



British Educational Activities in Northern India: 1840 to 1841

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The emphasis on vernacular education was laid during the decade of 1840, when the General Committee of Public Instruction (GCPI) in Calcutta reviewed its policy of diffusing English education throughout the presidencies and territories under the control of British in India.¹ In Northern India, English seminary was first attached to Benares College (established in 1797) in 1830 to persuade native gentry and educated classes of Benares towards the study of English who otherwise preferred Persian. A class of Persian was attached to the English seminary in October 1832 as part of an experiment. George Nicholls, after taking charge of the English seminary in 1835, replaced the Persian class with vernacular classes of Hindi and Urdu. Nicholls's idea behind the introduction of vernacular classes to English Seminary was:

If attention to the vernacular dialects be encouraged it may be expected that at some future period those who are studying English will translate a portion of learning they acquire into the native language thus enriching them and exciting a desire amongst their countrymen for an acquaintance with a language which contains so much to enlarge the minds and to enlighten the views of those who study it.²

By 1840, under the directive of GCPI, the same model of attaching vernacular classes to the English seminary was extended to the schools stationed in North Western and Central Province. The school at the British station in Sagar (central provinces), headed by Rao Krishna Rao (son of the hereditary Diwan of the principality of Sagar) had three independent departments of Persian, Marathi, and Hindi before the establishment of English seminary in the year 1835. This English seminary established at Sagar School was without any teacher and in order to make English classes functional Rao Krishna Rao managed to take on board one English master, Mr. Derozio, who accompanied him from Calcutta to teach the rudiments of English literature at Sagar School. However, after few days of residence at the Sagar

¹The decade of 1830 was marked by the zeal of the GCPI to promote English medium education amongst Indians. By 1840s the emphasis shifted to vernacular education and translating English texts into the vernacular languages of India. For further details on this shift of policy, see *Short Essays and Reviews on the Educational Policy of the Government of India, As Expounded by the Hon. Sumner Maine, D.C.L, Sir Donald Friel Macleod, C.B, K.C and the Late Lord Macaulay*. (Calcutta: The Englishman Press, 1886,) 124; Appendix I, 1-7. For recent studies on British education policy of the given period, see, Zastoupil, Lynn. Moir, Martin. Ed. *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy 1781-1843*. (London: Routledge. 2013).

²Nicholls to Sutherland, WBSA 11th January 1834 to 23rd December 1837 Vol. 9 part 2. Sl.no 13/2. 277. LCPI at Benares was repeatedly making the observation that there were very few Hindustani pupils in the College who can write their own language with anything like orthographic or syntactical correctness.

station, Mr. Derozio decided to move back to Calcutta, as he could not find a safe footing at the Sagar Station.³ His departure resulted in the appointment of an incompetent master, Ram Chunder, to teach English language and the rudiments of European scientific knowledge to the students of the school. In 1837, the number of pupils in English seminary was 28, while the Hindi department of the school had 122 pupils divided into six classes. The studies of the most advanced pupils in Hindi department consisted of *Subha Bilas*,⁴ geography, arithmetic, and astronomy. The school was suffering from shortage of books hence some of the first books in Hindi were compiled by the initiative of Rao Krishna Rao. The list of Hindi books prepared at the schools was as follows:

Hindi Books at Sagar School	Copies
The Hindee Primer	400 copies
Mr. Rowe's Hindustani Spelling Book third edition first printed in 1833	300 copies
Fables in Hindustanee for the use of schools. Second edition	100 copies
Betal Pachessa	20 copies
Pearson's Geography and Astronomy	30 copies
Treatise on the Globe	50 copies
Arithmetic	50 copies

A globe for the use of the students of Hindi prepared by Rao Krishna Rao in 1836 has been listed below:

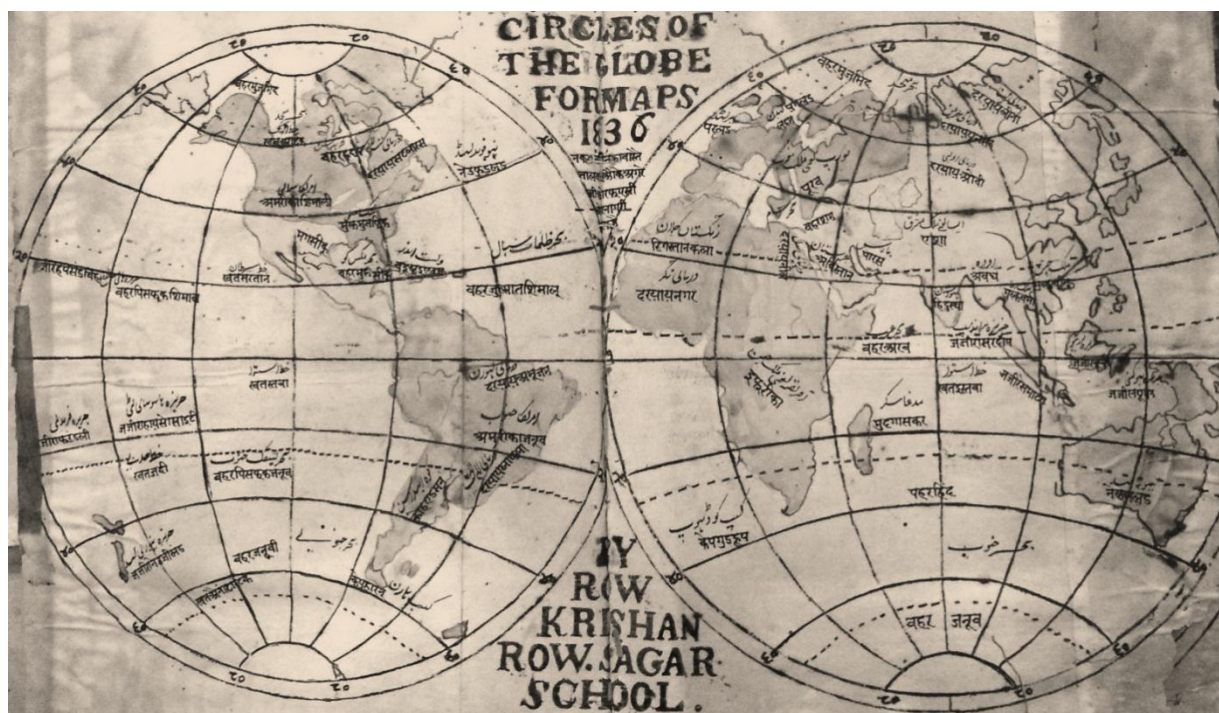


Fig.1

³Not the Derozio of Hindoo College, Calcutta.

⁴Editor's Note (herein after called Ed. N.): A collection of stanzas on various subjects in Hindi.

In the same year some students of Hindi, under the instruction of Ram Chunder and Rao Krishna Rao, prepared texts in Hindi on astronomy, geography, and mathematics. The name of the students who compiled these texts were Omrao, Veju Marathe, Bharo Prasad. These Hindi texts were prepared both in verse (using *mataric*⁵ meter and of *chupae*,⁶ *saviya*,⁷ etc.) and prose were based on the knowledge of the European science as understood by the compilers. The whole exercise was intended to teach the students of Hindi that earth rotates around the sun and other such facts; contrary to the astronomical and geographical notions found in the Siddhanta⁸ texts popularly studied by the educated classes especially, the Pandits of this region.⁹ By 1840, these independent activities at the Hindi department of the Sagar School and defective translations of the knowledge contained in the English books began to alarm the GCPI. In consequence, the GCPI on September 1840 supplied to the school the following vernacular books printed at the Agra School Book Society for use instead:

Books in Persian Character	Books in Nagree Character
History Russell's Translated in Urdu First Geography of Natives in Urdu Urdu Spelling Book	Bhugol Darpan in Hindee Brief Account of Solar System Marshman's Brief Survey of the Ancient History English Irregular and Depart Verbs

The overtly cautious attitude of GCPI at Calcutta towards the faults of Siddhantic system of astronomy and geography were based on the feedback it received from two important authorities on the native education in North Western and Central Provinces, Lancelot Wilkinson and H.T Prinscep.¹⁰ The first class book of Hindi, *Bhugol Darpan: A Comparison of the Puranic and Siddhantic Systems of Astronomy With that of Copernicus* by Onkar Bhut of Sehore, published under the authority of Agra School Book Society, Agra Press, 1841, was a very carefully compiled book.¹¹ The book was in the form of a dialogue

⁵Ed. N.: English vowel equivalent in Hindi.

⁶Ed. N.: a quatrain verse of Indian poetry, especially medieval Hindi poetry, that uses a metre of four syllables.

⁷Ed. N.: a Hindi quatrain of dactylic structure and each line include seven feet.

⁸A Sanskrit term denoting the established and accepted view of any particular school within Indian Philosophy.

⁹By the region I mean Maratha, Central Provinces, and Benares where Siddhanta texts were popularly studied till the first half of the Nineteenth century. However, the geographical imagination of the world contained in a set of Buddhist and Puranic texts was popular throughout Asia or Jambudvipa. Until the Nineteenth century, even the Japanese Buddhists envisioned a world system in which India was the centre, China was located at the periphery and Japan was an even more isolated territorial entity. In the Siddhantic model of the cosmos the earth is a fixed, non-rotating sphere at the centre of a series of interesting spheres around which the sun, moon, and the various planets and stars revolve around the earth. In this model the planets are ranged above the earth in this order: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and all the stars. In this model the diameter of the earth is calculated to be about 1600 *yojanas*. For further details, see Axel Michaels. *The Pandit Traditional Scholarship in India*. (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2001), 81.

¹⁰See *The Best Means of Promoting Vernacular Education*. WBSA (50) General Committee of Public Instruction Vernacular Classes, 1840-1842. Vol. 6 (A), 141-191.

¹¹Sehore was an important education centre located in the Central Province where the collusion between European scientific knowledge and Sanskrit sources occurred in the first half of the 19th century, under the supervision of Lancelot Wilkinson. For Wilkinson's intervention among the Pandits and his activities at Sehore Sanskrit Pathasala, see Richard Fox Young. "Receding From Antiquity: Indian Responses to Science and Christianity On The Margins Of Empire". 1997, *Kokusaigaku-Kenkyu* 16 (Meji Gakuin Ronso 595), 241-74; Micheal S. Dodson. *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture India, 1770-1880*. (New York: Palgrave

between a teacher and a student, comparing the Copernican notions with the Siddhanta texts of Bhaskaracharya, where the author acknowledged the authority of European knowledge over the geography of the world. The central argument that established the superiority of European scientific knowledge over the Siddhantic texts was that of the brave European sailors, who had revolved around the earth in their ships, had consequently proved that earth is round.¹² The process of integrating western knowledge with Siddhantic texts was taken further by another *Pandit*¹³ of Sehere, Bapu Deva Shastri.¹⁴ He joined Benares Sanskrit College in 1842 as a professor of natural philosophy.¹⁵

In January 1841, an observer from GCPI, Calcutta, visited the school and was surprised by the advancement made in English and vernacular education at 'this distant station.' After his return to Calcutta, GCPI on 29th January, 1841 directed the LCPI,¹⁶ in charge of the Sagar School to make certain changes in the management of school, so as to place it in accordance with the larger plan for native education.¹⁷ The proposed changes for the school were sanctioned by the Governor General in Council. In consequence, to these changes, Hindi department of the school was discontinued as a separate department. Rao Krishna Rao was relieved from his position as the superintendent of the Sagar School, his salary was reduced to the scale proposed for a head vernacular teacher (Rs 80), and he was transferred to Jabalpur.¹⁸ The Hindi department of the school was placed in the same discipline as English under the superintendence of a European master whose salary was increased to Rs. 300. In the same year, scheme of scholarship was introduced according to which a junior scholar of the school was allowed to be sent to the Benares Central College. The students opting for scholarship were required to read with grammatical facility and correctness, a piece of English prose selected from Dryden, Swift, Addison, or Johnson; in history, a knowledge of the leading facts of the histories of Rome, Greece, England, and India; in geography, an understanding of the general form of the Earth, its division into quarters, the division of quarters into countries, the name of the capital, principal cities of each country, the principle mountains and rivers; a grammatical knowledge of *Hindustanee*

Macmillan, 2007); Joydeep Sen. *Astronomy In India* (New York: Routledge, 2016). For his political activities see, Shaharyar M. Khan. *A Dynasty Of Women Rules In Raj India*. (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 2000).

¹²The establishment of the superiority of European authorities in the 19th century was not a phenomenon restricted only to India. In Japan the accumulation of western geography, especially its notions of a spherical earth rotating around the sun, presented a powerful challenge to traditional Buddhist representation. Japanese authors, however, chose to integrate western elements and information within the old geographical framework as much as possible. See Tansen Sen. Ed. *Buddhism Across Asia*. New Delhi: Manohar Publisher and Distributors. 2014, 266-7.

¹³*Ed. N.*: a Hindu scholar learned in Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy and religion, typically also a practising priest.

¹⁴For life and works of Bapu Deva Sastri see Baldeva Upadhyaya. *Kasi Ki Panditya Parampara*. (Varanasi: Visvavidyalaya Prakasan, 1983), 187-199 (in Hindi).

¹⁵In the words of German philosopher Hegel, the Newtonian physics was called natural philosophy in Great Britain. See, Norbert Waszek. *The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of 'Civil Society'*. (London: Kluwer Academic Publisher. 1988), 135.

¹⁶*Ed. N.*: Local Committee of Public Instruction (LCPI).

¹⁷The larger plan as propagated by Lancelot Wilkinson for Central and Northern India, pitched for a very careful transmission of European knowledge amongst the Indian subjects by also teaching them what was good and useful in their own system. Hence, he suggested a rereading of the traditional India sources in accordance with the European scientific methodology. The publication of the book by Onkar Bhutt and the appointment of Bapu Deva Sastri as previously mentioned were in concurrence with this plan.

¹⁸Jabalpur station school of the company was also established in 1840 at the cost of Rs. 3000. English department of the Jabalpur School contained 38 students and classes were divided into two (junior/ senior) under head master R. Stewart. The number of pupils recorded in the vernacular department attached with English department of the school was 124 with an increase of 2 out of which 9 were Muslims and 115 Hindus.

or *Bengali*¹⁹ with an ability to translate it correctly from English into the vernacular and from the vernacular into English. The scholarship entitled was Rs. 30 for the first two years and Rs. 40 for the next four years.

Unlike Sagar, Allahabad was more of an urban and important administrative centre for North-western Provinces with Suddar Ahaulat and Suddar Board of Revenue placed there. In 1841, English classes at the Allahabad School had 7 Christian, 15 Muslim, and 62 Hindu students. The English class was engaged in pursuing Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Poetical Reader no-4, Goldsmith's *History of England*, Cliff's *Political Economy*, Luchman's *Element's of Logic*, Euclid's *Elements*, Algebra, Natural Philosophy, Geometry, and the use of globe along with the composition and translation into the vernacular. Nagari (Hindi) and Urdu classes were attached to the English department in 1841. On 18th February 1841, GCPI sanctioned to give scholarship to the pupils of Allahabad school for Benares Central College on the same criteria as for the students of the Sagar School mentioned above.

In October 1841, an examination was conducted at the Allahabad school on Indian history and the following set of questions and answers were placed before the students:

History

1. Is the Sanskrit language supposed to have sprung from the vernacular or the vernacular dialects from the Sanskrit? {Answer- The vernacular dialect from Sungscrit} (sic)
2. Is the religion which now prevails in India similar to that which was originally introduced by the Brahmuns? If not in what respect is it different? {The religion which the Brahmuns introduced did not teach the Hindus to worship idols.} (sic)
3. Where are the Great War take place and between whom? {In Cachutre between Pandwas and Koruas} (sic)
4. What is said to have induced Vyas to compose the Mahabharat? {Because Calidas the poet wrote Ramayain} (sic)
5. Are the Hindus of the present day essentially different from those of ancient times and give your authority for your answers? {Because the customs which pervaded in ancient time are at present in full length in India.} (sic)
6. Against what Mahometan General did Boppa defends Hillore? {Inhumud bin Kasim} (sic)
7. What Mahometan conqueror established the Mohametan rule in the N.West? {Inhumud Gharey and chiefly his general Qutab.} (sic)
8. What dynasty subdued the Deccans? {Thilligy dynasty}(sic)
9. In whose time did the provinces of Malva-Goozerat, Khandesh, Jaunpore revolt? {In the reign of Muhammd Tagluek} (sic)
10. Which of the province of India submitted in the most dastardly manner to the Mohemetan yoke and who added it to their territory? {Bengal by Bukhtyar.} (sic)
11. What King gave encouragement to the Affghans and who was the first of that race to sit on the throne of Delhi? {Feroze Tugluk and Belol Lody was the first of that dynasty to sit on the throne of Delhi.} (sic)
12. Who was the last Hindu King of Delhi? {Prithviraj} (sic)
13. Who attempted to remove the Mahometan capital of India to Dergurh and what induced the futile attempt? {Julung as he went to conquer the deccan}.²⁰ (sic)

¹⁹*Ed. N.*: Indian Vernacular languages.

²⁰WBSA, GCPI Correspondence Gazipur and Allahabad School 3rd January 1840 to 18th December 1841. Vol.

Another important question that was placed before the students of the Allahabad school for the prize giving essay competition was, “Whether the condition of the people of Hindustan was better at the time the country was under the *Mughal*²¹ dominion or whether it is better under the present time under the English rule”.²² This essay while criticising monarchical structure of state, manners, and customs of ruling elite, subjugated condition of women and fractured rule of law under the *Mughal* dominion, elucidated the form of government under British in following words:

All foreign governments are evils, consequently the people inhabiting the conquered country show a preference for those conquered who do not wish to govern their opinion that is who allows them to live and act in the same manner as if they were independent who do not prevent them from following anyone religion in preference to another but only interfere in such cases where the security of life and property is concerned.²³

The English medium instruction at Gazipur school and Azimgarh College was under Mr. Fowles and Mr. Fink, respectively. After the introduction of English Education at Gazipur in 1839, the English classes had 153 pupil divided into seven classes. The senior class consisted of twelve pupils who were taught passages from Pope's works, Homer's *Iliad*, Shakespeare's plays, Bacon's essay, Milton's first book of *Paradise Lost*, Goldsmith's essay and history of Greece. On 17th April, 1841 GCPI nominated Mr. Roberts to officiate as head master of Gazipur school during the absence of Mr. Fowles. Two months' salary of Rs. 300 was paid to Mr. Roberts in advance when he left Calcutta on 20th April through the Magna Streamer. Under Mr. Roberts, history of Greece, Rome, England, and India were translated from English to Urdu.

In Azimgarh College at the end of 1838 there were 70 scholars on the list of the school and at the close of 1839, the school had 223 scholars divided into three departments: the vernacular, Sanskrit, and English. These scholars were subdivided into 6 classes and these classes were further subdivided in two or more divisions each. The studies of these scholars included a greater emphasis on translation from English since 1840. The 1841 report of the school mentioned that the books for the use of school were already under print and Mr. Fink was preparing a work on physics in Urdu and he published every fortnight an Urdu Akhbar with a circulation of about 200 copies in Azimgarh and neighbouring districts ranging as far as Allahabad and Saharanpur.

However, while outlining the attitude of the educated classes in Azimgarh towards Urdu, Fink observed that, all members of the educated classes in Azimgarh preferred Arabic and Persian as part of the liberal education and considered essential to the advancement in life (especially Persian). Urdu was looked upon as a newly formed imperfect dialect, a key to knowledge of no kind and so easy that it could be acquired only by use in writing and conversation. Though Urdu had adherence in poetry but that for Fink, was of very little use in schools. The general opinion towards English language, according to Fink, was similar to that

no. 35. Sl. No. 32/99, 331 to 349.

²¹The Mughal or Mogul Empire was an empire in the Indian subcontinent (early Sixteenth century to mid Nineteenth century).

²² *ibid*, 71.

²³ *ibid*, 71.

on Urdu. "It was looked as the meagre language, the repository of no literature or science and the reason why anyone was studying it was to obtain a respectable employment in some court."²⁴

The scheme of studies carried out at Azimgarh in 1840 was as follows:

Classes	No. of boys	Studies
First Class Div. I	8	English Reader from page 54 to 84. History of India from page 16 to 51. The Azimgarh Reader from pages 1 to 31. Syntactical exercises and composition. Geography - a course on the quarters. Arithmetic - studied vulgar fractions. Algebra- to the case I in simple equations. Geometry - Thirty five practical problems and the menstruation of planes as will be seen from the accompanying diagrams and enunciations. Natural Philosophy- the whole of mechanics and parts of hydrostatics, optics and astronomy.
Div. II	7	Urdu Bagho Bahar - part of the Urdu translation of the Bahar Danish and Gilchrist's Rasalah. Arithmetic with the I division. Astronomy-the first chapter of a work on the Copernican system entitled the Muflah-al-aflak. Geography - Asia and Hindustan.
Second Class Div. I	12	English Reader no. I from pages 21 to 48. The Azimgarh Reader from pages 1 st to 31. Syntactical exercise and composition. Geography - with 1 st class. Arithmetic - div. 1 double rule of three, div. 2 single rule of three. Geometry and natural philosophy with 1 st class.
Div. II	4	The Mufid-ul-sibian or Urdu Reader the whole and the Urdu Bagobahar. Arithmetic - as far as the double rule of three. Geography - Asia and Hindustan.
Third Class Div. I	10	Finished the English Instruction no. 1 and read 45 pages of the English reader no. 1. Syntactical exercise and composition. Geography - Asia and Hindustan. Arithmetic - section 1 compound division, section 2 simple division.
Div. II Div. III	17 18	Finished the Mufid-ul-sibian or Urdu Reader and half of Butler's Outline of Ancient Misery. Arithmetics - as far as the single rule of three. Geography-Asia and Hindustan. Finished the natural history of Lions in Hindi- exercises in grammar and composition. English Arithmetic as far as single division. Hindi Arithmetic as far as the Ghutta table. Geography -Hindustan.

²⁴See, WBSA, GCPI Correspondence Azimgarh and Gorakpur Schools 6 Jan 1840- 29 Dec 1841 Serial No. 34/101. p-505.

Fourth Class Div. I	21	The English Instruction to 32 pages. Syntactical exercise and composition. Arithmetic - section 1 multiplication, section 2 numeration. Geography - Asia and Hindustan
Div. II	16	Finished Muatakhhab-ul-naswak and half of the Kholdsat-ul-nasdiah. Arithmetic - as far as simple division. Geography- Asia
Div. III	24	Read 3 passage of the natural history of the Bear - exercises and composition. Arithmetic - as far as Arhya table.
Fifth Class Div. I	29	Some have just commenced the Muntakhab-ul-nasdiak and others the alphabet. Arithmetic - numeration. Geography - Asia.
Div. II	36	Studying the Hindi alphabet. Arithmetic the Pahara table.
Sixth Class Sanskrit Class }	26 37	Studying the Hindi alphabet. Studying some the Joytish Shastra and Lilavati and some the Byakaran and Kavyas.

The activities of these schools were received with great amusement and excitement by native residents and school authorities were also eager to invite local elites to attend annual prize distribution ceremonies. For instance, on 4th January, 1840 *Zamindars*²⁵, *Mahajans*²⁶ of Gazipur and surrounding areas were invited to witness the performance of students at the annual prize distribution ceremony of Gazipur school and they arrived in great numbers, though the ceremony was conducted in English which made them disinterested in its proceedings, yet Rs 137 was distributed for the best specimen of writing and calligraphy in English. Similarly, Azimgarah station had a branch school at Atraulia affiliated to the Azimgarah College.²⁷ The branch school was established at Atraulia located on the *Awadh*²⁸ border with about 60 pupils by Mr. G. Norton in 1840 and was largely attended by the boys of surrounding villages. The annual examination of this branch school was conducted on 19th January, 1841 in presence of Captain Thomason Engineer, principal Sudder Amen of Gazipur, 9 deputy collectors, 4 *Moonsiffs*, 9 *Zamindars*, and about 2000 landholders both European and natives of Azimgarah and neighbouring districts and of the adjoining *Awadh* territory along with numerous native spectators. On this day the school received a donation of Rs. 720 with an additional subscription of Rs. 71 from the present dignitaries. These donations enabled the school to procure a number of books and philosophical instruments for the use of students.

Conclusion

The growth of vernacular education under English departments at the educational institutions under British government began by 1840s and had a long lasting impact in the creation and shaping of native intelligentsia in later decades of the 19th century. Bapoo Deva Sastri's appointment as the professor of Natural Philosophy was a very important event in the history of education in Northern India because he challenged the modern European science after the mutiny of 1857 by claiming that differential calculus was known to the ancient Indian mathematicians much before Newton. At Benares College, Bapoo Deva was

²⁵*Ed. N.*: a landowner, especially one who leases his land to tenant farmers.

²⁶*Ed. N.*: a moneylender.

²⁷38.5 Km Northwest of Azimgarah.

²⁸*Ed. N.*: nown in British historical texts as Audh or Oude, is a region in the modern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (before Indian independence, it was known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh) and a small area of Nepal's Province No. 5.

succeeded by Sudhakar Divedi (1860-1910) who wrote treatises on the differential and integral calculus in Hindi and made similar claims apart from being a stern advocate of Hindi and Nagari against Urdu.²⁹ Harish Chandra (1850-1885) was aware of this claim and has written jubilantly about ancient Indian wisdom. Moreover, the propagation and promotion of Hindi and Nagari script was championed by Harish Chandra and his *Mandali*³⁰ (famously known as Bharatendu *Mandali*), who produced the first corpus of modern Hindi literature 1870 onwards in connection with the schools and colleges established under GCPI as students and teachers. George Grierson in *Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan* (1883) assessed the impact of GCPI's policy of imparting European scientific knowledge through vernacular languages on the native intellect in following words:

Other authors of a younger generation, of whom one of the greatest happily still alive, endowed with a wider and more catholic mental vision, no longer bounded by the horizon of Puranic cosmology, came to the front, and the benefit done to the intellect of Hindustan by such men as Raja Shiva Prasad and Harish Chandra cannot easily be calculated.³¹

²⁹See Mangal Deva Shasrtri. Ed. *The Chalarasikalana Part-I*. (Benares: Jananmandal Yantralaya, 1941), 2.

³⁰Ed. N.: Troupe.

³¹See George Grierson. *Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan*. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 889), 108.

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