets of Divine power, and benignity, and glory, may have lost some of their force by frequent use, and that they may be directed to objects to which they cannot in truth appertain. When the terms were first employed, however, they expressed, no doubt, the ideas they were invented to express; and the Hindu priests, poets, and philosophers, by whom they were originally applied, attempted by them to convey the notions they conceived of the Divinity. Even now, in the mouth of a believing Hindu, they have not lost their purport: the object to which he addresses them, though base and mean in our eyes, is not so in his, and he imagines it to be invested the attributes he assigns to it. But this is of little importance to the argument. It may be very true that the epithets are misapplied, that they are used as terms of course, that they exercise little influence on moral practice; the same things occur in other places than in India; but, whatever may be their practical value, they afford unequivocal proof, that at one time or other, and amongst some at least of the Brahmanical order, elevated notions of the power, and wisdom, and beneficence, of one only God, were entertained and expressed.”

The Hindus, since antiquity, have had the idea of One Brahman that has manifested itself and become multiple. Everything, animate or inanimate, present in the cosmos is fundamentally a manifestation of that One who is also considered the Divine in the Hindu conceptualization. Stones, plants, animals, humans, rivers, trees, and mountains are all considered the manifestation of the Divine—the idea is that there is One Divine manifesting in different degrees in all and sundry which is found in the universe. Similarly, all the various gods and goddesses are considered manifestations of the One Divine or the One Brahman. This conceptualization, which has been at the core of respecting unity in diversity and celebrating plurality, is reduced to a mark of savagery and barbarism by Mill. He opines:

He is all in all: From him every thing begins, in him every thing terminates: He unites all possible attributes: Like time, he has no beginning and shall have no end: All power belongs to him, all wisdom, and all virtue. Such is the progress of the language, not of knowledge and cultivated reason, but of the rude and selfish passions of a barbarian; and all these high and sounding epithets are invented by men whose ideas of the divine nature are mean, ridiculous, gross, and disgusting.<sup>76</sup>

The concept of the One Divine is not a mark of having a sophisticated understanding of divinity. He admonishes his English brothers, we think the likes of William Jones, for even thinking that Hindus could have had a refined theological notion of existence. The numerous gods and goddesses exceeded in unity and oneness is nothing like the monotheist conception of the Christians:

Among the numerous expressions of panegyric and adoration which the Hindus apply to their divinities, none seem to have made a deeper impression upon some of the most intelligent of our English inquirers, than the epithet One. This has so far prevailed as to impress them with a belief that the Hindus had a refined conception of the unity of the Divine Nature. Yet it seems very clear that the use of such an epithet is but a natural link in that chain of unmeaning panegyric which distinguishes the religion of ignorant men. When one divinity has been made to engross the powers of all the rest, it is the necessary termination of this piece of flattery, to

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

denominate him The One. Oriental scholars ought moreover to have reflected that *one* is an epithet of very common, and vague application in the languages of Asia; and is by no means a foundation whereon to infer among the Hindus any conception analogous to that which we denote by the term unity of God.... Brahme is a mere unmeaning epithet of praise, applied to various gods; and no more indicative of refined notions of the unity, or any perfection of the Divine Nature, than other parts of their panegyric devotions.<sup>77,78</sup>

There's nothing exclusive with the Hindus regarding the ONE. As per Mill, all the primitive and savage people of the past have had it—the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Africans, among others: “Few nations shall we find without a knowledge of the unity of the Divine Nature, if we take such expressions of it as abound in the Hindu writings for satisfactory evidence. By this token [it has been found] among the savages of Africa.”<sup>79,80</sup> There is nothing sublime about Brahman or the ONE either.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 370–74, italics in original.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 374, footnote, Wilson chastises Mill: “This is a specimen of most perverse reasoning. Brahme is said to be a mere unmeaning epithet of praise, applied to various gods; but if it means nothing, what honour can it do them, why is it attached to them? it must have some signification, or it would not be employed. It may be absurdly used; but, undoubtedly, when God or man is called Brahme, it is intended to say, that he is something of a more elevated nature than his ordinary nature—that he is, in fact, one with that being, who, according to particular doctrines, is not only the cause of all that exists, but is all that exists. The reasonableness of the Vedanta philosophy, the fitness of sectorial panegyric, are not in question. The eulogy of any individual god by identifying him with Brahme, derives its weight entirely from the notion that besides the inferior divinities, there is a God, one, uncreated and eternal, with whom to be identified figuratively or philosophically, is highest praise.”

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 372–73.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 370–71, footnote, Wilson protests: “Much of what follows on this subject is verbal quibbling. One, in Sanscrit, as in other languages, may no doubt imply ‘chief,’ ‘principal,’ or metaphorically denote identity of persons; but it should have been proved that the word was so used when applied to the “One” Deity. It does not signify, when so employed, the chief—or the same—but the one distinct from and above all, and from whom all things proceeded. What notions Mr. Mill would have the term express he should have explained; it is evident that he has in his instances confounded very different things; the notion of one of many with one over many, and the simple ideas of unity and supremacy, with more comprehensive ideas of other attributes. Why should the belief of one God not prevail amongst the Africans? What do we understand of oneness more than they? Why should not the Heathen nations have had some perception of this truth, although it failed to influence their practice? ‘The intelligent pagans acknowledged only one God according to the phrase quoted by Laertius of Thales. God is the oldest of all things, because he is unmade or unproduced, and the only thing that is so.’—i.35. “The Pagans do often characterize the Supreme God by such titles, epithets, and descriptions, as are incommunicably proper to him, thereby plainly distinguishing him from all other inferior gods.” Cudworth, ii. II.”

The ONE, in Mill's understanding, fundamentally represents the Sun, and the Hindu religion is nothing but a Pagan and animistic religion. Though not very fond of the Indologist William Jones on most counts, Mill here uses the testimony of the latter to substantiate his point:

Sir William Jones has written a discourse to prove that the gods of Greece, Italy, and India are the same. But it is sufficiently proved that the Greek and Roman deities ultimately resolve themselves into the sun, whose powers and provinces had been gradually enlarged, till they included those of all nature. It follows that the sun too is the principle of the Hindu religion. "We must not be surprised," says Sir William Jones, "at finding on a close examination, that the characters of all the Pagan deities, male and female, melt into each other, and at last into one or two; for it seems a well-founded opinion, that the whole crowd of gods and goddesses, in ancient Rome and modern Varanes, mean only the powers of nature, and principally those of the sun, expressed in a variety of ways, and by a multitude of fanciful names." He says too, that "the three Powers Creative, Preservative, and Destructive, which the Hindus express by the trilateral word *Aum*, were grossly ascribed by the first idolators to the heat, light, and flame of their mistaken divinity the sun." Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, were therefore, the heat, light, and flame of the sun; and it follows as a very clear deduction, that Brahme, whose powers were shadowed forth in the characters of those three gods, was the sun himself.<sup>81</sup>

Extremely important to the Hindus, the three Gods—Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva, the transformer—who are supposed to be taking care of different activities on earth, Mill ensures that even their distribution of power amongst themselves becomes a distinguishing feature of the savagery of the Hindus.

The Hindus have distributed the creation and government of the universe among those three, denominating Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer. Of the highest scene of operation in which the Divine Being can be contemplated by mortals, the creation of the universe, the conception, formed by the Hindus, is so far from corresponding with high and noble ideas of the creating power, that it is consistent only

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 387–88.



with the meanest. This itself is a criterion of a religious system from which there is no appeal. Of the peculiar functions of Vishnu and Siva no determinate conception appears to have been formed. They are two beings of mighty power, by whom great actions are performed; but there is no distinct separation of their provinces. Whenever indeed we seek to ascertain the definite and precise ideas of the Hindus in religion, the subject eludes our grasp.<sup>82,83</sup>

Thus, the animistic religion, with its deification of powers of nature, when combined with human qualities projected upon gods, produces a monstrous and inchoate mass of contradictions, which is Hinduism, as per Mill:

When the exaggerations of flattery are in this manner engrafted upon the original deification of the elements and powers of nature; and when the worship of heroes and of abstract ideas is incorporated with the whole; then is produced that heterogeneous and monstrous compound which has formed the religious creed of so great a portion of the human race; but composes a more stupendous mass in Hindustan than any other country; because in Hindustan a greater and more powerful section of the people, than in any other country, have, during a long series of ages, been solely occupied in adding to its volume, and augmenting its influence. So little do men regard incoherence of thought; so little are they accustomed to trace the relations of one set of opinions to another, and to form on any subject a consistent and harmonious combination of ideas, that while many persons of eminence loudly contend for the correctness and sublimity of the speculative, there is an universal agreement respecting the mean-

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 347–48.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 348, footnote, Wilson remarks: “The confusion is not the fault of the system but of its expounders. In the original scheme, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, were nothing more than mythological personifications of the power of the one first cause, to create, to preserve, and to destroy. In the course of time, the Hindus did precisely what the text asserts they did not; “they carried on the applause of one favourite deity, till they bestowed upon him alone all power in heaven and earth.” Brahma, probably, Vishnu and Siva, certainly, had their respective followers, who naturally invested the deity of their preference with the attributes of all. The Vaishnavas, made Vishnu creator and destroyer, as well as preserver; and the power of creating and preserving was assigned by the Saivas to Siva. There is no confusion or contradiction of system in this. It is the opposition of opposite sects. A person undertaking to give an account of the Christian religion would make strange work if he were to amalgamate as one undivided faith, the conflicting tenets of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Romanists. With equal ignorance do we confound Vaishnava, Saiva, and Sakta doctrines.”

ness, the absurdity, the folly, of the endless ceremonies, in which the practical part of the Hindu religion consists.<sup>84</sup>

Hinduism is a religion where ceremonies find far greater precedence than does the observation of morality. And because ceremonies are privileged over moral precepts, Hinduism is a primitive religion:

To the rude mind, no other rule suggests itself for paying court to the Divine, than that for paying court to the Human Majesty; and as among a barbarous people, the forms of address, of respect, and compliment, are generally multiplied into a great variety of grotesque and frivolous ceremonies, so it happens with regard to their religious service. An endless succession of observances, in compliment to the god, is supposed to afford him the most exquisite delight; while the common discharge of the beneficent duties of life is regarded as an object of comparative indifference. Even those inquirers who have been least aware of the grossness of the Hindu religion, have seen that wretched ceremonies constituted almost the whole of its practical part. The precepts, which are lavished upon its ceremonies, bury, in their exorbitant mass, the pittance bestowed upon all other duties taken together. On all occasions ceremonies meet the attention as the pre-eminent duties of the Hindu. The holiest man is always he, by whom the ceremonies of his religion are most strictly performed. Never among any other people did the ceremonial part of religion prevail over the moral to a greater, probably to an equal extent.<sup>85,86</sup>

Hinduism, contrary to advancing morality, in fact degrades it. Morality has a far less important place in the life of Hindus than rituals have. The ceremonies and rituals are, of course, pernicious:

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 395–97.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 398–99.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 398–99, footnote, Wilson corrects Mill: “The leading feature in the Hindu ceremonial is throughout overlooked or misstated. There are no observances ‘in compliment to the god,’ there is no form of worship proscribed in the law-books for any one divinity; the observances are all personal and domestic; they involve much less waste of time than they would appear to do, and are of a less offensive character than the public worship of Greece and Rome. This applies to the primitive system. In the actual state of the Hindu religion, public observances have been in a great degree substituted for domestic; but, even now, if the objects were worthy, the amount of time dedicated to them would not be excessive.”

Among rude nations it has almost always been found, that religion has served to degrade morality, by advancing to the place of greatest honour, those external performances, or those mental exercises, which more immediately regarded the deity; and with which, of course, he was supposed to be more peculiarly delighted. On no occasion, indeed, has religion obliterated the impressions of morality, of which the rules are the fundamental laws of human society: morality has every where met with the highest applause; and no where has it been celebrated in more pompous strains, than in places where the most contemptible, or the most abominable rites, have most effectually been allowed to usurp its honours. . . . Yet in the entire system of rules concerning duty, the stress which is laid upon moral acts, may, as we see in the case of the Hindus, bear no comparison to the importance which is attached to useless or pernicious ceremonies.<sup>87</sup>

Mill gives the postures of yoga and meditation the color of penance. Penance, in his conception, is nothing but sadism performed to please God, which in the imagination of the savage is malignant. The malignant God revels in the suffering of his devotee; thus, thinks the Savage Hindu:

The penances, prescribed by the various systems of religion, afford a remarkable indication of the qualities really ascribed to the object of worship. All penance consists in suffering. In the same degree in which the object of worship is supposed to be delighted with penance, in the same degree he is delighted with human suffering; and so far as he delights in suffering, for its own sake, so far he is a malignant being; whatever epithets, in the spirit of flattery, his votaries may confer upon him. It is natural to a rude and ignorant mind to regard the object of its worship as malignant. . . . In the religion of rude minds, pleasure in general bears a strong mark of reprobation, and the voluntary creation of pain is the strongest of all recommendations to him on whom the issues of life depend.<sup>88</sup>

Mill, however, is not content with depicting Hindus as more ritualistic than moralistic. He makes Hinduism a religion that promotes the loosest morality, also because the practice of penance and austerities does not guarantee that that a religion belonging to the savage people can

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 421–23.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 403–4.

encourage morality: “It is by no means unnatural for the religion of a rude people to unite opposite qualities, to preach the most harsh austerities, and at the same time to encourage the loosest morality.”<sup>89</sup>

Mill castigates the Hindus for venerating animals and plants. Even that becomes a measure for being backward and primitive:

Another contrast to the tortures and death which the religion of the Hindus exhorts them to inflict upon themselves, is the sacredness which it imprints upon the life of animals. Not only are the Hindus prohibited the use of animal food, except at certain peculiar sacrifices; even the offerings to the gods consist almost entirely of inanimate objects; and to deprive any sensitive creature of life, is a heinous transgression of religious duty. Many of the inferior creatures, both animate and inanimate, are the objects of religious veneration; such, in particular, are the cow, the lotos, and cusa grass.... It is known that many negro tribes worship animals and reptiles; and that they carry the solicitude for their preservation to a still more extravagant pitch than even the Hindus; punishing with death those who hurt them even casually.... To renounce the benefits which the inferior animals are fitted by nature to render to man, is not humanity, any more than swinging before an idol, by an iron hook, forced through the muscles of the back, is the virtue of self-command.<sup>90</sup>

Mill closes the chapter by launching an attack on the karma theory of the Hindus: metempsychosis and the transmigration of the soul. He claims that transmigration and metempsychosis have been characteristics of all savage societies; given that the Hindus are the most uncivilized of the lot, they have spun around it the most comprehensive of all theories.

Some very obvious, and very impressive appearances must have suggested the notion of the metempsychosis, since it is one of the most ancient, and one of the most general of all religious opinions. “No doctrine,” says Dupuis, “was ever more universally diffused; none claims an origin so ancient. It reigned in the East, and in the West, among rude nations, and polished nations; and it ascends to antiquity so high, that Burnet ingeniously declares, one would believe it to be descended from heaven; so

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 426–28.

much it appears without father, without mother, and without descent.” The Brahmens grafted upon it, in their usual way, a number of fantastic refinements, and gave to their ideas on this subject, a more systematic form than is usual with those eccentric theologians.<sup>91,92</sup>

Karma, however, does not make any Hindu moral; On the contrary, it has an adverse effect—it makes the Hindu destitute of free will and effort. It makes the Hindu lazy—a description that lays the foundation for Mill to segue into the last and the final chapter on the Hindus, where he describes their manners. This chapter is the final nail in the coffin in making the Hindu completely and entirely savage in the British and European imagination.

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 431–32.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 436–37, footnote, Wilson could not have been more dismissive of Mill’s treatment of Hinduism in the chapter even as he commented on Karma and transmigration: “The whole of this review of the religion, as of the laws of the Hindus, is full of very serious defects, arising from inveterate prejudices and imperfect knowledge. Every text, every circumstance, that makes against the Hindu character, is most assiduously cited, and every thing in its favour as carefully kept out of sight, whilst a total neglect is displayed of the history of Hindu belief. The doctrines of various periods and of opposing sects, have been forced into one time and one system, and the whole charged with an incongruity, which is the creation of the writer. Had he been more impartially disposed, indeed, it would not have been easy to have given an unobjectionable account of the Hindu religion, as his materials were exceedingly defective. *Manu* is good authority for the time to which it refers, and *Mr. Colebrook’s* essays furnish authentic details of particular parts of the ritual, but the different travellers who are given as authorities of equal weight, are utterly unworthy of regard. A word more on the subject of Fate, as understood by the Hindus; as it is something very different from that of other people. It is necessary, as the consequence of past acts—that is, a man’s station and fortunes in his present life are the necessary consequences of his conduct in his pre-existence. To them he must submit, but not from despair. He has his future condition in his own power, and it depends upon himself in what capacity he shall be born again. He is not therefore the helpless victim of an irresistible and inscrutable destiny, but the sufferer for his own misdeeds, or the possessor of good which his own merits have secured him.”

## **Hindus: Hierarchical, Oppressive, Women-abusers, Effeminate, Inhuman, Villainous, Timid, Weak, Cowardly, Lazy, Penurious, Greedy, Filthy, Superstitious, and Fatalistic**

Hierarchy and oppression are the master notes on which Mill describes the manners of Hindus. He has already characterized their social classification, governance, laws, and taxation around them. He now takes his diatribe, couched in the garb of scholarship, to the next level. Until the Hindus had not come under an external attack, Hindu society was divided into three quartets: the *Varna*, *Āśrama*, and *Puruṣārtha* systems. The last one is the pursuit of *artha* (material), *dharma* (adherence to the numerous responsibilities that one has in the social world), *kāma* (pleasures) and *moksha* (liberation). Of the three quartets, Mill, in his final chapter, takes up the second, given that he has already elaborated upon the first in the beginning stages of his treatise. The second quartet is divided into four stages of Hindu life: *Brahmacarya*, *Gr̥hastha*, *Vānaprastha*, and *Samnyāsa*. During *brahmacarya*, a Hindu was supposed to be a student. Mill does not comment upon the third quartet.

Much in tandem with his approach, as seen in the previous passages, Mill gives little value to the studentship years of the Hindu. In his tarnished and jaundiced opinion, the Hindu is a mere apprentice to his teacher and not a pupil: “The condition of the student much more closely resembles that of an European apprentice than that of a pupil in literature.”<sup>93</sup> The student-teacher relationship is, of course, not one which could be emancipatory or liberatory for the student but one which is hierarchical and oppressive. Not instruction but service defines the teacher-student relationship: “While the directions laid down respecting the instruction of the pupil are exceedingly few and insignificant, the forms, according to which he must pay his duty to the master, are numerous, minute, and emphatically enjoined.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

In describing the stage of life defined by conjugal relationship (*grhastha*), Mill debases the Hindu society and condition of women to his heart's content. The following passages are essential to note because they are almost reproduced verbatim in school textbooks—in politically correct and sanitized ways, of course.

The condition of the women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manners of nations. Among rude people, the women are generally degraded; among civilized people they are exalted. In the barbarian, the passion of sex is a brutal impulse, which infuses no tenderness; and his undisciplined nature leads him to abuse his power over every creature that is weaker than himself. The history of uncultivated nations uniformly represents the women as in a state of abject slavery, from which they slowly emerge, as civilization advances.... In such a state of society property is an advantage which it may naturally be supposed that the degraded sex are by no means permitted to enjoy.... Excluded from the inheritance of family<sup>95</sup>...[and] condemned to severe and perpetual labour, they are themselves regarded as useful property.... A state of dependance more strict and humiliating than that which is ordained for the weaker sex among the Hindus cannot easily be conceived.... No sacrifice is allowed to women apart from their husbands, no religious rite, no fasting.... Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which the Hindus entertain for their women. Hardly are they ever mentioned in their laws, or other books, but as wretches of the most base and vicious inclinations, on whose nature no virtuous or useful qualities can be ingrafted.... They are held, accordingly, in extreme degradation. They are not accounted worthy to partake of

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 248–49, footnote, Wilson candidly refutes Mill: “This is by no means the case. In the absence of direct male heirs, widows succeed to a life interest in real, and absolute interest in personal property. Next, daughters inherit absolutely. Where there are sons, mothers and daughters are entitled to shares, and wives hold peculiar property from a variety of sources, besides those specified by the text, over which a husband has no power during their lives, and which descends to their own heirs, with a preference, in some cases, to females. It is far from correct, therefore, to say that women, amongst the Hindus, are excluded from the rights of property.”

religious rites but in conjunction with their husbands. They are entirely excluded from the sacred books.<sup>96,97</sup>

The barbarian Hindu men in Mill's representations keep the women under their thumb—under complete subjugation: The Hindu man does not give her any freedom; she does not have any voice; she is abused and kept as an enslaved person; she does not have any inheritance rights; does not own any property; she cannot even perform religious rites on her own; she does not find any mention in the sacred texts. We want to highlight once again that Mill is generating the above-kind narrative to designate, characterize, represent, label, define, and term the Hindus as savages, uncivilized, and primitive. When any description of the Hindus in the current discourse reflects the abovementioned, however politically correct or sanitized it may be, it essentially says that the Hindus are savages and primitive. In the context of our present work, we must pause and take note of Mill's narrative on Hindu women because it is being replicated almost verbatim sans the remarks that explicitly call the Hindus primitive and savage. We will see this for ourselves a little further.

Contending that Hindu women are considered property by Hindu men is not enough for Mill; he impresses upon us that they are provided no education: "We have already seen, as in the most barbarous nations, that the women among the Hindus are excluded from sharing in the paternal property. They are, by system, deprived of education."<sup>98</sup> Hindu

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 445–51.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 446, footnote, Wilson again contests Mill regarding the property rights of women: "This was not the case amongst the Hindus,...their right to property is fully recognized and carefully secured." Ibid., 450–51, footnote, he further asserts, "In all this, our author's usual practice prevails of quoting every passage in favour of his own theory, and excluding every one that makes against it. A reluctant admission is subsequently made, that the Hindus have some general precepts, recommending indulgence and humanity in favour of the weaker sex; but they are passed over very lightly. If, instead of the language of law or satire, we look to the portraits of women painted by the Hindus themselves, in their tales, their plays, and poems, we shall find them invariably described as amiable, high-principled, modest, gentle, accomplished, intelligent; as exercising a very important influence upon men, and as treated by them with tenderness and respect. The English reader will find ample proofs of this in the *Cloud Messenger*, and *Hindu Theatre*, and in *Mr. Milman's Nala*; and it may be confidently asserted, that in no nation of antiquity were women held in so much esteem as amongst the Hindus."

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 451–52.



women, having no freedom for themselves within the society, are metaphorically chained:

An almost unlimited power of rejection or divorce appears to be reserved to the husband.... That polygamy was an established custom of the Hindus,<sup>99</sup> we learn from various documents...which at the same time conveys no evidence of their domestic gentleness.... It is to be observed, besides, that the women have no choice in their own destiny.... The whole spirit of the Hindu maxims indicates confinement: there are numerous precepts which respect the guarding of women.... Among the Hindus, as in general among the nations of Asia, since their emerging from the rudest barbarism, it seems to have been the practice for every man, who possessed sufficient means, to keep his women guarded, in a state of seclusion.<sup>100,101</sup>

Whereas the “lack of freedom” becomes a stick for Mill to chastise the Hindus, the prevalence of freedom, too, becomes a whip to beat up the Hindus for their want of civilization. This becomes evident as to how he describes the matrilineal society of the Nairs in the Malabars of India:

In the family of a Nair there is no wife; all the brothers and sisters live under the same roof; their mother the only known parent, during her life, and after her death the eldest sister, manage the domestic affairs; the sisters cohabit with the men of their choice, subject only to the sacred restriction

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 455, footnote, Wilson nuances Mill’s discussion of polygamy while correcting him: “Although permitted, polygamy is not encouraged by the ancient law, and from its being sanctioned in particular cases only, as of misconduct, aversion, or barrenness; Manu, ix. 77, 81, it is evident that it was not without restriction. Even the consent of the first wife seems to have been necessary. ‘She (the wife), who though afflicted with illness, is amiable and virtuous, must never be disgraced, though she may be superseded by another wife, with her own consent;’ lx. 82. By being disgraced means the loss of consideration in the family. The first wife seems always to have held the principal rank, and to have been mistress of the household.”

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 453–59.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 459, footnote, Wilson corrects Mill yet again: “It has, no doubt, been always the custom for the women of Hindus of rank and respectability to live in some degree apart, but not in seclusion, nor guarded with the same jealousy as by the Mohammedans. Manu provides for their being properly decorated at ‘festivals and jubilees;’ and many of the poems and plays describe their appearance openly in public at religious and other festivals and at public games, and the admission of men other than their immediate kinsmen to their presence on various occasions. Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana, Vishnu Purāna, Mālati Mādhava, Ratnāvali, &c. Even still the wives of respectable Hindus leave the inner—there is no such term as secret—apartments at pleasure, and go to bathe in the Ganges and other sacred streams.”

of a class not inferior to their own; the children are by the brothers regarded as their own, and inherit the property of the family. This is the exact description of a people among whom the institution of marriage is unknown, and the order into which things will run of their own accord, wherever the intercourse of the sexes is casual.<sup>102</sup>

It matters little to him if, in the same vein or breath, he contradicts himself, as we see in the quote below:

The Nairs, however, are said to have added a kind of refinement to this established custom. They contract a marriage with a particular woman. But this is entirely nominal. The woman never leaves her mother's house; her intercourse with other men is not restricted; her children belong to her brothers; and the arrangement of society is the same as if no such marriage existed.<sup>103</sup>

It is important to note that this contradiction does not appear after a gap of a few sentences; it appears in the continuity of the description itself. The scholarship is so agenda-based that for our present work, we decided not to dispute any of his statements based on evidence from the Hindu tradition—we could have given a plethora of evidence against every contention Mill is making on the Hindus. We decided, however, to lay bare the uncivil, uncouth, and uncivilized pathway that Mill has taken in representing the Hindus savage.

Subsequently, Mill begins to project his misogynist leanings onto the Hindus. It had been observed by some European travelers that the Hindus were mild-mannered and that there was a certain sophistication in their exchange with one another. Some may even have held that this was a mark of civilization amongst the Hindus. It is time now for Mill to knock those writers down:

Much attention has been attracted to the gentleness of manners, in this people. They possess a feminine softness both in their persons and in their address. As the inhabitants of Europe were rough and impetuous, in their

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 460–61.

rude and early state, and grew mild only as they grew civilized, the gentleness of Hindu manners has usually impressed their European visitors, with a high conception of their progress in civilization. It is, perhaps, a ground of presumption; but fallacious if taken as a proof. One of the circumstances which distinguish the state of commencing civilization is, that it is compatible with great violence, as well as great gentleness of manners. Nothing is more common than examples of both. Mildness of address is not always separated even from the rudest condition of human life, as the Otaheitan, and some other of the South-Sea islanders, abundantly testify. "The savages of North America are affectionate in their carriage, and in their conversations pay a mutual attention and regard, says Charlevoix, more tender and more engaging, than what we profess in the ceremonial of polished societies."<sup>104</sup>

Mill concludes that the "savages" in different parts of the world can be mild-mannered, rough, and impetuous. It depends upon the external circumstances—particularly on the abundance of food. If the food is abundant and the climate mild, which the savage Hindus have had since antiquity, it is but natural that mildness of manners would become part of their national character in comparison to those savages who find food scarce and themselves surrounded by a hostile climate. And if they are living under hierarchical and oppressive conditions (which define the social condition of the Hindus) where divergence from any behavior not deferential to the high and mighty could be dire, leading to even loss of life, mildness in manners must be the consequent outcome:

Where the commodities of life, by a happy union of climate and soil, are abundant, gentleness of manners, as appears by the traditions respecting the golden or pastoral age, is by no means unnatural to men in the earliest period of improvement: The savage, involved in a continual struggle with want, who sees himself and his children every day exposed to perish with hunger, is, by a sort of necessity, rapacious, harsh, unfeeling, and cruel. The species of polity under which the national character is formed is perhaps to a still greater degree the cause of the diversity which we now contemplate. Where the mind is free, and may vent its passions with little fear, the

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

nation, while ignorant and rude, is also fierce and impetuous: Where slavery prevails, and any departure from the most perfect obsequiousness is followed with the most direful consequences, an insinuating and fawning behaviour is the interest, and thence becomes the habit, of the people.<sup>105</sup>

When Mill firmly establishes that Hindus are effeminate, he begins to conjunct their characteristics with feminine as understood in the European context:

They are remarkably prone to flattery; the most prevailing mode of address from the weak to the strong, while men are still ignorant and unreflecting. The Hindus are full of dissimulation and falsehood, the universal concomitants of oppression.<sup>106</sup>

Lack of humanism, humanity, and altruism define the character of the Hindus:

No other race of men are perhaps so little friendly, and beneficent to one another as the Hindus.... "The Bengalese," says another traveller, "will seldom assist each other, unless they happen to be friends or relations, and then the service that they render only consists in carrying the sufferer to the water of the Ganges, to let him die there, or be carried away by the stream."<sup>107</sup>

Hindus are villainous, timid, weak, and cowardly by nature:

The cool reflection which attends the villainy of the Hindu, has often surprised the European.... Notwithstanding the degree to which the furious passions enter into the character of the Hindu, all witnesses agree in representing him as a timid being. With more apparent capacity of supporting pain than any other race of men; and, on many occasions, a superiority to the fear of death, which cannot be surpassed, this people run from danger with more trepidation and eagerness than has been almost ever witnessed in any other part of the globe.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 466–67.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 467.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 469–70.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 473–74.

Surprising as it may sound, taking recourse to the law instead of settling feuds by taking the law into one's own hands is also used by Mill to argue for the savage nature of the Hindus, which he once again equates with the feminine:

It is the mixture of this fearfulness, with their antisocial passions, which has given existence to that litigiousness of character which almost all witnesses have ascribed to this ancient race.<sup>109</sup> As often as courage fails them in seeking a more daring gratification to their hatred or revenge, their malignity finds a vent in the channel of litigation. "That pusillanimity and sensibility of spirit," says Mr. Orme, "which renders the Gentoos incapable of supporting the contentions of danger, disposes them as much to prosecute litigious contests. No people are of more inveterate and steady resentments in civil disputes. The only instance in which they seem to have a contempt for money, is their profusion of it in procuring the redress and revenge of injuries at the bar of justice. Although they can, with great resignation, see themselves plundered to the utmost by their superiors, they become mad with impatience, when they think themselves defrauded of any part of their property by their equals. Nothing can be more adapted to the feminine spirit of a Gentoo, than the animosities of a lawsuit."<sup>110,111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 474, footnote, Wilson not only recognizes the peculiarity of Mill's arguments but also underlines that the latter, even if the situation had been reverse, would have still painted the Hindus savage: "Surely having recourse to law for the protection of their rights or persons, instead of taking the law into their own hands, is no proof of want of civilization. What would Mr. Mill have said if the case had been reversed, and if the Hindus had been possessed of courage enough to seek a more daring gratification of their hatred or revenge? We should have had the old and new world ransacked, for instances to exemplify the savage manners of the Hindus."

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 474–75.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 475, footnote, Wilson quotes a former governor of Madras to refute the claims of Mill: "The fact has by no means been established, and is denied by much higher authority than Mr. Orme, who knew nothing of the people of India. Sir Thomas Munro says, 'I have had ample opportunity of observing them in every situation, and I can affirm, that they are not litigious. The opinion has been hastily formed from a few instances in the Supreme courts, and from the great number of suits in the Provincial courts: the former do not warrant a general conclusion, and the latter, to be duly estimated, require the numbers of the population, and the fewness of the judges to be taken into account. The circumstances of the country are also to be considered; and the result will be, that which has been advocated in a sensible tract upon the subject, that the multitude of suits is referable to the structure of society and state of property in India, and to the imperfection of our own systems of finance and judicature, and not to any inherent difference in the moral character or natural disposition of the people.' Inquiry into the alleged proneness to litigation of the natives of India. London, 1830."

After having disparagingly characterized the Hindus as psychologically feminine, he then focuses on representing them as physically and corporeally feminine, too. Mill sums up the effeminacy of the Hindus with the following:

The physical temperament of the Hindus, though an effect of some of the circumstances which have operated to the formation of their minds, has reflected a strong influence on their character. Their make is slender and delicate. Their shapes are in general fine. The female form, in particular, frequently attains in India its most exquisite proportions; and “their skins,” says Mr. Orme, speaking of the Hindu women, “are of a polish and softness beyond that of all their rivals on the globe.” The muscular strength, however, of the Hindus, is small; even less, according to the same accurate observer, than the appearance of their bodies, though expressive of weakness, would lead the spectator to infer. Their stature is in general considerably below the European standard; though such inferiority is more remarkable in the south, and diminishes as you advance toward the north.<sup>112</sup>

The laziness with which the non-European colonized had been described world worldwide by the European colonizers does not escape Mill’s formulations on the Hindus:

Another remarkable circumstance in the character of the Hindus; in part, too, no doubt, the effect of corporeal weakness, though an effect in some sort opposite to that excitability which we have immediately remarked, is the inertness of disposition, with which all men have been so forcibly struck in observing the conduct of this peculiar race. The love of repose reigns in India with more powerful sway, than in any other region probably of the globe. “It is more happy to be seated than to walk; it is more happy to sleep than to be awake; but the happiest of all is death.” Such is one of the favourite sayings, most frequently in the mouths of this listless tribe, and most descriptive of their habitual propensities. Phlegmatic indolence pervades the nation. Few pains, to the mind of a Hindu, are equal to that of bodily exertion; the pleasure must be intense which he prefers to that of its total cessation.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 477.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 479–80.

We have already seen Mill pronounce in the early chapters of his work that Hindus have no sense of history. He now makes them people who have a fondness for storytelling, deeply engaged in mythmaking:

Story-telling, which entirely harmonizes with the Hindu tone of mind, is said to be a favourite diversion. The recitations of the bards, with which the people of Europe were formerly so much delighted, afforded an entertainment of the same description. The stories of the Hindus consist of the wildest fictions; and as almost all their written narratives are in verse, their spoken stories, it is probable, like the effusions of the bards, contained occasionally more or less of the measure and elevation of verse.<sup>114,115</sup>

Hindus are gamblers: “The Hindus...appear to have been at all times deeply infected with the vices of gaming.”<sup>116</sup> And they are penurious too:

It is curious that avarice, which seems but little consistent with sloth, or that insecurity with regard to property which so bad a government as theirs implies forms a more remarkable ingredient in the national character of the Hindus, than in that of any other people. It is a passion congenial to a weak and timid mind, unwarmed by the social affections. They are almost universally penurious; and where placed in situations in which their insatiable desire of gain can meet with its gratification, it is not easy to surpass their keenness and assiduity in the arts of accumulation.<sup>117</sup>

Hindus are greedy, deceitful, and cunning: Quoting Orme, he says:

“From the difficulty of obtaining, and the greater difficulty of preserving, the Gentoos are indefatigable in business, and masters of the most exquisite dissimulation in all affairs of interest. They are the acutest buyers and sellers in the world, and preserve through all their bargains a degree of

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 484.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 484, footnote, Wilson disagrees: “Story-telling is not a Hindu diversion. If in use amongst them, it has been borrowed from the Mohammedans, amongst whom it takes the place of dramatic performances. What is presently said of the ‘wild fictions’ which these stories relate, and the probability of their being in verse, is wholly gratuitous. In ancient times, it seems likely that their heroic poems were recited, as was practiced in Greece, even in polished times.”

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 482.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 485.

calmness, which baffles all the arts that can be opposed against it.” The avaricious disposition of the Hindus is deeply stamped in their maxims of prudence and morality. Thus, they say: “From poverty a man cometh to shame. Alas! the want of riches is the foundation of every misfortune.—It is better to dwell in a forest haunted by tigers and lions, than to live amongst relations after the loss of wealth.” The mode of transacting bargains among the Hindus is sufficiently peculiar to deserve description. By a refinement of the cunning and deceitful temper of a rude people, the business is performed secretly, by tangible signs.<sup>118</sup>

Hindus are dirty and filthy: “Few nations are surpassed by the Hindus, in the total want of physical purity, in their streets, houses, and persons.”<sup>119</sup>

Perhaps mulling if there is any vice in the human world left that he has not used to designate the Hindus, Mill concludes by stating that the Hindus are superstitious and fatalistic:

The attachment which the Hindus, in common with all ignorant nations, bear to astrology, is a part of their manners exerting a strong influence upon the train of their actions. “The Hindus of the present age,” says a partial observer, “do not undertake any affair of consequence without consulting their astrologers, who are always Brahmens.” The belief of witchcraft and sorcery continues universally prevalent.<sup>120,121</sup>

To sum up, much in tune with how the Francophone postcolonial thinkers described the colonizer-colonized relationship, Mill demonized and vilified the Hindus to his heart’s content. He degraded them, painted them in the darkest hues, and groveled them to the ground as much as possible so that even the Dark Ages of Europe appeared more civilized. He would not cease milking such an opportunity at every given moment. He elevated the Britishers at the expense of the Hindus and extolled the virtues of his civilization in contrast to the manufactured lack of the

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 485–86.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 491–92.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 492, footnote, Wilson puts a mirror in front of Mill: “It is not so long since belief in witchcraft and astrology ceased to prevail in Europe, that we need to be very severe upon similar absurdities in Asia.”



Hindus—this is in the context of his writings in the *History*; his domestic writings on the socio-political situation in England painted a completely different picture as we shall shortly see. Mill did not leave any stone unturned in dehumanizing the Hindus and removed every trace of civilization that they had accrued through the efforts of their ancestors. As we saw in the previous pages, Hindus, in his representation, indeed became the antithesis of civilization: Savage, uncivilized, primitive, barbaric, uncouth, brute, rude, coarse, and all other synonyms that one can find of these words.

Like all racist representations, these characterizations, too, are nothing but myths and fabrications. They are pure imaginations, as pointed out by the Francophone theorists, which the next chapter will expose and discuss.

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# 4

## Imagining the Hindus and Hinduism

Critiquing colonial knowledge on India, S. N. Balagandhara, in *Reconceptualizing India Studies*, has argued that despite the notions of apparent objectivity, the study of India by Europe and Europeans has occurred within the cultural framework of Europe. He further states, “What Europeans think they know of India tells us more about Europe than it does about India.”<sup>1</sup> This cultural framework was the structure on which the European experience of India and the meaning of the experience were constructed. Colonial discourse, in his view, is the experience and the structuring of the experience. Though Balagandhara’s origin of critique and reconceptualization of studies on and of India take Said’s<sup>2</sup> *Orientalism* as the beginning point and given that we have decided to use postcolonial writings that have predated *Orientalism* for reasons outlined in the opening chapter, we would like to qualify that if we substitute Balagandhara’s use of “Orientalism” with “Colonial Discourse,” his critiques and contentions still suffice and hold water. The study of colonial discourse, therefore, reveals more about Europe than it does about the

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<sup>1</sup>S. N. Balagandhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>2</sup>Said, *Orientalism*.

non-western culture that it claimed to study is one of the main theses in Balagangadhara's arguments:

'Orientalism' refers not only to how Europe experienced the Orient, but also to how it gave expression to that experience. In doing this, Western culture built and elaborated on conceptual frameworks, using resources available from its own culture. Those descriptions also generated Europe's description and understanding of itself and the world. That is, Europe's descriptions of other cultures have been fundamentally entwined in many untold ways with the way it has experienced the world. To understand the way in which the West has described itself, the world and others, is to begin to understand the West itself. The challenge of Orientalism, thus, is a challenge to understanding Western culture.<sup>3</sup>

He elaborates upon the above further:

It is an epistemic truism to claim that descriptions of the world are framed using the concepts of the describer. Consequently, such a description does two things. First, it provides a partial description of the world. Second, being framed this way and not that of another way, the description tells us something about the framer of such a description. This epistemic truism has immensely profound consequences on the subject matter. If constancy, consistency, and durability are present in the descriptions by the West of itself and others, then such descriptions tell us more about the culture that has produced them.<sup>4</sup>

Balagangadhara further contends that colonial discourse and western social sciences (in contemporary times, "social sciences," for colonization ensured that no non-western form of knowledge pursuit survived in the mainstream) are intertwined and constrained by one another. Colonial Discourse "is not an extraneous and alien growth on the otherwise splendid corpus of social sciences. Instead, it is an inextricable part of the social-scientific discourse."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, both the categories, social sciences and colonial discourse, come from the same cultural framework. The contemporary discourse on India ensues from a western cultural framework,

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<sup>3</sup> Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies*, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 62.

which is at variance with how the Indians have conceptualized and structured themselves since antiquity. This included their epistemology and various knowledge pursuits in matters of the world as well as beyond the world: yoga and yogic traditions (in which will fall Vedanta and its various schools, Buddhism and its various schools, Jainism and its various schools, Tantra and its various schools, and many others), art, architecture, mathematics, medicine, surgery, metallurgy, civil engineering, literature, drama, poetry, etc. Therefore, India studies should not only explain India from the perspective of its cosmology and epistemology but also be able to account for western social sciences and colonial discourse.

Balagangadhara, thus, sets the stage for future scholarship. Our lead author, Kundan Singh, has developed a framework that can account for the patterns identified in western colonial discourse on India and the patterns underlying social sciences. The framework essentially comes from what Singh describes as classical Indian cosmology.

The plan of the chapter, therefore, is to give an overview of Singh's thesis developed against the backdrop of Thomas Kuhn's<sup>6</sup> *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. As we will see shortly, the framework will account for the patterns identified by Cesaire, Fanon, and Memmi in the colonial discourse as outlined in previous chapters and the patterns that exist in social sciences. The resulting framework, developed by fusing Balagangadhara's contentions and Singh's observations, will become the container in which we will further analyze the *History of British India* to show that Mil's contentions are pure fabrications, imaginations, and projections.

## Postmodern Philosophy of Science, Self-Referentiality, and Binaries

The impact of Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in academia is well known. Published for the first time in 1962, the book went on to become the academic bestseller of the last century. The *Structure* was a phenomenal challenge to the ideas of objectivism in Science, highlighting the play of paradigm with its explicit and latent assumptions in guiding research and interpretation of data, the dependence of scientific truth on

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

held truths of the paradigm in which scientists work, the consensual nature of scientific truth in a community of scholars, the inseparability of fact and value, the interactional nature of subject and object in a research situation, the dependence of scientific truth in the larger social milieu in which the scientists find themselves, among others.

What is not so well known in academia even today is that Kuhn's arguments are self-referential and that they devour themselves if one examines them at a meta-level. Singh writes:

One of the chief themes of his theses is that paradigms guide research in terms of observation and interpretation of data. If his premise is true—he has, of course supported it with a lot of evidence—then, by extension it can be said that he has culled out data from the body of the history of science to support his theory that paradigms guide research. In other words, the data was collected with the theory—paradigm guides research—already in his mind. As soon as we recognize this, Kuhn's arguments turn on themselves, thus assuming circularity. *A paradoxical situation emerges...: Kuhn's arguments are true and false at the same time.* True because there is evidence to support his claim, and false because he contradicts himself by inviting his arguments on himself. Alternatively, his arguments have been designated as self-referential by his critics, and have been termed as self-refuting.<sup>7</sup>

There is yet another vital dimension to the *Structure*: In showing the dependence of scientific truth on implicit paradigms being followed by its practitioners, Kuhn inadvertently ended up claiming that scientific truth is relative with respect to paradigms. He protested heavily in the preface to the second edition of the book in this regard, but his protestations do not hold water since there are passages after passages in the *Structure* that clearly articulate that he was suggesting the relative nature of scientific truth.<sup>8</sup> *In any case, if we take the conclusion "Truth is relative*

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<sup>7</sup>Kundan Singh, "Beyond Mind: The Future of Psychology as Science," in *Foundations of Indian Psychology: Theories and Concepts*, eds. R. M. Matthijs Cornelissen, Girishwar Misra, and Suneet Varma (Delhi: Pearson, 2011), 94–95.

<sup>8</sup>See Kundan Singh, "Beyond Mind: The Future of Psychology as Science," in *Foundations and Applications of Indian Psychology*, eds. R. M. Matthijs Cornelissen, Girishwar Misra, and Suneet Varma (Delhi: Pearson, 2014).

*with respect to paradigms,” we paradoxically find that this is an absolute truth about the relative nature of truth.* In other words, the strict dichotomy between absolute and relative in defining the nature of truth begins to crumble just as the dichotomy between true and false in Kuhn’s contentions breaks down if we put them to critical scrutiny at a meta-level. How can a truth contention be true and false simultaneously, or truth be relative and absolute simultaneously? The binary opposites begin to collapse.

What is the way forward then? Singh did not find answers in western philosophy, but he did find answers in the Indian *darśana* systems, loosely translated as philosophical systems.<sup>9</sup> Identifying the self-referential and self-refuting character of Kuhn’s arguments, instead of reverting to the modernist framework which entrenches subject/object, fact/value, subjective/objective, and universal/local dichotomies, Singh<sup>10</sup> as a way of suggesting a movement beyond the cul-de-sac that western epistemology is encountering due to the challenge of and implicit self-referentiality and self-refutation in Kuhn and other postmodern thinkers like Foucault, Rorty, and Derrida (space as well as the intent of the work precludes me going into their writings here) connected his discourse to the epistemology of Buddhism and Vedānta where the recognition and transcendence of dualities, dichotomies, and binaries are discussed in great detail.

The transcendence of dualities, dichotomies, and binaries has been emphasized in the Indian tradition right from the beginning—the Upanishads have discussed this issue. Singh, however, focuses on Mahayana Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta. Both these schools identify that binary pairs exist in interaction with each other; Mahayana Buddhism explains it through the principle of *pratītya samutpāda* or dependent co-origination, and Advaita Vedānta through the doctrine of *Māyā*. True

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<sup>9</sup>I say loosely because *darśana* essentially means vision whereas philosophy pertains to thought. The Indian *darśana* systems are said to have been created through yogic or spiritual experiences—and for the experiences to happen, it is considered necessary to go beyond thought and mind.

<sup>10</sup>See Kundan Singh, “Relativism, Self-referentiality, and Beyond Mind,” in *On Mind and Consciousness: Selected Papers from the MiCon Conference*, eds. Chhanda Chakraborti, Manas Mandal, and Rimi B. Chatterjee (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2003); Kundan Singh, “Relativism and Its Relevance for Psychology,” in *History of Science, Philosophy, and Culture in Indian Civilization: Volume XI Part 3: Consciousness, Indian Psychology, and Yoga*, eds. Kireet Joshi and Matthijs Cornelissen (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2004).

and false, right and wrong, and absolute and relative exist as pairs; for one to exist, the other must exist. For the absolute to exist, the relative must exist; conversely, if the absolute is taken away, the relative too will go away, just like it will become tough to recognize the night if the day ceases to exist. Or if a mountain ceases to exist, the valley too will disappear, for the mountain and valley define and create each other. Mahayana Buddhism holds that any thinking that is dichotomized, like subject/object, right/wrong, true/false, results in *avidyā*, loosely translated as ignorance. To get to knowledge or *prajñā*, one must get beyond dichotomies, dualities, and binaries. Similarly, in Advaita Vedanta, the transcendence of binaries is a must in the experiential knowing of Brahman. In addition, one of the early and chief exponents of Mahayana Buddhism, Nagarjuna, contends that the mind in search of truth can come to one of the four positions where A is a truth contention: 1. A is true. 2. A is false. 3. A is both true and false. 4. A is neither true nor not false. This is from his discussion on *catuskoṭi* or tetralemma. Any of the positions intellectually arrived at will keep the individual away from *prajñā* and embedded in *avidyā*. The meta-analysis of Kuhn's contentions that makes them simultaneously true and false can be accounted for in Nagarjuna's tetralemma. The cul-de-sac that western epistemology encounters through the recognition of self-referentiality in arguments of postmodern thinkers like Kuhn gives way when one brings the discussions on dichotomies, dualities, and binaries from the classical Indian perspective into the fray.

Singh consequently identified that it is the issue of binaries that separates western cosmology from the classical Indian cosmology. The discussion on binaries and their consequent transcendence begins in the Upanishads and continues through Patanjali's *yogasutras*, Buddhism and its various schools, Jainism and its various schools, Tantra and its various schools, Vedanta and its various schools, and Bhakti traditions. One finds it mentioned in the renditions of yogis of recent origin, such as Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, and Paramhans Yogananda.

On the other hand, western cosmology has operated within the confines of the binaries since the Greek times. Observing the operations of the binaries in western thought, which gives an accurate snapshot of how

social sciences in western academia have operated, Singh has a dozen theorems on binaries, some of which are as follows:

Theorem 1: Given that simple binaries like right/wrong and true/false did not get transcended in the Western cosmology beginning with the Greeks, various binaries like soul/body, this world/other world, contemplation/practical know-how, being/becoming, reason/senses among others within the Western paradigm got created.

Theorem 2: As the civilization progressed, more binaries were created. For instance, the lack of transcendence of dualisms in the Greek world, like soul/body, this world/other world, contemplation/practical know-how, being/becoming, reason/senses, gave birth to rationalism/empiricism, subjectivism/objectivism, faith/reason, religion/science, enlightenment/romanticism, idealism/realism, rationalism/positivism, rationalism/existentialism, and so on.

Theorem 3: When binaries are not transcended, in every binary divide, one half of the binary gets privileged, and the other half gets suppressed. For instance, during Christendom, in the faith/reason binary, faith was privileged and the reason suppressed; in the religion/science binary, religion was privileged and science was suppressed; in the soul/body binary, the soul was privileged and the body was suppressed; in the God/world and God/earth binaries, God was privileged and the world and earth were suppressed; in the tradition/modern binary, the tradition was privileged and any modern innovation was suppressed (it was primarily because of this that every modern innovation had to be checked if it conformed with the Bible); in the sacred/profane, believer/pagan, and monotheism/polytheism binaries, sacred, believer, and monotheism were privileged and profane, pagan, and polytheism were suppressed. In the Enlightenment, in the binary of religion/science, science was privileged and religion suppressed; in the binary of reason/faith, the reason was privileged and the faith suppressed; in the binary of mind/body, the mind was privileged and the body suppressed; in the God/world and God/human binaries, the world and human were privileged and God suppressed; in the binaries of reason/emotion and reason/intuition, the reason was privileged and emotion and intuition were suppressed. In both Christendom and the Enlightenment, in the binary of man/woman, the man was privileged and the woman suppressed; in the binary of heterosexuality/homosexuality, heterosexuality got privileged at the expense of homosexuality.



Theorem 4: When binaries have not been transcended and when revolutions happen, they tend to invert the various binary carts present before the revolution. For instance, the Renaissance began reversing the different binaries ossified in Christendom (e.g., God/ world, religion/science, faith/reason, contemplation/practical know-how). The end of the Renaissance resulted in the Enlightenment, which led to the triumph of reason over faith, the world over God, science over religion, and practical know-how over contemplation. This happens in two oppositional philosophies or philosophical orientations as well. For example, in the binary divide of rationalism versus empiricism, the philosophy of rationalism, as it privileges itself, undermines the philosophy of empiricism. Similarly, the philosophy of empiricism, when it makes a case for itself, inverts the binary cart, and as it privileges itself, suppresses or undermines rationalism; this is precisely what happened when Positivism came to the fore in the 1920s. Some binaries, however, will transfer untouched from one period to another or from one philosophy or thinker to another. For instance, the man/woman binary, in which the man was privileged over the woman, transferred unmitigated from Christendom to Renaissance to Enlightenment to Romanticism till the Feminist movement began critically examining the binary and the suppression of women at the hands of men.

Theorem 5: Until binaries are transcended, the possibility of the two halves of the binary relating to each other in any way other than dialectical terms is foreclosed.

Theorem 6: If a thinker or a philosophical school has not transcended the binaries or put the binary halves into a dialectical relationship, then the entire thought of the thinker or the school can be understood by identifying various binaries that are operational in them. It will be found that the binary halves that are privileged and the binary halves that are suppressed will coalesce. For instance, if there are binaries A/B, C/D, E/F, and G/H, and if A, C, E, and G are privileged and B, D, F, and H are suppressed, then A, C, E, and G will coalesce to form a conglomerate whereas B, D, F, and H will congregate to form a complex.<sup>11</sup>

And

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<sup>11</sup> Kundan Singh, "There isn't Only Cultural Blindness in Psychology; Psychology is Culture Blind," in *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion: Volume 32*, eds. Ralph W. Hood, Jr., and Sariya Chervuallil-Contractor (Boston: Brill, 2022), 411–12.

Theorem 7: When a thinker or a school subscribing to the Enlightenment encounters a non-western culture or civilization, he, she, or it projects on it all the binary halves that have been suppressed. When a thinker or school subscribing to Romanticism meets a non-western civilization or culture, he, she, or it projects on it the privileged halves of the various binaries that are operational in the paradigm of approach.<sup>12</sup>

It is Theorem 7 that is discussed in bits and parts under “Orientalism,” which we have renamed as Colonial Discourse for the sake of this work. The truth of this theorem, particularly in the context of colonialists, is exemplified in a short discussion below and full measure when we discuss the writings of James Mill.

Memmi, in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, begins his discourse by identifying the binary between the colonizer and the colonized. In the colonizer/colonized binary, the colonizer privileges himself (once again, the use of the male gender is deliberate) and subjugates or suppresses the colonized. He uses the civilized/savage dichotomy, and as he abrogates civilized to himself, he projects savagery, barbarianism, rudeness, bruteness, uncouthness, etc., to the colonized, spinning a mythical narrative—the colonial discourse—where every iota or semblance of civilization is taken away from the colonized. In the binary of virtue/vice, the colonizer accords to himself all virtues (essentially Christian) and all vices of every kind (once again Christian) to the colonized. The colonized, therefore, are characterized as lazy, cowardly, penurious, spendthrift, timid, villainous, greedy, filthy, evil, dark, sinful, etc. etc.

The Manichean world that Fanon describes is also a world based on binaries. Whereas the “othering” of the colonized in the accounts of the colonizer, Fanon attributes to unconscious projections, mainly coming from the repressed aspects of the white man’s id, Singh sees them as projections arising from the lack of transcendence of binaries in the western intellectual thought. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon at length describes how black people—both men and women—have been described as hypersexual beings. Speaking from the positionality of a Black man, he says, “As regards the black man everything in fact takes place at the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 424.

genital level.”<sup>13</sup> Black men are considered “sexual beasts,” having “hallucinating sexual power.” The Black man is conflated with sex and body: “A black man is fixated at the genital level or rather he has been fixated there”<sup>14</sup> and “There is one expression that with time has become particularly eroticized: the black athlete.”<sup>15</sup> The Black man, in fact has been transformed into his sexual organ: “The black man has been occulted. He has been turned into a penis. He is a penis.”<sup>16</sup> Fanon explains these characterizations of the Black man as projections arising out of the colonizer’s repressed aspects of himself that reside in Id which in Freudian terms is unconscious:

Every intellectual gain calls for a loss of sexual potential. The civilized white man retains an irrational nostalgia for the extraordinary times of sexual licentiousness, orgies, unpunished rapes, and unrepressed incest. In a sense, these fantasies correspond to Freud’s life instinct. Projecting his desires onto the black man, the white man behaves as if the black man actually had them.<sup>17</sup>

Singh sees the cause of the projections differently, though not disagreeing with Fanon. He explains it by considering the binaries associated with the body in Christianity and Enlightenment respectively: God/Body and Mind/Body. As God has been privileged over the body (and sexuality, as the body has been conflated with sexuality), the body and, consequently, sexuality have been suppressed in Christian thought. Similarly, in the Enlightenment, the mind was privileged over the body, which made the body undergo suppression in thought and practice. Given that the body and sexuality were suppressed in the thought narrative of the colonialists, who were either following the Christian thought or Enlightenment, when they encountered the Black people, they projected the suppressed halves in the God/Body and Mind/Body dichotomies onto the Black people. The Black people consequently got described through sexuality and body. Moreover, if the binary of conscious versus unconscious, where

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<sup>13</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 135.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

the conscious was privileged over the unconscious in the Enlightenment as well as post-Enlightenment, is brought into the discussion along with the observation in theorem 6 (that the suppressed halves of binaries on the one hand and the privileged halves of binaries on the other congregate), we find that body and sexuality were indeed being pushed into the unconscious when imperialism was rampant. Singh's contentions, therefore, account for Fanon's observations as well. Incorporating the above-mentioned ideas, Singh has developed an *Indian Postcolonial Theory*, the first iteration of which is currently in press.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, the above framework, from an Indian perspective, explains western social sciences and colonial discourse simultaneously and, therefore, furthers the reconceptualization of India studies that Balagangadhara has envisioned in his work. With this paradigm in hand, we will embark on critically examining the writings of James Mill. We will first outline the dominant western paradigms of thought that influenced Mill and then discuss his writings from the context of binary theorems that we have outlined above.

## James Mill, Utilitarianism, and Scottish Enlightenment

In keeping with the above, before we discuss the writings of James Mill in the context of the binaries, we would first elucidate the veracity of Balagangadhara's contentions: *When Europe spoke about India, it said more about itself than it did about India*. Indeed, in the intellectual writings of James Mill, there are two distinct influences: the Scottish Enlightenment, with which he came in deep contact at the University of Edinburgh, and Utilitarianism.<sup>19</sup> These two frameworks or paradigms were the containers in which Mill framed the discussions on India. They

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<sup>18</sup>Kundan Singh, "Colonialization and Indian Psychology: A Reciprocal Relationship from the Perspective of Indian Postcolonial Theory," in *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion: Volume 34*, eds. Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor and Ralph W. Hood, Jr. (Boston: Brill, 2024).

<sup>19</sup>Bain, *James Mill*; Stephen, *English Utilitarians: Vol. 2*; Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India*; Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*; Inden, *Imagining India*; Ball, ed., *James Mill: Political Writings*; Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; Marriott, *The Other Empire*; Schultz and Varouxakis, eds., *Utilitarianism and Empire*; Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*; Loizides, *James Mill's Utilitarian Logic and Politics*.

gave Mill the structure to gather and interpret the data from the Asiatic Society translations, European travelers' travelogues, and reports of East India officials who had been present in India since 1600—earlier as traders and later as rulers. That Mill projected and created false knowledge on India will become further explicit when we discuss his imaginings in the context of binaries present in the paradigms of Utilitarianism and Scottish Enlightenment. We will first discuss Utilitarianism and then the Scottish Enlightenment.

Jeremy Bentham is considered the father of Utilitarianism. Born on February 4, 1747, or 1748, in a family of means, he was also an intelligent child, just like James Mill. A person of physical disabilities—so short that he could be considered a dwarf with afflicted knees—he was a voracious reader. In 1755, he was sent to a boarding school where his academic performance was first-rate. In 1760, he was admitted to Queen's College, Oxford, where he graduated in 1763. He later completed his M.A. at Oxford University in 1766 and moved to London to try his hand at a career in Law, an endeavor in which he failed miserably. Gradually, he found his feet and began devoting time to what he felt was extremely important: reforming British society. He soon stumbled upon the axiom of Utilitarianism: the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Bentham earlier thought that his ideas would appeal to the governors, who would at once siege them to transform themselves and the society; his hopes were belied in no time, and he quickly realized that the interests of the governors were not identical with those of the governed and that his ideas would be vigorously opposed by those who were in power.<sup>20</sup>

His intellectual efforts began to bear fruit, and gradually, his works began to appear in print: *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), which was initially conceptualized as *Critical Elements of Jurisprudence; Fragment on Government* (1776); and *Defense of Usury* (1787). These writings brought fame to Bentham, and gradually a group of people who called themselves his disciples began to coalesce around

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<sup>20</sup> Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians: Volume 1: Jeremy Bentham* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1900).

him. In the years that followed the French Revolution, this group increasingly became involved in bringing about social and political reform in British society based on Bentham's vision. Mill met Bentham in 1808 when Mill was 35 years of age and Bentham 60. Mill considered himself a disciple of Bentham, as is evident from many of Mill's writings on the relationship, as quoted by Bain in Mill's biography.<sup>21</sup> The intimacy grew, and Mills (their eldest son John Stuart Mill was born in 1806) ended up spending many summers at the residence of Bentham in the countryside—first at Oxted in Surry Hills and later at Ford Abbey in Devonshire. In 1810, Mill moved to the house in Bentham's Garden, but it proved insufficient for his growing family.<sup>22</sup> He relocated to Stoke Newington; however, in 1814, Bentham leased a house next to his own and gave it to the Mills to live in, for which Mill paid half the rent initially. Later, as his financial situation improved, he, of course, paid the total rent. It is held within Mill's family that he broke away from Christianity under the influence of Bentham, who was, if not publicly but most certainly privately, an atheist. From 1808 to 1818, the intimacy between Mill and Bentham was so intense that the latter did not engage in anything significant in writing or public posturing without discussing it with Mill. Mill, on the other hand, was profoundly supported by Bentham in many ways—including protracted residence at the sprawling countryside residence Ford Abbey, during which he completed the *History of British India*. Mill, indeed, distinguished himself as the foremost of Bentham's disciples. Stephen writes the following about the relationship between Bentham and Mill that unfolded in this period:

No prophet could have had a more zealous, uncompromising, and vigorous disciple. Mill's force of character qualified him to become the leader of the school; but his doctrine was always essentially the doctrine of Bentham, and for the present he was content to be the transmitter of his master's message to mankind.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bain, *James Mill*.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen, *English Utilitarians: Vol. 2*.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen, *English Utilitarians: Vol. 1*, 215–16.

Bentham and Mill formed a fabulous combination—the association allowed Bentham to unfold his philosophical writings further, which began to be gradually implemented in societal reforms and transformation through the coordinated efforts of Mill with some other members of the cohort.<sup>24</sup> This period saw his following publications: *Manual of Political Economy* (1811), *Chrestomathia* (1816), *Table of the Springs of Action* (1817), *Analysis of Natural Religion* (1822), and *Book of Fallacies* (1825). Bentham's fame spread far and wide, and he became internationally known, with many nations inviting him to legislate for reforms. Just before the parliamentary reforms of 1832, Bentham breathed his last. These reforms put Britain on the road to democracy and liberal ethos, which included freedom of expression, liberty of the press, religious freedom, reduction in libel laws, education for the masses, etc. Stephen sums up the relationship between Bentham and Mill most beautifully:

Bentham's mantle fell upon James Mill. Mill expounded in the tersest form the doctrines which in Bentham's hands spread into endless ramifications and lost themselves in minute details. Mill became the leader of Bentham's bodyguard; or, rather, the mediator between the prophet in his "hermitage" and the missionaries who were actively engaged on the hustings and in committee-rooms. The special characteristics of English utilitarianism in the period of its greatest activity were thus more affected by Mill than by any other leader of opinion.<sup>25</sup>

Mill's reputation got sandwiched between two towering figures: Bentham and his own son, John Stuart Mill, considered the father of liberalism. Whereas his *History of British India* became the blueprint for all subsequent history texts on India, he faded into oblivion. This is extremely dangerous in our assessment in that the person who has written one of the most sinister of the texts on Hinduism and India became invisible. It has impacted the critical evaluation of his work. There has been a recent attempt by scholars like Terence Ball, Robert Fenn, and William Burston<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For details, see Bain, *James Mill*; Stephen, *English Utilitarians: Vol. 2*.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen, *English Utilitarians: Vol. 2*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ball, ed., *James Mill: Political Writings*; Robert A. Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought* (New York: Garland, 1987); Burston, *James Mill on Education*.

to resurrect the image of Mill as a thinker in his own right, which Antis Loizides<sup>27</sup> has furthered in *James Mill's Utilitarian Logic and Politics*. Loizides has argued quite conclusively that more than being Bentham's disciple, Mill was a thinker of his own, whose education and training at the University of Edinburgh influenced his writings decisively—his classical education in the Greek and Roman sources which influenced his writings all through, and his methodology in writing *History* is not only conjectural and theoretical as claimed by Jennifer Pitts<sup>28</sup> but also rhetorical, historical, and philosophical among others. Laudable as his endeavor is, for he does expand the discussion of intellectual influences on Mill that go beyond Bentham by tapping into his pre-Bentham Scottish influences, he does not make any attempt to break Mill's connections with Utilitarianism, confirming that the contents of the *History* “did indeed draw from Bentham's corpus.”<sup>29</sup> We will, therefore, remain focused on evaluating James Mill's writings on India within the context of Utilitarianism and Scottish Enlightenment. Mill's resurrection—or exhumation from our perspective—is welcome news for us, for it will eventually help shed a much greater critical light on his works, of which ours is a novel attempt.

With the above in the backdrop, it becomes imperative for us now to explore the following: 1. What was the social and political landscape in which Bentham gave birth to the philosophy of Utilitarianism? 2. What are the characteristic principles of Utilitarianism?

The political sphere in England consisted of a monarchy with two houses of parliament, which had been introduced through the revolution of 1688—the House of Commons and the House of Lords. It was a system where monarchy and aristocracy ruled the roost. The Monarch, through the purse that it had in control, could influence the House of Commons. There were officers, the mysterious “Board of Green Cloth,” who had both judicial and administrative functions. Corruption was rampant, and seats in the parliament could be bought with money. Voting was extremely limited—only to a few men in the aristocracy. The masses

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<sup>27</sup> Loizides, *James Mill's Utilitarian Logic and Politics*.

<sup>28</sup> Pitts, “Jeremy Bentham: Legislator of the World?”

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.



were poor and ignorant and had no say or interest in governance matters. Common law, or laws as per the tradition, was the norm. Any new law had to agree with the Common Law, also called the judge-made law. The aristocrats in the parliament were extremely powerful, with legislative powers extremely centralized and administrative centralization nonexistent. Much of the administrative functions were carried out under the supervision of the parliament. In other words, the combination of monarchy and aristocracy possessed the legislative powers and had the judiciary and executive in their clutches.

The parliament also controlled the Church of England, i.e., the aristocrats controlled the clergy. The clergy also survived on the patronage of the aristocrats: “The clergy... as a whole, were an integral but a subsidiary part of the aristocracy or the great landed interest.”<sup>30</sup> They were not propagators of original ideas but merely a class whose objective was to please the ruling class and give intellectual explanations to the dogmas that the latter held—i.e., provide moral authority to its rule.

Poverty was rampant, and education was mostly limited to monarchy, clergy, and aristocracy classes. The cities were filthy with high crime rates. The prisons were poorly managed with offenders lumped together; convicts died more due to jail fever than due to capital punishment. In addition to the above, the French Revolution took place, and the environment became profoundly conducive for Utilitarianism to emerge, with Bentham as its principal advocate.

“Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number” was Bentham’s clarion call or Utilitarianism’s maxim. This became the guiding principle of all the social and political interventions of the Utilitarians. According to Bentham, the measure of good governance from bad was not justice or Social Contract but the happiness produced among the masses. This axiom depended on pleasure and pain, which could be accounted for and in Bentham’s view were independent variables on which vice, virtue, obligation, inclination, justice, etc. depended. This principle formed the basis of legislation that Bentham evolved and enunciated in his final work. The reforms included pressing for the liberty of the press, for writers and journalists could be pressed for libel at the will of the people in government

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen, *English Utilitarians: Vol. 1*, 41.

by invoking the law that hurt sentiments or feelings. They argued for suffrage, with Bentham suggesting the governors' election by the governed to align the interests of the governed with the governors. Bentham held that aristocracy was bound to misuse its powers if there was no democracy operating on the class. He also recommended the eradication of monarchy and the Church of England. He advocated as little governance as possible, holding that governance was a necessary evil and that all governors needed to be checked and balanced in their propensity to abuse power. Making the governors accountable to the weight of public opinion was the prime objective of Bentham's reforms. This was primarily because he wanted to end the despotism of monarchy and aristocracy, primarily aristocracy, for after 1688, with the introduction of parliaments in British governance, the balance of power had tilted more towards aristocracy than monarchy.

As Bentham's lieutenant, Mill ensured that the reforms did happen and, in the process, wrote quite profusely on Britain's social and political conditions in various journals mentioned earlier. It is here that we find that Mill's writings on Britain shape his (mis)representation of India, for the seven chapters that he has written on the Hindus are primarily about his own social and political conditions: "government, economics, morality, and religion"<sup>31</sup> as per Mazlish. *Mill represents the Hindus and Ancient India in light of the conditions he wanted to transform in his home country.* In other words, the conditions that he wanted to expel from Britain were the conditions in which he imagined the Hindu society, as we will see below in detail. If Mill comments on the social stratification of the Hindus, he is primarily articulating the utilitarian understanding of his society, which was class-based and stratified along class lines. When he speaks about the Brahmins, he is talking about the clergy of his own country. When he describes the Kshatriyas of the Hindus, he is fundamentally representing the aristocracy of his home country. When he speaks about the Indian monarchy, he is not describing the Indian monarchical system but the absolutist European monarchical system that different parts of Europe—beginning with Rome and England—had experienced intermittently.

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<sup>31</sup>Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*, 121.

In addition, much in tune with the paradigm of Scottish Enlightenment—in which he was schooled at the University of Edinburgh—with its emphasis on humanism and rationalism, which rejected authority that reason could not justify, and on empiricism, with its focus on improvement of the human condition in this-world rather than the otherworld that James Mill imagined the Hindus, Hinduism, and India. We mentioned earlier that Mill wrote the *History* without visiting India—this choice, too, was inspired by his adherence to the paradigm of Scottish Enlightenment. The Enlightenment paradigm privileged reason, rationality, and mind and saw senses with suspicion. Mill echoes the view candidly as he explains to his readers in case they faulted him for writing the *History* without having gone to India even once:

It is well known, how fatal an effect on our judgments is exerted by those impulses, called partial impressions; in other words, how much our conceptions of a great whole are apt to be distorted, and made to disagree with their object, by an undue impression, received from some particular part. Nobody needs to be informed, how much more vivid, in general, is the conception of an object which has been presented to our senses, than that of an object which we have only heard another man describe. Nobody, therefore, will deny, that of a great scene, or combination of scenes, when some small part has been seen, and the knowledge of the rest has been derived from testimony, there is great danger, lest the impression received from the senses should exert an immoderate influence, hang a bias on the mind, and render the conception of the whole erroneous.<sup>32</sup>

## **Description of Hindu Society: A Sheer Projection of British Society Which Mill Wanted to Reform**

In the earlier chapter, we saw explicitly how, in order to make the Hindu society and culture savage, uncivilized, and barbaric, Mill represented them as caste-ridden with despotism predominantly employed by

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<sup>32</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, xxii.

Brahmins or by the combine of Brahmins, Kings, and Kshatriyas in governance matters. Incidentally, the characterization of Brahmins, Rajas, and Kshatriyas in Mill's writings has no basis in truth and reality. On the contrary, it has an explicit and manifest basis in how the priests, kings, and nobility behaved in England in the nineteenth century or the centuries preceding it. There is a direct correspondence between the writings of Mill for the reform of British society and his writings on India as described in the *History*. As it will become as clear as daylight below, the representation of the Hindu society and its various players, in particular the Brahmins, Kings, and Kshatriyas, are nothing but prodigious projections with the data coming from the way the priest, kings, and the aristocrats conducted themselves in England. We will place these two sets of writings one over the other to make the above explicit.

Another point, briefly touched upon earlier, needs to be explained and emphasized. In light of what Mill and other Utilitarians, also called Radicals, wanted to suppress in British society, Mill characterized the Hindu society. In other words, what Mill and his cohort wanted to suppress in Britain was projected onto India and the Hindu society and was, in that light, their picture concocted and fabricated. This can also be explained in terms of binaries, particularly the *Theorem 7* of the play of binaries. Let us suppose that there is a binary A/B. If B is what Mill wanted to suppress in Britain, B is what was projected onto the Hindus of India. If Mill wanted to suppress oppressive hierarchy in Britain, he ensured that he characterized the Hindu society as hierarchical and oppressive. If a representative form of governance was what he desired to establish in Britain, he ensured that there was no shred of people participation in the Hindu forms of governance. If despotism of monarchs, aristocracy, and priests in governance Mill wanted to suppress in Britain, he ensured that the Hindu Kings, Brahmins, and Kshatriyas were shown in this light. To make the above explicit and evident, we must critically examine Mill's writings on Hindus chapter by chapter and compare them with those for Britain. We will begin our discussion with the second chapter of *Book II* of the *History of British India: Volume 1*.

## The Hindu Brahmins in Mill's *History* are English Clergy

In the earlier stages of his career, Mill was positively disposed towards religion, evident in his pursuit of a master's in divinity from the University of Edinburgh. It is unclear whether it was his personal "growth," or that he was not able to find a job as a preacher in Scotland because of which he moved to London, or his contact with Bentham, who privately if not publicly, was an atheist, or his growing knowledge of the truth behind Christianity and clergy that we see an increasing attack in the writings of Mill on the Church of England and clergy. He begins by attacking the Church of England in an essay, *Schools for All in Preference to School for Churchmen Only*,<sup>33</sup> when the controversy between Lancaster and the Church of England broke out regarding spreading the expanse of education for the children of the masses. This was the time in England when education was restricted to the children of monarchy, clergy, and aristocracy and the children of the upcoming Middle Class or the Middle Rank as Mill called it. Lancaster wanted to extend the sway of education to the children of the masses, for which he suggested, given the prevalence of many Christian denominations in England, that the children should be given a basic minimum education in the Bible that was common to all denominations to avoid any conflict amongst them. The Church of England opposed the proposal, stating that if the Bible were not taught within the context of denominational Christianity, the children, though becoming literate, would ultimately turn into unbelievers. Mill took the opportunity to attack the Church of England, though he kept his vitriol restricted towards clergy.<sup>34</sup> Similar is his approach in an article for the *Westminster Review* titled "Robert Southey's Book of the Church,"<sup>35</sup> which, in a sense, is his prelude to a blistering attack that he launches on the Church and Clergy in "Ecclesiastical Establishments."<sup>36</sup> It is this

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<sup>33</sup> James Mill, *Schools for All in Preference to School for Churchmen Only* (London: Longman, 1812).

<sup>34</sup> For details, see Burston, *James Mill on Education*.

<sup>35</sup> James Mill, "Robert Southey's Book of the Church," *Westminster Review* 3, no. 5 (January 1825).

<sup>36</sup> James Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," *Westminster Review* 5, no. 10 (April 1826).

article, the contents of which we will use to show that when Mill spoke about the Hindu Brahmins, he categorically was talking about the English clergy.

What he thought about the Church of England and clergy could not be more explicit than the opening lines of the article:

We think it proper to begin by distinctly stating our opinion, that an ecclesiastical establishment is essentially antichristian; that religion can never be safe or sound, unless where it is left free to every man's choice, wholly uninfluenced by the operation either of punishment or reward on the part of the magistrate. We think it proper to go even further, and declare, that it is not religion only to which an ecclesiastical establishment is hostile: in our opinion, there is not one of the great interests of humanity, on which it does not exercise a baneful influence.... The clergy have, by a long course of usurpation, established a sort of right to call themselves and their interests, by the most sacred names. In ecclesiastical language, the wealth and power of the clergy are religion. Be as treacherous, be as dishonest, be as unfeeling and cruel, be as profligate, as you please, you may still be religious. But breathe on the interests of the clergy, make them surmise discredit at your hands, and you are the enemy of religion directly; nay, the enemy of your God; and all the mischief which religious prejudice and antipathy, the poisoned, deadly weapon of the clergy, can bring down upon its victims, is the sure and necessary consequence of your sacrilegious audacity.<sup>37</sup>

There is complete clarity in Mill's mind in that the clergy is bereft of any virtue and that they abuse their power in favor of self-interest and against the benefit of their fellow beings. They are power mongers, prone to using their influence to achieve their selfish ends and causes:

We desire also to be understood as disapproving an injustice of which clergymen have often great reason to complain, that of confounding the character of individuals with the corporation to which they belong. We have very many bad corporations, in which excellent men are included, and such is the case of the priestly corporation. But the question is not how many clergymen, from the influence of education, and the spirit of the

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 505.

community to which they belong, are, in their private relation, and taken individually, estimable men. You may take a number of men, one by one, all virtuous and honourable, who yet, if you club them together, and enable them to act in a body, will appear to have renounced every principle of virtue, and in pursuit of their own objects will trample, without shame or remorse, upon every thing valuable to their fellow men. We proceed upon the principle that men desire power, that they desire it in as great quantity as possible, and that they do not desire it for nothing. Men do not strive for power, that it may lie in their hands without using. And what is the use of it? The answer is plain. It is to make other men do what we please: to place their persons, their actions, and properties, to as great an extent as possible, at our disposal. This is known to be one of the strongest propensities in human nature, and altogether insatiable. The ministers of religion are not less subject to this passion than other men. They are cited, proverbially, as an example of it in excess.<sup>38</sup>

Let us now compare the above with what he writes on the Brahmins in the *History*, from the beginning itself. The English clergy use religion for their wealth and power; so do the Hindu Brahmins:

The priesthood is generally found to usurp the greatest authority, in the lowest state of society. Knowledge, and refined conceptions of the Divine nature, are altogether incompatible with the supposition, that the Deity makes favourites of a particular class of mankind, or is more pleased with those who perform a ceremonial service to himself, than with those who discharge with fidelity the various and difficult duties of life. It is only in rude and ignorant times that men are so overwhelmed with the power of superstition as to pay unbounded veneration and obedience to those who artfully clothe themselves with the terrors of religion. The Brahmins among the Hindus have acquired and maintained an authority, more exalted, more commanding, and extensive, than the priests have been able to engross among any other portion of mankind. As great a distance as there is between the Brahmen and the Divinity, so great a distance is there between the Brahmen and the rest of his species.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 505–6.

<sup>39</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 184–85.

In Mill's opinion, the clergy exercise their power over the masses by controlling the minds of the people, which comes to them by controlling knowledge and its dissemination.

When acting singly, each confined to his own congregation, to the small circle of individuals to whom personally his ministry can extend, the quantity of power a minister of religion can derive from his influence over the minds which he directs, is too small to prompt him to hazard much for its acquisition. No inordinate thirst for power is excited, and any perversity either of doctrine or of conduct, attempted for that end, is observed too closely to escape detection. It is only on the large scale that success can attend those mischievous machinations. Whatever motives can operate upon a minister of religion, to be of use to his flock, as an example and monitor of good conduct, retain in the natural sphere their natural force, unchecked by the appetites which the prospect of acquiring an extensive command over other men regularly engenders. When the whole, or the largest class of the ministers of religion, are aided by the magistrate in forming themselves into a body, so constituted as to act with united power, they become animated by the spirit which predominates in the leading men. This is a fact too certain to be disputed, and of which the causes are too obvious to require illustration. The spirit which predominates in the leading men is generated by the circumstances in which they are placed, the power immediately conferred upon them, and the prospect of increasing it without limits, by the means which they have at their disposal. That they will be actuated by the desire to make use of those means to the utmost, is a proposition which the history of human nature enables us to assume as undeniable.... The peculiarity of the case of an incorporated clergy arises from the peculiarity of the means they have to employ. In the ordinary case of power, the influence over men's minds is the effect of the power. The power exists first, and the influence follows. In the case of clerical power, this order is inverted; the influence comes first, and the power afterwards. The power is the result of the influence. The influence, therefore, is to be acquired in the first instance, and the greater the degree in which it is acquired, the greater the power which is the darling object of pursuit.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 506–7.



He replicates the English experience with clergy in the description of Brahmins as to how the latter control the masses or engage in governance:

The Brahmen is declared to be the Lord of all the classes. He alone, to a great degree, engrosses the regard and favour of the Deity; and it is through him, and at his intercession, that blessings are bestowed upon the rest of mankind. The sacred books are exclusively his; the highest of the other classes are barely tolerated to read the word of God; he alone is worthy to expound it. The first among the duties of the civil magistrate, supreme or subordinate, is to honour the Brahmens.... Mysterious and awful powers are ascribed to this wonderful being.... Not only is this extraordinary respect and pre-eminence awarded to the Brahmens; they are allowed the most striking advantages over all other members of the social body, in almost every thing which regards the social state.... Their influence over the government is only bounded by their desires, since they have impressed the belief that all laws which a Hindu is bound to respect are contained in the sacred books; that it is lawful for them alone to interpret those books; that it is incumbent on the king to employ them as his chief counsellors and ministers, and to be governed by their advice.<sup>41</sup>

Given that Mill did not think that the Hindus possessed any knowledge since they were irrational people, the Brahmins could not have controlled the Hindu people only through the control of knowledge. He, therefore, conflates Hinduism with rituals and makes the Brahmins performers of rituals through which they held the Hindu masses. The following is what he writes in the *History*:

As the greater part of life among the Hindus is engrossed by the performance of an infinite and burdensome ritual, which extends to almost every hour of the day, and every function of nature and society, the Brahmens, who are the sole judges and directors in these complicated and endless duties, are rendered the uncontrollable masters of human life. Thus elevated in power and privileges, the ceremonial of society is no less remarkably in their favour.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 185–87.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

The English clergy not only controlled the people's minds but also ensured there wasn't any competition to their power and influence. Consequently, they schemed incessantly to guarantee that there were no rivals. Mill writes:

[One of the consequences] of this pursuit by the clergy, of influence over the minds of their countrymen, is the desire of the monopoly of that influence. They are naturally actuated by their thirst for influence to prevent all competition with themselves in obtaining it. Just in so far as they expect great consequences from possessing it perfect and undivided, so great must be their fears of having it shared, or lost, by the success of rivals. Rivals not only threaten them with the partial, or total deprivation of that which they desire to occupy entire; but they bring the immediate not the problematical evil, of a great disturbance of ease. Without rivals a clergy can with little trouble possess themselves of the minds of their countrymen. They can riot in power and ease at the same time. To maintain their influence in competition with others, trouble must be taken at any rate. Diligence must be used, and that incessant. Vigilance must never go to sleep. Industry must never relax. But a life of labour and care is a very different thing from a life of security, indolence, and repose.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, "Not only did they give and take away crowns; they boldly assumed that no crown could be righteously held, except at their discretion."<sup>44</sup>

Mill's Brahmins also did the same and nothing different. They ensured their superiority and placed themselves even higher than the kings: "They are so much superior to the king, that the meanest Brahmen would account himself polluted by eating with him, and death itself would appear to him less dreadful than the degradation of permitting his daughter to unite herself in marriage with his sovereign."<sup>45</sup>

Traveling back in time, as Mill used evidence from European history to substantiate his thesis in "Ecclesiastical Establishments," he states that the clergy had the populace taxed heavily for the benefits that accrued to

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<sup>43</sup> Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 507.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 510.

<sup>45</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 188.

them. The practice of tithe added a burden to the people, contributing to their misery:

They subjected all Christendom to an enormous and destructive taxation for their own benefit; having succeeded in the audacious attempt to persuade the magistrate, that because the Jewish tribe of Levi, which had no share in the holy land, had a tenth of its produce, the Christian clergy should have a tenth of the produce of the land of Christendom; that is, as every man must eat his corn a tenth dearer, one tenth part, for their use, of every man's labour in Christendom.<sup>46</sup>

Mill's Brahmins since antiquity have behaved similarly and given that he froze the Hindu society in the past with innovation belonging to the Europeans and Brits and fixity and ossification belonging to the Hindus, they were manifesting their age-old practices even when he wrote the *History*. As per Mill, the Brahmins controlled property and ensured their material well-being at the expense of the populace.

With these advantages it would be extraordinary had the Brahmens neglected themselves in so important a circumstance as the command of property. It is an essential part of the religion of the Hindus, to confer gifts upon the Brahmens. This is a precept more frequently repeated than any other in the sacred books. Gifts to the Brahmens form always an important and essential part of expiation and sacrifice. When treasure is found, which, from the general practice of concealment, and the state of society, must have been a frequent event, the Brahmen may retain whatever his good fortune places in his hands; another man must surrender it to the king, who is bound to deliver one-half to the Brahmens. Another source of revenue at first view appears but ill assorted with the dignity and high rank of the Brahmens; by their influence it was converted into a fund, not only respectable but venerable, not merely useful but opulent. The noviciates to the sacerdotal office are commanded to find their subsistence by begging, and even to carry part of their earnings to their spiritual master. Begging is no inconsiderable source of priestly power.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 510.

<sup>47</sup>Mill, *History of British India*, 188–90.

As we stated earlier, given that this work of ours focuses on the misuse of colonial power and projection to construct a picture of the Hindus, we will not critically examine or interrogate the evidence that Mill has used in the *History* (which we reserve for our future work); however, we do not want to miss this opportunity to underline that such was the scorn and vitriol of Mill on the Hindus that he managed to find power and its abuse even in the begging practice of Brahmins to earn a livelihood.

These projections of Mill on the Brahmins have an additional layer. It was not only in the light of his experience with clergy in Britain that he projected and constructed their portrait, but also in his desire to attack and suppress the clergy and the Church of England in their sphere of governmental and societal involvement. This was because he held them as significant impediments to the reforms that he and the other Utilitarians sought: liberty of the press, freedom of expression, diversity of opinion or worship, the right of private judgment, reduction in libel laws, etc. Truer still will be that he was seeking these reforms against the control of the clergy and the Church of England on British society. “Ecclesiastical Establishments” goes into considerable detail, outlining how the Church of England, since her establishment, and her clergy suppressed some of the most sacrosanct values that they were clamoring and espousing for. It shows how the Church and the corporation of her priests were opposed to diversity of opinion, engaged in the persecution of people under heresy who differed from their views, negatively disposed towards acts of toleration towards the practice of Christianity outside of the Church, prevented people from becoming part of government and corporations who were not members of the Church, interested in persecuting those who differed from her ordinances, poised against the liberty of the press, opposed to freedom of expression against religion, and pro-establishment. It is in this backdrop that Mill exposes the clergy for their power-hungry, despotic, arbitrary, and authoritarian nature, which, as we saw in the previous passages, projected onto the Hindu Brahmins.

Mill, in addition, engages in the play of binaries that should be revealed and commented upon. In the binaries of new/old and progressive/regressive, he conflates the Hindu society with the old and regressive, for in the paradigm of Enlightenment, the new and progressive are privileged, whereas the old and regressive are suppressed and ascribed to Christendom

(vide *theorem 3*). Consequently, he projects the characteristics of the Christendom clergy to Brahmins (vide *theorem 7*), which does not really alter his central thesis because he did not see any difference between the Church of Rome and the Church of England, except that the former was Catholic and the latter Protestant. In addition, he intermittently conflates the Hindu society with the ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Assyrian, Greek, and Roman civilizations, ensuring, however, that the worst of the Greeks and the Romans are still better than those of the Hindus.

In the binary of knowledge/superstition, he conflates knowledge with British society and superstition with Hindu society. Given that the Brahmins were the purveyors of “knowledge” of the Hindu community, they became, in the eyes of Mill, conjoined with rank superstition and, consequently, the primordial carriers of superstition in the world.

Enlightenment privileges reason from the following binaries: reason/emotion, reason/imagination, and reason/intuition. Simultaneously, as it privileges reason, it suppresses emotion, imagination, and intuition, giving them negative connotations and suggesting that reason alone can provide knowledge.<sup>48</sup> Ignorance and superstition are conflated with emotion, imagination, and intuition. As per *theorem 6* of Singh, where he states that suppressed binary halves and privileged binary halves congregate, the Brahmins, therefore, in Mill’s characterization, become the manufacturers of superstition through the use of irrationality, poetry, and imagination:

The offspring of a wild and ungoverned imagination, they mark the state of a rude and credulous people, whom the marvellous delights; who cannot estimate the use of a record of past events; and whose imagination the real occurrences of life are too familiar to engage. To the monstrous period of years which the legends of the Hindus involve, they ascribe events the most extravagant and unnatural: events not even connected in chronological series; a number of independent and incredible fictions. This people,

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<sup>48</sup> For an additional discussion of Mill’s Hinduism in the context of positivism and Enlightenment, see Inden, *Imagining India*.

indeed, are perfectly destitute of historical records.... The Brahmens are the most audacious, and perhaps the most unskilful fabricators, with whom the annals of fable have yet made us acquainted.<sup>49</sup>

## Mill's Hinduism Is the Mirror Image of the Christianity of the Church of England that He Wanted to Suppress and Transform

The attack on clergy and the Church of England and the projection of their characteristics occurred not only in drawing a picture of Brahmins but also in the construction of Hinduism, which we will now explore. This becomes evident from Mill's article for the *London Review* titled "The Church and its Reform."<sup>50</sup> Though this piece was written nine years after the "Ecclesiastical Establishments," it would not be an exaggeration to say that the 1835 article is an extension of the previous one, evident from the way Mill opens and closes the "Ecclesiastical" article. The opening sentences lay out the plan quite candidly:

We intend, on the present occasion, as far as our limits will permit, to examine to the bottom the question of an Ecclesiastical Establishment, and more especially of the Church of England, in its effect on religion, on morality, on the character and actions of the clergy, on learning, on education, and on government.<sup>51</sup>

The following is how he closes the article, explicitly stating that he could only cover a part of the original plan, for he ran out of space, and that he would cover the rest at some later time:

We have now exceeded the limits to which an article ought to run, and yet have only reached two of the evils to which the fatal measure of incorporating a body of clergy gives birth; persecution on account of religion, and hostility to the liberty of the press. The development of its further effects in

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<sup>49</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 166–68.

<sup>50</sup> James Mill, "The Church and its Reform," *London Review* 1, no. 2 (July 1835).

<sup>51</sup> Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 505–6.

depraving both religion and morality, in corrupting education and government, in retarding the progress of the human mind, and in degrading the character, intellectual and moral, of the clergy, we shall undertake on some future occasion.<sup>52</sup>

The revisitation occurred nine years later, and this is a crucial point to note. After Mill met Bentham in 1808, he unfolded the latter's utilitarian principles over a period. Many of Mill's ideas that were developed in the earlier phases of his writing career were put to pen later. There is a remarkable consistency in his ideas, and there are no fault lines in his thoughts in that his earlier writings on the Utilitarian principles would differ significantly from the later ones. What he writes against the Church of England in the 1812 essay *Schools for All* is what he maintains in his 1825, 1826, and 1835 articles, respectively: "Robert Southey's Book of the Church," "Ecclesiastical Establishments," and "The Church and its Reform." While keeping the central ideas intact, he only made them more and more sophisticated over a period, adding more layers.

Mill considered the Brahmins to be the creators of Hinduism.<sup>53</sup> If projections are occurring on the Brahmins, it is only natural that there would also be projections on Hinduism. In his attack on the Church of England and her clergy in "The Church and its Reform," we find clues as to how he manufactured the narrative on Hinduism, which incidentally is the master narrative on the tradition even today, propagated in sanitized ways.

In the "Church and its Reform," after berating the clergy for controlling the minds of the masses, disallowing them to grow in either education or morality, and promoting superstition, Mill contends that the Church of England, much like the Romish Church is more invested in the promotion of evil than the in the proliferation of good. He feels that the ceremonies that the clergy performs in the church are of no use; they are mere mechanical repetitions of words, which do not lift either the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 548.

<sup>53</sup> Erroneously though, since the tradition holds it is not the Brahmins who are its authors but the sages who come from all the sections of the society! This, however, is a different story to be told in additional work, for as we have remarked earlier, we are not going to engage in the current one in refuting through evidence Mill's contentions; our undertaking is to show thoroughly how Mill's ideas on Hindus and Hinduism are nothing but fabrications and projections.

mind or the morals of the participants. Given that these ceremonies are mere repetitions of words, they bank on belief and cause impressions in the minds and hearts of people that are repeated without any sincerity. They make people mendacious liars. The ceremonies involve prayers, which “give a wrong notion of divine attributes”<sup>54</sup> because they reduce the omniscient and omnipotent qualities of the Divine. If one must pray to God, then it means that God is imperfect in wisdom and goodness, for if God needs to be told what one desires, it means that God is neither all-good nor all-knowing.

Further, the prayers involve describing God’s qualities. Mill questions if the all-knowing God does not know his qualities. If he does, then prayers are superfluous. And if the description through prayers is needed, then the prayers make him what he is not. In other words, prayers reduce and lower him from who he is. And, if God is delighted to hear his praises, God is not behaving as God but as a lowly human being.

Mill holds that the prayers are anti-Christian and that they are a mere ceremony. He cites evidence from the Gospels that Jesus decried prayers, describing them as the pretensions of the outwardly holy.

The Divine Author of our religion every where indicates his opinion, that praying is nothing but a ceremony: he particularly marks praying, as one among the abuses of that sect among his countrymen, who carried their religious pretensions the highest, and whom he considered it his duty to reprobate as the most worthless class of men in the nation. It is matter worthy of particular remark, that Jesus no where lays stress on prayer as a duty: he rarely speaks of it otherwise than incidentally. With that condescension to the weakness and prejudices of his countrymen, which is every where observable in his conduct, he does not reprobate a practice, to which he knew they had the attachment of an invincible habit; but by placing it among the vices of the Pharisees, he indicated with tolerable clearness what he thought of it. It would seem, if we take his own words and example for authority, not the interested interpretation of priests—that he actually forbade the use of prayer in public worship.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Mill, “The Church and its Reform,” 262.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.



Prayers, therefore, in his view, reduce the Divine from his exalted status, pervert religious principles, are purveyors of evil, and are instruments of abuse by the clergy for controlling the masses. It is in the light of the prejudice and attack on prayers and ceremonies that he conjoins with the Church of England and anti-Christianity that he has characterized much of Hinduism in the *History*. Essentially, it is in the backdrop of what he wanted to suppress in Britain concerning Christianity, clergy, and the Church of England that he created a picture of Hinduism by projecting onto it his intended suppressions. His suppressions included the demonized halves of the Enlightenment values, which were the opposite of reason and rationality.

We have already seen in the previous chapter how Mill described the “Religion of the Hindus” as completely savage, uncivilized, primitive, childlike, irrational, incoherent, immoral, and pagan. This characterization comes due to the privileging of the Enlightenment values of reason, rationality, logic, and mind. The opposite of these, and the characteristics that signify and define them, were projected onto the Hindus and Hinduism. Therefore, we saw Hinduism described as incoherent, inconsistent, vague, irrational, fantastical, senseless, loose, wavering, obscure, superstitious, disorderly, wild, primitive, childlike, and imbued with imagination, confusion, deformity, and passion. Interspersed in this discourse are embedded the characteristics of the Christianity of the Church of England and her clergy that Mill wanted to suppress. He, therefore, characterized the Hindu tradition as suffused with deities seeking nothing but panegyrics, praise, and flattery—a profoundly ceremony-oriented tradition lacking morals.

In the chapter’s opening pages, Mill claims that the divinities of the Hindus are showered with epithets of praise. The more uncivilized a people, the loftier the praise. Given that the Hindus, in his eyes, are amongst the lowest of the low, they excel in showering their deities with descriptions of praise: “In the Hindu books we find applied to the Divinity a great variety of expressions so elevated, that they cannot be surpassed even by those of men who entertain the most sublime ideas of the Divine Nature.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Mill, *History of British India*, 338.

However strongly he may have felt against his Christian brethren, he could not have called them barbarians without inviting the libel laws in Britain. Being a citizen of the British imperial power, nothing could have held him against the non-Christian Hindus. In his no-holds-barred approach, he, as we saw earlier, not only describes the Hindus as savages but also explains why the barbarian Hindus engage in the praise and flattery of the divine: It is to protect themselves from fear arising from the cataclysms of nature. The prayers are directed towards the Divine from protection:

The timid barbarian, who is agitated by fears respecting the unknown events of nature, feels the most incessant and eager desire to propitiate the Being on whom he believes them to depend. His mind works, with laborious solicitude, to discover the best means of recommending himself. He naturally takes counsel from his own sentiments and feelings; and as nothing to his rude breast is more delightful than adulation, he is led by a species of instinct to expect the favour of his god from praise and flattery. In an uncultivated mind, how strong this sentiment is, a very superficial knowledge of human nature may convince us.<sup>57</sup>

The Hindu barbarian is not only fearful but also greedy. Being a savage, he (the use is deliberate) was not very smart in the eyes of Mill but was undoubtedly clever enough to figure out that if the Deity could protect him from fear and nature, it could help him procure material goods as well. Therefore, the next cause for engaging in prayers was the satisfaction of greed. The prayers and panegyrics only multiply and never cede:

When the belief is once admitted that the Deity is pleased with panegyric, it is evident to what length the agitated and ignorant votary will speedily be earned. Whatever may be the phrases with which he begins; in a short time, the ardour of his fears incites him to invent new and stronger; as likely to prove more agreeable and prevalent. Even these, by a short use become familiar to his mind. When they begin to be stale and feeble, he is again prompted to a new invention, and to more violent exaggerations.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 342–43.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 343.

There were some Europeans, mainly working in India and translating the texts with the help of indigenous scholars, who had a more charitable view of the Hindus. Given the beauty of the Sanskrit language in which their religious matters were described, they considered Hinduism a reasonably sophisticated tradition. Mill takes a beef with them and holds that the “lofty epithets of praise” that Hindus direct towards their divinities are proof of their savagery rather than their civilization.

Some of the most enlightened of the Europeans who have made inquiries concerning the ideas and institutions of the Hindus, have been induced, from the lofty epithets occasionally applied to the gods, to believe and to assert that this people had a refined and elevated religion. Nothing is more certain than that such language is far from being proof of such a religion. . . . We may be fully assured, that the sublime language is altogether without a meaning, the effect of flattery, and the meanest of passions; and that it is directly suggested, not by the most lofty, but by the most grovelling and base, ideas of the Divine Nature.<sup>59</sup>

This is not all. These European writers (William Jones and his comrades) were also quite appreciative of the simultaneous existence of One Brahman and plural gods and goddesses in the literature of the Hindus, which Mill then attacks. The attack once again centers on the notions of panegyric, flattery, praise, and prayers. He is clear that when the Hindus talk about the One Brahman—which he spells as Brahme—they do not have any understanding of monotheism:

Brahme is a mere unmeaning epithet of praise, applied to various gods; and no more indicative of refined notions of the unity, or any perfection of the Divine Nature, than other parts of their panegyric devotions.<sup>60</sup>

Before moving on to chastise and demonize Hinduism through the lens of ceremony, the following is how Mill sums up Hinduism from the window of prayers and adoration—panegyrics, flattery, and praise from his standpoint. Mill’s projections are not random; they have a pattern and a

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 345–47.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

sequence. In the “Church and its Reform” article, Mill first takes on the Church of England for its meaningless prayers and then for its various ceremonies. He takes an identical road vis-à-vis Hinduism—first vilify it for its prayers and adoration directed towards the Divine and its multiple aspects, and then for its ceremonies:

*When the exaggerations of flattery are...engrafted upon the original deification of the elements and powers of nature; and when the worship of heroes and of abstract ideas is incorporated with the whole; then is produced that heterogeneous and monstrous compound which has formed the religious creed of so great a portion of the human race; but composes a more stupendous mass in Hindustan than any other country; because in Hindustan a greater and more powerful section of the people, than in any other country, have, during a long series of ages, been solely occupied in adding to its volume, and augmenting its influence. So little do men regard incoherence of thought; so little are they accustomed to trace the relations of one set of opinions to another, and to form on any subject a consistent and harmonious combination of ideas, that while many persons of eminence loudly contend for the correctness and sublimity of the speculative, there is an universal agreement respecting the meanness, the absurdity, the folly, of the endless ceremonies, in which the practical part of the Hindu religion consists.<sup>61</sup>*

Mill holds that it was the Church of England’s responsibility to enhance people’s morals; however, she does precisely the reverse. The Church accomplishes it by ascribing imperfection, of intellectual and moral kind, to the divine. This is done by emphasizing the punishment one is supposed to receive after death for wrong actions. In the human world, a being who uses punishment to accomplish desired results is not civilized but a savage. Extrapolating this argument to the divine sphere, Mill states that the Church’s position of the divine using punishment to instill morality in her followers lowers the character of the divine. In addition, this positionality only favors the clergy.

We have often asked ourselves, after hearing such a [Church-of-England] sermon, whether any human being could by possibility have received one

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 395–97, italics ours.

useful impression from it; whether any one could have gone away after hearing it a better man than when he came; in the least degree more alive to the motives to good conduct, more capable of resisting the motives to bad? Never, in a single instance, do we remember having been able to make an answer in the affirmative. For a confirmation of the opinion we have thus formed of Church of England sermonizing, we appeal to the printed specimens of them, some of which are by men of considerable ability, skillful advocates of a cause, acute and eloquent controvertists, but all of them defective, or rather utterly worthless, in moral teaching.<sup>62</sup>

If the Church of England promoted Christianity without morals, it should not be surprising by now that Mill's Hinduism would lack morals as well, for it was this feature also that Mill projected onto Hinduism. He is categorical in stating that the Hindu religion lacks morals—should not be difficult to conjure as it is the religion of barbarous people:

No circumstance connected with a religious system more decidedly pronounces on its character, than the ideas which it inculcates respecting merit and demerit, purity and impurity, innocence and guilt. If those qualities which render a man amiable, respectable, and useful; if wisdom, beneficence, self-command, are celebrated as the chief recommendation to the favour of the Almighty; if the production of happiness is steadily and consistently represented as the most acceptable worship of the Creator; no other proof is requisite, that they who framed, and they who understand this religion, have arrived at high and refined notions of an All-perfect being. *But where, with no more attention to morality,* than the exigencies and laws of human nature force upon the attention of the rudest tribes, the sacred duties are made to consist in frivolous observances, there, we may be assured, the religious ideas of the people are barbarous.<sup>63</sup>

*Church of Englandism*, as the Utilitarians liked to call the Christianity of the Church of England derisively, was ceremonies and nothing but ceremonies—it was utterly bereft of doing good to others. It comprised of Sunday service—where Mill, using the words of George Selwyn, states the Divine was palavered and the devil bull ragged, hatred was bred

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<sup>62</sup>Mill, "The Church and its Reform," 269–70.

<sup>63</sup>Mill, *History of British India*, 397–98, italics ours.

against dissenters, dogmatism was promoted, and morality was suppressed—and the performance of some others, like baptism, marriage, and burying the dead. The very few amongst her clergy who had the aspiration of being and doing good to others did not receive any instruction from the parent body in their endeavors and were on their own:

The duties, the enforcement of which is left to conscience, to the desire of doing good, in the breast of the individual, are for the most part neglected, and never otherwise than ill-performed. We are far from denying that there are good men among the working clergy of the Church of England, notwithstanding the obstruction to goodness which their situation creates; men who reside among their parishioners, go about among them, and take pains to do them good. But these are the small number; and they never act systematically and upon a well-digested plan. They are left, unguided, to follow their own impulses; and often a great part of their well-meant endeavours is thrown away. They receive no instruction in the art of doing good. This is no part of Church of England education.<sup>64</sup>

Given the pattern of projecting onto Hindu matters, the shadows of Britain that he was so desperately trying to suppress and transform, Mill's Hinduism has identical features. Hinduism, therefore, as per Mill, is besotted with ceremonies that far override the observance of ethics and morals: a religion that lacks morals and ethics and is defined by meaningless and cumbrous rituals.

Even those inquirers who have been least aware of the grossness of the Hindu religion have seen that wretched ceremonies constituted almost the whole of its practical part. The precepts, which are lavished upon its ceremonies, bury, in their exorbitant mass, the pittance bestowed upon all other duties taken together. On all occasions ceremonies meet the attention as the preeminent duties of the Hindu. The holiest man is always he, by whom the ceremonies of his religion are most strictly performed. Never among any other people did the ceremonial part of religion prevail over the moral to a greater, probably to an equal extent.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Mill, "The Church and its Reform," 271.

<sup>65</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 399.

To such a degree are fantastic ceremonies exalted above moral duties... [that] easily may the greatest crimes be compensated, by the merit of ritual, and unmeaning services.<sup>66</sup>

In the entire system of rules concerning duty, the stress which is laid upon moral acts, may, as we see in the case of the Hindus, bear no comparison to the importance which is attached to useless or pernicious ceremonies.<sup>67</sup>

Mill closes the chapter “Religion of the Hindus” by railing against the theory of rebirth that Hindus hold dear—metempsychosis or the transmigration of the soul in his description. The theory of rebirth is pegged on karma, which believes that every action has a result, either in this life or the next. Karma, as per the Hindus, is not only future-oriented but also past-oriented and present-oriented—meaning that karma (literally, it means work) conducted in the present can also alter the consequences of a particular karma or action of the past, influencing present and future. In other words, karma is in flux—actions and results simultaneously working on the individual’s past, present, and future. Mill, however, takes a restricted and myopic view of karma, which links karma only to future lives, holding that “the doctrine of future rewards and punishments has, in no situation and among no people, a power to make men virtuous.”<sup>68</sup>

In this representation, both the paradigm of Enlightenment and the pattern of creating a picture of the Hindus in the backdrop of Utilitarian reforms are involved. Enlightenment has the binary of free will/determinism, which privileges free will and suppresses determinism (vide *theorem 3*). Mill projects the suppressed determinism onto the Hindus through which he paints the Hindus as fatalistic (vide *theorem 7*) while using it to make one more assertion, amongst the countless, as to how and why the Hindus are immoral and savage. The belief that future rewards and punishments cannot have any influence in producing morality has links with how he attacked the English clergy. In “Church and its Reform,” we saw earlier how Mill states that the *Church of Englandism* does not promote morality, emphasizing that the clergy’s sermons on

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

punishment after death do not do any good to an individual's character. He rhetorically asks, "What is the use of punishment when the time of action is gone by, and when the doom of the wretched victim is fixed forever?"<sup>69</sup> And then answers himself: For the punishment to be efficacious, it must be proximate to the incident; when it is fixed in a distant future—afterlife in this case—it loses its efficacy and purpose. He then asserts the following: "That this theory is not derived from the Scripture, but is the pure forgery of priests, might be inferred with certainty *a priori*, and could also be easily proved by particular evidence."<sup>70</sup> This is entirely similar to what he says about the matter in the *History*: "Brahmens grafted upon it, in their usual way, a number of fantastic refinements, and gave to their ideas on this subject, a more systematic form than is usual with those eccentric theologians."<sup>71</sup>

Thus, in the hands of Mill, Hinduism and the Hindu Brahmins ended up paying for the sins of the Christianity of the Church of England and her clergy. It was the clergy in England with its Church that was deeply complicit in having created hierarchical and oppressive conditions in England, but through the unfettered imagination of Mill, bogey entities for a far-off land were formed. These imaginations have become full-blown monsters now, whom the Indian American children experience as soon as they set their feet in the sixth grade. However, before we come to that leg of our work, there are some more imaginations of Mill that must be accounted for.

### **Mill's Hindu Form of Governance Is Fabricated and Projected against the Conditions of Governance He Wanted to Undermine and Suppress in Britain**

As we saw earlier, social reform was the objective of Bentham and Utilitarians from the very beginning. Bentham's<sup>72</sup> earlier writings, *Critical Elements of Jurisprudence*, *Fragment on Government*, and *Defense of Usury*

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<sup>69</sup> Mill, "The Church and its Reform," 268.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 432.

<sup>72</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham, Published under the Superintendence of his Executor, John Bowring*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1838–43).



substantiate that as a significant aspect of social reform, it was governmental reform that he was pushing for. Indeed, Bentham saw himself as a modern lawgiver. The writings included critiques on monarchy, aristocracy, clergy, judiciary, etc., and the relationship among these entities.

Pursuing the master plan of Bentham, which he had put in place in the later decades of the eighteenth century, Mill, as he wrote the *History of British India* and immediately after completing it, contributed to the *Supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica* between 1815 and 1823 a series of articles. Some specifically espoused governmental reforms: “Government” (1820), “Jurisprudence” (1821), “Liberty of the Press” (1821), “Education” (1819), and “Prisons and Prison Discipline” (1823).<sup>73</sup>

Mill’s projections on the Hindu form of governance become evident when we put his essay “Government” alongside the chapter “Form of Government” from the *History of British India*—more specifically, in the backdrop of the form or forms of governance he wanted to expel from Britain for good. However, before we get into the specifics, it becomes imperative that we give a summary of the essay “Government.”

Mill says in the essay that governance for public good was popularized by Locke and by Bentham through the assertion of the greatest-happiness-for-the-greatest-number principle, and he considered it his undertaking to show how it could be accomplished. He begins the essay with another axiom at the core of Bentham’s utilitarian principles: humans operate on the pain-and-pleasure principle, where they engage in activities that maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Pleasurable activities lead to the enhancement of happiness, and painful ones lead to its diminishing. The government’s job is to increase pleasure (hence happiness) and diminish pain. One’s pleasures (consequently happiness) and pain (consequently misery) depend on the objects of desire one owns and the authority that one exerts on others—the power is directly proportional to the things of desire that one possesses. Therefore, humans are busy making other humans slaves to enhance their happiness by possessing objects of desire. The business of government, as per Mill, is the following: “The greatest

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<sup>73</sup>In Macvey Napier, ed., *Supplement to the IV, V, and VI Editions of the Encyclopedia Britannica* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1824).

possible happiness of society is, therefore, attained by insuring to every man the greatest possible quantity of the produce of his labour."<sup>74</sup> The government needs to ensure that the more powerful ones do not exploit weaker people and that the former do not usurp the objects of desire from the latter. Also, government means that the ones responsible for governance do not abuse the power.

Before Mill offers his solutions as to how the abuse of power is to be nullified, stalled, or accounted for, he suggests three ways in which governance can take place: 1. When the people themselves keep in their own hands their governance, through a process which he calls as *Democratical*. This arrangement is the rule of *the many* over *one* (monarch) or *a few* (aristocrats). 2. *A few* from the population are involved in the governance of *the many*, which he describes as *Aristocratical*. 3. *One* individual is involved in the rule of *the many*, which he terms as *Monarchical*. In terms of binaries, as per Mill's description, the *Democratical* form of governance is the rule of *the many* over *a few* or *one*, which can be represented as many/few or many/one. As per *Theorem 3*, Mill's *Democratical* form of governance privileges *many* over *few* or *one*. The *Aristocratical* form of governance privileges *a few* over *the many* or *a few* over *one* and is a system where a few from the nobility are privileged over both the masses as well as the monarch. It is a system in which the monarch, as well as the masses, are suppressed by the few who form aristocracy. The *Monarchical* form of governance is one (pun unintended) in which the monarch is privileged over *the many*, i.e., the masses, or *the few*, which is aristocracy. In other words, in the binaries of one/many or one/few, one is privileged, whereas both the masses as well as *the few* from the aristocracy are suppressed.

Whereas Mill modifies the *Democratical* form of governance for representative governance, where people choose their representatives who govern them through a process of voting (suffrage was not universal in Mill's scheme of things, for women and men—below the age of 40 and not holding property—were denied the right to vote) he derided quite exhaustively the *Aristocratical* (the rule of *the few* over *the many*) or the *Monarchical* (the rule of *one* over *the many*) forms of government. Both

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<sup>74</sup>James Mill, "Government" in *James Mill: Political Writings*, ed. Terence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.

these latter forms of government find disfavor in Mill's political writings. The representative form of governance finds favor, in which the interests of the governed aligned with the interest of the governors, made possible through the choice of representatives who could be censured and not returned to the House of Commons if they did not act by the aspirations and needs of the governed. Given that Mill explicitly wanted to undermine the *Monarchical* and *Aristocratical* forms of governance, where *one* ruled over the *many* or *a few* ruled over *the many*, respectively, he imagined or constructed the Hindu form of government. The suppressed paradigms of governance, *Monarchical* (the rule of *the one* over *the many*) and *Aristocratical* (the rule of *a few* over *the many*), in the binaries of a representative form of governance/*Monarchical* and representative form of governance/*Aristocratical*, were projected onto the Hindu forms of governance and their characterization made. The absolutist and despotic representation of Hindu governance, which we discussed extensively in the previous chapter, has roots in these imaginings, as will become crystal clear from the discussion below. Once we understand the binary halves that Mill is privileging and suppressing in his writings on "Government," we will be able to see through the falsehoods that he has created on the Hindu form of governance, for it is on the canvas of suppressed binary halves that he has fomented the Hindu world of governance—more appropriately misgovernance, for absolutism and despotism characterize misrule, not rule. However, some quotes from his essay on "Government" will be helpful.

How a Monarch abuses its power and oppresses the masses, the following is what Mill has to say:

If government is founded upon this, as a law of human nature, that a man, if able, will take from others any thing which they have, and which he desires, it is sufficiently evident that, when a man is called a king, it does not change his nature; so that, when he has got power to enable him to take from every man what he pleases, he will take whatever he pleases. To suppose that he will not, is to affirm that government is unnecessary; and

that human beings will abstain from injuring one another of their own accord.<sup>75</sup>

How Aristocracy abuses its power (*a few* using the power over *the many*) is stated by Mill in the following:

We have already observed, that the reason for which government exists is, that one man, if stronger than another, will take from him whatever that other possesses and he desires. But if one man will do this, so will several. And if powers are put into the hands of a comparatively small number, called an aristocracy, powers which make them stronger than the rest of the community, they will take from the rest of the community as much as they please of the objects of desire. They will, therefore, defeat the very end for which government was instituted. The unfitness, therefore, of an aristocracy to be entrusted with the powers of government rests on the basis of demonstration.<sup>76</sup>

How the combination of Monarchy and Aristocracy oppresses the masses can be inferred from the following utterances:

It is very evident that this reasoning extends to every modification of the smaller number. Whenever the powers of government are placed in any hands other than those of the community, whether those of one man, of a few, or of several, those principles of human nature which imply that government is at all necessary, imply that these persons will make use of them to defeat the very end for which government exists.<sup>77</sup>

We have also seen that the interest of the king, and of the governing aristocracy, is directly the reverse; it is to have unlimited power over the rest of the community, and to use it for their own advantage.... The monarchy and aristocracy have all possible motives for endeavouring to obtain unlimited power over the persons and property of the community. The consequence is inevitable; they have all possible motives for combining to obtain that power, and unless the people have power enough to be a match for

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 9–10.

both, they have no protection. The balance, therefore, is a thing, the existence of which, upon the best possible evidence, is to be regarded as impossible. The appearances which have given colour to the supposition are altogether delusive.<sup>78</sup>

In the previous chapter, we saw that in the binary of civilized/savage as Mill arrogated civilization to the Brits and other Europeans, he *vides theorem 3* suppressed savage and *theorem 7* projected it onto the Hindus. The Hindus, and their society, culture, manners, and governmental organization were caricatured to show them as savage and primitive. Their government structure was shown as absolutist and despotic with the monarch as the alpha Lord—in other words, the rule of *one* over *the many*, the paradigm or framework of governance Mill wanted to suppress or obliterate in his native country completely. His misgivings concerning the *Monarchical* form of governance were projected onto the Hindus, and the depiction of their governance structure was fostered.

Among the Hindus, according to the Asiatic model, the government was monarchical, and, with the usual exception of religion and its ministers, absolute. No idea of any system of rule, different from the will of a single person, appears to have entered the minds of them, or their legislators.... The pride of imperial greatness could not devise, hardly could it even desire, more extraordinary distinctions, or the sanction of a more unlimited authority.<sup>79</sup>

The absolutist form of the Hindu monarchical governance was despotic up to down, in the sense that the King (Mill does not entertain any possibility of a queen being a ruler) commanded all the administrative, judicial, and legislative powers. His deputies, as heads of smaller principalities, also oversaw the functions above in whom they were collapsed. Therefore, as per Mill, every unit of governance in Hindu kingdoms had an overlord, an absolute master and controller of all the state functions. The Hindus fundamentally and essentially followed an overlord culture in matters of governance. Every unit of government had *the one* ruling over

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>79</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 203.

*the many*. When these deputies assembled in the king's presence, they became part of the "many" brigade and the king as *the one* commanded them in totality and completeness. That the legislative, executive, and judicatory power lay in the hands of the monarch who ruled with arbitrariness and neglect, Mill could not have made more explicit:

In the first place, there are hardly any laws: and he alone is entitled to judge, who is entitled to legislate, since he must make a law for every occasion. In the next place, a rude people, unused to obedience, would hardly respect inferior authority. In the third place, the business of judicature is so badly performed as to interrupt but little the business or pleasures of the king; and a decision is rather an exercise of arbitrary will and power, than the result of an accurate investigation.... The administration of justice by the king in person, and in the provinces of course by his deputies, as in the subordinate districts by theirs, stands in the sacred books as a leading principle of the jurisprudence of the Hindus; and the revolution of ages has introduced a change in favour rather of the prince who abandons the duty, than of the people, for whom hardly any other instrument of judicature is provided.<sup>80</sup>

Not content with demonizing the governance of Hindus in the suppressed and projected paradigm of *one* over *the many*, Mill next characterizes their governance format in the container of the other suppressed paradigm: *a few* over *the many*, which he had used to describe the rule of aristocracy in which a few forming a class of aristocrats ruled over the masses. In other words, *the few*, as they privileged themselves in society, undermined *the many* from the masses (vide *theorem 3*). The few, interestingly, in the context of the Hindus do not come from the Kshatriya varna but from the Brahmin varna. And just like *the few* in the *Aristocratical* form of governance could even undermine the monarch or *the one* on one side and *the many* on the other side, Brahmins of Mill's description, as we saw earlier, not only undermine *the many* by controlling their minds and lives but also undermine the king. Part of the below from Mill, we have quoted in the previous chapter; we are now giving a fuller quote because we want our readers to see for themselves how the Hindu form of

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 212.

governance, after having been demonized in the suppressed paradigm of *one over many* or *one over few*, is now being vilified in the suppressed framework of another paradigm: *a few over the many*. We also pointed out in the earlier chapter that Mill, at the root level, contradicts himself in outlining the Hindu form of governance, for in the span of a few pages, he describes the king or the monarch as the one in whom the administrative, legislative, and judicial powers are concentrated and then the Brahmins in whom the all the three powers are collapsed. This contradiction is because the two suppressed frameworks in Mill's scheme of governance for Britain are being projected onto the Hindu scheme.

The powers of government consist of three great branches, the legislative, the judicial, and the administrative; and we have to inquire in what hands these several powers are deposited, and by what circumstances their exercise is controlled. As the Hindu believes, that a complete and perfect system of instruction, which admits of no addition or change, was conveyed to him from the beginning by the Divine Being, for the regulation of his public as well as his private affairs, he acknowledges no laws but those which are contained in the sacred books. From this it is evident, that the only scope which remains for legislation is confined within the limits of the interpretations which may be given to the holy text. The Brahmens enjoy the undisputed prerogative of interpreting the divine oracles; for though it is allowed to the two classes next in degree to give advice to the king in the administration of justice, they must in no case presume to depart from the sense of the law which it has pleased the Brahmens to impose. The power of legislation, therefore, exclusively belongs to the priesthood. The exclusive right of interpreting the laws necessarily confers upon them, in the same unlimited manner, the judicial powers of government. The king, though ostensibly supreme judge, is commanded always to employ Brahmens as counsellors and assistants in the administration of justice; and whatever construction they put upon the law, to that his sentence must conform. Whenever the king, in person, discharges not the office of judge, it is a Brahmen, if possible, who must occupy his place. The king, therefore, is so far from possessing the judicial power, that he is rather the executive officer by whom the decision of the Brahmens are carried into effect. They who possess the power of making and interpreting the laws by which another person is bound to act, are by necessary consequence the masters of his actions. Possessing the legislative and judicative powers, the Brahmens

were, also, masters of the executive power, to any extent, whatsoever, to which they wished to enjoy it. With influence over it they were not contented. They secured to themselves a direct, and no contemptible share of its immediate functions. On all occasions, the king was bound to employ Brahmens, as his counsellors and ministers; and, of course, to be governed by their judgment. . . . It thus appears that, according to the original laws of the Hindus, the king was little more than an instrument in the hands of the Brahmens. He performed the laborious part of government, and sustained the responsibility, while they chiefly possessed the power.<sup>81</sup>

We also pointed out in the previous chapter that Mill recognized that he had contradicted himself. To correct or damage control the inconsistency, he contends that the Hindu king, through force (because he has control of the army) and purse (because he has control of the treasury), can control the Brahmins and eventually establish his suzerainty. This contention is also a projection and has roots in Mill's enunciations in "Government." Examining whether there was a balance of power between people, aristocracy, and monarchy in Britain, Mill states

*Any two of the parties, by combining, may swallow up the third.* That such combination will take place appears to be as certain as any thing which depends upon human will; because there are strong motives in favour of it, and none that can be conceived in opposition to it. Whether the portions of power, as originally distributed to the parties, be supposed to be equal or unequal, the mixture of three of the kinds of government, it is thus evident, cannot possibly exist.<sup>82</sup>

Two combining to swallow the third explains how, in Mill's view, the king and the Brahmins combine to perpetuate an oppressive and absolutist rule over the people. How the king can swallow the Brahmins to bring them under his control and provide them an ancillary status in governance can be inferred from the following when he discusses different combinations of two swallowing the third:

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 217–19.

<sup>82</sup>Mill, "Government," 18.



Three varieties of this union may be conceived; the union of monarchy with aristocracy, or the union of either with democracy. Let us first suppose that monarchy is united with aristocracy. The power of each is equal or not equal. If it is not equal, it follows, as a necessary consequence...that the stronger will take from the weaker, till it engrosses the whole.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, we see that every aspect of Hindu governance is nothing but fabrications and imaginations of Mill, contrived in the light of the representational government—which was in tune with the larger plan for governmental transformation laid down by Bentham—that he wanted to bring about in Britain. These fabrications incidentally have not died down; they have not been put behind as figments of the colonial past; on the contrary, they thrive and, in school textbook discourse, appear in explicit and implicit ways (to be unfolded in great detail in the next chapter), imprinting the minds of students in conscious and unconscious ways that Hindus and India in antiquity devised a hierarchical, oppressive, and absolutist form of governance which was only transformed through the onslaught of the European Man as he carried as effectively as he could the “white man’s burden.”

### **Mill Imagines Hindu Jurisprudence against the Backdrop of English Laws that He Wanted to Expel from Britain**

Mill follows up his essay on “Government” with an article on “Jurisprudence,” published in 1821—quite logical in that governmental reforms are meaningless if laws that form the architecture of the government are not reformed. In tandem and in line with the pattern we have exposed so far, we find Mill imagining the Hindu form of jurisprudence in the backdrop of jurisprudence reforms he sought in Britain. To shed light on this issue, it is imperative that we first understand some of the cardinal points that he has enunciated in the article “Jurisprudence”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 18–19.

<sup>84</sup> James Mill, “Jurisprudence” in *James Mill: Political Writings*, ed. Terence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

and then compare them with the ones that he has enumerated in the *History* in the chapter “Laws of the Hindus.” The article “Jurisprudence” is divided into three sections: Civil Code, Penal Code, and Code of Procedure. Mill discusses the chapter “Laws of the Hindus” also along the same lines.

### Hindu Laws and Civil Code

Jurisprudence, in Mill’s understanding, means the protection of Rights, for Rights and the *greatest good for the greatest number*—the utilitarian principle—are intricately entwined. Rights and happiness are directly proportional, and he holds that they were not sufficiently protected in European countries—“enlightened countries,” to use his words. When Mill speaks about Rights, it is not in the sense in which we understand the term today: “All rights...when the term is closely investigated, are found to mean powers; powers with respect to persons, and powers with respect to things. What any one means when he says that a thing is his property, is, that he has the power of using it in a certain way.”<sup>85</sup> Rights and objects of desire, therefore, are intricately entwined for him. His fundamental concern back then was that the more powerful kept the weak under their heels and that the weak could protect neither their property nor the produce of their labor from the strong. That the Rights of the vulnerable are trampled upon, in Mill’s view, affects the general happiness, which is in opposition to the utilitarian principle.

As per his assertion in the article, Rights have yet to be defined, and there is a dire need to define them. The definition of Rights falls under the Civil Code. Offences—their definition—and punishment comprise the Penal Code. Mill names the process through which the Rights are defined and the violations prevented, with the identification of offenses and their punishment, as the Code of Procedure. These Mill refined from the thoughts of Bentham—Civil Code and Penal Code in the ideas of Bentham were clubbed under “Substantive Law,” and the Code of Procedure was described under “Adjective Law.” Having elaborated upon

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 48.

the arms of the judiciary, Mill further explains what he means by Rights: “Rights are powers, and the powers are means for the obtaining of services. We have now, therefore, a language, by the help of which we may speak with tolerable clearness.”<sup>86</sup> Mill consequently describes the Rights involving people and then the Rights involving things, and depending upon the extent of services that an individual can derive from them, they are said to be his property (we are deliberately not saying “his or her property” here because women in Mill’s scheme of things were property). In his view, it is the legislature’s job to define the Rights as clearly as possible. That the Rights can be described in terms of services—when they would begin or when they would end or the circumstances in which they would come into play—its determination by the legislature is straightforward: “The legislature only has to determine what fact shall be considered as giving a beginning to each right, and what shall be considered as putting an end to it, and then the whole business is accomplished.”<sup>87</sup>

In addition, he claims that European nations, since antiquity, have had these Rights enumerated, except that they needed to be clearly defined, including their onset and termination; in fact, they were so ill-defined that they were not even called Rights. Says he:

The following is an imperfect enumeration of them:—An expression of the will of the legislature, when it makes any disposition with regard to property; Occupancy, when a man takes what belongs to nobody; Labour; Donation; Contract; Succession. Of these six causes of the commencement of a right there is a remarkable distinction between the first three and the last three. The first three give commencement to a right in favour of one individual, without necessarily putting an end to a right enjoyed by any other individual. The last three give commencement to a right in favour of one individual, only by making the same right to cease in favour of another individual.<sup>88</sup>

A clear definition of the Rights makes the judge’s job easy. He can quickly determine whether a particular Right belongs to a specific individual,

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

when it began, what evidence exists to prove that it commenced or ended, etc. The lack of definition is a mark of regression, which Mill's Enlightenment value of progress had to correct and bring to speed. It is this conflation that becomes a signifier of rudeness and barbarianism in the Hindu context in matters of jurisprudence.<sup>89</sup>

Amid the imperfections adhering to the state of law among a rude and ignorant people, one is, that they preserve not their maxims of justice, and their rules of judicial procedure, distinct from other subjects. In the law books of the Hindus, the details of jurisprudence and judicature occupy comparatively a very moderate space. The doctrines and ceremonies of religion; the rules and practice of education; the institutions, duties, and customs of domestic life; the maxims of private morality, and even of domestic economy; the rules of government, of war, and of negotiation; all form essential parts of the Hindu codes of law, and are treated in the same style, and laid down with the same authority, as the rules for the distribution of justice.<sup>90</sup>

Mill further claims in the *History* that the Hindu laws are not only ill-defined and ill-formulated, but also there isn't any distinction between civil and penal laws. Taking the help of William Jones's *Institutes of Menu*, which was his translation of the *Manusmṛiti*, the following is what he enunciates:

In the Institutes of Menu, the most celebrated perhaps of all the original compends of Hindu law, the titles, as they are there denominated, or divisions, of law, are eighteen.... It is not easy to conceive a more rude and defective attempt at the classification of laws than what is here presented. The most essential and obvious distinctions are neglected and confounded. Though no arrangement would appear more natural, and more likely to strike even an uncultivated mind, than the division of laws into civil and penal, we find them mixed and blended together in the code of the Hindus. The first nine of the heads or titles, as above, refer to civil law; the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, to criminal law; the sixteenth

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<sup>89</sup> It is a different issue that, as per Mill, not only matters in jurisprudence but also everything in the scholarship of Hindus, which is ill-defined and almost a complete smorgasbord.

<sup>90</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 223.

and seventeenth return to civil, and the eighteenth to criminal; while the tenth relates partly to the one and partly to the other.<sup>91</sup>

In “Jurisprudence,” Mill also makes it explicit at the beginning of the article that the definition of Rights is predicated upon the need to protect the weak and reduce oppression. In other words, there is a proportional relationship between lack of definition of any jurisprudence matter and oppression, which he wanted to transform in his home condition. Consistent with his approach—viz, construct the Hindu world against the transformation sought in Britain—he projects the conflation onto the Hindu world. In the earlier chapter, he had already shown the Hindu governance as absolutist and oppressive; he only needed to add some more nuance, which he accomplishes in his chapter on the Hindu laws. He continues from the previous quote:

The tendency of this rude conjunction of dissimilar subjects is, amid other inconveniences, to confound the important distinction between those obligations which it is the duty of the magistrate to enforce and those which ought to be left to the suggestions of self-interest and the sanctions of morality; it is to extend coercion and the authority of the magistrate, over the greater part of human life, and to leave men no liberty even in their private and ordinary transactions; while it lessens greatly the force of the legal sanction in those cases in which its greatest efficiency is required.<sup>92</sup>

In the quote above, there is a phrase “obligations which it is the duty of the magistrate to enforce.” This needs a bit of elucidation. In “Jurisprudence,” Mill makes a binary distinction between Rights and obligations: “Every right is a benefit; a command to a certain extent over the objects of desire. Every obligation is a burden; an interdiction from the objects of desire. The one is in itself a good; the other is in itself an evil.”<sup>93</sup> If Mill were privileging Rights over obligations, it should not be surprising by now that a Hindu magistrate would not be enforcing the Rights of people; on the contrary, he would be enforcing obligations.

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<sup>91</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 224–26.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>93</sup> Mill, “Jurisprudence,” 49.

This is precisely how he represents a Hindu magistrate, defining him in the light of what he wanted to suppress in his native country. In the binary of Rights vs obligations, as he suppresses obligations, he projects them onto the Hindu people and conflates them with the Hindu magistrate. The Hindu magistrate becomes an enforcer of obligations rather than an upholder of Rights.

In addition, given that he privileges the discourse on Rights, it would be a stretch to find its attribution to the Hindu laws. It would be more logical to encounter their description in synonyms of obligations. Consequently, he describes the Hindu laws in the idiom of contracts, which is a synonym for obligations—the inverted image of Rights he projects on the Hindus. In the process, he makes an egregious claim (honestly speaking, a laughable one) that Hindus did not have any distinction between people and things. Therefore, there was no way in Mill's imagination that Hindus could have conceptualized anything about Rights, and they were so unevolved that they could not even make a discernment between people and things:

Another ground of division, well calculated, as being exceedingly obvious, to strike an uncultivated mind, is the distinction of persons, and things. This was the ground-work of the arrangement bestowed upon the Roman laws. It is that of the arrangement which continues to prevail the English; rude as it is, at once the effect, and the cause, of confusion. It will be seen, however, that, even this imperfect attempt at a rational division was far above the Hindus.<sup>94</sup>

It is, therefore, that when Mill discusses the Hindu laws from the vantage point of the classification that he created to improve upon the English Laws—Civil Code, Penal Code, and Code of Procedure—he claims that there is hardly anything civil about the Hindu laws (since they were ill-defined, there could not have been any definition of Rights; there wasn't even a distinction between people and things because of which Rights about people and Rights about property could not be conceptualized; and for Civil Code to exist, Rights had to be defined):

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 226.

In order to convey, in as narrow a compass as possible, an idea of the maxims and spirit of Hindu jurisprudence, it will be convenient not to follow the mangled division of the Hindus themselves. Omitting the laws, which regulate the political order, which determine who are to govern, who are to obey, and define the terms of command and obedience; laws are conveniently distributed under the three usual heads; I. *Civil laws, though Civil is a very objectionable term*; II. Penal laws; and III. The laws of judicature, or those which fix the mode in which the judicial services are rendered. Under each of these heads, such particulars have been carefully selected from the multitude of Hindu laws, as appeared the best calculated to convey an idea of the leading qualities of the Hindu code, and of the stage of civilization at which it may appear to have been formed.<sup>95</sup>

We also saw how Mill defined the coordinates of the relationship between Rights and the Civil Code on the following: expressions of the legislature's will, occupancy, labor, donation, contract, and succession. The first three, in his opinion, if worked upon by the legislature, lead to the Rights of an individual without any other person involved. In contrast, the latter three engender the Rights of an individual in relationship to others. Subsequently, he distinguishes Rights involving things (property) from Rights involving people. But what does Mill do since property has been discussed in the Hindu laws? He could not have discussed it under Rights, given his mental schemata. Finding a way out, he still discusses the property laws not as Rights but as contracts; instead of using the six parameters discussed above, he considers only five, excluding the expression of the will of the legislature. This is in complete consonance with the hierarchical and oppressive framework that he has conceptualized for the Hindu world: In the arbitrary rule of one person, there could not be any legislature in an absolutist form of governance.

It is needless to remark, that the sources of acquisition [of property], by occupancy, by labour, by contract, by donation, by descent; which are recognized in almost all states of society, are recognised in Hindustan. It is in the accuracy with which the intended effects of these incidents are defined, and in the efficiency of the means taken to secure the benefits they convey,

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 229, italics ours.

that the excellence of one system above another is more particularly observed.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, using the descriptor of lack of accuracy in definitions that Mill employed as an overarching canopy to deny Rights in Hindu laws, he further gravitates the Hindu property laws towards contracts. Besides, the alleged lack of definition in the Hindu world fulfilled all the other agendas that Mill had already rolled out: Hindu laws were savage, uncivilized, irrational, arbitrary, absolutist, oppressive, etc. We, therefore, see profound emphasis on the lack of definition, incoherence, inconsistency, vagueness, ambiguity, etc., as Mill discusses the property laws: “vagueness and ambiguity, the source of endless dispute, which distinguishes the laws of all ignorant people, and which forms a most remarkable feature in those of Hindustan”<sup>97</sup>; “Inconsistency, and even direct contradiction, is a characteristic of the Hindu laws, which it does not appear to have been thought even requisite to avoid.”<sup>98</sup>

In distinguishing between the Rights pertaining to people and the Rights pertaining to things, Mill considers children and wives as property over whom men have Rights. Given that he held women as property even in his home conditions, it is improbable he could have accepted that women in the Hindu world could own property: property cannot own property. This is exactly what he writes about the Hindu women vis-à-vis property: “It is particularly to be noted that daughters are debarred from a share in the inheritance of their fathers. The woman, indeed, among the Hindus, is so restricted in the means of acquiring property, that she is almost excluded from its rights.”<sup>99</sup>

## Hindu Laws and Penal Code

We find the Hindu laws discussed in the section “Penal Code” much in correspondence with suggested reforms in the English Law discussed

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 229–30.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 245.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 246.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 248.



under “Penal Code” in “Jurisprudence.” However, to elucidate the correspondence, we must first discuss the Penal Code from “Jurisprudence.”

Whereas the section “Civil Code” discusses the exploration and definition of Rights, “Penal Code” discusses the violation of those Rights. Rights can be violated directly or indirectly. The indirect infringement of Rights is through those measures that attack the governmental machinery involved in protecting Rights—for instance, an attack on courts or parliament. As per Mill, the Penal Code also discusses the modes through which Rights are violated and the consequent punishments that are accorded.

Mill argues that once the Rights have been violated, two approaches must be undertaken: 1. The violations should be repaired. 2. Their recurrence is prevented. In discussing this, he refines the doctrine of Satisfaction in the English Law. The reparations should be to the satisfaction of the injured. The principle of Satisfaction, however, is only applicable in cases where Rights have been directly infringed upon; it is superfluous in cases of indirect infringements.

Reparations involve punishments. For punishments, Mill states that motives should be established. If punishments override the benefits accrued from violating the Civil Code, the latter can be prevented. For the punishments to act as deterrents, they should be in proportion to the crimes committed. The pain derived from the consequence of engaging in such violations should exceed the pleasure resulting from committing them. Mill is candid in stating that corporeal punishment’s purpose is preventing crimes, and it should not proceed from any other motive, like deriving pleasure out of inflicting punishment or a sense of retaliation.

We shall assuredly prevent any acts, if we attach to them motives of the painful kind, sufficient to outweigh the motives of the opposite kind which lead to the performance. If we apply a less quantity of evil than is sufficient for outweighing those motives, the act will still be performed, and the evil will be inflicted to no purpose; it will be so much suffering in waste. If we apply a greater quantity of evil than is necessary, we incur a similar inconvenience; we create a quantity of evil which is absolutely useless; the act, which it is the tendency of the motives of the pleasurable kind to produce, will be prevented, if the motives of the painful kind outweigh them in the

smallest degree, as certainly as if it outweigh them to any degree whatsoever. As soon, therefore, as the legislator has reached that point, he ought immediately to stop. Every atom of punishment which goes beyond is so much uncompensated evil, so much human misery created without any corresponding good. It is pure unmingled mischief.<sup>100</sup>

Punishments should also be certain and immediate. Mill considered punishments as evil—a necessary evil, though. He was clear, however, that they should be used to a minimum:

It is imperatively required, by the laws of benevolence, that, if evil is a necessary means to our end, every expedient should be used to reduce it to the smallest quantity possible. It is cruelty; it belongs only to a malignant nature; to apply evil in a way which demands a quantity of it greater than would otherwise have been required.<sup>101</sup>

The above is Mill's framework to evaluate the penal code of the Hindu laws. We reproduce his words verbatim:

An offence is an act by which a right is violated. The object of punishment is to prevent such acts. It is employed under the empire of reason, only as a last resource. If offences could be prevented without punishment, punishment, ought never to exist. It follows, as a necessary consequence, that as little of it as possible ought to exist. It is equally manifest, that it would be vain to establish rights, if the necessary means were not to be used for securing them. It is therefore good to make use of punishment, as far as necessary for the securing of rights; with this precaution only, that the suffering or evil, produced by the punishment, is less, upon the whole, than that which would arise from the violation of the right. *By these maxims, as criterions, we shall endeavour to ascertain the attributes of the criminal code of the Hindus.*<sup>102</sup>

Now that we have established that the maxims, transposing which he evaluates the Hindu penal laws, are also the maxims that he wanted to

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<sup>100</sup> Mill, "Jurisprudence," 66.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 66–67.

<sup>102</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 251–52, italics ours.

embed in English jurisprudence by overhauling the English laws, it should not be surprising to us, given the line of inquiry that we have been following, that he projects onto the Hindu penal laws the same features against which he had strong and negative opinions. Punishments awarded from the motives of resentment, revenge, and retaliation, which he wanted to completely negate, obliterate, and transform in home conditions, are projected onto the Hindu penal laws.

The misery and disorder which overspread human life, wherever self-defense rests wholly upon the individual, are the cause to which government owes its origin. To escape from those evils, men transfer to the magistrate powers sufficient for the defence of all; and agree to expect from him alone that protection, which they obtained so imperfectly from their own exertions. In the rude and violent times when this revolution takes place, it is not from a just and cool discernment of the limits of defence, prevention, and reparation, that penalties are exacted. *It is from the impulse of a keen resentment, that the sufferer pursues, and from a strong sympathy with that resentment, that the magistrate commonly judges and condemns. It is not so much security that is coveted, as revenge.* A great injury committed can only be expiated by a great injury received. *Two principles therefore universally characterize the penal code of barbarous people: severity; and retaliation....* Notwithstanding the mildness which has generally been attributed to the Hindu character, hardly any nation is distinguished for more sanguinary laws.<sup>103</sup>

In the *History*, from time to time, we find Mill connecting political and social thoughts or practices he wanted to suppress or transform with ancient civilizations and then conflating the Hindu world with them. The following is one such occasion:

Retaliation is another peculiarity which remarkably distinguishes the laws of that barbarous period, when the punishment of crimes is chiefly measured by the resentment of the sufferer. Whatever the injury which the innocent man has sustained, a similar injury, by way of punishment, is imposed upon the guilty. Whatever the member or part of his body, with

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 252–54, italics ours.

which the offender committed the crime, upon that part is the chastisement inflicted. The Hebrew law of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, is a familiar example of what occurred among other nations. The forfeit of limb for limb, and member for member, was, among the Romans, exacted by the law of the twelve tables, unless where the offender could expiate his crime by a fine of 300 pounds of copper. The earliest legislators of Greece were so rude as to leave the punishment of crimes, undefined, to the discretion of the judge; but Zaleucus, legislator of the Locrians who first prescribed rules on this subject, enforced so literally the maxim of an eye for an eye, that it was deemed an important reform on his laws when it was decreed that he who struck out the eye of a person with one eye should lose both his own. The Egyptians extended the principle of punishing criminals in that part of the body which was chiefly instrumental in the guilt to an extraordinary number of instances. He who discovered the secrets of the state had his tongue cut out; he who violated a free woman was made an eunuch; of those who counterfeited coin and seals either public or private, of those who made use of false weights and measures, and of public notaries who forged or mutilated deeds, the two hands were cut off; and calumniators were subjected to the same punishment which would have been due to those whom they falsely accused. *To...extraordinary a degree the spirit of retaliation moulds the penal legislation of the Hindus.*<sup>104</sup>

The above-mentioned occurrence, part of a pattern, is in complete harmony with Mill's thought paradigm. Mill, following the values of Enlightenment, apart from privileging reason over irrationality and all facets with which irrationality is linked, also privileged progress over the past (which is characterized as regressive, uncivilized, savage, and uncouth). As per *Theorem 6* of Singh, when binary thinking is not transcended in a thinker, he/she clubs all the privileged binary halves with one another and all the suppressed binary halves with one another. Therefore, in Mill, reason and progress are conflated, whereas irrationality (and all characteristics associated with it in the Western world) is conflated with backwardness and the past. In this framework of backwardness and irrationality, he discusses the history of the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations. And if we consider *Theorem 7* of Singh, all the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 255–56, italics ours.

suppressed binary halves—and all their associated characteristics—are projected onto the Hindu world. Therefore, the Hindu penal laws in Mill's description show remarkable similarities with the penal laws of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans.

In the final section of the “Penal Code” of “Jurisprudence,” Mill gives specific recommendations to legislators for framing laws on punishment. He states that punishments should be “equable, that is, calculated to operate with uniform intensity upon all persons.”<sup>105</sup> The inverse of what is desirable for social reforms in Britain again becomes the standard by which the Hindu penal laws are evaluated and assessed. That he uses this maxim in evaluating the Hindu laws in the *History* can be ascertained from his words: “No maxim more naturally recommends itself to the human mind, even before it is strong, than that all who commit the same crime should meet with equal punishment.”<sup>106</sup>

The “savage” Hindus, of course, did not practice any such maxim. They practiced unequal laws and favored one class of people over the other, with the lower on the receiving end of the bargain. The following is the verdict of Mill:

In so far it is one of the plainest dictates of reason, that where the offence is equal, the suffering or hardship imposed should be equal. Though a pecuniary mulct imposes all degrees of hardship, according to the pecuniary abilities of the man who pays *the Hindu law makes no distinction between the rich and the poor. It makes, indeed, a serious distinction between the man of one class, and another: and they, of the lowest are, with a very few exceptions, always the most severely fined.* But if the class is the same, the same forfeit is exacted for the same offence; though one man should be too opulent to feel from it any sensible inconvenience; another should suffer all the pains and horrors of want.<sup>107</sup>

Mill closes the “Penal Code” section in “Jurisprudence” with a few suggestions to the legislators regarding when punishments should not be used. We would gather from our discussion in the earlier pages that Mill

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<sup>105</sup> Mill, “Jurisprudence,” 70.

<sup>106</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 258.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 259, italics ours.

considered punishment evil because punishment lessened happiness and enhanced pain—and the purpose of the Utilitarians was to improve the sum of pleasure over pain. They are the following:

1. Where the evil to the community does not overbalance the good to the individual.
2. Where the evil necessary for the punishment would outweigh the evil of the act.
3. Where the evil created is not calculated to prevent the act.
4. Where the end could be obtained by other means.<sup>108</sup>

The Hindus of Mill's *History* were, of course, precisely doing the reverse: increasing evil in society through punishments that far exceeded the good that came to the aggrieved individual or the society that had been violated.

Punishment should be proportioned, not to the greatness of the crime, that is, the quantity of suffering it produces, but solely to the difficulty of creating an adequate motive to abstain from it: if a fine of one shilling created a sufficient motive to abstain from the crime of murder, the fine of a shilling would be all the punishment which ought to exist. It must be owned however that the principle of punishing crimes, according to their magnitude, very naturally suggests itself; and bears a strong appearance of according with the principles of reason. Even to this early and imperfect principle, the Hindus have never ascended. While perjury, one of the most mischievous of crimes, and one against which an adequate motive is very difficult to create, is punished only with fine, and in its most aggravated cases with banishment; the crime of obtaining goods on false pretences is punished with mutilation, and even with death.<sup>109</sup>

## Hindu Laws and the Code of Procedure

The next in line of discussion in “Jurisprudence,” is the Code of Procedure. As per the article, the legislature determines the Rights and the various

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<sup>108</sup> Mill, “Jurisprudence,” 72.

<sup>109</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 262–63.

ways the Rights can be upheld or violated. However, there should be a subsidiary agency that “is constituted for the purpose of carrying those enactments into effect.”<sup>110</sup> Mill holds that historically, whereas the civil and penal codes were not contemplated upon, the Code of Procedure, though not systematically, came about through hit and trial. In the rudimentary stages of civilization, the king decided upon and ruled over people’s disputes. Later, the king appointed his deputies—judges—to administer justice, which was arbitrary and whimsical. Consistent crimes soon began to receive similar judgments, which gave rise to Custom Law. These laws were imperfect and administered based on memory and remembrance. In Asia, these judgments were not recorded, but in Europe, they were, which made the former inferior to the latter. The latter, however, needed much refinement, which Mill, inspired by Bentham, had set out to accomplish:

In every part of Asia, and in all ages, law has remained in that state of existence, or non-existence. In Europe, where, at a pretty early period, it became the practice to record in writing the proceedings of the judges, the natural propensity of referring to the past as a rule for the present, begat in time a species of obligation of being directed by the examples which had already been set. This created a uniformity and certainty, which, however imperfect, were greatly superior to those which attended the arbitrary proceedings of Asiatic judges. Yet this was a benefit which had a dreadful alloy. A body, not of law, but of decisions, out of which, on each particular occasion, a law for that particular occasion, as out of the crude ore, was to be smelted, hammered, and wire-drawn, was the natural material out of which to manufacture a system of chicane. How accurately the system of law, in the several nations of Europe, has conformed to the character of a system of chicane, is matter of present and lamentable experience. The uncertainty, the delay, the vexation and expence, and that immorality of the worst species with which they inundate the community, are not the only evils, great as they are, of laws constructed upon such a plan. A system of laws, so constructed, becomes an instrument of conservation for the

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<sup>110</sup>Mill, “Jurisprudence,” 72.

barbarous customs and ideas of the times in which they were engendered; and infests society with evils of another age.<sup>111</sup>

That Mill uses the framework once again outlined in “Jurisprudence” in the evaluation of Hindu Laws will become evident from his own words enunciated in the *History*:

Conformity to the laws of the two preceding orders; denominated, for want of better terms, the Civil and the Penal; is the End: The laws of Judicature are to be regarded in the light of Means to that End. The subject, in its full extent, includes an account of 1. the instruments made use of for producing the fulfilment of the laws of the two former kinds, and 2. the modes of using them.<sup>112</sup>

With that said Mill connects the Hindu “Code of Procedure” with the Asiatic system of adjudication, which was inferior to and more savage than the European system he had set out to reform. He lays an extra emphasis on his claim that the use of written evidence was wanting in the Hindu legal system despite, even from his own acceptance, the Hindus had begun writing their laws since antiquity—*Manusmṛti*, which was translated as the *Institutes of Menu* by William Jones, is just one of the compendia that we find in the Hindu world in terms of laws, jurisprudence, and justice:

The instruments made use of among the Hindus...[involve] the functions of the king; who, with his Brahmen assessors, is the principal instrument. The mode of using the instruments of judicature, or the steps according to which judicature is performed, were there also-briefly described.... The laws or rules respecting evidence...is still useful to describe. Prior to the general use of writing, the chief species of evidence, applicable to judicial cases, is the speech of witnesses. It is this species which makes the principal figure in the laws of Hindustan to the present age. It is even more than doubtful whether written evidence is at all referred to by the author of the ordinances of Menu though from himself we learn that writing had been

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>112</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 269.



applied to laws.... but for the use of evidence by writing not a single rule is afterwards adduced, though numerous rules are prescribed for the use of that which is delivered orally; not even a word of allusion to this novel species of evidence appears; and where the various circumstances are enumerated on which the attention of the judge ought to be fixed, while the evidence of speaking witnesses occupies a conspicuous place, the evidence of writings is entirely omitted.<sup>113</sup>

In “Jurisprudence,” for a comprehensive determination of whether Rights established by the legislature have been violated or not, Mill gives substantial space to the examination of evidence. The examination of evidence should be comprehensive, and the net for the gathering of articles of evidence should be cast wide so that the light of truth can shine upon the dispute. Mill suggested this reform because in England back then, the English law was more interested in excluding evidence providers than in including them. Speaking of the English lawyers, he states,

In all causes, they have determined, that persons so and so situated, things so and so situated, though apt to be pregnant with information beyond all other persons and things, shall not be admitted as sources of evidence. Thus, in English law, we have incompetency of witnesses, that is, exclusion of them, 1st, From want of understanding; 2dly, From defect of religious principle; 3dly, From infamy of character; 4thly, From interest. These are undisguised modes of exclusion; besides which, there is an extensive assortment of disguised modes. Under this title comes the rule, that only the best evidence be given which the nature of the case admits of; according to which, it often happens that the only evidence which can be had is excluded. Under this title also falls the rule, making certain kinds of evidence conclusive, by which proceeding, all other evidence is excluded. To the same list belongs the rule, that hearsay evidence is not admissible. The rules, so extensive in their application, by which writings are wholly rejected, only because they want certain formularies, are rules of exclusion; and so are the limitations with respect to time, and to number of witnesses. Into the very extensive subject, however, of the absurdity and

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 269–70.

mischievousness of the rules of evidence in English law, we cannot pretend so much as to enter.<sup>114</sup>

What Mill wanted to transform in English laws vis-à-vis gathering of evidence is what he projects onto the Hindu situation. He shows through his massive use of selective evidence—which, as we have been seeing in footnotes, Wilson refutes once again—how penurious and scanty the Hindus were in matters of gathering evidence and gives a long list of people who are excluded from the process of gathering evidence. Below is his assertion on the Hindus minus the list, which we have eliminated to make the quote less cumbersome:

The evidence of three witnesses is required for the decision of any question: “When a man has been brought into court by a suitor for property, the cause shall be decided by the Brahmen who represents the king, having heard three witnesses at least.” Yet it is declared in another place that “one man, untainted with covetousness, may... be the sole witness.... The different degrees of trustworthiness in different witnesses leads to mischievous rules.... [The] enumeration of persons, whose testimony was altogether unfit to be believed, affords a proof of the great difficulty of obtaining true testimony in the age in which it was made; and holds up a dreadful picture of the state of morality to which it could be supposed to be adapted. It indicates, also, by the strange diversity of the cases which it includes, a singular want of discrimination, in the minds by which it was framed. And further; rules for the exclusion of testimony, from any person, not deprived of the ordinary exercise of the human faculties, could, however the vicious effects of custom may preserve them, be introduced, only in an age of great ignorance and barbarity, when the human mind judges in the gross, is incapable of nice discriminations, cannot assign the different value which ought to be attached to the testimony of different men, and estimates the

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<sup>114</sup>Mill, “Jurisprudence,” 82.

weight of a body of evidence by the number, not the trustworthiness, of the people who deliver it.<sup>115,116</sup>

In “Jurisprudence,” he then goes on to prescribe that the reformed English laws should be more inclusive than exclusive in gathering evidence. Evidence should not only be sought from people known to provide them truthfully but also from people not considered trustworthy in society. Information should be allowed to flow from all sides, and it should be examined through a rigorous court procedure. This would allow truth to prevail.

If evidence is to be received from no source from which evidence, liable to produce deception, is capable of coming, evidence must not be received at all. Evidence must be received from sources whence false evidence, as well as true, is liable to flow. To refuse all information from such sources, is not the way by which a knowledge of the truth can be obtained. This is the way to make sure of not having that knowledge. The means of obtaining it are, to receive information from every possible source, and to separate the bad from the good, under all those securities, and by the guidance of all those marks, of which understanding and attention know how to avail themselves. It is not enough to say, we will receive information from those sources only which are least likely to yield deceptive evidence, refuse to receive it from those which are most likely.<sup>117</sup>

We find Mill’s Hindus again engaging in the jurisprudence practices he wanted to reform in Britain. He represents the Hindu judges *a priori* excluding people who would be considered untrustworthy in giving

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<sup>115</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 271–74.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 274, footnote, Wilson yet again corrects Mill: “The imperfections of the Hindu law have been in this, as in all other cases, pertinaciously selected: notwithstanding these blemishes, however, its general character has received commendation from high authority. ‘With some trifling exceptions, the Hindu doctrine of evidence is, for the most part, distinguished nearly as much as our own, by the excellent sense that determines the competency, and designates the choice of witnesses, with the manner of examining, and the credit to be given to them, as well as by the solemn earnestness, with which the obligation of truth is urged and inculcated; insomuch that less cannot be said of this part of their law, than that it will be read by every English lawyer with a mixture of admiration and delight, as it may be studied by him to advantage.’—Elements of Hindu Law, by Sir Thomas Strange, late chief justice of Madras, p. 309.”

<sup>117</sup> Mill, “Jurisprudence,” 83.

evidence in jurisprudence matters and fundamentally deciding on disputes either with little evidence or no evidence: after all, what better could be expected from irrational people who were not only arbitrary but also oppressive!

The makers of [Hindu] laws, perceiving that certain classes of witnesses were apt to give false testimony, and considering that false testimony misleads, resolved immediately that the testimony of such witnesses ought never to be received. Now, if the testimony of the best sort of witness had been a thing which the judges always had at command, in sufficient quantity, this might have been a rational procedure. But as this was very far from being the case; as it very often happens that the testimony of the best sort of witnesses cannot be had, or that they contradict one another; that not only some light, but full and satisfactory light, may often be obtained from the worst sort of witnesses; to determine that certain classes of persons, and among them the persons whose knowledge of the facts is naturally the most complete, shall not be used as witnesses, is merely to determine that judicature shall be performed, so far, without evidence; that the judge shall decide without knowledge; and the question of right and wrong, instead of being determined upon all the evidence that can be had, shall be determined upon a part of it only, sometimes a most insignificant part, sometimes hardly any at all.<sup>118</sup>

Given that written laws and the writing of evidence had attained prominence in Mill's worldview, which he wanted to induce in Britain, he once again projects their inverse on the Hindu situation, even if he must twist and turn evidence.

The laws respecting written evidence are few, and applied to a very limited number of cases. One distinction is recognised. "A writing," says the law, "is of two sorts; first, that which a man writes with his own hand; second, that which he procures to be written by another: of these two sorts, that which is written by a man's own hand, even without witnesses, is approved; and that written by another, if void of witnesses, is not approved." The remaining rules apply, almost entirely, to the modes of supplying, by means

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<sup>118</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 275.

of the oral, what is at any time defective in the quantity or quality of the matter drawn from the scriptural source.<sup>119</sup>

The concluding remarks on the chapter “Laws of the Hindus” also come from the line of argument that Mill has followed in “Jurisprudence.” This should not be surprising because, though the *History of British India* was published earlier than “Jurisprudence,” the articles that Mill would write for the *Supplement to Encyclopaedia Britannica* had been decided in 1814 itself. Alexander Bain reports the correspondence of Mill with Macvey Napier, the editor of the fifth edition of the *Supplement* that occurred in 1814, where Macvey’s invitation to Mill to contribute to the *Supplement* is explicit.<sup>120</sup> In a certain sense, in the concluding part of “Laws of the Hindus,” Mill writes the precis of “Jurisprudence” as he drives more nails into the Hindu coffin. Given that we have substantially discussed the contents of “Jurisprudence” in the above, the following from Mill in *History* will make it clear:

The qualities desirable in a body of law may all be summed up under two comprehensive titles; I. *Completeness*; II. *Exactness*. *Completeness* has a reference to the matter: *Exactness* to the form. I. A body of laws may be said to be *Complete*, when it includes every thing which it ought to include; that is, when all those rights, the existence of which is calculated to improve the state of society, are created; and all those acts, the hurtfulness of which to the society is so great as to outweigh the cost, in all its senses, necessary for preventing them, are constituted offences.<sup>121</sup>

He diplomatically declines to comment on the evaluation of *Completeness* of Hindu Laws. Given that the *Completeness* in law was what he had envisioned for Britain and that he held the Hindu laws far inferior to even the English laws that he was envisioning to reform, he perhaps thought that it would be a waste of time to evaluate the Hindu laws on the scale of *Completeness*. Or, because “Jurisprudence” had not been published yet, he could not yet attempt it, which goes on to prove that the contents of

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>120</sup> Bain, *James Mill*.

<sup>121</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 282.

“Jurisprudence” had already been framed at the time of writing the *History*: “To show in what degree the Hindu law approaches, or recedes from, the standard of *Completeness*, would require a more extensive survey of the field of law, than consists with the plan of the present work.”<sup>122</sup> In our mind and the minds of the readers, however, there should not remain any doubt, given the correspondence between “Laws of the Hindus” and “Jurisprudence,” that the latter had already been framed, just not published yet. Finally, when we read below his distinction between criteria making a law *Complete* versus criteria making a law *Exact*, we find that those areas deal exclusively with the definition and delineation of Rights. Given that Mill dealt more with obligations than Rights in the Hindu context, he perhaps felt superfluous even to discuss them.

Minus the discussion on Rights and the need and ways to define them, “Jurisprudence,” discussed under “Civil Code,” “Penal Code,” and “Code of Procedure” can undoubtedly be encapsulated in the following lines from the *History*:

A body of laws may be said to be *Exact*; 1. when it constitutes nothing a right, and nothing an offence, except those things precisely which are necessary to render it *Complete*; 2. when it contains no extraneous matter whatsoever; 3. When the aggregate of the powers and privileges which ought to be constituted rights, the aggregate of the acts which ought to be constituted offences, are divided and subdivided into those very parcels or classes, which beyond all others best adapt themselves to the means of securing the one, and preventing the other; 4. when it defines those classes, that is, rights and offences, with the greatest possible clearness and certainty; 5. when it represses crimes with the smallest possible expense of punishment; and 6. when it prescribes the best possible form of a judiciary, and lays down the best possible rules for the judicial functions.<sup>123</sup>

He then delivers one of his final blows on Hindu jurisprudence by evaluating it on every parameter that he used to define *Exactness* in law in “Jurisprudence.” Hindu jurisprudence becomes the opposite, reverse,

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 283–84.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 282–83.

inverse, or the “other” of his envisioned standards on *Exactness* for British law. All along in the “Laws,” Mill had only spoken about obligations and contracts in the Hindu context but towards the end of the chapter Rights enter the fray. These Rights do not emancipate as they do in the British context; on the contrary, they oppress. The Rights favor the oppressive rule.

[Hindu law] departs widely from Exactness, in every one of the particulars wherein exactness consists.... 1. It creates a great many rights which ought to have no existence [rights for people who have the power to oppress]; and acts, which ought not to be erected into offences, it does so erect in great numbers. 2. It abounds in extraneous matter. 3. The division and arrangement of the matters of law are highly imperfect. 4. The definitions are so far from excluding darkness and doubt that they leave almost every thing indefinite and uncertain. 5. Punishments are not repressed, but abound; while there is the most enormous excess in the quantity of punishment. 6. The form of the judicatory is bad, as are a certain proportion of the rules for the mode of performing the judicial services.<sup>124</sup>

Apart from this brief description above, Mill does not discuss Rights, their delineation and definition, in the “Laws of the Hindus.” Still, he does not fail to use writing, delineation, and definition as standards to uphold the English jurisprudence and, consequently, “other” the Hindu jurisprudence. Showing the correspondence between “Jurisprudence” and the “Laws of the Hindus,” we elucidated how Mill conflates regressive and unreformed aspects of English jurisprudence—before his and Bentham’s writings and consequent parliamentary reforms of 1832—with Hindu jurisprudence. It required some analysis and critical application of thought on our part to show it. Mill, toward the end of the chapter in the “Laws of the Hindus,” himself confirms and reconfirms our thesis. The following is what he writes regarding the writing, definition, and delineation of laws within the English context:

Prior to the art of writing, laws can have little accuracy of definition; because, when words are not written, they are seldom exactly remembered;

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 284.

and a definition whose words are constantly varying is not for the purposes of law a definition at all. Notwithstanding the necessity of writing to produce fixed and accurate definitions in law, the nations of modern Europe have allowed a great proportion of their laws to continue in the unwritten; that is, the traditionary state; the state in which they lay before the art of writing was known. Of these nations, none have kept in that barbarous condition so great a proportion of their law as the English.<sup>125</sup>

This barbarianism of the English situation was what he, as a disciple of Bentham, had set out to reform. He did achieve considerable success if we consider the 1832 parliamentary reforms in Britain. As the following quote will show, this barbarianism became the defining feature of Hindu jurisprudence through projection and conflation. It is worth noting, however, that it required considerable wordsmithing on Mill's part to achieve his objective, for the Hindus have had laws written since antiquity. Since the laws were written, he needed to fault them on the parameters of precise definition, multiple interpretations, inherent contradictions, uncertainty, and ambiguity—lacunae that he found in English laws. And he does not fail to mention that the Hindu laws while sharing the characteristics with the unreformed English laws, were also inferior to them because the Hindus lacked the practice of recording judgments, which could serve as guidelines for future judges.

From the opinion of the Hindus that the Divine Being dictated all their laws, they acknowledge nothing as law but what is found in some one or other of their sacred books. In one sense, therefore, all their laws are written. But as the passages which can be collected from these books leave many parts of the field of law untouched in these parts the defect must be supplied either by custom, or the momentary will of the judge. Again, as the passages which are collected from these books, even where they touch upon parts of the field of law, do so in expressions to the highest degree vague and indeterminate, they commonly admit of any one of several meanings, and very frequently are contradicted and opposed by one another. When the words in which laws are couched are to a certain degree imperfect, it makes but little difference whether they are written or not:

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.



Adhering to the same words is without advantage, when these words secure no sameness in the things which they are made to signify. Further, in modern Europe, the uncertainty adhering to all unwritten laws, that is, laws the words of which have no certainty, is to some degree, though still a very imperfect one, circumscribed and limited, by the writing down of decisions. When on any particular part of the field a number of judges have all with public approbation, decided in one way; and when these decisions are recorded and made known, the judge who comes after them has strong motives, both of fear and of hope, not to depart from their example. The degree of certainty, arising from the regard for uniformity which may thus be produced, is, from its very nature infinitely inferior to that which is the necessary result of good definitions rendered unalterable by writing. But such as it is, the Hindus are entirely deprived of it. Among them the strength of the human mind has never been sufficient to recommend effectually the preservation, by writing, of the memory of judicial decisions. It has never been sufficient to create such a public regard for uniformity, as to constitute a material motive to a judge. And as kings, and their great deputies, exercised the principal functions of judicature, they were too powerful to be restrained by a regard to what others had done before them. What judicature would pronounce was, therefore, almost always uncertain; almost always arbitrary.<sup>126</sup>

## **Mill Defines the Hindu Taxation System in the Light of the British System He Wanted to Be Obliterated**

The earlier passages have clearly shown how Mill was critical of the hierarchical and oppressive nature of his own British society, the relationship between the various classes of people—monarchy, aristocracy, clergy, and common—and the abusive hold of power that aristocracy manifested. We have also seen how these experiences, contentions, observations, and critiques were projected onto the Hindu situation, where the oppressor/oppressed binary characterized every facet of the Hindu world. The situation with the issue of taxes and taxation is no different. If a writer describes the social structure of a people as hierarchical and oppressive, the governance structure as authoritarian, and the juridical laws as unjust,

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 285–86.

it would be a stretch even to think that he/she would not describe the taxation system as inhumane and oppressive. To get a complete sense of Mill's projections and analyze them in binary theorems we have been advocating, we will first examine Mill's writings written for the British context and then compare them with how he described the Hindu taxation structure.

In the article "Summary Review of the Conduct and Measures of the Seventh Imperial Parliament"<sup>127</sup> in *Parliamentary History and Review*, Mill argues that the aristocracy in Britain taxes the people heavily to enhance its power and comfort. The taxes collected in the state's name eventually line up the pockets of the aristocrats. In proportion, the wing of the administration that enhances the peace and security of the people—police, judiciary, and protection from foreign invaders—is minimally provided for.

In modern times, the machinery of taxation has been found the most commodious instrument for making power useful to those who hold it. The power enjoyed by a particular class, of making laws to take so much annually from the property of every man, was the power to distribute a great part of the proceeds among themselves. This is a machinery which we may conclude has everywhere been worked to the utmost. But nowhere has the working been so prodigious as in England.

The great evil of this mode of satisfying the aristocracy with the property of the people is, that it takes from the people more than it gives to the aristocracy, and carries the oppression of the people to a much greater extent than the mere enriching of the aristocracy would require.

For taxation, pretexts are thought necessary. The people are not told that they must be taxed, because the aristocracy want more of their money. They are told that they must be taxed, because the wants of the state must be supplied. And then those wants must be turned to the best account, and exaggerated to the utmost. All the establishments of the state are pushed to the greatest extravagance which the spirit of the times will bear. Civil boards and civil officers are multiplied without end. Army and navy are kept at the highest amount, for which a pretence can possibly be invented. And colonies and distant possessions are multiplied, both because lucrative

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<sup>127</sup> James Mill, "Summary Review of the Conduct and Measures of the Seventh Imperial Parliament," in *Parliamentary History and Review* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826).

places may be made in them with profusion, and because they afford one of the best pretext for keeping up an expensive army and navy.

It is through these establishments chiefly, that the aristocracy pocket what they do pocket of the public money. But for every pound which they get to themselves in this manner, many pounds are extorted from the people. A regiment of soldiers benefits the aristocracy only by the pocketings of a few of its highest officers: it grinds the people by the cost of the whole machine. In like manner, a ship has only a few good things for the aristocracy: a vast amount of charge and oppression to the people. A colony has several good places fit for the aristocracy: it almost always lays an enormous expense upon the nation.<sup>128</sup>

These contentions fundamentally describe the taxation structure Mill encountered in Britain, where aristocracy ruled the roost, holding power to serve its own sinister interest that enhanced its privileges and comfort. The aristocracy did this at the expense of the ordinary people with whom it held its interest as inimical.

In a different article the same year, writing for the *Westminster Review* as he commented on the “State of the Nation,”<sup>129</sup> he discusses the relationship of taxation and aristocracy further. An oppressive government, he avers, taxes heavily and, through heavy taxation, robs the people of their labor and capital and consequently of the enjoyments for which they have labored. Extravagant taxes not only increase the hardship of common people but also the number of people who live off the labor and capital of others. Aristocracy is the class that lives off the work of others, legislates, and creates an oppressive government. The aristocratic behavior is emulated by others, which leads to a diminution in the morality and ethics of people as a whole, resulting in the decline of the character of the nation:

Not only does extravagant taxation increase enormously the number of those who live noxiously upon the labour of others, but, in addition to every person who does so live, it raises up two or three who expect so to live, who are striving to be placed in that situation, and who, of course,

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 775–76.

<sup>129</sup> James Mill, “State of the Nation,” *Westminster Review* 6, no. 12 (October 1826).

have the disposition in full perfection. . . . Of course, of those who live upon the taxes, in an over-taxed country, the greater proportion by far belong to the class who legislate and who impose the taxes. This, at any rate in this country, is the aristocratical class. Of those who live upon the labour of others without rendering them an equivalent, by far the greater proportion, therefore, belong to the aristocracy. It follows, that the disposition of so living, that most immoral of all dispositions, the real origin of almost all the crimes which infest human society, exists in the aristocracy to a degree far greater than that in which it exists in any other class in the community. The aristocracy get up a morality to favour this propensity, and this interest. Among them the thing does not pass for wicked and shameful. It is treated as an excellent part of the wisdom of the world. Their example and approbation give countenance and encouragement to the propensity; and the disposition to live upon the labour of others is diffused throughout the community. The moral sense of the nation is perverted; the distinction between what is right and what is wrong, in one of the great departments of human action, is lost, and the horror of crime is almost wholly extinguished. . . . The nation becomes a nation of swindlers; and nothing hinders them from being as generally thieves and robbers, but the greater risk to which these vices expose the practitioners. It is demonstratively certain that an over-taxed country must be an immoral country.<sup>130</sup>

Mill's contentions above were written to outline the problems associated with the taxation system in Britain to transform it. In light of what he experienced and wanted to change in Britain, he concocted the Hindu taxation system, projecting all the evils of the British taxation system he desired to suppress and alter in his native context.

Indeed, Mill describes the Hindu taxation system as oppressive, where the king as the ruler and representative of Kshatriyas—who, in Mill's correspondence, were the aristocrats of Britain—sat at its pinnacle. In the *History*, he spends considerable space describing the taxes as heavy. Not remaining content with depicting the taxes as extravagant, he also conflates the system with despotism and arbitrariness—despotism, as we would remember from the previous pages, was the hallmark of the British aristocracy. Like the Hindu laws, he claims, the taxation rules were

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 256–58.

ambiguously defined, deliberately to benefit the tax collectors who could bend them as per their whims and fancies to extract as much taxes as they wished. The Hindu tax collection system, therefore, had corruption and despotism institutionalized. The following exemplifies that the Hindu king was the exploiter of labor and beneficiary of the capital, as was the aristocracy in Britain:

The sovereigns in India had not only the ownership, but all the benefit of the land; the ryots [husbandman] had merely the privilege of employing their labor always upon the same soil, and of transforming that privilege to some other person; the sovereign claimed the right to as much of the produce as he pleased, and seldom left to the ryots more than a very scanty reward for their labor.<sup>131</sup>

## Concluding Mill's Projection Saga

Javed Majeed partly confirms the arguments of the preceding sections when he says, "*History of British India* was still unable to view India in terms other than as part of a strategy for attacking British society itself; India was important only insofar as it played a part in a larger political and epistemological venture whose purpose was to fashion a critique of the ruling British ideology of the time."<sup>132</sup> However, we must say that his contentions do not in any way betray the intense and close reciprocal relationship operating on binary lines that we show between James Mill's writings for India and his writings for Britain because of which the *History* becomes a far more hegemonic text than even described by Ronald Inden in *Imagining India*. Also, whereas Majeed states that the "*History* was a matrix in which a critique of British society itself was shaped,"<sup>133</sup> we contest it and argue that *it was in the matrix of his critique of British society that the contents of History were framed*. Mill did not begin the critique of

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<sup>131</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 322.

<sup>132</sup> Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 198.

<sup>133</sup> Javed Majeed, "James Mill's *The History of British India*: The Question of Utilitarianism and Empire," in *Utilitarianism and Empire*, eds. Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis (New York: Lexington Books, 2005), 101.

the British society; instead, it was part and extension of a long Benthamite tradition (about which Majeed himself has spoken copiously in both the works quoted here), which was the background in which the writings of the *History* emerged. Mill began working on the *History* in 1806, met Bentham in 1808, and completed it in 1817; this was also the period in which his closeness with Bentham was maximum. The intellectual universe of Mill was suffused and pregnant with the Benthamite tradition of the critique of British society as he worked on and completed the *History*. In addition, as would be evident from Mill's numerous articles since his residence in London, Mill was an astute commentator on British social and political issues even before he met Bentham.<sup>134</sup> If all his socio-political writings had emerged much after the publication of the *History*, Majeed would have been justified in stating that it was in the matrix of India in the *History* that the critique of British society was forged. However, this is not the case; even the *Supplement to Encyclopedia Britannica* articles, which eventually led to the 1832 parliamentary reforms, began appearing in 1815, and the writings that appeared after the publication of the *History* were also conceptualized in 1814. The controversial essay "Government," which contained a scathing critique of the aristocracy for the institution of representative democracy in Britain and which contained the materials for Mill's projections on the Hindu form of governance, though first published in 1820 for the first time (it was republished many times after that), was fully conceptualized and crystalized in 1816.<sup>135</sup> There is correspondence between David Ricardo and Mill in 1817 regarding the essay's contents.<sup>136</sup>

James Mill and Macvey Napier, the editor of the *Supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica*, met sometime in May 1814 to discuss how Mill could be of assistance to Napier's project. Over the years they exchanged ideas on a number of prospective subjects. By 1816, the two men were in

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<sup>134</sup> For Mill's bibliography and a discussion on this topic, see Loizides, *James Mill's Utilitarian Logic and Politics*.

<sup>135</sup> We have a much-nuanced understanding of Majeed's works, which we reserve for a later time; the above for the time being as to our agreements and disagreements with his contentions should suffice.

<sup>136</sup> Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*.

communication specifically about Mill's article on government. Five years later, with completely different personal and professional circumstances for Mill, they would still be in communication for potential contributions to the supplement. The essay "Government" was first published in the *Supplement* in September 1820.<sup>137</sup>

Mill's projections were not only ideological but also had roots in profound personal experiences. His relentless attack on aristocracy and abuse of power by whom he considered elite, which, as we saw in earlier pages, sumptuously grafted on the Hindu and Indian situation, also came from the scars that he experienced as he was growing up. Though the Stuarts financially supported him for his education, and he obliged them by naming three of his children after three of the Stuarts' family members, Mill was not allowed to marry the daughter of the Stuarts, Wilhelmina, despite the romance that had blossomed between them.<sup>138</sup> She was married off to William Forbes and died young after producing six children. Remembering Wilhelmina in one of his correspondences to Francis Place, his friend and comrade in the parliamentary reforms, when the latter asked him about his friendship with Sir John Stuart, after whom he had named his eldest son, the famous John Stuart Mill, the elder Mill wrote:

Sir John Stewart... [had] one only child, about the same age as myself, who, besides being a beautiful woman, was in point of intellect and disposition one of the most perfect human beings I have ever known. We grew up together and studied together from children, and were about the best friends that either of us ever had. She married Sir William Forbes, and after producing him six children died a few years ago of a decline. Her poor mother told me with her heart ready to break that she spoke about me with almost her last breath, and enjoined them never to allow the connection which subsisted between us to be broken. So much for the old friendship with Sir J. Stuart, which it is very proper you should know, but which I do not wish to be talked about.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Loizides, *James Mill's Utilitarian Logic*, 27–28.

<sup>138</sup> Bain, *James Mill*.

<sup>139</sup> Cited in Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*, 56.

Given the times, Mill could not have spoken to Place about his romance with Wilhelmina and went as far as he could, asking him to keep the matter under wraps. He certainly was not talking about concealing his relationship with Sir John Stuart because, as we mentioned earlier, his eldest son was named after him.

After graduating from the University of Edinburgh and before Mill moved to London, as he was trying his hand at becoming a preacher, he supported himself by teaching the children of aristocrats. Mill had bitter experiences in such situations, and if we go by the discussions of his biographer Alexander Bain, it was an insult directed at him at the house of an aristocrat where he worked as a tutor that led to his departure to London. Citing Thomas Thomson, one of the close friends of Mill from the University of Edinburgh, Bain writes of this incident involving Mill: “He gave offense to the heads of the family by drinking the health at table of one of the junior female members of the house,” and in consequence, “gave up his situation, and determined to trust to his pen and his own exertions.”<sup>140</sup>

Mill’s dislike or hatred of aristocracy was not lost on Bentham, who remarked, “His creed of politics results less from love for the many than from hatred of the few. It is too much under the influence of social and dissocial affection.”<sup>141</sup> Further, if we analyze the “Government” as to the defense and extolling of the Middle class, we will not be off in contending that Mill was speaking for his own class, which he designates as the “Middle Rank.” Indeed, the *History of British India* did bring Mill substantial fame, money, power, and influence; however, given his zeal and passion for the reform of British society, he would have attacked the existing social conditions anyway, and he did not need the backdrop of the *History* as is suggested by Majeed to accomplish his objective.

Given that we have touched upon the psychological correlates of Mill’s projections, we would like to conclude this section by including Bruce Mazlish’s research, which he has generated by engaging in Mill’s psychohistory. Not that the racist representations that he directed at the Hindus should or ever need any explanation, their roots can be found in Mill’s

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<sup>140</sup> Bain, *James Mill*, 29.

<sup>141</sup> Cited in Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*, 95.



personality and his values. Mill believed in hard work, which was derived from his Calvinistic background. Hard work shaped not only the conditions of his life but also his character. He raised his son, John Stuart Mill, on these values to the point of the latter encountering a nervous breakdown in his early 20s.<sup>142</sup> The senior Mill's letters to his colleagues and friends are replete with the necessity of hard work and its engagement in his personal life. In addition, work was a utilitarian value—it was through hard work that one served society: “Those who did not work betrayed their society in two ways. They were parasites, and they were likely to be stupid.”<sup>143</sup> Mill's self-description matched the evidence that Bain found in writing Mill's biography. His wife and friends described him as working long hours, spread between writing and teaching his children—days sometimes beginning at 4 AM and concluding at midnight.<sup>144</sup>

The opposites of hard work and conditions resulting from its lack consequently became the hallmark of the Hindus, whom, as we saw earlier, Mill described as lazy, penurious, greedy, filthy, and fatalistic. Mill upheld “manly” values with which he associated courage, valor, rationality, energy, industry, strength, and boldness. The Hindus consequently became, in his descriptions, effeminate, childish, villainous, timid, weak, cowardly, and passive. The shadows Mill tried to suppress in himself became the definition of the Hindus. Mazlish psychoanalyzing Mill confirms:

[Mill's] disdain for childishness, uncontrolled imagination, weakness, effeminacy, and possessiveness was massive... [and] this is a tribute to his own anxieties on these matters, and his own desperate need to defend against the temptation to indulge in these qualities in himself. It is a familiar psychoanalytic picture, masked by him as objective, rational scholarship. The Hindus had become, for Mill a scapegoat.<sup>145</sup>

These projections ensured the permanent superiority of Mill's ilk and the permanent inferiority of the Hindus. His writings on Hindus fulfill all

<sup>142</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>143</sup> James Mill, cited in Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*, 63.

<sup>144</sup> Bain, *James Mill*.

<sup>145</sup> Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*, 128.

the criteria of racism in his scholarship: He depicted the Hindus and their civilization as savage in every possible way to the British and other European nations, even when they were in their darkest ages. As the horrors of British imperialism unfolded in India, Mill's caricature of the Hindu people had disastrous consequences for them, creating a permanent and unbridgeable gap between the British masters and Hindu subjects. The inferiority of the Hindu people fomented on the binary line of superiority/inferiority, which is the quintessential characteristic of racist discourse, became etched in stone.

Further, Mill, as we have extensively shown, imagined the characteristics of the Hindu people, Hinduism, and Ancient India based on projections that were only Hindu and Indian in the name. Of course, the terms and vocabulary were from the Indian and Hindu context, but they had nothing to do with the truths of the subject matter. The discourse was a complete sleight of hand; it was about Britain and nothing about Ancient India, Hinduism, and Hindus. It was the fabrication of a colossal order—incidentally not without sinister consequences, which also is a profound understatement. Mill took away from Hindus all claims of civilization and, in its place, planted timeless hierarchy, oppression, and exploitation. Nothing of culture and values remained with them. They were dehumanized and did not have an iota of virtue in them. If Mill stumbled upon a positive value, it was turned into a negative—this explains his hostility towards British researchers writing about India under the aegis of William Jones, for because they had direct access to culture and texts, they were writing positively about it. In the totalizing discourse of Mill, Hindus ended up devoid of any light or consciousness. They were to use the words of Fanon, “objectified,” or Cesaire, “thingified.”

Mill's discourse provided all the justifications needed for the brutal and racialized British colonial rule where everything of the British was superior and the natives inferior. Every exploitation could be explained away in the name of civilizing the native population. The Britishers, since the publication of the *History*, had the rationale of bringing the light of civilization to the Hindu people; every action, whether benevolent or malevolent, had a moral justification and force. Since the Hindus had only known hierarchy and oppression, the British felt justified in subjecting them to authoritarian rule. Both James Mill and John Stuart Mill

advocated it, surprising as it may sound, for the latter is the father of liberalism whose end goal was to liberate humanity from oppression. The oppression resulted in a revolt of Indian soldiers in the British army, carrying the aspirations of liberating India from the British. The revolt was suppressed, furthering the racialized rule over India. Mazlish writes:

Mill's prejudices about the Hindus prepared the way for an even more nefarious British racism after 1857.... In 1857, with the Indian mutiny, while various Benthamite-type legal codes were introduced in a renewed paternalism, a new racist spirit entered the British Raj. In what one scholar, Hutchins, has termed, "The illusion of Permanence," the British decided that the native Indians could never grow up—they were children forever—and must be ruled (for their own good, of course) permanently by the British. As Stokes summarizes the change: "Now reform was to be carried in the spirit of racial conquest that succeeded the Mutiny."<sup>146</sup>

The above withstanding, this work is not about the sociological consequences of Mill's work. Therefore, we will drop the matter and proceed to analyze the impact of Mill's colonial-racist discourse on History and Social Science school textbooks that are currently being taught to children. Mill's *History of British India* became the standard framework for all history books on India since its publication. As reported by Inden,<sup>147</sup> Oxford and Cambridge University publications continued its paradigm, which we will see reproduced and reflected in school textbooks in the next chapter.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>147</sup> Inden, *Imagining India*.

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# 5

## Mill's Colonial-Racist Discourse in School Textbooks

One would like to think that a colonialist and racist discourse on Hindus and Hinduism was a thing of the past, with India and Hindus having gained political independence from the British Raj. This chapter will conclusively show that this is not the case. The discourse is still alive and kicking: a discourse that was constructed to show that Hinduism was nothing but rank savagery and that Hindus were one of the most uncouth and barbaric people on the face of the earth. We saw in the previous chapter that Mill's discourse on Hinduism was a complete projection with a sound basis in England's social and political climate. A sanitized and politically correct version of Mill's discourse is what is introduced to the Indian American children from sixth grade onward. The reason why we contend that the school-textbook discourse is a politically correct and sanitized version of nineteenth-century colonial and racist discourse is that all the coordinates around which Mill described and characterized Hinduism and Hindus remain the same—it is just that the current discourse is not explicitly calling the Hindus and Hinduism respectively as savage and the religion of barbaric people but in a subtle sense it is. Hinduism, equaling caste, hierarchy, and oppression, which was the primary container in which Mill's discourse was forged, is still the dominant discourse in which grade-school children are schooled. Not only are the

coordinates of the description of Hinduism and Hindus in Mill's History reproduced in the schoolbook discourse but also the sequence in which Mill unfolded the discourse in his *magnum opus* of Hindu denunciation, with a minor variation here and there, gets replicated. The following about the school textbook production process becomes pertinent to shed light on the preceding.

Since both of us authors are residents of California, our analysis will focus and concentrate on the State of California. Also, California follows, among the other states of the US, the most systematic and detailed process of public-school curriculum design and production. The California Department of Education begins the process of discourse production in school textbooks by setting the "History-Social Science Content Standards" or *HSS Content Standards* from now on. These content standards were formed when a report, *A Nation at Risk*, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 pointed out the falling standards in education in schools, citing the "rise of mediocrity." They specify in categorical terms what topics must be taught at every grade level, Kindergarten through 12. They are guidelines for developing the "Human and Social Science Framework" or the *HSS Framework* from now on. The textbooks later adopted by various school districts must be curated within the guidelines enumerated in the *HSS Framework*. The commitment of the California Board of Education to the *HSS Content Standards* is fair and square, intending to see them implemented at every level of grade-school education. It is steadfast in

completely aligning state efforts to these standards, including the statewide testing program, curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, professional development, preservice education, and compliance review. We will see a generation of educators who think of standards not as a *new layer* but as the *foundation* itself.<sup>1</sup>

The *HSS Content Standards*, therefore, are foundational. Any edifice created or constructed is squarely dependent on the foundation; if the

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<sup>1</sup>"History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade 12," California Department of Education, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>, iv, emphasis in original.

foundation itself is faulty, there remains little chance of the edifice not getting affected. These content standards cascade effects from the *HSS Framework* to school textbooks and other instruction materials. As we stated earlier, both the sequence and the content of the materials produced at the behest of the California Board of Education are infused and suffused with Mill's colonial discourse. We will first show that Mill's *History* influences the choice of topics and their sequence in the *HSS Content Standards* and then analyze the contents of the *HSS Framework* and school textbooks. Instead of analyzing the school textbooks of all the publishers in the business, we will only take McGraw-Hill's *Impact California Social Studies: World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations* as an example to protect the discussion from becoming unwieldy. Given that *HSS Content Standards* and *HSS Framework* directly influence textbook production, we will use terms like the "McGraw-Hill textbook" or the "textbook" instead of the name of the textbook's author. The author will be cited and referenced at the appropriate places. Also, given California's expansive and detailed process, it becomes a role model for other states with content standards (not all states, by the way, have content standards). We will, therefore, not compare the content standards of all these states with California, but suffice it to say that in critically examining the content standards, the framework, and a textbook from the state of California, we are putting the pan-US discourse on Hinduism and India under critical inquiry.

## **Mill's *History* and the *HSS Content Standards***

In the first chapter on the Hindus in the *History*, after showing that the Hindus are savage because they have no sense of history, Mill goes on to contend that the Hindus are more savage than all the savages put together because they have spent far more time as nomads and wanderers than others before settling down to begin what could be considered "civilized" behavior. This history of the Hindu people is because of the bountiful nature of the terrain they inhabited—lush green with forests and rivers. The vast subcontinent with a favorable climate and food available from the forests did not render the settling down of the early Hindus necessary.

Therefore, in the first chapter itself, we see two critical discussions by Mill, which become the first two topics of the *HSS Content Standards*: the geography (land, soil, climate, rivers, etc.) of India and that the early Hindus spent considerable time in the Indian subcontinent as wandering nomads. Because of Mill's nomadic characterization of the early Hindus, the later Aryan Invasion Theory on India was built, soon to be discussed in greater detail below.

Consequently, the first two topics of the *HSS Content Standards* are the following:

1. Locate and describe the major river system and discuss the physical setting that supported the rise of this civilization.
2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.<sup>2</sup>

Mill's second chapter on Hindus begins with a vilification campaign on Brahmins, holding the Brahmins responsible for creating a false religion called Hinduism and for creating a social structure and system ensconced in and imbued with hierarchy and oppression. This chapter of Mill's work is predominantly about the caste system and oppression, as discussed in the preceding chapters, with Brahmins ruling the roost and sitting at the top of the caste hierarchy they created. We would also not want to miss that Mill created this narrative to prove how savage, barbaric, uncouth, uncivilized, and rude the Hindu people were. With a one-to-one correlation, the next two topics of the *HSS Content Standards* are the following:

3. Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.
4. Outline the social structure of the caste system.<sup>3</sup>

Mill's chapter six on the Hindus describes their religion. Apart from promoting myriad falsehoods based on the projections of his experiences with the Church of England, whose practices he derisively called the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



*Church of Englandism*, we saw how Mill concocted the description of Hinduism in the previous chapter. In describing Hinduism, he invented this narrative that the Brahmins persecuted the Buddhists and made them flee to different parts of South Asia and Asia. In the words of Mill:

But though Buddha is, by the Hindus, regarded as a manifestation of the Divine Being, the sect of Buddhists are regarded as heretical, and are persecuted by the Brahmins. It is conjectured that, at one time, a great number of them had been compelled to fly from the country, and spread their tenets in various directions. The religion of Buddha is now found to prevail over the greater part of the East; in Ceylon, in the further peninsula, in Thibet, in China, and even as far as Japan.<sup>4</sup>

The *HSS Content Standards* do not lag in making this the fifth topic of discussion for the grade-six students:

5. Know the life and moral teachings of Buddha and how Buddhism spread in India, Ceylon, and Central Asia.<sup>5</sup>

Mill's chapters three, four, and five discuss the Hindu form of governance, laws, and taxes. We have already seen how, within the container of showing the primitiveness and barbarianism of the Hindu people, Mill argued that their governance forms, social laws, and taxation structure were hierarchical and oppressive. We also saw in the previous chapter that these contentions were sheer fabrications and projections emanating from the parallel British systems that Mill and his fellow radicals were protesting and clamoring against to suppress and transform. The *HSS Content Standards* give the *HSS Framework* creators and publishers full sway in discussing these issues under the following topic, which deals with the governance, laws, and taxes of the Hindus:

6. Describe the growth of the Maurya empire and the political and moral achievements of the emperor Asoka.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mill, *History of British India*, 360.

<sup>5</sup> "History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade 12," 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

The last topic of the *HSS Content Standards* does not directly correlate with the writings of James Mill but with the concerns of another colonial, William Jones, who established the Asiatic Society of Calcutta in 1784 for a systematic study of India and its various aspects. However, given that this study is mainly about Mill and his legacy on the continued discourse of Hinduism and India, we will pass the seventh topic. What needs to be emphasized is that six of the seven topics of the *HSS Content Standards* bear a direct relationship and correlation with the highly degrading, demeaning, toxic, and racist discourse of James Mill. In addition to the content, even the sequence of the topics almost matches the arrangement of Mill's chapters on Hindus.

The textbook publishers do not belie the trust of *HSS Content Standards* in replicating the colonial and racist discourse of Mill. We now turn the gaze of our inquiry to McGraw-Hill's World History textbook.

## Colonial Discourse and the Aryan Issue

After discussing the landscape of the Indian subcontinent ("mountains, plains, and rivers") and an extraordinarily brief description of the Harappan Civilization and its only two cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, and ignoring many others like Lothal, Dholavira, Kalibangan, and Rakhigarhi, McGraw-Hill's *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations* quickly moves to describe the Aryan issue. This is in the context of the decline of the Harappan Civilization from 1900 BCE onwards. Earlier, it was held that it was the Aryans as a race that had invaded the Indian subcontinent and destroyed the Harappan civilization (*HSS Content Standards* still believes in it as we saw previously); it is now held that that Aryans migrated to the Indian subcontinent. The McGraw-Hill textbook and the *HSS Framework* represent this theory. Here is the textbook representation:

Groups of people called the Aryans (AR•ee•uhn) migrated to India.... The Aryans were not a race or ethnic group. Many historians believe that the Aryan people's language was part of a large language family known as Indo-European. A language family is a group of similar languages. Many

modern Indian languages like Hindi, are part of the Indo-European family. So are many in European languages, including English. The Aryans were speakers of Indo-European languages. Indo-European people lived in central Asia but began migrating to other places. Some moved west to Europe or south to Iran. The Aryans went to India. There is another point of view that suggests that Aryans and their language are indigenous to India. This point of view holds that the Aryans started in India and spread northward, and is held by a smaller number of scholars. Like most Indo-European, the Aryans raised cattle for meat, milk, and butter. They moved from place to place to find pastures and water for their cattle. The Aryans were expert horse riders and hunters, as well as fierce warriors. As they moved about, the Aryans sometimes raided nearby villages for food. From about 1500 B.C.E. to 1000 B.C.E., bands of Aryans moved throughout India. These groups mixed with the descendants of Indus valley people. Together they created a new culture. Over time, the Aryans in India adopted a new way of life. They settled down in one place and became farmers, though they still raised cattle.<sup>7</sup>

The Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) of *HSS Content Standards* and the consequent Aryan Migration Theory (AMT) of the *HSS Framework* and textbook are heavily contested theories. The contestations are not a minority view but a substantial one, with umpteen scholars, archaeologists, historians, and linguistics worldwide having contested AIT and AMT, including one of us—Kundan Singh. It was basically because of contestations that AIT has been transformed to AMT, which also has weak evidence in its support, but that is a different story. Since we have maintained throughout the book that we will not argue either in support or against the evidence of the textbook discourse that the school-going children are subjected to other than showing that the discourse that they are studying is a politically correct and sanitized version of the colonial and racist discourse of James Mill, we will refrain from arguing either in favor or against of the AIT or AMT. We will reproduce verbatim, with slight adaptations, the following two sections from Singh's published article "Colonial Roots of the Aryan Invasion/Migration Theory and the

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<sup>7</sup>Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations* (Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019), 255.

Contemporary Evidence in Western Sources”<sup>8</sup> with another section in between that shows James Mill’s connection with German Indology and Christian Lassen.

## Colonialism and the Genesis of the Aryan Invasion Theory

William Jones<sup>9</sup> outlined the connection between Sanskrit and European languages, contending for a shared ancestry between Indians and Europeans. He was a student of languages, and in his view, Sanskrit is profoundly copious and far more refined than Greek and Latin are, and these languages bear similarities in grammatical forms and verbs, which could not have been produced by chance. He also held that Sanskrit has similarities with the Gothic and Celtic languages and Persian; thus, they belong to one family.

The common ancestry theory was not born with Jones as Bryant<sup>10</sup> demonstrates. Such conjectures were prevalent even before him. Scholars such as Pere Coeurdoux, as early as 1768, had contended that Sanskrit, as the language of the Brahmins, came to India from Caucasia. There were others such as Nathaniel Halhed and James Parsons, physician and fellow of the Royal Society and of the Society of the Antiquities, who in the year 1776 had already drawn a connection between Indian and European languages. It was the reputation and stature of William Jones, who was a judge in the Supreme Court in Bengal, which engraved this idea in stone.<sup>11</sup>

In the initial years of common Indo-European ancestry, India was the cradle of the civilization. Thinkers of the Modern Era, such as Voltaire, Sonnerat, Schelling, and Schlegel, argued that the epicenter of civilization was India and that Europe owed its cultural and philosophical

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<sup>8</sup>Kundan Singh, “Colonial Roots of the Aryan Invasion/Migration Theory and the Contemporary Evidence in Western Sources,” *Indian Historical Review* 48, no. 2 (December 2021). Relevant sections republished with permission granted in the publishing contract itself.

<sup>9</sup>William Jones, “On the Origin and Family of Nations,” *Asiatic Researches* 3 (1792), in *The Collected Works of William Jones* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup>Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

origins to India. Monboddo,<sup>12</sup> Halhed, Schlegel, and Kennedy<sup>13</sup> believed Greek and Latin originated from Sanskrit. The mother tongue of all the Indo-European languages was Sanskrit. This theory, however, did not remain static. With the political ascendancy of Europe over India, the mother-tongue theory began to fade into oblivion. One of the first people to challenge it was Frantz Bopp, who felt that there was instead an “original” tongue from which Sanskrit and the European languages were derived, although Sanskrit could preserve its originality better than others. The original tongue was termed the Proto-Indo-European language, of which Sanskrit became one of the daughters, albeit the eldest of them all. For the people thus being represented by these ideas, the terms Indo-German, Indo-European, and Aryan came into use beginning in the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

With the decline of the status of Sanskrit as the original mother tongue of all European languages, India as the mother region of all Indo-Europeans also began to recede. Fredrick Schlegel's brother, A.W. von Schlegel, in 1842, asserted that instead of migrating from India to Europe, some central region existed from which people went in different directions to Europe and India. Benfey, consequently, contended that since Southern India consisted of a “tribal” population (and hence, by implication, inferior given the prominent discourse of the times), they had to be subjugated by the invading “superior” Aryans from the North. Muir,<sup>15</sup> torturing the Sanskrit texts, claimed the gradual advance of Aryans from the Northwest of India to the East and South. The Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) was thus born. Post the 1857 war, as the British established its political suzerainty over most of India, neither India as the home of the Aryans nor Sanskrit as the mother tongue of the European languages remained. Dilip Chakrabarti writes, “With the Raj firmly established, it was time to begin to visualize the history and cultural process of India as a series of invasions and foreign rules.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>J. B. Monboddo, *Of the Origins and Progress of Language* (Edinburgh: Balfour, 1774).

<sup>13</sup>V. Kennedy, *Researches into the Origin and Affinity of the Principal Languages of India* (London: Longman, 1828).

<sup>14</sup>Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*.

<sup>15</sup>J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts* (London: Trüber, 1860).

<sup>16</sup>Dilip K. Chakrabarti, “India and the Druids,” *Antiquity* 50, no. 197 (1976): 66–67.

Given that the colonizers and missionaries, more often than not, have been in cahoots with one another for the global subjugation of peoples and cultures, both parties seized the opportunity and began driving the AIT hard. A common ancestry of the Hindus and Europeans was an idea that had made most of the missionaries and colonizers uncomfortable. Missionaries such as Alexander Duff and William Hastie and colonizers such as James Mill opposed the idea tooth and nail. They were more inclined to emphasize the differences between Indians and Europeans rather than their similarities. Disparaging Indians—their culture, civilization, traditions, and religion—was the master note of their utterances instead of focusing on convergences or similarities. With the “discovery” by the Madras school of Orientalists that southern Indian languages and Sanskrit did not come from a common root,<sup>17</sup> the notion mentioned above of “Aryans” invading the “Indians” began to gain further currency. The Vedas were further tortured to depict white and fair “Aryans,” coming through the northwest, in conflict with the dark-skinned and flat-nosed “Dravidians,” described as the original natives of the Indian subcontinent. The corollary to all this, as Trautmann<sup>18</sup> shows, was that the European Aryans brought civilization and Sanskrit to India. The conclusion fitted exceptionally well with the “civilizing mission” notion of the Europeans: just as the Aryans of the past brought civilization, language, and culture to the Indians of the yore, the colonizers and missionaries were bringing a second wave of civilization to the inter-mixed and corrupted (hence by default inferior) Indians. The AIT served many different political ends—of missionaries, colonialists, and “native” Indians.<sup>19</sup>

The movement of the Aryan homeland from India to “somewhere in Asia” to Europe also happened in successive stages. It was assisted by German philology. As an emerging nation, Germany had found itself lagging in becoming a colonial power as some European nations such as England, France, Spain, Holland, and Portugal had done, and it was desperately looking for sources that could bolster its national identity and

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<sup>17</sup> Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas R. Trautmann, “Elephants and the Mauryas,” in *India: History and Thought*, ed. S. Muckerjee (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> For details, see Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*.

ego. Sanskrit and India came in extremely handy for such an objective. If the Germans could show that they were the original Indo-Europeans, who were the cause of various European nations and India in history, their national pride would be stamped beyond question. This was the basis of their quest for the pure Indo-German race. The Indo-Germans could consequently not have a homeland in Asia. Therefore, the homeland of the Indo-Germans/Indo-Europeans/Aryans had to be changed first and moved to Europe.

And indeed, the process began. Robert G. Latham, in 1862, proposed a European homeland for the Indo-Europeans. In 1878, the German philologist L. Geiger contended that Indo-Europeans were blond and blue-eyed people and that these traits had become diluted and darkened in places with a foreign admixture of genes.<sup>20</sup> Since the contention served the European sense of superiority, in no time, it began to gather steam and get regurgitated. Finding evidence for unadulterated blond, fair, and blue-eyed Indo-Europeans in the regions of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Belgium was easy. Thus, this area became the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans. The rise of Nazism was exclusively related to this appropriation, although one must say that in the quest for the original homeland of Indo-Europeans, scholars have virtually pointed to almost every part of Europe.<sup>21</sup>

In this melee emerged the German Indologist Max Müller, whom the East India Company had hired to translate the Sanskrit texts in its possession. He arbitrarily attributed the date of the Rig Veda to around 1200 BCE. The arbitrariness of the dating was criticized by his contemporaries, to which he responded in 1890:

I have repeatedly dwelt on the merely hypothetical character of the dates, which I have ventured to assign to first periods of Vedic literature. All I have claimed for them has been that they are minimum dates, and that the literary productions of each period, which still exist or which formerly

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

existed could hardly be accounted for within shorter limits of time than those suggested.<sup>22</sup>

He explains further:

If now we ask as to how we can fix the dates of these periods, it is quite clear that we cannot hope to fix a *terminum a qua*. Whether the Vedic hymns were composed [in] 1000 or 2000 or 3000 BC, no power on earth will ever determine.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, the coming of Aryans to India in 1500 BCE was determined—a date that gets regurgitated in all mainstream academic literature on India and Hinduism.<sup>24</sup> The following are three conclusions that emerge from the above:

1. The issue of Aryans and India has not been static. Over a period of time, the spectrum has evolved from India being the cradle of the Aryan civilization to being invaded by fair, blond, and blue-eyed Aryans who had their homeland in Europe.
2. It has changed with the changing fortunes of India. That the “Aryans” invaded India from the northwestern frontier was a theory developed when the suzerainty of the British over India was almost complete.
3. The Aryan Invasion Theory is not divorced from—on the contrary contiguous with—the imperialistic designs of the colonialists and the evangelical zeal of the missionaries. Depending upon the political and missionary expediencies, the Aryan Invasion Theory was used by various parties involved.

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<sup>22</sup> B. B. Lal, “Aryan Invasion of India: Perpetuation of a Myth,” in *The Indo-Aryan Controversy: Evidence and Inference in Indian History*, ed. Edwin F. Bryant and Laurie L. Patton (New York: Routledge, 2005), 51. He cites Max Müller’s own words in this regard.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).



## James Mill and Christian Lassen

In the shift and flow of ideas, Mill played a crucial role. His *History*, among many others, accomplished two things for sure: 1. It completely inverted the paradigm of William Jones's Asiatic Society, which was by and large generating truer accounts of India and its civilization because its researchers were based in India and were working in collaboration with Indian scholars.<sup>25</sup> Even if we concede that the research of Asiatic Society was colored by the romantic inclinations of William Jones (for he is stated to have influenced the Romanticism of nineteenth-century Europe), what is certain is that it was not representing India and Hindus as savage, uncivilized, and brute. Mill shifted the Britishers from, if we take Trautman's<sup>26</sup> terms into account, *Indomania* to *Indophobia*. 2. He broke the back of the paradigm of German Romantics, who, because of their romantic projections on India, were far more favorably disposed to India than were their successors who have been clubbed under the category of German Indologists to distinguish them from the German Romantics. His discourse on India and Hindus was picked up by Hegel,<sup>27</sup> who, following suit trashed the Indian civilization and Indian philosophy, which dented the enthusiasm of the German Romantics<sup>28</sup> and paved the way for the rise of German Indology,<sup>29</sup> which it would not be an exaggeration to say worked with the Millian representation of Hinduism and India to the hilt for many decades to come.<sup>30</sup> Mill's *History* is the Faultline when the idea of India being the cradle of civilization and Sanskrit being the mother of all Indo-European languages began to move and shift as discussed in the previous section. In addition, it helped the rise of the German Indologists, who were complicit in the creation and the

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion on Mill's flipping of the discourse of William Jones, see Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Inden, *Imagining India*.

<sup>28</sup> Bradley L. Herling, *The German Gita: Hermeneutics and the German Reception of Indian Thought, 1778–1831* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> It would take at least a monograph to cover this topic in complete detail; therefore, we will abstain from going into the details.

perpetuation of Aryanism in Europe, which, as we all know, resulted in the holocaust of the Jewish people.

German Indology's beginnings can be traced to the writings of Christian Lassen, who, after having studied with A. W. Schlegel in Bonn between 1821 and 1824 proceeded to London and Paris for further studies (precisely the period in which Mill's *History* sold like hot cakes in London). He returned to Bonn in 1827 to obtain *venia legendi*, for which he wrote a dissertation on the geography and history of Punjab based on the Mahabharata and the accounts of travelers. In the following years, Lassen copiously wrote on ancient Indian history with Mahabharata as one of the central texts.<sup>31</sup> Mill's ideas played a central role in this reconstruction of the Indic civilization. *Among others, Lassen fully absorbed Mill's (mis)representations of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, and it was he who was one of the key people in engendering the two-race theory within the Indian context: the superior and light-skinned Aryans who came from the west of the Indian subcontinent and invaded the dark aboriginals of the Indian subcontinent.*<sup>32</sup> The Aryans in northern India, in his conceptualization, were the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, whereas the subjugated aboriginals were the Shudras. The Indian population was thus racialized. Beginning with Lassen, the German Indologists became busy with interpreting and reinterpreting Mill's contentions on Hindus and Hinduism within the binary divides of Aryan/aboriginal, Aryan/Dravidian, and Aryan/Dasyu for many decades to come. Summing up the contribution of Lassen in the racialization of ancient Indian History and tradition, Adluri and Bagchee write: "His racial theory constitutes a mainstay of his reconstruction of ancient Indian history in the first volume of his *Indische Alterthumskunde* ... as well as playing an occasional role in his reconstruction of the middle and late periods in the successive volumes of the work." The explicit racialized Indian history of Lassen was possible only because the groundwork of a colonial and implicitly racist

<sup>31</sup> Adluri and Bagchee, *The Nay Science*.

<sup>32</sup> Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-Aryan Mythology as Ideology and Science*, trans. Sonia Wichmann (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006); Tuska E. Benes, *In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2008); Dorothy M. Figueira, *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

characterization of Hindus and Hinduism had already been accomplished by Mill. If Mill had not fabricated the hierarchical and oppressive social order of the Hindus (based on nothing but sheer projections as we saw earlier), it would not have been possible for Lassen to conflate the “oppressive” Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas with Aryans and the Shudras with the aboriginals.

### James Mill, AIT, and AMT

In addition, Mill's description of the Hindu people as wandering savages in chapter one of Mill's section on Hindus in *History* solidified the description of ancient Hindus as wanderers, nomads, and cattle herders and paved the way for these “Aryans” to get onto the horseback as cattle-herding wandering nomads and invade India, perpetuating the Aryan Invasion Theory without the backing of any hard and conclusive evidence. This is also why when the cities of the Harappan Civilization were discovered, they were not linked to the Aryans (ancient Hindus), for in the European imagination (logic from their standpoint) a wandering nomadic people couldn't build a massive civilization of such material scale as the Harappan Civilization. It was, therefore, that the civilization (again without any hard and conclusive evidence) was linked to the “indigenous Dravidian” people whom the “invading Aryans” defeated. This is even though the same “cattle herding nomadic people” in abundance speak about cities in the Vedas.

Now that the AIT has been shot down, the description of the Aryan Migration Theory, which is the officially stated or unstated stance of western academia, surprisingly as it may sound, is only a politically correct and sanitized version of how Mill described the ancient Hindus in the early nineteenth century. The *HSS Framework* states the following:

People speaking Indic languages, which are part of the larger Indo-European family of languages, entered South Asia, probably by way of Iran... The early Indic speakers were most likely animal herders. They may have arrived in India in scattered bands, later intermarrying with

populations perhaps ancestral to those who speak Dravidian languages, such as Tamil and Telugu, in southern India and Sri Lanka today.<sup>33</sup>

Why do we say that the above description by the *California HSS Framework* is a sanitized and politically correct version of the James Mill narrative? 1. Given that the Aryan is a much-derided term because of the holocaust that the Nazis caused appropriating the term, the *HSS Framework* does not use it; however, it still means Aryans, substituting it with “people speaking Indic languages, which are part of larger Indo-European family of languages.” And when it means Aryans, it does not suggest Aryans as indigenous to India. It means explicitly Aryans coming to India via Iran from Europe: the White, fair-skinned, blond, and blue-eyed Aryans. 2. The groups of “people speaking Indic languages” are essentially nomadic herders and wanderers, just like how they were in the James Mill description. It is just that in the current *HSS Framework* version, they are not being called barbaric, uncivilized, ignorant, and rude, and it does not describe the larger imperial context in which this narrative was framed to begin with. It is this very version that gets recycled in all History textbooks. In higher studies also, a narrative similar to the one mentioned in the *Framework* appears.

To sum up, the Aryan Invasion Theory or its politically correct sibling, the Aryan Migration Theory, is intimately tied with the colonial and racist projects. The invasion and migration theories are entwined with the racial superiority of the European people. The invasion or migration theory strips the Indians of their agency to conceive, foster, nurture, and perpetuate a civilization. It is about denying the indigenous Indian population the creative, intellectual, and rational capacity to engender a civilization. The direct colonial rule may have ended, but the paradigm running the colonial enterprise that it is only the European people or people with European lineage who are capable of establishing civilizations is solidly intact when we consider the AIT or AMT.

It is in the backdrop of this “othering”—this turning of the Indian civilization, its culture, its history, its contribution to humanity into the

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<sup>33</sup> “Chapter Ten: History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, 2016,” California Department of Education, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfchapter10.pdf>, 162–63.

primitive “other”—that the picture of the early Aryans as wandering and nomadic cattle herders was painted, and James Mill is the architect-in-chief of this description. Max Müller arbitrarily ascribed the date of 1500 BCE to the coming of the Aryans. Since the day this issue became conflated with the stated and unstated aspirations of White and European supremacy, all reasoned evidence has been thrown to the wind. Scholars worldwide can keep providing evidence after evidence to show that neither the Aryan invasion nor the Aryan migration happened, the theory will remain intact. And it will remain intact until the time the scholars in the field with European ancestry consciously and unconsciously keep believing that they and they alone can build any civilization of any substance anywhere in the world.

Furthermore, the *HSS Framework* may abstain from using the term “Aryan,” but it does not preclude McGraw-Hill’s textbook from using it. The world knows that “Aryan” is a through-and-through racist term and yet, in a complete travesty of truth, has the audacity to teach the children that Aryans were neither a race nor an ethnic group. Let us look up the dictionary meaning of “race” and “ethnic.” Merriam-Webster dictionary gives the dated meaning of race as “a group of people sharing a common cultural, geographical, linguistic, or religious origin or background.” It defines “ethnic” as “of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background.”

The McGraw-Hill textbook says that Aryans are not a race or an ethnic group, yet, as described, they share a common linguistic heritage and a common region of origin (Central Asia). This is contradictory, for if we take the dictionary definitions into account, the Aryans or the Indo-European people very much become a racial and an ethnic category. McGraw-Hill’s description is nothing but a sleight of hand to camouflage a racist discourse, and that is why all that it has written describing the Aryan people (cattle herders, nomadic people, horse riders, etc.) are classic definitions of how the German Indologists described the Aryans. The Aryans were a race back then, and they are a race, however fictitious they may be, now. The *HSS Content Standards* explicitly and the *HSS Framework* and McGraw-Hill textbook implicitly, as soon as they begin the discourse on India, Hinduism, and Hindus, teach a racist discourse

that is suffused with the colonialist agenda to show the Hindus as savage and primitive. The accomplishments of the Harappan Civilization are carefully separated from the Hindus and the coming of Aryans to the Indian subcontinent in 1500 BCE, the creation of Vedas between 1500 BCE and 500 BCE (despite that the person who gave this date, Max Müller, kept on insisting that the dates are speculative) and the mixing of Aryans and Dravidians to create a common Vedic culture are taught as putative facts with complete confidence, as fitting as it can be of White supremacy.

## Mill, Caste, Hierarchy, Oppression, and the Textbook Representation

In Chap. 3, we discussed in detail Mill's representation of the Hindu social order with the explicit agenda of characterizing the Hindu people as savage, primitive, uncivilized, and brute. Almost from the very beginning of his work, Mill framed the discourse on the savagery of the Hindus within the confines of caste, oppression, and hierarchy. His central idea in the chapter "Classification and Distribution of People" (which is his Chap. 2 on the Hindus) is that it was the Brahmins who ordered the Hindu society based on divine authority and took every measure to ensure that authority, power, and wealth remained in their hands. They were the *creme de la creme* of the society, far above the rest of the "castes." They controlled the Hindu society through the performance of rituals and by keeping religious matters guarded and shrouded in mystery. Next in importance in the hierarchical order are the Kshatriyas because they protect the society from enemies. In his conception, savages are prone to fear, and the more savage they are, the more fearful they are. In proportion to the fear they feel, they revere the protector. Given that the Kshatriyas are warriors and protectors of the society, they receive unbounded respect and adoration from the savage Hindus. Mill then describes the Vaishyas as farmers, craftspeople, and merchants—people superior to Shudras, who are engaged in servile labor. Shudras as a class are denied a just share in the labors of their production. He completes the

chapter with a portrayal of the Chandalas as people who are loathed by the rest of the Hindu society, who carry corpses, who carry out executions, and who carry out the dirty and unclean work of the community.

We have also shown in Chap. 4 that Mill mainly spoke about the English society of his time in describing the Hindu society. Also, he imagined the Hindu society in the light of the transformations he envisioned in his domestic context. He imagined the Hindu Brahmins in the light of English clergy, and all his gripes against the Church of England clergy were projected onto the Hindu Brahmins. We placed his India writings against his domestic writings and showed the correlations. When he spoke about the Hindu monarch, he essentially talked about the English monarch. In describing the Hindu Kshatriyas, he effectively represented the English aristocrats. In essence, the hierarchy and oppression that were imputed onto the Hindu society since the beginning of the time were what Mill was experiencing in his domestic context, which he drastically wanted to transform. In summary, we can say that in his portrayal of the Hindu society as hierarchical and oppressive along caste lines, two salient features were operational: 1. To show the Hindu people as savage, primitive, and uncivilized. 2. The descriptions of the Hindu society were fabrications, imaginations, and projections.

The McGraw-Hill textbook, after discussing the Aryan issue, seamlessly moves into describing the Hindu social order much along the lines of caste, hierarchy, and oppression, much like Mill, who had wasted no time in engendering such a discourse. There is no exaggeration or hyperbole when we say that McGraw-Hill's description of Hindu society is nothing but a precis of Mill's chapter two on Hindus. Have a look:

Priests, leaders, and other elites used religion to justify their high place in society.... The four social classes of ancient India are called *varnas* (VAR\*nehhs). People were considered members of a *varna* based on their jobs and personal behavior, but mostly based on which *varna* they were born into. The most powerful *varnas* were the Brahmins (BRAH•mihns) and Kshatriyas (KSHA•tree•uhs). The Brahmins were the priests—the people who performed religious ceremonies... The Kshatriyas were warriors and governors who ran the government and army. Next were the Vaisyas (VYSH•yuhs), or commoners. Vaishyas were usually farmers,

craftspeople, and merchants. Below the Vaisyas came the Sudras (SOO•druhs). Sudras were **manual** workers and servants. Most Indians were in the Sudra *varna*. The thousands of distinct occupational and other groupings into which persons were actually born (called *jati*, “birth”) came to be associated or linked to one or another of the *varnas* over time. Each of these *jatis* has its own strict dietary and marriage rules and customs. Scholars refer to the *jati* system as a caste (KAST) system. In such a system, people remain in the same social group for life. People’s *jati* determine the jobs they may take. *Jati* also affects people’s choice of marriage partners. Higher classes came to be seen as purer than lower ones. Relations between classes were seen in terms of spiritual purity or impurity. By 500 C.E. or earlier there existed a community outside the *jati* system called the Dalits. Sometimes called the Untouchables, Dalits did work that *jati* Indians would not do, such as sanitation, disposal of dead animals, and cremation or burning of the dead.<sup>34</sup>

Just like Wilson, the editor of the fourth edition of the *History of British India*, commissioned after the death of Mill, keeps pointing out the inaccuracies in Mill’s representation of the Hindus, we would like to state that there are profound inaccuracies in how McGraw-Hill represents the Hindu society as it existed in the past and how it exists in the present (though both Mill’s as well as Spielvogel’s portrayals of the Hindu society fossilize it and represent it as unchanging since the beginning of time). We will not go any further because, as we have maintained throughout, our objective in this work is only to show the correlation between Mill’s representations of Hindus that he carefully drafted over twelve years to prove to the world the savage existence of Hindus with *HSS Content Standards*, *HSS Frameworks*, and McGraw-Hill’s narrative on Hindus and Hinduism.

The textbook does not directly call the Hindus savage. It is a different world where the dominant must be careful about the political correctness in statements and narratives. However, just like Mill set the discourse in *History* about the Hindus being hierarchical and oppressive from the beginning itself, McGraw-Hill sets the tone on Hindus being hierarchical (and oppressive, for hierarchy and oppression are synonyms in the

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<sup>34</sup> Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 258, bold in original.



contemporary world) as soon as it opens the discourse on them. It does not explicitly call the Hindus savage, but implicitly, it does. It not only regurgitates Mill's narrative in describing the Hindus sans the primitive-and-savage part but also "others" the Hindus in the present context. In today's context, the civilizational value of the United States is equality and liberty, which is the stark opposite of hierarchy and oppression. Without being explicit, the discourse constructs the binary between equality and freedom vs. hierarchy and oppression. As it privileges the civilizational value of equality and liberty, it undermines hierarchy and oppression (and rightly so). However, by conflating Hindus with hierarchy and oppression, it makes them the scapegoat of all kinds of shadow projection, for which the Indian American children must bear the brunt as we will see in the next chapter. In reproducing Mill's caste-hierarchy-and-oppression narrative on the Hindus, the McGraw-Hill textbook also follows the instructional guidelines of the *HSS Framework* to the minutest details:

Ancient Indian society formed into groups, *jatis*, that emphasized birth as the defining criteria. Jatis initially shared the same occupation and married only within the group. This system, often termed *caste*, provided social stability and gave an identity to each community. The *Vedas* also describe four main social categories, known as *varnas*: Brahmins (priests), *Kshatriyas* (kings and warriors), *Vaishyas* (merchants, artisans, and farmers), and *Sudras* (peasants and laborers). A person belonged to a particular varna not just by professional excellence and good conduct, but primarily by birth. In addition, by 500 CE or earlier, there existed certain communities outside the *jati* system, the *Dalits* (sometimes known as "Untouchables"), who did the most unclean work, such as cremation, disposal of dead animals, and sanitation. Relations between classes came to be expressed in terms of ritual purity or impurity, higher classes being purer than lower ones. This class system became distinctive over the centuries for being especially complex and formal, involving numerous customs and prohibitions on eating together and intermarrying that kept social and occupational groups distinct from one another in daily life.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>"Chapter Ten: History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, 2016," 164.

Once the hierarchical and oppressive nature of the Hindus has been established, it becomes straightforward to wade into other areas where their tyrannical nature could be shown. Even the positives are turned into negatives. For instance:

In ancient India, the family was the center of life. Grandparents, parents, and children live together in an extended family. Elder family members were respected. The oldest male in the family was in charge of the entire household.<sup>36</sup>

Family and respect for elders are values that are upheld in American society as well. However, notice how the positive description has been turned into a negative by suggesting that the family structure was patriarchal and, therefore, hierarchical and oppressive, where the eldest man of the family ruled the roost. Once again, the issue here is not whether this was true or not (untrue as far as we are concerned, which we will settle in future publications); one thing is quite certain: the textbook will leave no stone unturned in furthering the colonial “hierarchy and oppression” narrative on Hindus.

In discussing how Mill characterized the Hindus in Chap. 3, we made specific note of how he describes Hindu men as women abusers, and we also remarked that Mill’s narrative on this aspect of Hindu men is reproduced almost verbatim in the grade-school discourse. Though we direct our readers to his direct quote in Chap. 3, the following is the summary of his bile: Hindu men keep Hindu women in abject slavery as instruments of fulfilling their sexual lust and sexual lust alone. They do not enjoy any rights; they cannot inherit property; they are made entirely dependent on men; they are treated as property; they are subjected to perpetual and servile labor; they cannot on their own perform any religious rites, only with their husbands; they are denied any visibility in the sacred texts; and they live most degrading and humiliating of the conditions. The following is what the McGraw-Hill textbook states:

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<sup>36</sup> Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 259.

Men had more rights than women in India. Males inherited property, unless there were no sons in the family. Men attended school or became priests, while women were educated at home. Both men and women attended religious ceremonies and celebrations, but not as equals.<sup>37</sup>

The textbook author, of course, cannot be as crude as Mill in describing the status of Hindu women. Yet, he conveys quite effectively his description of the degraded status of Hindu women in India. There is another profoundly troubling dimension to the textbook narrative: Even when it speaks about Hindus of ancient India, it keeps inserting statements where the past/present dichotomy gets entirely blurred. The grade-school students begin interpreting the discourse as if it is describing the current Hindu condition. Again, this is understandable because, starting with Mill, the Hindu society has been frozen in a timeless dimension: a society that has not changed since the time memorial. In the binary of change and dynamism vs. frozen timelessness, the Europeans, with the Enlightenment persuasion, accorded themselves dynamism and progress. In contrast, they projected changelessness to the Hindus, frozen in time. Let us look at the following two descriptions:

Young men from India's leading families could marry only after finishing 12 years of education. In India, parents arranged marriages for their children. Even today, many marriages are arranged. In early India, boys and girls often married in their teens. People could not get divorced.<sup>38</sup>

Many Hindus today in India and in the United States do not identify themselves as a member of a caste.<sup>39</sup>

In stating that many Hindus in India and the United States do not identify themselves with a caste and that Indian parents engage in arranged marriages for their children, the textbook is making the description of the Hindus of Ancient India come alive in the present. The past does not remain buried in the past; it becomes the present—and present as defined

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 259.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 259.

and characterized by Mill with the explicit agenda and intention of making the Hindus savages. The Indian American children suffer the consequences of this representation, which we will discuss in the subsequent chapter.

## **Mill, Hinduism, and the Textbook Representation**

Since Mill considered the Hindus as the irrational “other” of the European rational men, he suffused his discourse, characterizing Hinduism as an irrational and incoherent religion. In his “learned” assessment, it is imprecise, chaotic, contradictory, and vague. He derides both the pantheism and the monotheism, liberally present in the tradition—well! traditions in his conceptualization, for Hinduism, in his scheme of things, is nothing but a rag-tag collocation of different contradictory traditions. He mocks the idea of the one Divine, which has become everything in the universe—the central idea of the Upanishads that there is nothing but one Brahman, which manifests in cosmic and universal multiplicity. He mocks the three central Deities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and derides the distribution of powers amongst them in the running of the universe—Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; Shiva, the transformer. Mill characterizes Hinduism as a “religion” full of mindless ceremonies, which far exceed the observation of morality and ethics. Panegyrics and flattery of the divine abound in the religion. He does not spare even yoga and meditation practices, conflating yoga with penances and equating it to what will contemporaneously be called sadism. He ridicules the respect for animals and closes the chapter “Religion of the Hindus,” scoffing at the karma theory and its two central ideas around which the theory is constructed: metempsychosis and transmigration. Karma, in his assessment, does not make the Hindus moral; on the contrary, it makes them devoid of free will, lazy, and fatalistic. The aforementioned summarizes our Chap. 3 discussion of Mill’s ideas on Hinduism, where we fully unfolded how Mill conceptualized his ideas in the larger framework of showing Hindus and Hinduism as savage and barbaric.

In Chap. 4, we showed how Mill constructed his ideas in the light of the Christianity of the Church of England—*Church of Englandism* as he derisively called it. Mill fashioned the characterization and representation of Hinduism in the backdrop of the practices of the clergy of the Church of England, with whom he not only was engaged in ideological warfare but also held them as people who had muddled and sullied Christianity. In the light of practices of the Church of England that he wanted to suppress and transform, he constructed the image of Hinduism. In other words, in the light of the shadows (pun unintended) of *Church of Englandism*, Mill's Hinduism was fabricated. Mill had profound issues with how the clergy controlled the minds of people using ceremonies and panegyrics directed towards God and felt that these activities reduced His omniscience and omnipresence, lowering Him from what He is. He held prayers and ceremonies as anti-Christian. Consequently, he spent considerable time in describing in the *History* Hinduism as a religion involving rituals, ceremonies, panegyrics, and flattery. The lack of morality in the practices of the Church of England was projected to show the lack of morality in Hinduism.

The McGraw-Hill textbook reflects a refined version of the discourse above. Apart from covering all the topics that Mill had written about, Brahman, Upanishads, Deities, and many others that we shall soon see, in “Lesson 2: Religions of Ancient India,” it describes Hinduism as a religion that was formed when the religion of the Brahmins mixed with the

ideas of the other people of India.... Hinduism includes many beliefs and practices.... acceptance of religious diversity also grew to be a central aspect of Hinduism.... [Hindus] believed in many different Deities. Hindus built temples and statues and held ceremonies for these Deities. Eventually four Deities became the most important: *Brahma* the creator, *Vishnu* the preserver, *Shiva* the Deity who transforms the world, and *Sarasvati* the Deity of learning. Over time, Hindus came to think of all the Deities as different parts of Brahman, the one universal spirit.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 261–62.

The above sentences should be carefully studied in light of what Mill has left behind for us. When the textbook states that Hinduism is a diverse tradition, it does not suggest the central Vedic dictum that it is the oneness of Brahman that simultaneously manifests in the diversity of Deities; on the contrary, it means how, over a period of time, different traditions mixed to become what is known as Hinduism today. Of course, in the current climate of political correctness, the textbook is not going to state as Mill boldly asserted, that Hinduism is a rag-tag collocation of different ideas that are incoherent and are in contradiction to one another, but if we dig only a little deeper, Mill's reflection on the description becomes clear. It is the same Millian idea that Hinduism's diversity is not an organic one that has been present since its inception revealed through the spiritual practices of the sages but a synthetic one that came about when "Brahmanism" mixed with other traditions. This description also reeks of the racist Aryan invasion or migration theory, which has long held that it was the mighty Aryans who came to India and established Brahmanism first and then, as they intermixed with the indigenous populations, gave birth to Hinduism. Whereas the textbook describes the Abrahamic religions as revealed and hence superior religions, it implicitly describes Hinduism as concocted or fabricated and, therefore, an inferior religion to the Abrahamic faiths.

The rituals and ceremonies directed to the Deities are also insidiously inserted in the above quote. Apart from all the vitriol that Mill poured against rituals and ceremonies in his domestic context, which further reinforced Protestant Christianity's distaste for the practices of Catholicism and which also became one of the defining features of his definition of Hinduism, the textbook makes Hinduism as the "other" of the dominant religion of the United States: Protestant Christianity. The effects of all of these become visible on the psyche of the Indian American children, as we will see in the next chapter.

We already saw that Mill had discussed the karma theory with metempsychosis and reincarnation as its two principles within the larger container of proving how savage and brute the Hindus were and have been. It would have been nothing short of a miracle if the McGraw-Hill textbook had not discussed it. Here is the discussion:

Another part of Hinduism is the belief in **reincarnation** (REE•ihn•kahr•NAY•shuhn) or the rebirth of the soul. Hindus strive for *moksha*, the ultimate peace.... In Hinduism, the idea of reincarnation is closely related to another idea known as **karma** (KAHR•muh). According to karma, people's **status** in life is not an accident. It is based on what they did in past lives. In addition, the things people do in this life determine how they will be reborn. If someone leads an evil life, that person is reborn into a lower form of life. When good people die, their souls are reborn into a higher form of life.... Beliefs such as reincarnation also made many Indians more accepting of the *jati* system. A devout Hindu believed that the people in a higher *jati* were superior and deserved their status. At the same time, the belief in reincarnation gave hope to people from every walk of life. A person who leads a good life is reborn into a higher *jati*.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from the fact that the above is a simplistic and reductionist understanding of karma, which most indigenous scholars of Hinduism would reject (but that is not the point here), the karma theory here is linked specifically to the “Hinduism equals caste equals hierarchy equals oppression” rendition of Mill. Mill's exposition of the equation is explicit, whereas McGraw-Hill's textbook does the same without being explicit.

Next in the target line is dharma, one of the most cherished concepts of the Hindus. Dharma comes from the root word *dhṛ*, which means to uphold. It is dharma that makes the Hindus revere rivers, mountains, forests, the earth, and their family and family kins, village, nation, etc. It is dharma that binds the Hindu to the divine. The McGraw-Hill textbook does not spare even dharma—which it defines as people's duties—from linking it with caste and hierarchy and obliquely with oppression: “People's duties are different, depending on their place in society. A farmer has different duties than a priest. Men have different duties than women.”<sup>42</sup> Dharma, therefore, becomes a tool for the oppression of people along the caste and gender lines—not explicitly stated, but the implicit meaning is as clear as daylight. It further conjoins dharma with karma, which has already been conflated with caste and hierarchy, and

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 262–63, bold in original.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 263.

through this conjoining, consigns some of the most essential epics and texts of the Hindus to the gut of oppression:

Hindus believe that through acceptance and performance of their personal duties [dharma], they can influence how their soul is reincarnated in a future life [karma]. How do Indian texts, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana* describe the importance of dharma? How does dharma vary from one person to another?<sup>43</sup>

And then ensures that the *Bhagavad Gita* is represented as a book promoting war along with promoting casteism:

One section of the *Bhagavad Gita*, “Of the Distress of Arjuna” explains the struggle that Arjuna endures when forced to face his relatives on the battlefield. The Deity Krishna explains to Arjuna his responsibilities as a warrior.<sup>44</sup>

“Responsibilities as a warrior” is a euphemism for performing Kshatriya responsibilities. Not that it is untrue, but there are not more than three or four verses in the Gita out of seven hundred that speak about Varna. The McGraw-Hill description not only reduces the Gita but also surreptitiously links it with the recurring theme we encounter in the representation of Hinduism: Hinduism is nothing but caste and hierarchy.

The textbook further ensures that dharma responsibilities and obligations are squarely linked to caste, and nothing is left to imagination:

The laws of Manu (c.100 C.E) is an ancient text that explains the obligations of all Hindus. It includes 12 chapters and more than 2,600 verses. Attributed to the Hindu scholar Manu, the laws describe how individuals from each of the four varnas are expected to behave, including specific expectations for men and women.<sup>45</sup>

For Hindus, the textbook once again on this topic breaks the past/present dichotomy and represents the Hindus as living in a timeless continuum:

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



Many Hindus today still believe that a man should go through four stages in his life: a student (preparing to live in the world), a married man (accepting worldly responsibilities), a forest dweller (retirement from the world), and, finally a wandering monk (completely renouncing the world).<sup>46</sup>

The textbook, as it mirrors the colonial and racist narrative of Mill, therefore cannot absolve itself by saying that it is describing the Hindu past, however erroneously misrepresented it may be. Just as there was no difference for Mill in the Hindu past and the Hindu present, there is no distinction for the McGraw-Hill textbook either. The past it describes in the name of Hindu history is very well the Hindu present.

Further, in engaging in the above representation, the textbook meticulously follows the contents of the *HSS Framework*:

These teachings were transmitted orally at first, and then later in written texts, the *Upanishads* and, later, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Performance of duties and ceremonies, along with devotion and meditation, became dimensions of the supreme quest to achieve oneness with God. That fulfillment, however, demands obedience to the moral law of the universe, called *dharma*, which also refers to performance of social duties. Fulfilling *dharma* is one of the four primary goals of human life, along with *kama* (love), *artha* (wealth) and *moksha* (oneness with God). Success or failure at existing in harmony with *dharma* determines how many times an individual might be subject to reincarnation, or repeated death and rebirth at either lower or higher positions of moral and ritual purity. Progress toward spiritual realization is governed by *karma*, the principle of cause-and-effect by which human actions, good and bad, affect this and future lives. Many of the central practices of Hinduism today, including home and temple worship, yoga and meditation, rites of passage (*samskaras*), festivals, pilgrimage, respect for saints and gurus, and, above all, a profound acceptance of religious diversity, developed over time.<sup>47</sup>

The Indian American children consequently bear the brunt, as we shall shortly see.

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 263.

<sup>47</sup>“Chapter Ten: History Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, 2016,” 163–64.

## Oppressive Hinduism vs. Emancipatory Buddhism

As we saw earlier, Mill conjectured that oppressive Brahmins persecuted the Buddhist monks, leading to the monks fleeing India and settling in Southeast and East Asia. With the foundation of this representation laid, the German Indologists carefully erected the edifice of emancipatory Buddhism, emerging from the shackles of oppressive Brahmanism in the next few decades.<sup>48</sup> The McGraw-Hill textbook, in a nuanced manner, reflects the dichotomy above. We also saw how Mill, who was extremely dissatisfied with the ritual practices of the priests of the Church of England, constructed a negative characterization of Hinduism surrounding ceremonies. In his rant on the Hindus, hierarchy, oppression, Brahmins, and ceremonies are synonyms. Any postcolonial representation of Hinduism that relies exclusively on ceremonies in characterizing it inheres within itself the prejudice and bias of Mill. The McGraw-Hill textbook does exactly that:

During the 500s B.C.E., some Indians felt unhappy with the many ceremonies of the Hindu religion. They wanted a simpler, more spiritual faith. They left their homes and looked for peace in the hills and forests. Many trained their minds to focus and think in positive ways. This training was called meditation. Meditation had originated within Hinduism over 1000 years earlier. Using meditation, some seekers developed new ideas and became religious teachers. One of these teachers was Siddhartha Gautama (sih•DAHR•tuh GOW•tah•muh). He became known as the Buddha (BOO•dah). He founded a new religion called Buddhism (BOO•dih•zuhm).<sup>49</sup>

In saying that there was dissatisfaction amongst people due to the ceremonies of Hinduism, the textbook fundamentally reproduces the Millian narrative that Brahmins, with their ceremonies, were oppressing the masses, due to which some of them left their homes in search of peace. It

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<sup>48</sup> See for details Adluri and Bagchee, *The Nay Science*.

<sup>49</sup> Spietvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 264.

is a different matter that the individual pursuit of divinity and truth has been built into Hinduism through *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*—which do not involve rituals and ceremonies—that led people like the Buddha to step out.

The McGraw-Hill textbook further constructs the image of Buddhism in the backdrop of oppressive Hinduism through its caste system, which becomes crystallized in the following:

Buddhism spread because it welcomed people from all walks of life. The Buddha placed little importance on the *jati* system. He believed people's place in life did not depend on the *jati* into which they were born. The Buddha explained that the success of life depended on people's behavior now. Like Hindus, the Buddha believed in reincarnation, but in a different way. He thought that people could end the cycle of rebirth by following the eightfold path rather than their dharma.<sup>50</sup>

The textbook, in a nutshell, replicates the oppressive Hinduism vs emancipatory Buddhism narrative. Hinduism is once again subtly represented as an oppressive system ensconced in caste and caste-based dharma. This dichotomy is entrenched in the children's minds when asked to make the following inquiry: "Why was Buddhism so appealing to some followers of the Hindu religion?"<sup>51</sup>

In addition, it subtly describes the pre-Buddhist Indian society (aka the Hindu society) as one where there was massive poverty and suffering for the masses and an inordinate amount of richness for the privileged:

[Siddhartha Gautama] grew up as a prince in a small Kingdom near the Himalaya.... As a young man, Siddhartha seemed to have everything. He was rich, handsome, and happily married with a newborn son. Then one day he left his palace to explore the life of ordinary people in the kingdom. As he traveled, Siddhartha was shocked at the misery and poverty around him. He saw beggars, people who were sick, and aged people with nowhere to live.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 265.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 267.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 264.

The documented biography or hagiography of the Buddha—however one may look at it—states that Siddhartha Gautama encountered an old person, a sick person, a dead person, and a monk in the four trips that he took from his palace, which inspired him to leave his kingdom in search of truth.<sup>53</sup> It nowhere talks about poverty and beggars. It is essential to question the genesis of this falsehood. It can be traced to Mill's representation of the Hindu society, where only the monarchs and Brahmins were wealthy, and the masses lived in stark poverty. In the backdrop of Mill's characterization, the Buddha's predominantly existential quest becomes social, inspired by poverty caused by wealthy monarchs. And Buddhism becomes a religion to escape the oppression of the ceremony-obsessed Brahmins, who also crafted the hierarchical caste system.

## **Oppressive Hindu King vs. Emancipatory Buddhist King**

We saw earlier how Mill painted a picture of Hindu kings as despotic and absolutist. In his representation, the monarchical king held exclusive control over executive, legislative, and judicial matters, with all the powers collapsed in him. The absolutist form of governance necessitated maintaining a vast army, for which he taxed his subjects heavily. He ruled with arbitrary power and will. In addition, Mill also generated the narrative of India being a land of invasions since antiquity.

Not to flog a dead horse, we also saw that the above representations were projections and fabrications, with Mill generating data from his domestic context. More specifically, his characterizations of Hindu governance were in the light of the British governance structure that he found highly troubling, which he desperately needed to transform in Britain. These pieces of lies, distortions, fabrications, and projections that Mill crafted to show the Hindus as savage and primitive once again sans the primitive part are reflected in the McGraw-Hill textbook. In the section "Origin of an Empire," the textbook begins with the Millian representation of India being a land of invading armies:

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<sup>53</sup> See Charles S. Prebish and Damien Keown, *Introducing Buddhism* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

By the 500s B.C.E, India was divided into many small kingdoms. Conflict over land and trade weakened the kingdoms, leaving them open to foreign invasion. First, Persian armies conquered the Indus Valley in the 500s B.C.E and made it part of the Persian Empire. The Greeks, under Alexander the Great, that defeated the Persians. Alexander entered India but turned back in 325 B.C.E, when his homesick troops threatened to rebel.<sup>54</sup>

Alexander's army threatened to rebel because it not only encountered stiff resistance from the army of a small Indian kingdom ruled by Porus, which led to Alexander getting injured and the loss of its several men, but also came to know that there were far bigger and ferocious armies awaiting its men in the interiors of India if it dared to proceed further.<sup>55,56</sup> However, this is something the textbook does not speak about, for it would run contrary to the Millian narrative. Instead, it paints a distorted picture, arguing that Alexander's army threatened to rebel because it was tired and homesick.

The textbook continues with the Millian representation:

After Alexander left India, an Indian military officer named Chandragupta Maurya built a strong army. He knew that only a large and powerful empire

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>55</sup> In Arrian, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The Brief Life and Towering Exploits of History's Greatest Conqueror: As Told by His Original Biographers*, eds. Tania Gergel and Michael Wood (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 120, Plutarch writes: "As for the Macedonians, however, their struggle with Porus blunted their courage and stayed their further advance into India. For having had all they could do to repulse an enemy who mustered only twenty thousand infantry and two thousand horses, they violently opposed Alexander when he insisted on crossing the river Ganges also, the width of which, as they learned, was thirty-two furlongs, its depth a hundred fathoms, while its banks on the further side were covered with multitudes of men-at-arms and horsemen and elephants. For they were told that the kings of the Ganderites and Praesii were awaiting them with eighty thousand horsemen, two hundred thousand footmen, eight thousand chariots, and six thousand fighting elephants."

<sup>56</sup> In J. W. McCrindle, ed. and trans., *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017), 33, Megasthenes writes: "Gangaridai, a nation which possesses a vast force of the largest-sized elephants. Owing to this, their country has never been conquered by any foreign king; for all other nations dread the overwhelming number and strength of these animals. Thus Alexander the Macedonian, after conquering all Asia, did not make war upon the Gangaridai, as he did on all others; for when he had arrived with all his troops at the river Ganges, he abandoned as hopeless an invasion of the Gangaridai when he learned that they possessed four thousand elephants well trained and equipped for war."

could defend India against invasion. In 321 B.C.E., Chandragupta set out to conquer northern India and unify the region under his rule.<sup>57</sup>

Chandragupta Maurya defeated the Greeks that Alexander had left behind in that part of India that had come under Persian control. The defeat of the Greeks resulted in a matrimonial alliance between Seleucus Nicator's daughter and Chandragupta Maurya's son Bindusara, but these facts are not mentioned, for they would run contrary to the Millian legacy, which the McGraw-Hill textbook tends to inherit. Seleucus Nicator was the successor of Alexander and, after the latter's death, became the emperor of the Seleucid empire, which in its heydays covered Asia Minor, the Iranian plateau, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

Reflecting the Millian construction that Hindu kings were despots and absolutist, the textbook states:

Chandragupta was the first ruler of the Mauryan dynasty. He set up a highly centralized government in the capital city of Patliputra (PAH•tah•lih•POO•truh). He divided his empire into provinces which were ruled by governors whom he appointed. This helped him organize such a large territory.<sup>58</sup>

With the above characterization, the textbook kills any possibility of people's participation in the Hindu governance structure. On the contrary, what emerges is that he ruled with an iron hand and did not tolerate any dissent. He was cruel and cared more for his own interests than the lives of the people who served him. In addition, he was a coward.

More than 600,000 strong, Chandragupta's powerful army crushed any resistance to his rule. He also used spies to report any disloyalty among his subjects. While he was a strong ruler, Chandragupta was very cautious. He was afraid of being poisoned, so he had servants taste his food before he ate it. He was so concerned about being attacked that he never slept two nights in a row in the same bed.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 270.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

Chandragupta had a grandson, Ashoka, who eventually became the ruler of the Mauryan empire. The textbook descriptions related to him crystalize the binary between an oppressive Hindu king, Chandragupta Maurya, and an emancipatory Buddhist king, Ashoka. The following from the textbook will make it amply evident:

Ashoka was an unusual king. Like many rulers, Ashoka began his rule with fierce wars of conquest. Eventually, he came to hate killing. After one battle, he looked at the fields covered with dead and wounded soldiers. He was horrified by what he saw. Ashoka committed his life to spreading Buddhist teachings and becoming a man of peace. Ashoka kept his promise. During the rest of his life, he tried to improve the lives of his people. Ashoka made laws that encouraged good deeds, family harmony, nonviolence, and toleration of other religions. He created hospitals for people and for animals. He built fine roads, with rest houses and shade trees for the travelers' comfort.<sup>60</sup>

Ashoka's civic engagements pertaining to the improvement of the lives of the people, like building hospitals, roads, and rest houses and "making" laws to ensure family harmony and toleration of religions that are attributed to his turn to Buddhism do not come from Buddhism but from the text of statecraft, which was composed by the mentor and the teacher of his grandfather: Kautilya. Kautilya quickly identified the precocity of Chandragupta Maurya and helped him become the ruler of almost the entire Indian subcontinent. In the process, the former also authored a text in the lineage of *Arthaśāstra*, which, among other vital issues related to statecraft, outlines quite clearly what an ideal king should do to be respected among the people.<sup>61</sup> However, given Mill's prejudices on Hinduism that the textbook has inherited, the author does not and will not investigate and represent the influence of Kautilya's text on Ashoka, for Kautilya and Chandragupta Maurya are conflated with the Hindu tradition.

The imprint of Mill's *History* on the school textbooks is not peripheral or minimal; on the contrary, it is central. This explicit connection and

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 271.

<sup>61</sup>Kautilya, *The Arthashastra*, ed. and trans., L. N. Rangarajan (New Delhi: Penguin, 1992).

correlation between Mill's colonial and racist discourse on Hindus, Hinduism, and Ancient India and the current textbook discourse on their parallel counterparts involving caste, hierarchy, and implicit oppression affect Indian American children deeply. In the backdrop of the currently upheld values of equality and emancipation, they are "othered." As soon as they are exposed to this narrative, even when they cannot cognitively comprehend the projection of the shadows they are subjected to, they begin to feel it. They are affected by it in more ways than one. We now turn to comprehensively investigating and discussing the negative psychological consequences that the representation above of Hinduism has on Indian American children, which is our topic for the next and concluding chapter.

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# 6

## Damaging Psychological Consequences of the Discourse

Given that it is the politically correct and sanitized version of the colonial discourse, which is run roughshod with racism, that is being taught to the Indian American children, the psychological consequences that the narrative or discourse generates are very similar to the effects that have been observed in colonized people and in groups that are racially targeted, for instance, the African American people. This chapter is dedicated to discussing this issue threadbare.

We saw earlier that colonialism and racism have gone hand in hand. Colonization, with its racist underpinnings, has been known to cause psychological consequences, as described by Fanon and Memmi, who were more or less the trendsetters in this area of study. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, as the name itself suggests, describes in detail the psychological consequences that colonized people, especially the Black people, have been subjected to. Memmi began the analysis in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and completed it in the *Dominated Man*<sup>1</sup> and *Racism*.<sup>2</sup> Though the political colonization for most of the world, barring the First Nations people, has ended, racism has not. It is very much operational

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man: Notes Toward a Portrait* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> Memmi, *Racism*.

today: alive and kicking. Any discourse rooted in colonial domination is essentially a racist discourse, and it will cause the same psychological consequences as when political colonization was in place. In other words, the psychological damage that colonization causes is very similar to what Racism inflicts. We will exemplify the last point by comparing Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and Beverly Daniel Tatum's "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"<sup>3</sup> Tatum's work is predominantly in the context of African American children, whereas Fanon's work is in the context of colonization and implicit racism.

We will, therefore, in this chapter, give a summary of the consequences of colonization, draw a comparison with how racism impacts African American children in the United States, and, in the light of the two, analyze the impact of the school textbook discourse on the Indian American children. The data is the depositions of the Indian American children proffered at the State Board of Education (SBE), California. As discussed in the previous chapter, the SBE is responsible for generating the *HSS Framework*—a sort of curriculum—which publishers of social science textbooks use to curate teaching materials for K-12 students. The *HSS Framework* is revised every ten years through a process in which students, teachers, professors, and parents, among others, give feedback. The publishers then produce textbooks based on the *HSS Framework*. All the stakeholders mentioned above review and comment on the books. The data for our analysis come from the testimonies given in the last revision cycle, which ran from 2015 to 2017, specifically from the hearing on November 9, 2017. As many as seventy-two Indian American children, ranging from elementary school to high school, participated in the process and spoke about the damaging consequences of the text on Hinduism and India that they had been studying or were about to begin studying (based on what they had seen their friends or siblings undergo).

We want to underline that even before we looked at the data, we first created a framework for analyzing the psychological consequences of colonialism and racism. In a certain sense, in this work, we predicted that the literature on the psychological effects of colonialism and racism, coming from the works of Fanon, Memmi, and Tatum, will coincide and

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<sup>3</sup>Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Why Are the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" *And Other Conversations About Race* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

match with the testimonies of the Indian American Children at the SBE. They did. We will critically examine our prediction in the final section of the chapter.

We begin constructing the framework with Fanon, a trained psychiatrist. We then gravitate to Memmi and subsequently to Tatum. Though Fanon wrote from the perspective of a black man within a colonial situation and Memmi from the perspective of a Tunisian Jew, their contentions assumed a universal appeal for all the colonized people because the truth of their observations could be validated and substantiated in the colonized population across the world. Though both Fanon and Memmi used the terms “colonizer” and “colonized” to comment upon the relationship that exists between the two, we are substituting them with “dominant” and “dominated” respectively. This is precisely because political colonization has ended in most of the world—their use in the current times will make them archaic and redundant. Also, if we use the terms “dominant” and “dominated,” we will be able to integrate and compare the work of Fanon and Memmi with that of Tatum. Memmi’s *Dominated Man* may have unconsciously inspired substituting colonized with dominated.

## Inferiority Complex, Shame, and Becoming One’s Enemy

In the dominated, they develop an inferiority complex, which makes them disconnect from their culture, ethnicity, and tradition. The dominated do not feel comfortable in the color of their skin and want to become white. The language and the culture of the dominant become the standard to which the dominated want to measure up. The more the dominated adopt the culture and language of the dominant, the further they go away from the language and culture of their ancestors. The dominant “others” the dominated, creating myriad misrepresentations. These myths are not seen by the dominated as myths but as facts because these myths not only become part of the educational system but also get recycled in media and mainstream conversations. Consequently, these myths

cavorting misrepresentations get internalized by the dominated, resulting in the dominated recycling the discourse about themselves, which has not been formulated by their ancestors but by the dominant, whose explicit agenda was to subjugate and oppress. Therefore, one of the objectives for Fanon to write *Black Skin, White Masks* was to liberate the black population from itself—from the chains it has put upon itself due to the internalization of the oppressive discourse.

The myths, masquerading as facts, essentially stated that the dominated have no culture, language, history, science, philosophy, arts, etc. In subtle and explicit ways, they get internalized in the psyche and constitution of the dominated. The dominated consequently engaged in two interdependent behaviors: 1. They do not investigate the veracity of “facts” about themselves and the culture that has been set by the dominant. In fact, they do not even know that the discourse in the mainstream on them has been framed by the dominant—just like the situation in the context of Hindus and Hinduism, we did not know that the current discourse in textbooks is nothing but a sanitized version of the colonial discourse set in motion by James Mill. 2. As they disconnect from themselves and their own culture and traditions, they gravitate towards the culture, civilization, and traditions of the dominant, thinking them to be universal standards, thereby mainstreaming the dominant’s civilization, culture, and knowledge systems.

The result of this twin process is that whereas the civilization, culture, and knowledge systems of the dominant grow and proliferate, the civilization, culture, and knowledge systems of the dominated atrophy and die. They are either *museumized* or mummified by the dominant as artifacts of history, past, or tradition that have been superseded by the onward march of humanity (of course, humanity equals the dominant) or are ravaged and cannibalized for appropriation—as has happened in the case of yoga and Indian philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

Inferiority complex manifests in the choice of partners as well—and the choice, as per Fanon, is not guided by authentic love. It is driven by the Adlerian unconscious, where one begins to dislike a partner from

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<sup>4</sup>J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997).

one's ethnic group. The choice is inspired by the desire to partake of the culture and the civilization of the dominant because of the inferiority that one feels vis-à-vis one's own. With measures as in the above and others in which one seeks the dominant's culture, there arises in the dominated a desire to whiten oneself—inside and outside as was the case with Michael Jackson. The dominated begins to seek the approval of the dominant constantly. The dominant is seen to be rich and beautiful or handsome (as the case may be depending on one's sexual orientation). By marrying into the ethnicity of the dominant, the dominant unconsciously and, at times consciously, seeks to elevate itself. Fanon describes this phenomenon “affective erethism,”<sup>5</sup> as stated earlier.

Racist discourse creates not only an inferiority complex but also an identity confusion, as Fanon exemplifies with his example of Jean Veneuse—an Antillean schooled and raised in France since childhood: Is he French, or is he a black person? For in his mind, he could not be both. Being French was out of the question because French and whiteness were conflated; being a black Antillean was also out of the question because he was raised not on an Antillean Island but in France. Neither the French accepted him as his own, nor did the Antillean islanders.

Inferiority complex results in a lack of self-esteem and confidence. Fanon, critiquing Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban: Psychology of Colonization*, however, makes explicit that the inferiority in the dominated is not before the emergence of the colonial dominant but is a result and consequence of the dominated-dominant relationship: “Inferiorization is the native correlative to the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say: *it is the racist who creates the inferiorized.*”<sup>6</sup>

As we mentioned, it is not just the conscious aspect of the mind that gets impacted by the discourse—the unconscious gets shaped and influenced too. The dominant operates in binaries such as good versus evil, black versus white, leader versus led, hero versus follower, etc. Whatever is considered positive in these binaries and the world of the dominant gets appropriated, and the negative gets projected onto the dominated.

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<sup>5</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 73, italics in original.

These constructions and projections find their way into children's books and comics, like Tarzan, Phantom, Mandrake, etc. The child begins to identify with the consciousness of the dominant and, at the level of the unconscious, internalizes the negative constructions of its own people, civilization, culture, tradition, etc:

In the Antilles, the black schoolboy who is constantly asked to recite "our ancestors the Gauls" identifies himself with the explorer, the civilizing colonizer, the white man who brings truth to the savages, a lily-white truth. The identification process means that the black child subjectively adopts a white man's attitude. He invests the hero, who is white, with all his aggressiveness—which at this age closely resembles self-sacrifice: a self-sacrifice loaded with sadism. . . . Gradually, an attitude, a way of thinking and seeing that is basically white, forms and crystallizes in the young Antillean. . . . The fact is that the Antillean does not see himself as Negro; he sees himself as Antillean. The Negro lives in Africa. Subjectively and intellectually the Antillean behaves like a white man. But in fact he is a black man.<sup>7</sup>

What is the consequence of this? The dominated develops hatred towards one's people and consequently towards oneself. Fanon could not say it better, citing his example:

It is normal for the Antillean to be a negrophobe. Through his collective unconscious the Antillean has assimilated all the archetypes of the European. The anima of the Antillean male is always a white woman. Likewise, the animus of the Antilleans is always a white male. The reason is that there is never a mention in Anatole France, Balzac, Bazin, or any other of "our" novelists of that ethereal yet ever-present black woman or of a dark Apollo with sparkling eyes. But I have betrayed myself; here I am talking of Apollo! It's no good: I'm a white man. Unconsciously, then, I distrust what is black in me, in other words, the totality of my being.<sup>8</sup>

There is a split that occurs in one's psyche. Externally, one is the very person that the mainstream education, books, pedagogy, and media

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 170.

describe and judge—that is how others see one—and internally, through the identification with the mainstream narrative, one is constantly judging how one looks externally. In other words, the internal constitution ends up judging one's external appearance. As a result, one ends up hating oneself, reflecting the hate one is subjected to through the narrative, which essentially "others." Self-hatred is one of the major consequences of the racist discourse:

The black man is, in every sense of the word, a victim of white civilization. It is not surprising that the artistic creations of Antillean poets bear no specific mark: they are white men. To return to psychopathology, we can say that the black man lives an ambiguity that is extraordinarily neurotic. At the age of twenty—i.e., at the time when the collective unconscious is more or less lost or at least difficult to bring back to the realm of the conscious—the Antillean realizes he has been living a mistake. Why is that? Quite simply because (and this is very important) the Antillean knows he is black, but because of an ethical shift, he realizes (the collective unconscious) that one is black as a result of being wicked, spineless, evil, and instinctual. Everything that is the opposite of this black behavior is white. This must be seen as the origin of the Antillean's negrophobia. In the collective unconscious black = ugliness, sin, darkness, and immorality. In other words, he who is immoral is black. If I behave like a man with morals, I am not black.<sup>9</sup>

Self-hatred results in either assimilation or alienation. Assimilation is accentuated by the shame that one feels, as described by Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, toward one's own culture, customs, traditions, language, and philosophy, which results in the aping of the culture, language, customs, practices, and philosophy of the dominant. The disdain and hatred towards one's traditions are more or less directly proportional to the fascination that one feels towards those of the dominant. Consequently, the psychological consequences begin to be revealed in sociological behavior. The dominated then starts to become one's own enemy:

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 169.

The colonized does not seek merely to enrich himself with the colonizer's virtues. In the name of what he hopes to become, he sets his mind on impoverishing himself, tearing himself away from his true self. The crushing of the colonized is included among the colonizer's values. As soon as the colonized adopts those values, he similarly adopts his own condemnation. In order to free himself, at least so he believes, he agrees to destroy himself. This phenomenon is comparable to Negrophobia in a Negro, or anti-Semitism in a Jew. Negro women try desperately to uncurl their hair, which keeps curling back, and torture their skin to make it a little whiter. Many Jews would, if they could, tear out their souls—that soul which, they are told, is irremediably bad. People have told the colonized that his music is like mewling of cats, and his painting like sugar syrup. He repeats that his music is vulgar and his painting disgusting. If that music nevertheless moves him, excites him more than the tame Western exercises, which he finds cold and complicated, if that unison of singing and slightly intoxicating colors gladdens his eye, it is against his will. He becomes indignant with himself, conceals it from strangers' eyes or makes strong statements of repugnance that are comical. The women of the bourgeoisie prefer a mediocre jewel from Europe to the purest jewel of their tradition. Only the tourists express wonder before the products of centuries-old craftsmanship. The point is that whether Negro, Jew or colonized, one must resemble the white man, the non-Jew, the colonizer. Just as many people avoid showing off their poor relations, the colonized in the throes of assimilation hides his past, his traditions, in fact all his origins which have become ignominious.<sup>10</sup>

Beverly Daniel Tatum confirms the aforementioned psychological consequences within the context of racism alone, given that she predominantly focuses on the African American population in contemporary times. Her work begins in the framework of internalized oppression—the internalization of a stereotypical and negative discourse—and then subsequently explores the psychological consequences of internalized oppression among children, adolescents, and young adults, stating the following:

The negative messages of the dominant group about the subordinates may be internalized, leading to self-doubt or, in its extreme form, self-hate. There are many examples of subordinates attempting to make themselves

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<sup>10</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 165–66.



over in the image of the dominant group—Jewish people who want to change the semitic look of their noses, Asians who have cosmetic surgery to alter the shape of their eyes, Blacks who seek to lighten their skin with bleaching creams, women who want to smoke and drink, “like a man.” Whether one succumbs to the devaluing pressures of the dominant culture or successfully resists them, the fact is that dealing with oppressive systems from the underside, regardless of the strategy, is physically and psychologically taxing.<sup>11</sup>

Mark that the above is almost verbatim to what Memmi stated in a penultimate quote. She notes that the negative images impact the psychological development of children—as little as three years old. Negative images lead to self-rejection and a lack of self-worth. It is, therefore, a large part of her work committed to developing a positive self-image among people of color, particularly African Americans. It is in middle school that identity formation begins: at the time when the school textbooks begin pummeling the Indian American children with negative images. Research also indicates that adolescents of color are far more interested in identity issues around race than their white peers.

Tatum further says that one of the consequences of experiencing racism is that Black children, particularly the ones who are academically astute, as a coping mechanism develop *racelessness*, “wherein individuals assimilate into the dominant group by de-emphasizing characteristics that might identify them as members of the subordinate group.”<sup>12</sup> This is in addition to the oppositional stance to white identity that Black students take.

Experiencing racism, the children of non-white immigrants to the United States develop one of the following strategies: “*assimilation, withdrawal, biculturalism, and marginalization.*”<sup>13</sup> These strategies are remarkably similar to what Memmi had described above: assimilation and alienation (aka withdrawal and marginalization).

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<sup>11</sup>Tatum, “*Why Are the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*”, 26.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 139.

## Colonial-Racist Discourse's Negative Consequences on Indian American Children

When we analyze the testimonies of the Indian American children at the California State Board of Education (SBE) hearing on November 9, 2017, we find that they are articulating all the consequences that emerge from a racist discourse: feelings of inferiority, shame, self-doubt, self-rejection, self-hate, identity confusion, and lack of self-worth, self-esteem, and self-confidence. As a result, there is a tendency in them to either deny their Indian/Hindu<sup>14</sup> identity (akin to racelessness and assimilation) or withdraw and feel marginalized. Indeed, they report marginalization and bullying, which begins almost as soon as the class is exposed to the discourse on Hinduism and India. It was, therefore, they showed up in hordes at the SBE to get the representations altered. Do they fully understand where the problems are coming from? Do they know that they are being fed an archaic colonial discourse on Hinduism? Certainly not. However, given that they are on the receiving end of the consequences of the discourse, they showed up to demand change. Due to their experiences, they know something is wrong with the discourse. They expressed their views depending on their capacity to understand and articulate the nature of the problem.

The analysis of the testimonies reveals certain patterns. While the younger ones spoke about bullying or the fear of bullying, for the most part, the older ones spoke about bullying and its consequences. Among the older ones, some only stated that there were problems in the representation because of which they and their peers faced bullying, whereas others were able to get into the nature of problem as well, mainly emanating from the conflation of Hinduism and Hindus with caste, dirt, and filth—apart from Mill representing the Hindus through the prism of caste,

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<sup>14</sup>Scholars have identified that first and second-generation Indian populations privilege their cultural and ethnic identity over all other identities. For instance, R. M. George, "From Expatriate Aristocrat to Immigrant Nobody: South Asian Racial Strategies in the Southern California Context," *Diaspora* 6, no. 1 (1997): 29, writes: "The only identity that is acknowledged is the cultural and ethnic one of being no more and no less than 'Indian American.'" Sunil Bhatia, *American Karma: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Indian Diaspora* (New York: New York Press, 2007) confirms. We have, therefore, used Indian for all the students unless they identified themselves as Hindu.

hierarchy, and oppression, we would like to underline that he had spent considerable time in characterizing them as dirty which textbooks reproduce. It was students from higher grades who spoke about the psychological consequences as well as the discourse being racist and Hinduphobic. We have classified the student population into four categories for our analysis: pre-sixth grade, sixth grade, seventh and eighth grade, and between ninth and twelfth grade. Also, though most of them have articulated their names and school affiliations, we have decided not to use them despite their testimonies being part of the public record of the SBE proceedings.

### **Pre-Sixth Graders and the Fear of Getting Bullied**

The pre-sixth graders express concern and fear of getting bullied, which their elder siblings or friends have already faced. Here is a fifth grader speaking about what her sister underwent at school and what she fears that she, too, would experience if the contents were not altered:

I am a fifth grader.... My oldest sister is in ninth grade, and she learned misguided information about Hindu culture. I know many truths about Hinduism, but her classmates don't. I don't want to go through what my sister felt and read about my culture in our school. I also don't want to be teased, taunted, and bullied by my classmates due to what the textbooks will say next year.<sup>15</sup>

There is another fifth grader who is concerned about encountering what her elder peers of Indian origin have already faced or are currently undergoing. She already is grasping that the textbooks represent Hinduism as inferior to other religions and that she is going to encounter prejudice because of her Hindu faith. She states:

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<sup>15</sup> California Department of Education, "State Board of Education Meeting November 9, 2017," YouTube, November 28, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXvB6Xsci-E&list=PLgIRGe0-q7Safim1TwdTNlcV7aulbigPr&index=43>.

I am a fifth grader.... I have heard stories from some of my sixth and seventh-grade Indian-origin friends about how they were bullied in school for being a Hindu. I am worried that I will have to suffer the same fate because the textbooks incorrectly portray my religion as inferior. Religion never taught me to have negative prejudice against somebody who follows another way of life or prays to another form of God. And I expect the SBE to present Hinduism with equal respect as it has shown to other religions. Fighting with my classmates on whose religion is superior is the last thing I want to do in middle school. Can you please fix those textbooks?<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes with the teachers devising ingenious ways of teaching Hinduism to their seniors through the paradigm of caste, they find out even before getting to read the textbooks that they would be taught that Hinduism equals caste, which would not agree with their experiences of India and Hinduism. They begin to dread going to the sixth grade, fearing that their non-Hindu and non-Indian-origin friends would look down upon them. Here is the concern of one elementary school student, who perhaps still retains his Indian citizenship:

To me, my country is a place where I get together with my aunts, uncles, and grandparents and have fun. To me, my country is a beautiful place. To me my country is full of amazing and colorful cultures and traditions. But not everyone thinks of my country in this way. There was a class of sixth graders who were taught about Hinduism in this way: The teacher put a bunch of papers into a hat. Half of them said Brahmins, and half of them said untouchables. Each student picked up one piece of paper from the hat. If they were a Brahmin for the rest of the week, they could talk only to the other Brahmins, but they had to stay away from the untouchables. If they were untouchable, they had to stay away from the Brahmins. That's not what Hinduism is. When my friends learn about my religion and culture, I don't want them to think of slums and the caste system. I want them to think about the beautiful festivals and temples that fill up my country.<sup>17</sup>

The student in the above is already articulating that he would feel shame in front of his peers when his religion and culture are taught. It should

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

not be rocket science to conjecture that he and many others may develop issues surrounding self-doubt, self-worth, self-esteem, and self-confidence over a period. Indeed, there is a fourth grader who is already speaking about identity confusion, though in not as many words. She is already sensing that there is a negative portrayal in the textbooks, which she wants to be corrected:

I request you to dismiss all such drafts which promote negative impressions like my sister's textbook [who is in the sixth grade]. Let me tell you why: when my parents and my sister were discussing culture and religion and how it was described in my sister's social science book, I felt so confused and worried by how it is portrayed. We know of an older friend who came home crying because of being bullied in school after the lessons on Hinduism. I don't want my friends to look down upon me because of the unfair message the sixth-grade textbook is trying to convey. Instead of focusing on the negativity, it can focus on so many positive aspects.<sup>18</sup>

### **Sixth Graders Report Negative Portrayal**

As many as 11 sixth graders were present at the SBE hearing, and they all spoke about the negative portrayal of Hinduism. More than betraying a complete cognitive understanding of how the representation is negative, which is understandable, they articulate their felt sense or conative inkling of something being wrong with the picture. They already feel that they are being “othered” and discriminated against, and they speak about bullying. One can also see that they can decipher a connection among the negative portrayal, bullying, and hatred against Hinduism, which they are beginning to experience from their non-Hindu peers. Here is an example:

I am learning about Hinduism in class. In the current books and upcoming editions, Hinduism is very poorly represented. Photos about Hinduism are negative. It shows something near the trash. Unfortunately, I haven't seen anything positive about Hinduism in my textbook. It is common for other

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

kids in the class to look down upon me or my Hindu friends and our culture since it is misrepresented in the textbooks. It leads to bullying.<sup>19</sup>

A couple of sixth graders, however, speak about the conflation of Hinduism with the caste system, dirt, filth, and poverty. Of course, they do not know they are being fed a colonial discourse almost two hundred years old. Still, because of the consequences of the sanitized discourse on them, they recognize that the text is discriminatory. Here are their testimonies:

My school uses the McGraw-Hill text, and I am starting Ancient India and Hinduism next week in class. I went through the materials in advance and felt from the very beginning that the text made me feel discriminated against. It starts with a story about caste, something we have never discussed at home. In fact, caste doesn't impact any aspect of my life.<sup>20</sup>

I am highly flustered and alarmed about false pictures of modern India. In my class, we are learning about the caste system. My classmates happened to think that Hindus have an unfair belief in which one group has more power than others. Also, the textbook McGraw-Hill has two pictures: one is of ancient India, and the other is of modern India. I cannot tell the difference. Why, you ask? Because there is no difference, even though modern India should be displayed on a higher level. In fact, India is one of the most developed countries in Asia.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to feeling the negative consequences of the conjoining of Hinduism with the caste system, it is incredible that these sixth-grade students are already identifying the trope of "timeless India" frozen in backwardness, poverty, filth, and caste system, which Mill had meticulously crafted that is reproduced by McGraw-Hill. There was another student who, apart from mirroring the above discussion, was quite candid about the lowering of her self-esteem that the textbook materials could produce:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

This summer, I read the history textbooks...which made me feel low in esteem seeing my motherland, India, and the disgrace of its culture and Hinduism. I am worried that my friends will make jokes on my country and its religion, and they would start bullying me by keeping names. As a student and as a child, I don't want my morale to go down. How will I study in such an environment, and this could also happen to other kids? Hopefully, you all understand how bullying can affect the growing kids and their parents. My concern is when all the true facts about other civilizations are given, then why not Indian civilization?<sup>22</sup>

### **Seventh and Eighth Graders Report Contempt and Bias against Hinduism**

We analyzed the testimonies of 13 seventh and eighth graders. All of them articulate their concerns about the negative, inaccurate, derogatory, and misrepresentative portrayal of Hinduism. Some of them state that textbooks manifest and promote hatred and bias against Hinduism and report that their lived experiences of Hinduism are contrary to the textbook discourse. Showing the photocopy of one of the pictures in a textbook, which, if not critically examined, could only lead to the conflation of Hinduism with filth and dirt, a student questions in exasperation: "These books are biased. Until and unless they are driven by utmost contempt, how could anybody write such discriminating books?"<sup>23</sup> A couple of them also point out that the textbooks specifically target Hinduism, noting that whereas the other religions are idealized and shown in a positive light, Hinduism is represented in a derogatory fashion:

When I was in sixth grade prior to the Hinduism unit, I was excited to expand my knowledge about my religion. However, after reading the chapter, I was shocked to see the negative portrayal of Hinduism. This affected me personally. My peers would ask me questions about Hinduism that made me feel awkward. On a test, I wondered whether I should put the answer that matched up with my beliefs or the answers that came from the textbook. I have nothing against other religions, but as the year went on, I

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

observed that the other religions in the textbook were idealized, whereas Hinduism was described as a negative and unclean religion.<sup>24</sup>

Because of this representation, they speak about either bullying, being mocked, feeling unsafe and insecure in the environment, or all the above. They express feelings of inferiority and shame regarding their religion. They talk about their pride in their religion and culture getting hurt and the possibility of developing an inferiority complex and other psychological issues, quite akin to the consequences of racism, though none of them use the term racism.

I am here to express my concern about how derogatory and stereotypical content about our particular culture in textbooks has a long-lasting impact on the students. Students belonging to that culture are not able to understand and appreciate the richness of their own culture and end up developing an inferiority complex about it. Students from other cultures form wrong impressions and ideas about them. It severely hampers their learning process. It also encourages bullying and other bad behavior towards the students of the affected culture. Hence, it is very important for you to ensure that no hateful or biased materials find their way into the new textbooks.<sup>25</sup>

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF), in the summer/early fall of 2015, conducted a national survey among 335 Hindu American students in the grade range of 6–12 concerning their experiences at school. This was part of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI). It reports six key findings:

- One out of three respondents said they had been bullied for their religious beliefs, while about half of the total sample size indicated feelings of awkwardness or social isolation because of their religious identity.
- More than three out of five respondents said that their schools focused on caste and Hinduism, including claims about the religion and Indian social practice that have been long debunked.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



- About one in eight respondents said their teachers made sarcastic remarks about Hinduism in front of class.
- About one out of every four respondents surveyed said she/he was put on the spot or singled out by a teacher when the section on Hinduism was discussed.
- About one in four respondents said they had been bullied within the past year, with about a third saying those who bullied them were “making fun of Hindu traditions.”
- Of those who had shared anecdotes in the short answer, most highlighted a sense of alienation for being a different religion, particularly one not understood well in most U.S. classrooms or textbooks. As a result, some respondents said they hid their religious identity in order to prevent or stop bullying. As one respondent said, “After being made fun of by people I thought were friends, I didn’t tell anybody else I was Hindu so I don’t experience problems so much as I feel awkward sometimes.” Others also reported deep emotional scars from bullying incidents.<sup>26</sup>

It is general psychology that it is not easy for children to speak about their bullying experiences. It seems that most of them used the HAF report to talk about their own experiences, in all probability using the defense mechanism of displacement. However, there was one student who candidly shared his experiences of bullying as he demanded changes in the textbook:

I would like to talk about the problem of bullying of Hindu American students as a result of information in the sixth-grade education system. I suffered first-hand experience from this terrible outbreak of bullying of Hindu American students. I do not want other students to feel the pain and shame that I did. If textbooks indirectly encourage kids to call Hindus untouchables or tell them that all Indians grow up in slums, it is an injustice to the rest of the population. It is an injustice to know that many Hindus will be bullied like me, and it is certainly an injustice if other kids

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<sup>26</sup>“Classroom Subjected: Bullying & Bias Against Hindu Students in American Schools,” Hindu American Foundation, accessed February 15, 2023, [https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/HAFN\\_16\\_008-BullyingReport\\_final\\_RGB\\_r2.pdf](https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/HAFN_16_008-BullyingReport_final_RGB_r2.pdf), 1.

must feel all the wretched feelings that I had to feel, and this must change now. I advocate for all the changes that my fellow speakers have made and much more.<sup>27</sup>

There was an eighth grader who, citing the HAF report, stated that due to the negative discourse, many of her friends had disconnected from their Hindu identity. When subjected to a racist discourse, this is very similar to what, at times, non-white children, as Tatum stated above, develop as a defense mechanism against racism: assimilation and racelessness. The issue of the denial of Hindu identity progressively becomes worse as the children grow up in age.

A bullying report on Hindu American children says that one female in 12<sup>th</sup> grade “noted that her classmates had frequently tried to convert her, and instructional content only created more negative impressions of Hinduism.” She says, “Having an incomplete, brief, and completely generalized unit which only focuses on negative aspects of Hinduism does not help to dispel the persistent stereotypes. *I have seen too many friends give up on their faith and hide their Hindu identity to avoid being socially isolated.*”<sup>28</sup> *As a student, at this age, I have also seen this happen to many of my friends.*

## High School Students Point Out Racism and Hinduphobia in the Texts

The students from the ninth grade to twelfth grade spoke up against the negative portrayal of Hinduism and all the consequences that emanate from it. Given that they are more mature than the elementary and middle school students, almost all of them cited the HAF bullying report as they spoke about their own experiences of bullying and those of their Indian American peers. Some of them were astute enough to identify that there is inherent racism in the textbook depictions and that they are Hinduphobic in content. They were also not afraid to speak about the

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<sup>27</sup> California Department of Education, “State Board of Education Meeting November 9, 2017,” YouTube.

<sup>28</sup> “Classroom Subjected: Bullying & Bias Against Hindu Students in American Schools,” 8, italics ours.

negative psychological consequences—shame, low self-esteem, embarrassment, emotional scars—that they or their fellow Hindu American peers experienced due to the racist and Hinduphobic content. Here are two ninth graders calling a spade a spade and mincing no words in identifying racism and Hinduphobia that underlies the textbook discourse.

Drafts from National Geographic as well as McGraw-Hill...have blatantly racist content that promote Hinduphobia. If accepted, these books will continue to initiate bullying and create tension in schools for Hindu children. A report from the Hindu American Foundation says that one in three Hindu American children has complained of bullying based on their culture and beliefs. That is not a statistic to be proud of. I stand here in support of my fellow Hindu American children who stand victim to such hateful content.<sup>29</sup>

I felt my presence is needed here today because of the hatred, racism, and prejudice that is being instilled in today's young adults. I believe that nobody is above the law, so why do we allow such big textbook companies as Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and McGraw-Hill to break the law by discriminating against hard-working Americans just because of their race or skin color? If this is the type of learning that we are instilling into our children, no wonder they grow up to learn that just because somebody is of a different skin color, they are lower than us.<sup>30</sup>

There is another one speaking about similar issues, though in the context of the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) draft textbooks that the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) had rejected that SBE was reconsidering. This validates what we have been saying: All the textbooks emanating from the *HSS Content Standards* and *HSS Framework* have colonial and racist discourse; we took the example of McGraw-Hill only to keep the discussion from becoming unwieldy.

About one in eight people who responded to a bullying on Hindu American children survey said that their teachers had made sarcastic remarks about Hinduism in front of the entire class. A student quoted in the report

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<sup>29</sup> California Department of Education, "State Board of Education Meeting November 9, 2017," YouTube.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

mentions, “After being made fun of by people I thought were friends, I didn’t tell anybody else I was Hindu, so I don’t experience problems so much as I feel awkward sometimes.” There have also been reports of deep emotional scarring because of bullying incidents. Being a Hindu girl myself, I know that I was crushed inside when I learned information like this and when these incidents happened to me and...I am grateful to IQC for rejecting two of HMH’s programs, which are blatantly racist and Hinduphobic.<sup>31</sup>

The high school students were also more forthcoming about the psychological consequences of the discourse. This is understandable in that, developmentally, they have already begun their identity formation phase. They talk about their identity and how their identity formation is getting hurt by the colonial-racist discourse. Let us look at some of their testimonies:

I am here today to stand against the bullying of Hindu teens. The negative portrayal of Hinduism in the textbook causes one in three teens to be bullied. As teenagers, students like me try to find our identity. If students are being bullied for expressing their religion, they grow up feeling embarrassed about their beliefs and identity. We want to build a nation with confident citizens rather than ones with low self-esteem.<sup>32</sup>

In sixth grade, I was excited to learn about my culture, only to be met with ignorance and disgust from my classmates after reading the textbooks. My classmates confused Deities for demons and mocked cultural dances. In response to this behavior, I felt ostracized and ashamed of my religion. Hindu students surveyed across the United States also feel the same, experiencing awkwardness and exclusion, and they deal with depression due to this bullying.<sup>33</sup>

We quantitatively analyzed the seventy-two student testimonies also. Eighty-three percent discussed discrimination, 75 percent discussed

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

bullying, 40 percent discussed feelings of shame in their heritage, 24 percent discussed feelings of inferiority, and 18 percent discussed being mocked.

More than 80 percent of the students providing testimony were in middle or high school, had experienced the teaching of these materials directly in the classroom alongside their peers, and were speaking from that traumatic experience. If we look at this group, 74 percent reported experiencing bullying, 41 percent experienced feeling shame in their heritage, 88 percent experienced discrimination resulting from the teaching of these materials, and 20 percent were mocked for their heritage resulting from how India and Hinduism are taught relative to the glowing terms other world religions and ancient civilizations are taught.

Approximately 15 percent of the students providing testimony were in elementary school and were speaking based on their siblings' experiences as they saw and heard their brothers and sisters describe their experience at home when the materials were being taught. These students were worried about what would happen to them when they reached the sixth grade and were taught these materials. In this cohort, 82 percent reported fear of bullying, 55 percent were concerned about experiencing discrimination, 45 percent reported fear of feeling shame, and 9 percent were worried about being mocked.

The remaining students didn't specify their age or grade during their testimony but are less than 3 percent of the testimonies we analyzed.

The experience of the high school and middle school children giving testimony is different: Thirty-six middle school children were recently taught these materials, ranging from the year of their testimony to two years before the testimony date. On the other hand, high school students were taught these materials three to seven years before their testimony. Despite the time gap, the impact of the materials left such a lasting impression and ongoing experience that as many as twenty-three high school students chose to travel for hours and spend the day in Sacramento to give testimony. Similarly, the fear of experiencing these materials was so intense that eleven elementary school students also traveled to Sacramento and overcame their fear of public speaking in a formal forum to give testimony.

## Conclusion

The knowledge of Ancient India and Hinduism, which the textbooks through the curricula they receive from Education Boards, is far from objective. It has the veneer of being veritable and putative, but it is the fabrication of momentous proportions, as we saw in the earlier chapters. It comprises shadows and projections, inhering within itself profound epistemological violence. It is wholly and comprehensively racist. The reality or the truth of the situation is mired in “mystifying amnesia,” to use the words of Leela Gandhi. Colonization has made the world forget the facts of Ancient India and Hinduism.

A mere sanitization of a discourse that is blatantly colonial and racist does not take away the consequences that colonial and racist discourses are known to produce. The colonial-racist lesson that the Indian American children are being fed hits them at two levels: external and internal. On the external front, they encounter bullying, taunting, teasing, mocking, and ostracization from their peers. In the inner universe, they begin to feel shame and embarrassment about the religion and culture of their ancestors. Their identity formation begins to get affected, manifesting in lower self-esteem. Given the reports we had from the children above, the impact is so profound for many that they disconnect from their Indian roots altogether. They do not identify themselves as Hindu, if they are one, and struggle with identity issues for the rest of their lives: quite similar to assimilation and racelessness that a racist discourse is known to produce in people of color. They develop a hatred towards Hindus and Hinduism. In the case of being a Hindu, they develop hatred towards themselves, with consequences certainly not favorable—we reserve the investigation of the psychological effects on adults who disconnected from Hinduism due to the textbook discourse they encountered in grade school for a later time, though we already have a good sample size of anecdotes from adults that validate our claim.

Through a postcolonial analysis, we have made visible what is suppressed, subterranean, forgotten, and hidden. After writing the paradigm-determining text on India, James Mill became invisible because his fame and reputation got boxed between two stalwarts: Bentham and his own

son, John Stuart Mill. His invisibility, however, did not ensure that the juggernaut of a narrative that he had set in motion would not continue to crush the Indian people and people with Hindu ancestry. His legacy does not even spare children as young as ten years old. The ghosts he has left behind begin haunting the Indian American children almost as soon as they start developing cognitive abilities. These phantoms trail them and decisively influence their middle school and high school experience and, if we take the anecdotal accounts of countless Indian American adults, the rest of their lives. Racism, which is invisible and underground, is even harder to deal with, for while it is staring in the face of these Indian American children, it does not have a name. Through the journey we have taken our readers through, we have exposed the ghosts and phantoms that haunt the Indian American children. We have revealed the ugliness of the sinister container in which the discourse was framed in the nineteenth century. A mere polishing of the exterior does not take away its inherent ugliness. It profoundly affects the core of the children who have barely set their feet in the world.

It is time the concerns that the Indian American children are raising are listened to. Through the testimonies that they tendered, they have laid bare their soul as to how the “Ancient India and Hinduism” discourse is negatively impacting their lives. Curricula and textbook materials based on falsehoods cannot be allowed to promote shame, embarrassment, low self-esteem, and an inferiority complex. Schools are temples where lives are made; they cannot become dungeons where bullying and harassment occur. They cannot be places that the Indian American children dread to venture into; they do not have to kill an integral part of themselves to get educated. Schools are places where identities are formed, not decimated. It is a serious matter when nine-ten-year-olds express dread and horror at progressing further in education. We ardently hope that the organizations and publishers involved in producing the discourse on Ancient India and Hinduism will take note of our postcolonial deconstruction and engage in a course correction.

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