

“They all belong to the school of Adam Smith”: The dissemination of Adam Smith’s ideas in Calcutta in the nineteenth century¹

Adam Smith’s influence in the colonial British Empire needs to be investigated further, and it was for this reason I chose to investigate the reception of Smith’s ideas in Calcutta during the nineteenth century. When I first began my work on the project, I examined various avenues of archival research through which I could trace this influence. If I could find sources, printed or otherwise, to substantiate my research, I hoped it would throw light on the history of economic thought in colonial Bengal. The question of dissemination of Enlightenment ideas into India, especially at the level of medium and low thought, could also be answered, to an extent, through such avenues. I wanted to know how Adam Smith, whose *The Wealth of Nations* (hereafter *WN*) contains a remarkably sympathetic portrayal of the depredations by the East India Company in Bengal, appealed to Indian intellectuals in the age of imperialism.

I want to make a quick clarification at this point. In the Indian context, public discourse is never merely elite, intellectual discourse; that is, it deals with the “thought and culture of highly educated people.”² C.A. Bayly makes this point compellingly in his seminal work, *Empire and Information*³. The question of class hierarchies in intellectual history is a thorny one. But India’s, and especially Bengal’s, intellectuals are almost always referred to as belonging to the “middle-class,” the *madhyabitta-bhadralok*, irrespective of the immense actual disparities in their economic and social means and mobilities, and this needs closer

¹ “Hindoo Liberals”, *The Englishman*, May 1836. Reprinted in the *Asiatick Journal*, Vol. 21, Pgs. 223-224. This study was funded by a research grant from the History Project and the Institute for New Economic Thinking.

² Nell Irwin Painter, *Interchange*. “The Practice of History”. *The Journal of American History*, 90 (2003), p. 591. Quoted by Emma Rothschild, “Arcs of Ideas: International History and Intellectual History”. *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, ed. Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad and Oliver Janz, Göttingen, 2006, pp.222.

³ Bayly, C.A. *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

examination. “Middle-class,” in the colonial Indian, especially Bengali, context, is an aspirational ideology with its own set of intellectual ethics. As such, medium and low thought, as evident in mediums and genres of exchanges of information such as newspapers, broadsheets and textbooks, are as much representational of intellectual thought, as is high-level discourse embodied in the classic works of nationalist economics by pioneers such as Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji and Romesh Chunder Dutt.

The following methods of inquiry seemed to be the most likely to yield results in my search:

1. I wanted to see if Smith’s *WN* was ever published in Calcutta, through an Indian press. I also wanted to find out if any translations of Smith were ever made into Bengali or Hindustani, and at what date such a translation could have been made, and what the historical context would signify. Surprisingly, I could not find any such translations mentioned in the contemporary catalogues of libraries and knowledge societies.

2. I tried to find if there were textbooks on political economy that were being written and how Smith’s ideas were being disseminated in Bengal through colonial pedagogy. This yielded better results. For example, if one searches the partial bibliography of Bengali books published between 1801-1867, prepared by the School of Cultural Texts and Records, Jadavpur University, at least seven books on “commerce” or “trade” can be traced.⁴ These are the books mentioned:

i. *Specimens of native accounts* in 1820.

ii. *Arthabyabahaar* (Treatise on Money) by Rajkrishna Roychowdhury in 1863.

⁴ Bibliography System and Location Register of Bengali Books, 1801-1867. Stable URL: <<http://www.compcon-asso.in/projects/biblio/welcome.php?redirect=/projects/biblio/index.php>>. Accessed: 05/12/2014.

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iii. *Byabsayik byabahar* (Treatise on Commerce) and *Jamīdārī darśan arthāt jamīdārī ebam mahājanī sam kranta hisābādir niyam* (The philosophy of landlords, or the rules of keeping accounts for land-holdings and usury), both by Kaliprasanna Sengupta, published in 1865.

iv. *Dhan Bidhan* by Gopal Chandra Dutta published in 1862. This list does hint that there was a lively interest in political economy and commerce in colonial Calcutta.

One of the earliest mentions of Adam Smith that I could find was with respect to a group of students at the Hindu College, later the Presidency College. These students, most from higher caste backgrounds, but with varying socio-economic class-status, came under the influence of their extraordinary teacher, a 17-year-old Anglo-Indian poet called Henry Louis Vivian Derozio.⁵ Derozio introduced his students to the radical, liberal strand of Western political ideas. The efflorescence of Bengali culture in the nineteenth century, often called the “Bengal Renaissance,” can be traced to Ram Mohan Roy and his followers as well as to this group of Derozians, who in their later lives made significant contributions to Indian political and socio-cultural reforms. The Derozians were discussed avidly in the Indian press, both vernacular and English. The title of this report is taken from one such article in the conservative English periodical, *The Englishman*, which offers an insight into the kind of ideas that were circulating in Calcutta. The article, titled “The Hindoo Liberals” is worth quoting at some length:

“With respect to the questions relative to political economy they all belong to the school of Adam Smith. They are clearly of opinion that the system of monopoly, the restraints upon trade, and the international laws of many countries, do nothing but paralyze the efforts of

⁵ For more on Derozio, see Thomas Edwards. *Henry Derozio: The Eurasian poet, teacher and journalist*. Calcutta: W. Newman and Co., 1884. In his last public appearance in December 1831, before his untimely death at the age of 23, Derozio promised to deliver a course of lectures at Doveton, a private college in Calcutta, on “...on Law and Political Economy, with a view of qualifying the Doveton’s pupils to avail themselves of the judicial situations which had so recently been opened to East Indians.” Pg. 161.

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industry, impede the progress of agriculture and manufactures, and prevent commerce from flowing in its natural course. The science of mind is also their favourite study. The philosophy of Dr Reid, Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown, being perfectly of a Baconian nature, comes home ‘to their business and bosoms’.”⁶ (Emphasis mine)

The man who introduced Political Economy as a subject to be taught to school students in Bengal was the Scottish missionary Alexander Duff, who became one of the most influential members of the Anglicist faction in the immediate aftermath of the decisive changes in British colonial pedagogy introduced by the adoption of the suggestions made by Thomas Babington Macaulay in his famously controversial Minute on Education in 1835. One of the major reasons behind Macaulay’s advocacy of English pedagogy was, as he said in the Minute, “English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. *It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East.*”⁷ Duff’s interest in pedagogy as a means of propagating Christianity and Macaulay’s stated aim coincided in a way which led to the introduction of political economy as a discipline worthy of study in the new type of Indian schools which favoured English language and Western modes of knowledge, like the ones set up by Duff in Calcutta. Duff’s biographer George Smith wrote that Duff felt the need to have “competent lay teaching of lay subjects” because “the acute but imitative Bengalee intellect had not sufficiently been trained” in such subjects. Duff found a competent assistant in his fellow

⁶ “Hindoo Liberals”, *The Englishman*, May 1836. Reprinted in the *Asiatick Journal*, Vol. 21, Pgs. 223-224.

⁷ “Minute by the Hon’ble T.B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835”. Stable URL: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html. Accessed 06/12/2014.

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passenger on the ship to Calcutta, a certain Mr. Clift, who was “highly educated and well-read, especially in the then little studied science of political economy”.⁸

Alexander Duff had been a student of Thomas Chalmers, the great Scottish churchman and political economist, who taught at St. Andrews University. With Clift as an assistant teacher at his school in Calcutta, Duff planned a project for the writing of an elementary textbook on political economy, “. . . more elementary than the writings of Adam Smith and J.R.

McCulloch.” The introduction of the scientific study of political economy would, Duff hoped, help to combat “the social exclusiveness, the commercial apathy, the industrial antipathy, which marked the Hindoos”.⁹ Clift wrote the manual, and apparently it became very popular. According to George Smith, Duff’s biographer, Duff’s school, The General Assembly’s Institution in Jorasanko, which catered to middle and upper class Bengalee boys, was the first in which political economy was taught in India. The project however led Duff into some trouble with his superiors in Scotland, as, “So little had political economy been mastered in the land of Adam Smith and in the kirk of Thomas Chalmers, that the committee condemned the enthusiastic missionary, when he joyfully reported his success, for teaching a subject, which the monopolist government of the East India Company might confound with politics!”¹⁰ It seems that Adam Smith’s ideas were considered radical and dangerous, especially in the way *WN* dealt with the depredations of the East India Company in India in the last three decades of the 18th century. The enthusiastic reception of Smith amongst the young colonized Indian subjects was viewed with great suspicion by the English press, the conservative older generation of Hindu elites among the nascent Indian intelligentsia, and

⁸ George Smith. *The life of Alexander Duff, D.D., L.L.D.* New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1879. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Pgs.132-135.

⁹ *Ibid.* Pg. 135.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Pg. 135-36.

among the colonial administration as well as the missionary societies in both England and Scotland.

What did Horace William Clift's manual on political economy actually contain? How was the subject being introduced to Bengali school-boys? First published by the Baptist Mission Press at Calcutta in 1835, and sold by Thacker and Spinck Co., the book had gone through four editions by 1846. By the 4th edition, the book was being printed by the Calcutta Schoolbook Society's Press. The actual title of the book was *Elements of Political Economy: Designed as a Manual for Education*. In the preface, Clift laid down the reasons as to why it was desirable that the subject be taught to young men, primarily because he felt every man of genuine learning needed to have a clear understanding of the principles behind the working of "Rents, profits, wages, taxes, and so on." For Clift, the reason was obvious. No man could "avoid topics, so clearly woven with all his own interests."¹¹ Of his intellectual debts, Clift is very clear as well – "If any who are familiar with Malthus and MacCulloch and Smith should occasionally find passages almost verbatim from these writers, they must recollect this acknowledgment and justification. Such passages are not numerous but they are sometimes unaccompanied with references when authority seemed of no service."¹² There are 26 mentions of "Doctor Smith" in the 268-pagebook. He is quoted verbatim in the chapters on the division of labour, exchange, wages and the accumulation of capital. Clift quotes Smith's *WN*, Book 1, Chapter 1, quite liberally in these chapters of his book – especially the example of the "pin manufacture" and of the worker in the pin factory.¹³ For Clift, there had been no improvement on Smith's original exposition on the division of labour theory – "Doctor Smith

¹¹ Horace William Clift. *Elements of Political Economy: Designed as a Manual for Education*. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1835. Cf. "Preface". Pgs. iv-vi.

¹² Ibid. Pg. v.

¹³ Ibid. Pg. 56-57.

has treated this subject in a masterly style and succeeding writers have done little more than repeat his remarks.”¹⁴

The closest Clift gets to making a political observation on the state of governance in the Indian colony also comes with his use of Smith’s principles to talk of the East India Company’s policies in their Indian domains. Clift obliquely refers to the condition of the Indian landholding classes and their estates as a result of the Permanent Settlement by referring to Smith’s opinion on the improvements wrought on agriculture by the accumulation of capital, which in turn could be brought about only with the expansion of free trade: “Such as have been depicted were formerly the actual manners of landholders in England; such also have been the course and means of their improvement: and it is not a little remarkable how exactly Doctor Smith's description of the state itself, applies to wealthy natives in this country, and how probable it appears that a similar alteration will be effected amongst them by the very same agency.”¹⁵ Again he went on to quote Smith, “It is the highest impertinence and presumption in kings and ministers, says Doctor Smith, to pretend to watch over the economy of private people and control their expenditure either by sumptuary laws or by prohibiting the importation of foreign luxuries.”¹⁶ Clift dryly goes on to say, “The precepts and reproaches of Dr. Smith are well applied.”

Clift was writing the book in the immediate aftermath of the Renewal of the Charter of the East India Company in 1833 (The St. Helena Act or Govt. Of India Act 1833), that ended the activities of the British East India Company as a commercial body, in which the Company lost its monopoly on trade with China and other parts of the Far East and became a purely administrative body. The Free-trade lobby in Britain, which had first emerged as a formidable

¹⁴ Ibid. Pg. 61.

¹⁵ Ibid. Pg. 129.

¹⁶ Ibid. Clift, pg. 137. Clift is of course quoting Smith in the WN, vol. 1, bk.2, ch. 3.

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opponent during the 1813 renewal of the EIC charter, (and helped Wilberforce in opening India up to Christian evangelical proselytizing), had gained a decisive victory over the monopolistic policies of the Company in its Indian empire. The new hope of a more liberal government, combined with the age of social and political reform initiated by Lord Bentinck and Ram Mohun Roy and his followers, as well as the rise of the new class of indigenous Indian entrepreneurs like Dwarkanath Tagore, who seized this opening up of the Indian market, to gain immense economic influence which in turn resulted in political influence, created an atmosphere charged with possibilities of new kinds of partnerships between Britain and India. With this background in mind, suddenly it becomes very clear why and how deeply Smith's ideas permeated the new discourse on free trade in the Indian colony. It also becomes clear why the young Indian students of Derozio were debating radical liberal ideas so enthusiastically, why Duff thought it was an opportune moment to introduce the study of political economy in his school, and why, indeed, on the matters of political economy, they all belonged to the school of Adam Smith. It also becomes clear why Duff's superiors in Britain thought that the propagation of such radical ideas spilled over from the realm of pedagogy into political posturing in the new reality of the East India Company's rule in India.

In my search for textbooks or manuals written in Bengali, I relied primarily on the catalogues prepared by Rev. James Long. These are the most reliable sources of our knowledge of book-publishing in Bengali in the period between 1800 to 1867. It is evident from Long's account, published in 1855, that interest in political economy was still limited, especially in terms of publishing in Bengali. Under the heading "Political Economy," there is a terse comment: "On this subject one work appeared in Anglo-Bengali, about 15 years ago, the "Parishram Bishay", which treated of labour and capital. We understand that Wheatley's (sic) excellent

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work, 'Easy Lessons on Money Matters' is now being translated."¹⁷ In Long's compilation of the catalogue for the Vernacular Literature Committee's Library, again, there is a single entry, possibly referring to the same book – "'Treatise on Political Economy, pp.40'. Cost 8 annas."¹⁸

The reference to Wheatley was actually to Bishop Richard Whately's "Easy Lessons on Money Matters: for the use of Young People", first published in 1833. According to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, "Whately held that public worship and the teaching of the clergy were insufficient, and he became a prolific popularizing author, writing and compiling school textbooks. ... his Easy Lessons on Money Matters for the Use of Young People (1833), a simplified version of his lectures on political economy, was circulated by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, translated into many foreign languages (including Maori and Japanese), and was read by the young Stanley Jevons"¹⁹ This book became the main source of three economic textbooks that were most popular, until the first decade of the twentieth century, when Economics was finally introduced as a separate subject in the Calcutta University syllabus in 1908 (it was earlier taught as a part of the course on History), which led to new textbooks being written.²⁰

¹⁷ Long, James. "Descriptive catalogue of Bengali works, containing a classified list of fourteen hundred Bengali books and pamphlets...". Calcutta: Sanders, Cones and Co., 1855. Pg. 44. "Parishram Bishay" in translation is "On Labour".

¹⁸ Long, James. "'Catalogue of the Vernacular Literature Committee's Library", compiled by James Long, the expense defrayed by the liberality of Babu Jaykissen Mukerjea." Calcutta: Sanders, Cones and Co., 1855. Pg. 54.

¹⁹ Richard Brent, 'Whately, Richard (1787–1863)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2014 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29176>, accessed 7 Dec 2014].

²⁰ Bhattacharya, Durgaprasad and Archana Bhattacharya. *Economic Writings in Bengali, 1818-1947*. Calcutta: Socio-Economic Research Institute, 1983. Pg. 13.

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J.F. Blumhardt's catalogue of the Library of the India Office has a comprehensive list of books on political economy or related writings in the vernacular.²¹ The heading "Political Economy" lists these following books:

1. *Arthaniti o arthavyavahara: Elements of Political Economy, founded on Whateley, Mill, Fawcett, and other authorities.* Nrisinghachandra Mukherjee. Calcutta: 1874. 2nd edition, Calcutta: 1875.
2. *Arthavyavahara: A Catechism on the acquisition and uses of Wealth.* Mahimachandra Gupta. Dacca: 1874.
3. *Arthavyavahara. A Catechism on Wealth and its use.* Radharaman Dasa. Dacca: 1874.
4. *Arthavyavahara. Money Matters, in Bengali.* By Rajakrishna Raya Chaudhuri. 7th edition, Calcutta: 1870. 10th edition, Calcutta: 1873. 11th edition, Calcutta: 1874. 12th edition, Calcutta: 1875.
5. *Arthavyavaharer prasnottara. A Catechism of Political Economy.* Balakanatha Datta. Hughli: 1871.
6. *Arthavyavaharer prasnottara.* Kaliprasanna SenGupta, Calcutta: 1874.
7. *Arther svarthakata. A Treatise urging an economical use of Money.* Anandakisora Sena. Dacca: 1867.
8. *Banijya-darpana. A Treatise on Commerce.* By Jagadisa Tarkalankara. Krishnagar: 1866.
9. *Samkshipta arthavyavahara. A short Treatise on the acquisition and use of Money.* U. C. I. Dacca: 1872.

²¹ Blumhardt, J.F. "Catalogue of the Library of the India Office, Vol. II-Part IV, Bengali, Oriya and Assamese Books". London: Eyre and Spottiswode, 1905. Pg.27.

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In 1981, a seminar was held under the auspices of the Socio-Economic Research Institute in Calcutta, on the subject of economic writings in Bengali. The seminar had contributions from luminaries such as Bhabatosh Datta, Satyendranath Sen and others. Durgaprasad Bhattacharyya, whose paper was on Bengali economic books, included a small section on textbooks, published between 1861 and 1874. Bhattacharyya mentions two of the books in Blumhardt's catalogue: *Artha-Vyabahara* by Rajkrishna Roychowdhury and *Arthaniti o Artha Vyabahara* by Nrisingha Mukherjee (pub. 1874).²² A third, *Dhana-Vidhana arthat Dhana Vidhayak Saral Path*, by Gopalchandra Dutta (pub. 1862), does not appear in Blumhardt's catalogue, but is of interest as well. I would like to talk about each of these three books briefly, and also discover the mystery of why "Artha-Vyabahara" was such a popular title for books on this subject. Partha Chatterjee, who mentions Bhattacharyya's bibliographic essay in his article "A Modern Science of Politics for the Colonized," refers to the variant meanings of the word "Vyabahara," and concludes that it evolved from the Sanskrit meaning "law" or "litigation," but also referred to the contemporary meaning of "use" rather than that of "behaviour."²³

Rajkrishna Roychowdhury's book had reached 12 editions by 1875. A close reading of the book's preface and advertisements reveal a number of interesting facts. Roychowdhury says that the book had originally been a translation of Whately's *Money Matters*, but with the growing awareness of the public to the science of political economy, and the changing needs of the pupils, he had edited and almost entirely rewritten the book to more closely incorporate "important materials from the works of Mill, Fawcett, and other standard writers on Political Economy." He also mentions that he had incorporated the writings of the "late, lamented

²² Bhattacharyya, Durgaprasad and Archana Bhattacharyya. *Economic Writings in Bengali, 1818-1947*. Calcutta: Socio-Economic Research Institute, 1983. Pg. 13-14.

²³ Ed. Chatterjee, Partha. *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*. Partha Chatterjee. "A Modern Science of Politics for the Colonized". Pgs. 93-117.

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Professor Cairnes of the London University.”²⁴ John Elliott Cairnes, whom the *ODNB* calls “the leading economist in Britain” at the time of his death, in the same year Roychowdhury published the 12th edition of his book, was the Whately professor of Political Economy at London University, and as much a popularizer of the subject as Whately, through his lectures on ‘The character and logical method of political economy.’²⁵ It is evident that Bengali authors of textbooks on political economy followed the evolution of economic thought and theory in Britain very closely and continuously updated their own textbooks to reflect the most recent theory and research for the young Bengali men who were being trained in the subject in their schools. According to Roychowdhury, his book had been assigned reading on the subject in English and Vernacular Middle Schools, as well as at the Normal Schools in Calcutta, and had earlier been officially recommended by the Lt. Governor, Sir George Campbell, as a textbook for schools in Calcutta. It also appears that Sir Richard Temple, who was the Lt. Governor at the time of the publication of the 12th edition, had excluded the book from his recommendations of textbooks for the minor school-scholarship examinations, which led to some trepidation and speculation on Roychowdhury’s part about the future inclusion of the subject of political economy in the Indian school-curriculum.

How much did Adam Smith feature in this most popular and important of Bengali textbooks on political economy? In the second chapter of his book, on the division of labour, the old favourite from the *WN*, that of the pin-manufacturer, is used to illustrate the principles of the subject.²⁶ The style of writing borrows from Whately, who borrowed from Smith, in the use

²⁴ Roychowdhury, Rajkrishna. *Artha-Byabahara, or Money-Matters, in Bengali*. Printed by Behary Lall Bannerjee in the press of Sri J.G. Chatterjee and Co. Published by the Sanskrit Press Depository, No. 30, Bechoo Chatterjee’s Street. Edn. 12. “Preface”.

²⁵ R. D. Collison Black, ‘Cairnes, John Elliot (1823–1875)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4345>, accessed 7 Dec 2014].

²⁶ Roychowdhury, Rajkrishna. *Artha-Byabahara, or Money-Matters, in Bengali*. Printed by Behary Lall Bannerjee in the press of Sri J.G. Chatterjee and Co. Published by the Sanskrit Press Depository, No. 30, Bechoo Chatterjee’s Street. Edn. 12. Pg. 30-33.

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of explanatory scenarios and familiar situations to explicate the theories of the subject. Smith is referred to by name in the chapters on division of labour and the situations and conditions for the fluctuation of the cost of labour. Roychowdhury translates Book 1, chapter 10, of the *WN* almost verbatim, with suitable substitution of British examples for Indian ones in some cases. The sections translating Smith on “Wages and Profit in the different Employments of Labour and Stock” are in chapter two of Roychowdhury’s book, “Betan” or “Wages.”²⁷

Smith is also referred to extensively on the chapter on taxation, with the four Smithian maxims on sound taxation taken from *WN* Book 5, chapter 2. Roychowdhury inserts into this discussion the realities of changes in Indian systems of taxation, first during the Permanent Settlement, then during the introduction of income tax in India, and lastly, due to the reparations due to Britain from India to compensate for the losses during the Mutiny of 1857.²⁸ Ricardo is referred to by name for the sections concerned with the theory of rent and the iron law of wages.²⁹

Because Roychowdhury’s book was the recommended textbook for Middle Schools, as well as for the minor-student scholarship examinations, which gave a stipend to the qualifying students to compensate for their fees, it created a publishing industry of its own. Partha Chatterjee refers to the number of books bearing the title “Artha-byabahaar,” which were less than 36 pages in length and written in the form of questions and answers -

“Prashnottara”/“Catechism”. These books in Blumhardt’s catalogue are the ones by Mahimachandra Gupta, Radharaman Das, Balakanath Datta, Kaliprasanna Sengupta and U.C.I. However, on a closer reading of their contents, it is clear that these were not individual

²⁷ Ibid. Pgs. 90-100.

²⁸ Ibid. Chapter 4, “Rajkar”. Pgs. 113-127. Smith’s four maxims, again translated verbatim, begin on page 122. The income tax was introduced in India formally in 1860. James Wilson, proprietor of “The Economist” and father-in-law of Walter Bagehot, was the financial member of the Council of India and in charge of the project. He died in Calcutta in 1860.

²⁹ Ibid. Pg. 85-86.

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works on political economy, but rather aids to study Roychowdhury's textbook. They contained, as the content-pages show, exactly the same headings as Roychowdhury's book, and were printed at the three main educational centres of Calcutta, Hughli and Dhaka, with prices ranging between 2-4 annas. A series of questions related to each chapter in Roychowdhury's book, which had either appeared in the scholarship examinations, or were supposed to appear, were printed, with keys to the answers, and students could then memorize the essential points of Roychowdhury's books easily.

A demonstrative selection of questions and answers selected from these study-aids are as follows:

From Mahimachandra Gupta:

Question: Panditbar Ricard Saheb bhumi'ke koto bhabe bibhakta koren? (What are the ways in which the great Pundit Ricardo divides the types of land?)

Answer: Bhumi'r urbarata anusare tini bhumi'ke tin bhage bibhakta koriyachhen. Jatha, uttam, madhyam, adham. (Depending on the production capacity of the land, he divides it into three types – highly productive, medium and depleted)³⁰

Questions referring to Adam Smith:

From Gupta:

Question: Je sakal karane karmakarir sulabhata ba durlabhata nibandhan tahadiger betaner nunyadhikya hoi, Daktar Adam Smith Saheber e bishaye ki abhipray prakashita hoiachhey?

³⁰ *Artha-Byabahaar Prashnottar*, ed. and collected by Sri Mahim Chandra Gupta, Dhaka, Sulabh Jantra, 1281 (1874), 5th Bhadra. Available at Dhaka Babur Bajar, N.K. Chattopadhyay and Company Book Shop. Price 4 anna, Sri Ishan Chandra Shil Printer, publisher. Part II, Chapter 2, "Dhan-bistritya o Khajna". Pg. 16-17. (Translation, mine)

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(What are the reasons that Doctor Adam Smith elucidates as being the causes of the fluctuation of wages depending on the availability of labour?)³¹

From Balakanath Datta:

Question: Doktor Adam Smith Saheber matey ki ki niyame kar adai kora uchit, taha sanskhepe barnan koro? (Describe in brief, according to Doctor Adam Smith, what are the ways in which taxes should be collected?)³²

A young Bengali teenager, due to appear for these scholarship examinations in hope of winning the lucrative stipends, can easily be visualized – in a quiet house on a desolate street in Calcutta or Dhaka, in front of an oil-lamp or the dim light reflected from the gas-lit streetlights, eyes heavy with sleep, cramming from these question-banks, murmuring the names of Adam Smith and Ricardo as magic talismans who could open doors to academic advancement and from there to the coveted government jobs, thereby helping these young men on their way to Babudom.

I will only talk briefly about the two other books by Gopalchandra Dutta and Nrisingha Mukherjee. Gopalchandra Dutta's book was first published, as has been mentioned earlier, in 1862.³³ As such it is the earliest book on political economy in the Bengali language, the earliest translation of Whately's *Money Matters*, and possibly the translation in preparation referred to by James Long. In its first edition, which was 108 pages long, Dutta said he had translated the book for the good boys of Bengal who were academically inclined, but had excised Whately's numerous and unnecessary references to Christianity and Christian morals from his translation, and only expanded on the moral teachings where he felt it was

³¹ Ibid. Part II, Chapter 1, "Dhan-bistriti o Betan". Pg. 14.

³² *Arthabyabaharer Prashnottar*, Sri Balaknath Dutta Sankalita. Hughli, Budhodoy Jantre Sri Kashinath Bhattacharyya Kartrik Mudrita, San 1278 (1871), Mulya 2 anna.

³³ Dutta, Gopalchandra. *Dhana-Vidhana arthat Dhana Vidhayak Saral Path*. Calcutta: G.P. Roy and Company, 1862.

imperative to do so. Dutta said money was what drove the material world and was necessary for happiness, so the study of the science of money was necessary for his countrymen, and his translation, rough and imperfect as it was, would aid them in this study, or so he hoped.

While Smith or any other economist is not mentioned by name, the sections on division of labour and wages follow Whately closely, and the sections in Whately's *Money Matters* are, of course, close paraphrases of Smith from the *WN*. Dutta also refers to Ricardo's theory of comparative advantages.³⁴

The last book I wish to discuss is *Arthaniti o arthavyavahara: Elements of Political Economy, founded on Whateley, Mill, Fawcett, and other authorities* by Nrisinghachandra Mukherjee.³⁵ According to Durgaprasad Bhattacharya, this book was modeled on the Cambridge economist Henry Fawcett's *Manual of Political Economy*, published in 1863. Bhattacharya also feels that Mukherjee might have later made extensive use of *Political Economy for Beginners* written by Dame Millicent Fawcett, Henry Fawcett's wife, which was published in 1870.³⁶ Nrisinghachandra Mukherjee's book was first published in 1874 and had reached a second edition within a year. It was also the first book in Bengali to use the now-standard word for economics – *Arthaniti*. Mukherjee's credentials, as they appear on the title-page of the second edition of his book, are impressive: he was a pleader at the Calcutta High Court, a professor at Presidency College, and a member of the Board of Examiners of Calcutta University. His book, he stated, was suitable for teaching in Normal and Vernacular schools as well as in *pathshalas*. The general public, interested in political economy, could also benefit from a perusal of the book. In the preface, Mukherjee makes an impassioned

³⁴ Dutta, Gopalchandra. *Dhana-Vidhana arthat Dhana Vidhayak Saral Path*. Calcutta: G.P. Roy and Company, 1862. Pgs. 6-7.

³⁵ Mukherjee, Nrisinghaprasad. *Arthaniti o arthavyavahara: Elements of Political Economy, founded on Whately, Mill, Fawcett, and other authorities*. Calcutta: New Schoolbook Society, 1875.

³⁶ Bhattacharya, Durgaprasad and Archana Bhattacharya. *Economic Writings in Bengali, 1818-1947*. Calcutta: Socio-Economic Research Institute, 1983. Pg. 13-14.

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argument about the extraordinary appeal and necessity of learning the principles of political economy – across classes, be it the zamindar or the raiyyat, the master or the slave, merchant or buyer, everyone benefited from knowledge of the science. He says that just as good school boys and girls learn algebra and mathematics, they should also be given an adequate education in the principles of political economy. This is also the first time a Bengali author refers to women students while writing about their target audience in the genre of Bengali economic writing, and the necessity of imparting the same kind of knowledge to both boys and girls.

Mukherjee’s book was aimed at the students of the minor scholarship examinations, who had to sit for tests on political economy and money-matters, and he says his material is culled from “Whately, Mill, Fawcett, Adam Smith and other well-known British and French authorities” on the subject.³⁷ He also stresses that his is not a mere translation, but an expression into Bengali of his own understanding of the greater writers on political economy – this claim does not hold up on closer reading. In the “Advertisement” or “Bijnapan,” dated 18th July 1875, prefixed to the second edition of the book, Mukherjee says he was encouraged to publish an enlarged and cleaned-up second edition because of the highly favorable reviews he received from almost all the leading vernacular and English periodicals and newspapers in Bengal – the *Bangadarshan* (ed. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay), the *Somprakash* (ed. Dwarkanath Vidyabhushan, contributor Vidyasagar), the *Education Gazette* (the Government of India’s official publication) and the *Hindu Patriot* (ed. Girish Ghose, leading Positivist in Bengal).³⁸ Mukherjee also mentioned a group of friends and patrons who had helped him prepare the manuscript, and who were, like him, interested in a wider dissemination of the

³⁷ Mukherjee, Nrisinghaprasad. *Arthaniti o arthavyavahara: Elements of Political Economy, founded on Whately, Mill, Fawcett, and other authorities*. Calcutta: New Schoolbook Society, 1875. “Advertisement”. Translations mine.

³⁸ *Ibid.* “Second Advertisement”.

principles of political economy in the Bengali language. Among the people he mentioned were the principal of Sanskrit College, Prasanna Kumar Sarbadhikari, the pioneer of homeopathic medicine in India, Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, and the principal of Sil's Free College, Jadunath Ghosh. Mukherjee's language and examples are clearer and more elegant than those of his predecessors, but in terms of content he remained very close to Roychowdhury, as also in his chapter divisions. The sections on division of labour, quite predictably refer to Smith, but also to Fawcett and Mills.³⁹ On rent and wages, Ricardo, who is called a merchant residing in London, is referenced.⁴⁰ Smith's explanation for the causes of the fluctuation of wages is referred to in the section on wages in chapter 2, part 4 and the section very closely follows both Millicent Fawcett and Roychowdhury. Again, like most of his predecessors, Mukherjee is enamoured of Smith's example of the pin-factory, and reproduces the section in verbatim translation from the *WN*, in his chapter on exchanges.⁴¹ Smith's maxims on taxation are also very closely adapted from Roychowdhury.⁴²

What then, was Adam Smith's reception in Bengal? From Young Bengal's wholehearted assimilation into the "school of Adam Smith" in the 1830s, to our hypothetical young Bengali school-boy sleepily learning by rote Smith's principles on division of labour and on taxation, what was the actual impact of Smith? While it is clear that classical economics remained the mainstay of pedagogy in Bengal schools, and that generations of young Bengali men learned of the great "Doctor Smith" in their school-books, the lack of Bengali translations of his works means very few of the "madhyabitta bhadralok" actually gained any true familiarity with or insight into Smith's works in the original. His name was known, not the great Enlightenment principles that Smith embodied and often shaped through his major works like

³⁹ Ibid. Pg. 18-19.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Pg. 67-68. "David Ricardo namok ekjon London-basi banik".

⁴¹ Ibid. Chapter 3, part 1, "Binimoy: Mulya o Pan" (Exchange: Cost and Prices). Pg. 152-153.

⁴² Ibid. Pg. 215-216.

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WN or *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. From references to Smith in Romesh Chunder Dutt's work, as well as in Naoroji and Ranade, and from the stray references to Smith in the works of Naoroji, Dutt or Ranade, it also seems, as Kris Manjapra conjectures, that "Smithianismus"⁴³ had spread from Germany to India, through the influence of List's model of "national economy."⁴⁴ Both Ranade and Dutt had called Smith "insular," following Adam Muller, a misreading that is quite staggering in its impact, when one considers that the moral vision of Smith's impartial spectator depends on a philosophy of expansion of sympathy for that which would ordinarily be the alien, the distant and the strange. This expansiveness of moral judgment and sympathy is evident in his indictment of the East India Company's depredation of the Bengal economy in the 18th century.

And yet, how much credence should one pay to such judgments and assessments of Adam Smith? Romesh Chunder Dutt paid homage to Smith – "Political Economy, as a more practical science, engaged my attention later than Philosophy; and **Adam Smith and Ricardo and John Stuart Mill opened out a new world to me.** As a student in London I often saw and heard John Stuart Mill, and had the honour of knowing Henry Fawcett more intimately, and I was a faithful believer in their doctrines. But later in life, as a practical administrator, I saw the limitations of these doctrines, and perceived how the greatest European writers failed to grasp the economic conditions of Eastern life. Sismondi and Laveleye, and other European writers, do not understand the Indian land system; even Mill,

⁴³ For "Smithianismus", see Rothschild, Emma. "Smithianismus and Enlightenment in 19th century Europe". Unpublished paper, presented at a conference The Rise and Fall of Historical Political Economy, at the CHE, Cambridge, 1998.

⁴⁴ Manjapra, Kris. *The Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire*. Pg. 147-148.

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who was thirty years in the India Office, speaks of the system of England and Ireland, France and Italy, but does not venture to touch on Indian problems in his ‘Political Economy.’”⁴⁵

The criticism is levelled at not only Smith but all theorists of political economy who did not, and possibly could not envisage the condition of the Indian economy under British rule, which was more than a century old by this time. Smith could not have envisaged it, since he died in 1791. But even those like Mill, who were intimately connected to the colonial administration, refused to engage with a problem that was to Dutt and his fellow economic thinkers such as Naoroji, Ranade (whose personal library housed the entire collection of Smith’s works), and Kale, an outright drain of India’s economic resources, leading to extreme poverty and famine of the Indian people. This was a moral failure and a political expediency on the part of theorists like Mill. Choosing a German model based on List to critique the British Government’s economic policies in India and critiquing British economic theorists, of whom Smith was pre-eminent, was a political statement of opposition, as much as it was representative of an endorsement of the German historical school of political economy. As Dutt said, “**The East must produce its own thinkers, its own historians, its own economists.**”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Gupta, Jnanendranath. *Life and Work of Romesh Chunder Dutt, C.I.E.* London: J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd., 1911. Pg. 388. (emphasis mine)

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (emphasis mine)