

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this book is to explore the development and impact of English and 'modern' forms of education upon Indian society. It is intended, primarily, as a contribution to South Asian history. Yet in doing so it will also contribute to the imperial, social and religious histories of the subcontinent. It seeks to explore the larger field of education in north India from the mid-nineteenth century to the outbreak of all-India nationalist mobilization led by Gandhi and Congress in the early 1920s. In particular, it relates pedagogy 'on the spot' with its social contexts and shapers, and with larger intellectual debates, religion, spirituality and Indian patriotism. It casts a wider net than existing historiography to give us a holistic understanding of not only the educational experience but also of colonial interactions, knowledge contestation and the emergence of Indian patriotism. In doing so, it seeks to make a solid and penetrating contribution towards our historical literature.

Education was, politically and imperially-speaking, crucial for the British during the generation of Macaulay and after to fill the lower tiers of a rapidly spawning-out colonial bureaucracy. Most of these clerk jobs were either undesired by the British or could only have been filled by Indians which bilingual abilities. In part, this was needed to serve the needs of the East India Company, which by the 1850s had moved significantly towards statistical compendiums, voluminous cartographic surveys and ethnographic studies as a way of knowing their subjects. Expatriate Company officials and, later on, British administrators serving the Sovereign, relied heavily upon the abilities of both the 'new public man'¹ and subordinate English-literate clerks to communicate between increasingly removed British officialdom and the networks of social, aesthetic and affectionate communities in the north Indian hinterland. The colonial bureaucracy would likely have had limited writ without the likes of Shiva Prasad and numerous other English-educated Indians who worked upcountry in the Gangetic hinterland, and across much of India for that matter.

Apart from its political and imperial realities, education was also, more importantly, a formative social and intellectual factor in the emergence of modern India. The decision by the Company to jettison Persian as an official

language in favour of English had reverberate effects (though often incomplete and patchy) upon the pedagogical landscape of South Asia. Large sections of the north Indian Muslim *ashraf* classes, for example, who had served the Mughal state system and its regional successors, suddenly found their gentry skills in rhetoric and legal administration, outdated. There were also, in theory, changes in the possibility of social mobility. For Hindus, these were issues of caste and social purity. Schools were – theoretically – more open to a wider social mix of Indians, whereas prior ‘higher’ education was largely reserved for Brahmans and other of relatively socially and religiously elite standing. Indians who could (and did) work under the Company had to keep European time, regular diaries and had to correspond in English. The knowledge imparted in these schools was also significant in terms of South Asia’s social and religious history. Students who before might have studied Vedic lore and astrology, divine geography, Koranic rationalism, and rhetoric, were now exposed to a western curriculum and the works of Bacon, Locke and Newton. In theory, these had the possibility to jaundice traditional Hindu beliefs and social conceptions of purity and pollution. These early nineteenth-century movements towards ‘useful knowledge’ ran hand-in-hand with both desires to ‘uplift’ and ‘civilize’, and, often more insidiously, hopes to see off Indian ‘superstition’ and, some hoped, to Christianise Hindus.

These were all significant changes in the social and intellectual landscape of pedagogy. In tackling these larger issues, this study, which is primarily focused upon the social contexts of education, also engages with larger issues such as gender, race, empire, missionary Christianity and ‘colonial discourse’ (to use the modern jargon). These are all unavoidable and indispensable tools in helping us to gain a rich, deeper understanding of the educational experience. Although it does not afford primary consideration to any one of these individual topics, it treats them as parts of a wider, dynamic rubric of pedagogical experience and seeks to link them to larger developments in modern South Asia. In particular, it treats race, gender and religion not in a vacuum, but as constantly moulding and interdependent developments which contributed towards larger changes in modern India.

Education in Modern South Asia

This book starts from the need to address a curious gap in South Asian historiography: education. For such a significant development in the subcontinent’s history, the accumulated and contemporary literature surrounding it is relatively straitjacketed by a fixation upon institutions and high policy. Whilst seemingly inevitable and almost necessary, this book argues that we can gain much more from a deeper, penetrating understanding of how education functioned in the locale and its relation to wider Indian social and political developments.

The current state of educational historiography can largely be explained by the ruminations of the generation of post-Independence scholars' experiences of growing up with English education in India. They saw the imposition of new institutions and centralizing, state-sanctioned curricula as radically transforming conceptions of knowledge, rationalism and religion. This was seen especially in contrast to precolonial forms of knowledge impartation and instruction in 'higher' subjects—mainly Koranic studies in the *madrasah* (Islamic seminary), Vedic knowledge in the *vidyalaya* (monastery), and other vocational studies in the *pathshala* (Hindu indigenous schools).

These experiences have manifested themselves directly in the general literature on education. Most of this has focused on institutions and policy. Many of the most well-known studies for example, such as those by Aparna Basu,² Sarayu Prasad Chaube³ and Suresh Chandra Ghosh,⁴ have given us excellent studies on the institutions of modern education. Others such as Krishna Kumar⁵ and Mushirul Hasan⁶ have analysed the political imperatives which drove the emergence of English education and the political contexts of the Indian educational experience and its colonial policies.

One significant by-product of this trend has been to accept the transforming effects of modern, English education upon Indian tradition as given. This is an assumption which has largely characterized our educational historiography. Missionary educationists, Anglicizing evangelical preachers and company scholars were already championing this during the 1820s and 1830s and the 'age of reform'. This continued up through the 1940s and 1950s. Indian observers largely echoed this line of thought. Abdullah Yusuf Ali⁷ argued during the 1940s that English education radically shook up Indian society, thinking and tradition. P. L. Rawat was another historian who made similar claims.⁸ Contemporary historians and anthropologists have largely kept this interpretation alive. Nita Kumar, in documenting the local conditions of pedagogy amongst various social groups in Banaras, has argued that English education represented a serious rupture with the Indian past.⁹

These are all important studies. And of course, it would be hard to deny the change which resulted from the introduction of colonial forms of English education. Yet this is not the complete picture. More specifically, Indian educational historiography is still relatively devoid of studies which firmly lodge pedagogy in its very important and moulding social contexts. The sociology of education – how education was moulded and shaped by social factors such as religion, caste and community – is relatively unexplored. Education, particularly outside of major cities such as Calcutta, Delhi, Madras and Bombay, is also relatively unexplored. What is more, many of these studies' conclusions are unintentionally similar to scholarship which has focused on learned theories of Orientalism.¹⁰ The history of Indian education has, with its focus on institutions and policy pronouncements, unwittingly resuscitated the prism of modernity versus Indian

tradition. This is simplistic and, in a way, it has stunted our historiography. This book seeks to move educational historiography beyond this dichotomy.

The Educational Enterprise and the Sociology of Pedagogy

Throughout, this book will utilize a phrase termed the 'educational enterprise'. It is not, it must be stressed, a 'thing' or concrete entity. Effectively it is a heuristic template used to gauge the network of mission schools which were fanned out across northwestern Bengal, further upcountry in the Gangetic plain, in select parts of the Punjab and central, Hindi-speaking India. It covers a wide collection of schools run by numerous missionary societies at the secondary and higher levels, teaching in both English and various forms of Hindustani. More importantly, it offers an insightful way of assessing the British and missionary impact upon both Indian religious and secular knowledge systems, and patriotic sentiment. One of the main advantages of utilizing a wider template in studying education is that it not only accounts for the diversity of experiences within a pedagogical relationship, but it also can identify trends and commonalities across administrative regions, castes and religious communities.

The main manner in which this concept of an educational enterprise is given colour and depth is through studying the sociological context of education. Since South Asian historiography already possesses a rich and sophisticated social history, this approach should be seen as an attempt to bridge two different approaches. This book makes a strong argument for expanding the boundaries of South Asian historiography by working with the field of educational sociology. Too little is known about the day-to-day running of education and its wider sociological bearings. Who served as patrons of schools? What were the demographics of these schools? How were schools linked to communities of religious, aesthetic and affective knowledge? Such questions, this book argues, are crucial in understanding the impact of modern forms of education in India. This book therefore treats education not as a mere institutional experience, confined to the pedagogical relationships usually found in classrooms, but as actively shaping and, more importantly, shaped by its social context – in bazaars, Hindu temples, mosques, hill retreats and student lodgings. It suggests that education be broadened to include a wide variety of religious, spiritual and anthropological experiences. What is more, a sociological understanding of the educational experience, both secular and religious, can give us an even wider perspective to the already well-documented emergence of organized Indian nationalism. Indian educational history has been divorced from its social context. It needs to be, this book argues, restored to its very instructive social environment. Such an approach ought to bring significant benefits to Indian historiography.

This project has derived a good deal of inspiration from the work of Pierre Bourdieu.¹¹ Bourdieu's sociological work offers a useful theoretical template by which to assess the impact of education and, more instructively, how Indians were able to shape their pedagogical functioning and experiences. In particular, his concepts of pedagogic authority, charisma and cultural reproduction can prove of great use to scholars of South Asia. Bourdieu, for his part, treats the authority of pedagogy as something which reproduces the ethos and privileges of the socially elite, referring to the French educational system – particularly the *Grand Ecoles* and the *Ecole Nationale D'Administration*. Bourdieu sees education as possessing a veneer of meritocracy whilst clandestinely safeguarding the authority and dominance of the state, and those with the most vested interests in administering it. In effect, he argues, modern state-run regimes of education reproduce not only the dominance of the socially elite, but also the legitimacy of the state. Bourdieu's work touches upon many aspects which are crucial for modern South Asian history – knowledge contestation, colonial educational infrastructures, and teacher-pupil relationships.

In all, this study finds much use in these concepts. Yet it takes particular qualifications with them. In the Indian context, for example, there had always been a longer, precolonial undercurrent of educational patronage which relied upon the local subscriptions of village headmen, panchayat councils and holy men, in the forms of elementary and merchant-commercial education (*Mahajani*-shopkeeper-education).¹² Very often this took place beyond the ken of the Mughals and their regional state successor systems, which nearly exclusively patronized the study of 'high' education-Sanskritic learning, the Islamic *madrassah* and Urdu poetry. The precolonial Indian states did not set up their own centralized curricula, and instead served as symbolic patrons. The British, by contrast, set up a centralized bureaucratic system first at the provincial (and later at the central) level and state-run curricula, rendering many indigenous institutions obsolete. But it was never as absolute or seemingly penetrating as it may have seemed. Outwardly, the institutional change was significant. But such change did not necessarily equal social change. There was, in theory, much room of manoeuvrability for Indians to carry on reproducing their own social, religious and caste ethos within a transformed institutional structure. It is one of the main aims of this book to explore this void which has held back our historiography.

Missionaries in South Asia

Another aim of this book is to grant missionaries a more central role in the history of South Asia than they have hitherto been afforded. Missionaries have not yet been fully integrated into the mainstream historiography of South Asia, and have usually been treated as institutions or purely religious actors. This book,

by contrast, will strongly argue for a more formative role for missionaries in the emergence of modern India and their interactions with Indian society. In particular, it offers a telling insight into how missionaries operated beneath the veneer of pamphlets, sermons and (usually the focus of modern scholars) popular missionary figures such as Alexander Duff and William Carey. Whilst this book deals with missionaries, it is mostly, it must be stressed, a contribution towards Indian history, but it simultaneously contributes towards imperial history due to the nature of the topics covered.

The history of religion and missionaries within the historiography of imperialism is a subject which has become increasingly vibrant and sophisticated of late. There have, of course, been earlier studies of the ‘missionary impact’ in India, though these have been peculiarly circumscribed in their approach. Scholars have tended to focus more on ideological and confrontational periods between missionaries and Indians. Lata Mani, for example, has focused on missionary diatribes over *sati* (self-immolation of Hindu wives), documenting how they riled against such ‘barbaric’ practices and, importantly, displayed a disparagement which mirrored that of the reformist-cum-Anglicizing generation of James Mill and Thomas Macaulay.¹³ Avril Powell has also documented the more hardened interactions between missionaries and Indian society, bringing particular focus to the religious polemics with the Muslim *ulama* in north India before the Mutiny.¹⁴ Other scholars such as Anthony Copley have shed light upon the period of religious conflict and polemic debate between missionaries and religious leaders, particularly over matters such as conversion.¹⁵

One underlying presumption from much of this scholarship, however, has been to conflate (in varying degrees) missionaries with wider imperial prerogatives. This has even been done by a wider academic and theological audience. N. Barney Bityana, for example, has conflated colonialism with Christianity from a political perspective, arguing that the prerogatives of missionaries were often in line with wider imperial dynamics.¹⁶ The scholar of liberation theology, Tissa Balasuriya, has similarly suggested that missionary Christianity is still theologically bound up with the imperial pretences of Christianity and expansionist Europe.¹⁷ These underlying arguments have been similarly and more recently echoed in the field of imperial historiography. Catherine Hall,¹⁸ for one, has demonstrated how missionaries in Jamaica and Birmingham created an ‘other’ in their rhetoric, activities and imaginations. Kathleen Wilson has argued that missionaries were instructive in making ‘Christian subjects’ out of the ‘other’,¹⁹ whilst Hans Turley has even gone as far to argue that Protestant Evangelism justified forms of ‘ethnocide’ and colonialism.²⁰

These arguments, the following chapters contend, deserve significant qualification. This trend in recent imperial and missionary historiography has tended to focus on general and more popular missionary spokesmen, whilst often over-

looking less well known – yet equally significant and instructive – figures who worked for decades in Indian villages, holy cities and classrooms. Popular rhetoric and publications have been given overly-weighted attention at the expense of more intimate and constructive interactions with colonial societies. Whilst admitting that the creation of difference was part of an emerging imperial English and imperial identity, this was not, it must be stressed, the complete picture. Numerous other missionaries engaged with Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist traditions in ways which were far more positive and sympathetic than these scholars have allowed. There was another half to the missionary impact which deserves equal attention. In doing so, this book will account for the imperial horizons of British Protestant missionaries in India and, to another extent, the wider world.

One noticeable omission from much recent work on missionaries has been theology, and the scant inattention that imperial scholars have paid to it is highly problematic. As Andrew Porter²¹ has recently argued, missionaries took their theology seriously, and our understandings of the missionary impact are significantly limited if we fail to account for theology and how it played itself out in the mission field. This book is largely in sympathy with this view, arguing that theology was crucial to the field of missionary education and, upon closer analysis, the history of religion and knowledge in South Asia. The omission of theology also hinders us from accounting for the wider, and often tenuous and uncertain, intellectual undercurrents upon which they were based. The following chapters demonstrate that the theology in widest currency – Fulfilment – not only guided missionary educationists in their activities, but, more importantly, opened up the possibility for Indian-missionary interaction, contestation and, in the end, uncertainty as to the degree which missionaries were 'hand-maids of empire'. Moreover, the theology itself was not solely a product of the European will to dominate, but also, as we will see, had strong roots in pre-colonial Indian traditions, wider European intellectual disagreements and uncertainties. It was also moulded and shaped by experiences in India.

Another aim of this book is to integrate missionaries into the mainstream of South Asian historiography, rather than treating them as marginal and purely religious actors. It aims to effectively cross-fertilize the realms of Indian and missionary history more intimately. This needs to be emphasized. Past historians have tended to consider religion and missionaries irrelevant to social and colonial history, given the dearth of converts they managed to attract. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Mission activity was a significant social factor in the shaping of modern India. Hindus and Muslims adapted the rhetoric and practices of their antagonists, codified religious canons, and organized themselves along proselytizing lines. These developments helped contribute to 'modern' and larger Hindu and Muslim identities – and ultimately nationalisms – in South Asia. Missionaries, this book will stress throughout, were also more deeply engaged with and knowledgeable

about the very cultural, religious and affective forms of knowledge from which the British became increasingly removed as the nineteenth century progressed. Two questions this book seeks to answer are: were missionaries absorbed by the larger process of Empire consolidation in India, and how significant was their impact, via education, upon the subcontinent?

Another approach this book takes is treating missionaries not purely as religious actors. In particular, less examined in South Asia's historiography has been the missionary-scholar-Orientalist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Too little is known about the more intense and personal interactions between Indians and Europeans after the period of the Indian Mutiny, many of which were spearheaded by missionary-cum-scholars. This is largely because contemporary scholars are still loosely bound to a chronology which sees the post-Mutiny period as unquestionably reactionary, racially-minded and disparaging of Indian tradition. Yet such an approach, this book argues, is limited by focusing on either British officialdom or Anglo-India. These latter nineteenth-century missionaries, upon closer inspection, engaged in a voluminous amount of discourse with pundits, moulvies and sannayasis, and at major religious and pilgrimage sites. Missionaries engaged in the higher and multiple thoughts of Hinduism and its philosophy, discussing and investigating everything from the nature of God, incarnation, the afterlife and the transmigration of souls (*samsara*). Banaras was usually a focal point. Religious tracts and scriptures were exchanged, and pundits and missionaries met weeks later to discuss in either seminar form or in the public arena of debate. Great and vibrant public discussions were generated, and at times even the hope of religious conversion was jettisoned completely. This book argues that the later colonial period was not just an era of religious and ideological conflict, and polarization, but was also characterized by intense discourse, discussion and exchanges of religious ideas which – from one perspective – increasingly resembled the early periods of British Orientalist scholarship.

Aims and Outline of this Book

This book approaches education in a three-fold manner. Firstly, it explores and charts the pre-colonial traditions of comparative religious scholarship which were pioneered by Indo-Muslim gentry scholars starting with the scholarly canons and travelogues of eleventh- and twelfth-century Muslim scholars and, more intensely, during the Mughal period. Secondly, it penetrates into the functioning and impact of pedagogy 'on the spot' by examining the infrastructure of education, the reception of the curricula by Indian students, and the contestation of Orientalist scholarship on India and the origins of religious traditions. Lastly, it examines the relationship between north Indian education and wider developments in Indian patriotism and affective knowledge, exploring how both

missionaries (for their own reasons) and Indian students contributed to what can be forms of 'constructive nationalism'. In a sense it is a broad, ambitious study. But it does argue that by weaving a wider variety of topics into a study of education we gain a more socially-contextualized understanding of Indians' diverse educational experiences.

The societies most involved in education in the North-Western Provinces (latter United Provinces) of Agra and Oudh were the Church Missionary Society (CMS), London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). The former two organizations were more evangelical in orientation, whilst the SPG was itself more representative of the 'High Church' tradition in Anglicanism, having more in common with the Catholic Church. These societies differed in their stances on doctrine and especially the use of ritualism. The SPG, for example, was seen by the more evangelical CMS and, to a lesser degree, the more Congregational LMS, as too close to 'Romanism'. These differences did manifest themselves back home in Britain and were the subject of divisive debates in the British public sphere, but they are less easily discernible in the north Indian context. Despite these differences, there was a marked degree of congruence in both their attitudes and practice in their dealings with Indian students and their religious traditions. For instance, the rather minute differences between societies over the degree to which they planned on accommodating Indian religions in their efforts to propagate Christianity rarely manifested themselves 'on the spot'. Missionaries from different societies often filled-in for teachers at other societies' schools, even though some felt they were 'competing for souls'.

This book effectively has six core chapters. Chapter 1 begins by examining the precolonial foundations upon which both Orientalist scholarship and comparative religious debate were based. In particular, it examines vibrant, extant traditions of religious debate and appropriation which were picked up upon by eighteenth-century Orientalist scholars and, later on, missionaries themselves. It also provides a useful, late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century context to establish the wider context of missionary engagements and Indian responses. Chapter 2 goes on to analyse the social, economic and moral context which allowed the emergence of a north Indian educational enterprise. It looks at, in particular, the ascendancy of a market form of education which came into being during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and how it was shaped by not only British anxiety and fear, but also by Indian social realities. Chapter 3 examines the instructive role of theology in the educational field, defines missionary aims and means, and in doing so touches upon topics such as gender, empire and cultural representations. This chapter specifically probes how missionaries engaged with pre-existing studies of Hindu theism and how they moulded them to fit their own agenda. Chapter 4 is more specific, and accounts for the 'nuts and

bolts' of pedagogy by examining the infrastructural shortcomings and instructive contexts in which these schools operated. In particular, it links the infrastructural deficiencies of pedagogy with larger trends of secularization which were, it stresses, fashioned by both missionaries and Indians. It also accounts for how Indians shaped the enterprise within and how it reproduced Indian ethos and cultural norms regarding public piety, ritual pollution and privilege. Chapter 5 addresses the wider topic of knowledge, examining in particular how Indian holy men, students and scholars contested missionary efforts to impose terms of religious debate. It also examines how these groups also reacted to their western curricula and contested popular scholarship on comparative religion. In doing so it charts the rise of affective knowledge within a wider ecumene in north India by the latter nineteenth century. Building upon forms of affective knowledge, Chapter 6 explores the educational enterprise's interactions with Indian patriotism and the links between missionary aims and, at a larger level, Indian nationalism. In doing so, it affords a more formative role for missionary educationists in the development and propagation of Indian patriotism, and further explores the widening gap between the Raj colonial state's cultural and human knowledge and that of missionaries, Indian students, and holy men. This was largely due to the deep, vain and Christocentric engagements which missionaries sought out and achieved.

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