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Max Muller – Missionary or Scholar

Devendra Swaroop*

To commemorate the death anniversary of Friedrich Max Mueller (1823-1900), the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, after a formal request from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India decided to organise a seminar on December 15-16, 2000. The theme chosen for the seminar was “Max Muller and his contemporaries”. The Seminar was to be a part of the German Festival in India which was jointly sponsored by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Govt. of India and actively promoted by the Max Muller Bhavans located in Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Bombay etc. The German Festival was aimed at fostering Indo-German friendship and for that a German Scholar Max Muller was thought to be a proper medium. But Prof. Tapan Roy Chaudhury chairing the last session of the seminar surprised everybody with his remarks that the great scholar whose death centenary we were celebrating in India in order to foster Indo-German friendship was not at all remembered in his birth place Dessau in Germany. Prof. Ray Choudhary said: “Some years back, I forget which, I was privileged to attend a seminar in the birth-place of Max Muller. We discovered somewhat to our amazement that his name was unknown to the people of that place. Whereas his father who was a famous poet... was very well known”. (*Max Muller and his Contemporaries*, Kolkata, August 2001, pp. 213-214)

Earlier, in the same session, Prof. Ratna Basu of Calcutta University in her paper “*Max Muller's Indology Revisited*” observed: “Till the late 1980s, Max Muller was projected chiefly by the German Cultural Centres in India which are named after him Max Muller Bhavans; elsewhere they are called Goethe Institutes” In fact, the change in nomenclature was introduced in India in the year 1957. Prof. Basu continued. “German Indologists did not take up the contribution of Max Muller as a serious point of Indological discussion till the recent past, the only exception being the use of the edition of the Rig-Veda (*edition Princeps*) for beginning any Vedic Course.”

Based on her personal experience of Indological studies pursued in German Universities, Prof Basu observed, “When an interview was broadcast in the mid-eighties of the twentieth century by the Radio Voice of Germany, it was detected that the German Indologists showed utter indifference towards Max Muller’s contribution to Indological studies. These were hardly featured in the curriculum of the Universities so far as Indic studies were concerned.” (ibid., pp 204-205)

German roots of Max Muller cannot be denied. He was born in Germany, spent first twenty three formative years of his life there, migrated to England in June 1846, spent more than 54 years of his life there till his death in October 1900. In 1859, he married an English lady Georgina Grenfell of Maidenhead and even transferred his loyalties from German Lutheran Church to Anglican Church of England, but he continued to be German at heart and aspired to play the role of a bridgehead between England the nascent German

nationalism led by Prussia during the difficult times of its wars with Denmark and France aimed at the fulfillment of its quest of a united Germany. Irony of Max Muller's life was that neither England could accept him as an English man, nor Germany felt grateful for his contribution in mobilizing British support for its cause in adverse situations. The triumphant German nationalism achieved its goal of political unity in 1871, marched aggressively on the path of industrialisation, and to gain its lost ground in the field of colonisation and mercantilism. Then it saw in England its main rival. The old goodwill was lost, relations got embittered. Soon Max Muller was caught between his loyalties to his German blood and the British benefactor. He issued an Apologia on behalf of England pleading impatient Germans to use moderation in their approach. But, "so angry was the German public that the Leipzig Branch of the Pan-German League (*the All-Deutscher Vernon*) drew upon a solemn protest against Max Muller's Apologia for England. The Protest closed with the word." You have no longer the right to call yourself a German," and one newspaper expressed the wish to see 'Max Muller hanged on the same gallows with Chamberlain and Rhodes, and the Aasvogel (vultures) picking his wicked bones". (Georgina Max Muller, *Life and Letters of Max Muller*, Vol. II, p. 408, London 1902).

Disowned by Germany, Max Muller was not owned by England as well. With all his professions of loyalty to England and trying to serve its imperial interests at academic and religious level to the best of his ability for more than fifty years, Max Muller was not given British citizenship, he died a German on the British soil. In 1860, Max Muller, inspite of vigorous canvassing by himself and his English friends, was denied the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit at Oxford with all his reputation as a Vedic Sanskrit Scholar against a comparatively mediocre called Monier Williams only because of his German blood and close association with Baron von Bunsen, the Prussian ambassador to England from 1841 to 1854. Who had introduced Max Muller to the East India Company and persuaded them to bear the expenses of the publication of Max Muller's Magnum Opus the edition of Rig-Veda with Sayana's Commentary, which created a niche for Max Muller in the world of Sanskrit Scholarship all over the world.

In a letter dated August 22, 1875 he wrote to Stanley, the Dean of Westminster Abbey, that he was "only tolerated at Oxford" feeling that he had been "At Oxford on sufferance." In a mood of depression Max Muller complained: "I think I have been treated without the fairness and consideration which, as a rule, are generally shown by an Englishman to Englishman, but though I may have made a mistake in settling in England, and spending here the best years of my life. I shall always be thankful for having passed through this School of life" (*Life and Letters*, Vol. I, p. 329). Pouring out his frustration, he wrote to the Duke of Argyll. "I have sometimes regretted that I am not an Englishman and able to help more actively in the great work of educating and improving the natives". (*Life & Letters*, Vol. I, p. 357).

Having given so much space to delineate the predicament of Max Muller that the land of his birth has forgotten him and the land of his adoption no more finds him of any use, and therefore does not remember him I am faced with the question that why we Indians should be so much obsessed with Max Muller that even if we wish we can't forget him?

Why is he so relevant to us even today more than a century after his death? If we survey his long life, we find India alone had been the centre of all his herculean intellectual efforts and outstanding academic creations. He tried to uproot our established perceptions of our own past and transplant new ones in their place. We had believed that our Vedas had a divine origin and had existed from eternity. He, by publishing for the first time the full text of the Rig-Veda along with the 14th century commentary by Sayana in six volumes between 1849 and 1873, tried to convince us that RigVeda was man made and that its antiquity did not go beyond 1200 B.C. We knew that Rig-Veda, led us through a maze of multiplicity of cosmic deities to one ultimate reality, but Max Muller told us that Rig-Veda reflected the religious yearnings of a nature fearing primitive man and it neither represented polytheism, nor monotheism, rather henotheism, a word coined by him.

Not that Max Muller was not aware of the hoary antiquity of the Rig-Veda. In his Autobiography, written in his last days and published after his death by his son, he admits: “As to the actual date of the Veda ... if we were to place it at 5000 B.C. I doubt whether any body could reduce such a date, while if we go back beyond the Veda, and come to measure the time required for the formation of Sanskrit, and of the Proto-Aryan language, I doubt very much whether even 5000 years would suffice for that. There is an unfathomable depth in language, layer following after layer, long before we arrive at roots, and what a time and what an effort must have been required for their elaboration, and for elaboration of the ideas expressed in them (*Max Muller, My Autography*. Indian reprint, N. Delhi, 2002, pp. 120-121). Similarly about henotheism in his Cambridge lectures of 1882 before the prospective ICS batch, he quoted Rig-Veda itself to conclude that it clearly enunciated monotheism. But for long he propagated “As the oldest book that ever was composed – the Veda – was supposed to give us a picture of what man was in his most primitive state, with his most primitive ideal, and his most primitive ideas, and his most primitive language” (*My Autobiography*. P. 115-116)

He did it with a design, with a well defined objective. Max Muller was a scholar of very high calibre. He had wonderful command over language, chose his words with meticulous care carrying double meaning. Apparently, he projected himself as a disinterested objective researcher who was an admirer and benefactor of India. But his real motives were different and can be found in his private letters written to his contemporaries, and which were made available to the world by his wife in September 1902 two years after his death on 28th October 1900.

Soon after the publication of the first volume of his Rig-Veda Commentary in 1849 he wrote to his mentor Chevalier Bunsen in July 1850, “With regard to Empson’s and Dr. Wilson’s letters, it is difficult to advise. Nevertheless, I, of course, shall be glad if the Rig-Veda is dealt with in the *Edinburgh Review* and if Wilson would write from the standpoint of a missionary and would show how the knowledge and bringing into light of the Veda would upset the whole existing system of Indian theology, it might become of real interest”. (*Life & Letters*, Vol. I, p. 117)

His letter to Bunsen dated August 25, 1856, fully exposes his designs and objectives. Here Max Muller writes, "After the last annexation (i.e. of Ouah in February 1856 – D.S.) the territorial conquest of India ceases – what follows next is the struggle in the realm of religion and of spirit, in which of course, centres the interests of the nations. India is much riper for Christianity than Rome or Greece were at the time of St. Paul. The rotten tree has for sometime had artificial supports, because its fall would have been inconvenient for the Government."

Further, he writes. "For the good of this struggle I should like to lay down my life, or at least to lend my hand to bring about this struggle". With this purpose, at that time Max Muller was keen to go to India. He writes to Bunsen: "I feel somewhat drawn to India – a desire difficult to resist in the end. Only I do not know how to get there." He clearly lays down his strategy. "I do not at all like to go to India as a missionary, that makes one dependent on the parsons; nor do I care to go as a civil servant, as that would make one dependent on the Government. I should like to live for ten years quite quietly and learn the language, try to make friends, and then see whether I was fit to take part in a work, by means of which the old mischief of Indian priestcraft could be overthrown and the way opened for the entrance of simple Christian teaching ..." Elucidating the importance of India, Max Muller writes, "Whatever finds root in India soon overshadows the whole of Asia, and nowhere could the vital power of Christianity more gloriously realize itself than India, if the world saw it spring up there for a second time in a very different form from that in the West, but still essentially the same."

Having presented his aim and strategy Max Muller suggests in the same letter a practical way to reach India, "I thought the other day whether I could not manage to go to India with Maharaja Dulip Singh (son of Raja Ranjit Singh and who was a Christian convert – D.S.) He is very well spoken of and he returns next year after having learnt in England what good thing he may do some day for his Fatherland India, It seems to me it would form the natural nucleus of a small Indo-Christian colony, and it is only necessary to create such a centre in order for exercise one's power of attraction on all sides," (Life & Letters, Vol. I, pp. 181-82)

Anyhow, this plan of Max Muller to go to India could not materialise and he had to carry on his struggle for India's conversion to Christianity from England itself. The idea of territorial conquest to be followed by religious and intellectual conquest always worked at the back of his mind till his death. In his famous Cambridge lectures (1882) titled "*India: what it can teach us*", Max Muller exhorting the young candidates for the ICS who listened to his lectures, says: "if a few of them, at least, determined to follow the footsteps of Sir William Jones and to show to the world that Englishmen, who have been able to achieve by pluck, by perseverance and by real political genius the material conquest of India do not mean to leave the laurels of its intellectual conquest entirely to other countries, then I shall indeed rejoice and feel that I have paid back, in however small a degree, the large debt of gratitude which I owe to my adopted country, and to some of its greater statesmen, who have given me the opportunity, which I could find nowhere else of realising the dream of my life – the publication of the text and commentary of the Rig-Vedaand now the edition of the translation of the *Sacred*

Books of the East India.” (*India: What it can teach us*; Indian reprint, Penguin, 2000, p. IX.)

Max Muller was convinced that intellectual conquest of India shall lead to her conversion to Christianity. He had identified the newly emerging English educated Indian elite as his target. His publication of the English translation of the Sayana’s Commentary of Rig Veda was aimed at this small but important section of Indian population. In 1866, Max Muller wrote in a letter to his wife “I am convinced, though I shall not live to see that day, that this edition of mine and the translation of the Veda will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last three thousand years. (Life & Letter, Vol. I, p. 328)

Supporting his candidature for the Boden Professorship in 1860, the Bishop of Calcutta in a letter dated July 13, 1860 wrote to Max Muller, “.... I am sure that it is of the greatest importance for our missionaries to understand Sanskrit, to study the philosophy and sacred books of the Hindus, and to be able to meet the Pundits on their own ground. Among the means to this great end, none can be more important than your edition and Prof. Wilson’s translation of the Rig Veda. (Life & Letters, Vol. I, p. 237).

Dr. Pusey of Christ Church in his letter dated June 2, 1860, wrote: “I cannot but think then that your labours on the Vedas – while they attest your wonderful power in mastering this ancient Sanskrit and while they evince, as I understand, great philological talent, beyond the knowledge of Sanskrit itself, are the greatest gifts which have been bestowed on those who would win to Christianity the subtle and thoughtful minds of the cultivated Indians ... Your work will form a new era in the efforts for the conversion of India, and Oxford will have reason to be thankful that, by giving you a home, it will have facilitated a work of such primary and lasting importance for the conversion of India, and which by enabling us to compare that early false religion with the true ...” (Life & Letters, Vol. I, p. 238)

Max Muller himself, in 1887, in a speech delivered in the hall of St. John’s College on request of the Vicar of St. Giles said. “When I undertook to publish for the University Press a series of translations of the most important of these sacred books, one of my objects was to assist the missionaries. What shall we think of a missionary who came to convert us, and who had never read our Bible...” (Life and Letters, Vol. II, p. 455)

As a part of his struggle for conversion to India, Max Muller, without setting his foot on Indian soil, cultivated friendship with top English educated intellectuals and reformers in India. The list is quite large. He was in regular correspondence with Dwarkanath Tagore and Debendranath Tagore, Satyendranath Tagore, Keshab Chundra Sen and Pratap Chundra Majumdar of Sadhavana Brahmo Samaj, with Raja Radhakant Deb and Rajendra Lal Mitra, with Bairamji Malabari and R.C. Dutt etc. He wrote critical essays on Raja Rammohun Roy and Swami Dayanand Saraswati. He included the profiles of many of his Indian friends in his *Biographical Essays* published in 1884 and *My Indian Friends* etc. His sole purpose behind cultivating Indian friends was conversion of India to

Christianity. In a letter dated December 16, 1868, he wrote to the English Duke of Argyll, the Secretary of the State for India: “Though I have never been in India, I have many friends there, both among the civilians and among the natives, and I believe, I am not mistaken in supposing that the publication in England of the ancient sacred writings of the Brahmans, which had never been published in India,have not been without some effect on the intellectual and religious movement that is going on among the more thoughtful members of Indian societyIt is easy to find fault with what is called young Bengal – the product of English ideas grafted on the Indian mind. But young Bengal with all its faults, is full of promise...”

In the same letter Max Muller brazenly says “India has been conquered once, but India must be conquered again, and this second conquest shall be a conquest of education....”

Lauding the missionaries in India, Max Muller continues, “....The missionaries have done far more than they themselves seem to be aware of, nay, much of the work which is theirs they would probably disclaim. The Christianity of our nineteenth century will hardly be the Christianity of India. But the ancient religion of India is doomed – and if Christianity does not step in whose fault will it be.” (Life & Letters, Vol. I, pp 357-58).

The life and letters published after his death show that Max Muller pinned high hopes in Keshab Chandra Sen and Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar for openly professing their conversion to Christianity. But the untimely death of Keshab Chandra Sen in 1873 made him to focus all his efforts on Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar, which he carried on till his last days on sick bed. His letters to Mozoomdar dated Oxford, June 1899, Nov 3, 1899 and March 11, 1900 show his desperation to anyhow persuade, or even to tempt Mozoomdar to openly profess Christianity which would make Max Muller die in peace. (Life and Letters, Vol. II) In view of these efforts for conversion from his death-bed, it is hard to accept the view of his German biographer Johannes H. Voigt that, “The Max Muller of 1898/1899 had moved a long way from that position that he took when he wrote to Baron Bunsen in the fifties, to Lord Argyll in the sixties and when he lectured at Westminster Abbey on ‘Missions’ in 1873.” Voigt concluded, “If ever there has lived a man, who by inner struggles and by constant efforts throughout his whole life came at the end of it to embrace the highest spirit of India’s religious and philosophical heritage, then it was Max Muller.” (J. H. Voigt, *Max Muller, The Man and his ideas*, Calcutta, 1981, p.3. quoted in *Max Muller and his Contemporaries*, Calcutta, 2001, p.211)

Max Muller was a prolific writer and captivating orator. His literary heritage beginning in 1844 with the publication of *Hitopdesha* and closing at the *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* (1899) and also *My Autobiography* and *Last Essays* published in 1901 after his death is too vast to be homogenous and linear in progress; rather it is full of self-contradiction about persons, situation and ideas. We find Max Muller rejecting the extension of Darwinian theory of evolution as to the origin of language but applying it to religion, as is evident from the title of his “*A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature so far as it illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmans*” published in 1859. J.H. Voigt admits that Max Muller ‘had adopted some ideas of Darwin already in his *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1861)’. Voigt says: “The Darwinian theory of evolution and

struggle for existence, which Max Muller had in the early seventies condemned as an attack on religion, became by the end of his life, incorporated into his *religious* belief (Voigt: *Max Muller: The Man and his Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967, p.20). Prof D.P. Chattopadhyay's opinion is: "He was Darwinian in his linguistic approach. Main influence on him was of T.H. Huxley. Max Muller's Kantian–Darwinian dualism leads him to the conclusion that the career of language is autonomously defined by the laws of nature and human being can't alter that course." (in *Max Muller and his Contemporaries*, Kolkata, 2001, p.15). It is really puzzling in view of his fierce and drawn out controversy with Charles Darwin after they had met at Darwin's house in the year 1875. In fact, the word "primitive" was almost an obsession with Max Muller which he applied to every thing Hindu – religion, language and mythology.

One of the major distortions introduced by Max Muller was his popularisation of the word Arya or Aryan as a racial connotations. Although the word 'Aryan' had been used in racial sense earlier also, by the English Ethnologist J.C. Prichard in 1843 and the German Indologist Christian Lassen in 1847, but Max Muller did it with a design, with an objective and popularised it widely. Beginning with his first research paper "*Relation of Bengali to the aboriginal languages of India*", read before the British Association in April 1847 at Oxford, he everywhere consciously used it in racial sense, not confining it to any language family.

In a letter to Bunsen dated August 28, 1853, Max Muller wrote, "I always use the term "Aryan" instead of Indo-European; Iranian only for Persian or Median. Both together I take as the South–Aryan branch in contrast to all the rest of the Aryan, who turned to the North West." (Life and Letters, Vol. I)

Max Muller's biographer J.H. Voigt is emphatic that "Max Muller used to call these assumed ancestors by the Sanskrit term 'Aryans', the name of the invaders who come to India between 1500 and 1200 B.C.; Max Muller extended the precisely defined term 'Aryan' to the unknown people who spoke the assumed Indo-European *Ursprache* or orgined 'language' (Voigt, *Max Muller: The Man and his Ideas*, Kolkata 1967, p.5). In his article "*The Veda*" written in October 1853 Max Muller wrote: "There was a time when the ancestors of the Greeks and Italians, the Persian and the Hindus, were living together beneath the same roof separate from the ancestors of the Semitic and Turanian races" (*Chips from a German workshop*, Vol. I; 1868, pp. 61-68)

Obviously, the assumption of co-habitation means that Max Muller held linguistic groups and ethnic groups to be identical. Thus, Max Muller gave a dangerous twist to the word 'Aryan' by using it as a racial connotation. By clubbing the Hindus, Iranians and Europeans in the word 'Aryan' and separating it from the Semitic and Turanian, Max Muller was propounding the theory of Aryan superiority over the Semitic races on one hand and on the other, the superiority of the European branch on the Asian branch of the Aryans themselves.

In his lecture on Vedas in 1865, referring to the ancient Aryans, Max Muller said "those men (viz. the unknown Aryans) were the real ancestors of our race ... we are by nature

Aryan, Indo-European, not Semitic. Our spiritual kith and kin are to be found in India, Persia, Greece, Italy, Germany; not in Mesopotamia, Egypt or Palestine.” (*Chips*, Vol. I. p. 4). Clearly Max Muller was using the term ‘Aryan’ as a race.

In this book *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, London 1859, Max Muller says:

“Although the Brahmans of India belong to the same family, the Aryan or Indo-European family, which civilized the whole of Europe, the two great branches of that primitive race were kept asunder for centuries after their first separation”.

He also says: “It would have been impossible to discover any traces of relationship between the swarthy natives of India and their conquerors, whether Alexander or Clive, but for the testimony borne by language” (vol. I, p 71)

In spite of concerted efforts to popularise the term ‘Aryan’ in place of Indo-European, Max Muller in 1860, admitted, “As the person mainly responsible for the use of the term ‘Aryan’ in the sense of Indo-European and since the term has not encountered the same acceptability in Germany as in England, or in France, I am going to develop below some consideration which might justify its use and then he proceeded to enumerate all other terms – Indo-German, Indo-European, Iaphetic, Sanskrit and even Mediterranean and to explain their inadequacy. In 1861 *Lectures on the Science of Language* delivered at the Royal Institution of Gr. Britain, Max Muller said, “As I have been asked repeatedly why I applied the name of Aryan to that family of languages, which we have just examined, I feel that I am bound to give an answer.” And this was the answer he gave: “Aryan is a Sanskrit word, and in the later Sanskrit it means noble, of a good family. It was, however, originally a national name and we see traces of it as late as the law book of the Mānavas, where India is still called Aryavarta, the abode the Aryan” (p. 46).

This is a very farfetched interpretation of what Manu Smriti really says. Moreover, it does not identify the boundaries of the Aryavarta with India or Bharata. He gave a long explanation exclusively based on Sanskrit literature and particularly from the Zoroastrian literature about which Max Muller had himself informed Bunsen that the separation of the Vedic Brahman and Zoroastrians had taken place much before the composition of Rig-Veda in at least 1500 B.C.

Having popularised the word ‘Arya’ in racial sense for more than two decades, Max Muller, for inexplicable reasons decided to call off his own bluff. In his lecture “*On the results of the Science of language*” given at Strassburg University (Germany) in 1872, he tried to retract his earlier position saying: “One forgets too easily that, whenever, we speak of the Aryan and Semitic families, we make a purely linguistic distinction. There are Aryan and Semitic languages, but it is unscientificto speak of Aryan Race, Aryan Blood and Aryan Skulls and to try ethnological classification on linguistic bases. These sciences, linguistic and ethnological, should at this time, at least, be kept strictly apart from each other” (published under the title *Ueber die Resultate der Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg, 1872).

Fifteen years later, i.e. in 1887 in his much talked about publication, *Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryan*, he categorically declared: “Aryan, in scientific language, is utterly inapplicable to race”. In his inaugural address at the opening of the 9th International Congress of Orientalists held in London in 1892, Max Muller again presented his new theory, we know, of course, that languages presuppose speakers; but when we say Aryan, we say nothing about skulls, or hair, or eyes, or skin, as little as we say Christians, or Mohammadans – and, English or Americans. All that has been said and written about the golden hair, the blue eyes and the noble profile of the Aryan, is pure invention, unless we are prepared to say that Socrates, the wisest of the Greeks, was not an Aryan, but a Mongolian. We ought, in fact, when we speak of Aryan, to shut our eyes most carefully against skulls, whether dolichocephalic, or brachycephalic or mesognathic”

Obviously, he was trying to address the usurpation of Aryan Race theory by the aggressive German nationalism and the battle of words between the French and German nationalists. Unmoved, the German scholarship only scoffed at Max Muller’s self-righteous sermons. They quoted years and pages from the vast Max Mullerian literature proving that it was he who had given the term ‘Aryan’ an ethnic connotation.

Max Muller’s literature is full of such high flowing assertions and sermons, contradicting each other. In 1869 Louis Jacoliat, a French man, who had been a Chief Justice of Pondicherry, in his book *La Bible dans L’Inde* (English translation in 1870; *Bible in India*), paying glowing tributes to India called it the ‘Cradle of Humanity’, prayed, “may we hail a revival of thy past in our Western future”. Max Muller lost his equanimity and angrily wrote to the British Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone in a letter dated July 9, 1869, “Jacoliat’s book *La Bible dans l’Inde*, which I looked at, is beneath criticism, it is simply untrue. The author has been deceived, has deceived himself and tries to deceive others.” (Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 368).

Was he really not aware of the originality and greatness of ancient Indian culture? In his Cambridge lecture (1883) he admitted “after having thus carefully examined all the traces of supposed foreign influences that have been brought forward by various scholars, I think, I may say that there really is no trace whatever of any foreign influence in the language, the religion, or the ceremonial of the ancient Vedic literature of India.” (Brahma Dutt Bharati, *Max Muller: A life long Masquerade*, Delhi, 1992, p. 185).

His scholarship was biased, motivated, lacking transparency and honesty, which is evident from a letter which he wrote on December 4, 1899, “less than a year before his death – to Prof. Deussen of Kiel, where he says:

“Of course, Alexandria was so close to India and so close to Athens that spiritual intercourse was quite possible I have so far carefully withheld from the idea of Indian influence on Alexander but, of course, the possibility must be faced.” (Life and Letters, Vol. II, Bombay edition 1903, p. 421) It is a case of suppressed Veri.

Max Muller's public relation exercise for cultivating influential personalities in India worked upon Swami Vivekanand also, after his intellectual conquest of the West at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893. A meeting was arranged between Vivekanand and Max Muller during his visit to England in 1896. The young Swami was swept off by Max Muller's vast Vedic knowledge and Sanskrit studies. Swamiji was so influenced that he called him *avatar* of Sayanacharya and a modern Rishi. Max Muller expressed his desire to write on Vivekanand's Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa, invited Swamiji for a detailed meeting at Oxford on May 28, 1896. On the basis of the feedback received from Swamiji, Max Muller published an article on Ramakrishna Paramahansa in the journal *Nineteenth Century* (July-December 1896). It was followed by a separate monograph on the life and sayings of Ramakrishna published in 1898. It is interesting to note that when Max Muller was imploring Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar to openly profess his conversion to Christianity, he was singing praise of Ramakrishna. Perhaps he had sensed that Brahmosamaj was losing its grounds to Ramakrishna Mission founded in the year 1897.

The double facedness of Max Muller is too obvious that while in his private correspondence he was playing the role of a Christian missionary, outwardly he was projecting himself as an ardent admirer of India through his Cambridge Lectures (1882), Three lectures on Vedanta (1898) and Six Systems of Indian Philosophy (1900) so much so that some enthusiasts believed that he had got converted to Vedanta in the last phase of his long life.

To wind up, the question arises: is Max Muller with all his biased and motivated theories and assertions, really relevant to us in any way, or should we also take a cue from 'the German Indologists of different academic levels and age groups' who argued: 'Most of the results and conclusions of Max Muller's research investigations have been superseded in subsequent years, particularly in the last fifty years...' (Prof. Ratna Basu in *Max Muller and his Contemporaries*, Kolkata, 2001, p. 204). Is it not high time that we overcome our obsession with Max Muller and give him his place in the dustbin of history?