RECASTING THE SELF: MISSIONARIES AND THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR IN KERALA (1854-1956)

Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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2017

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21 July 2017

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, entitled **'Recasting the Self: Missionaries and the Education of the Poor in Kerala (1854-1956),** submitted by me to the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is my original work. It has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree in any University.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in this University.

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Acknowledgments

The past few years have been nothing short of a rollercoaster ride, and I owe it to many people and institutions. This thesis began under the guidance of Prof. M.S.S. Pandian, whose presence is deeply missed. In the midst of uncertainty regarding research, Prof. Pandian's gentle reminders to read, reflect, and relax, kept me in good stead. Today, this work stands completed under the supervision of Prof. Janaki Nair, and I thank her immensely for the generosity, sharp insights, and boundless curiosity, with which she helped navigate this dissertation. She instilled much-needed motivation when the personal and political was going tough. Alongside my supervisors, this work has gained much from the financial and intellectual support of the Transnational Research Group on Poverty and Education, Max Weber Stiftung and the German Historical Institute London. The TRG doctoral fellowship provided me with a wonderful opportunity to share my work with a group of friends and colleagues, and travel to various archives, within India and abroad. It helped improve my understanding of the subject and the craft of writing in many ways, alongside good food and travel. I have also benefitted from the well-preserved and excellent services of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the India Office Library in London, Mission-21 at Basel, Cadbury Special Collection at University of Birmingham, United Theological Seminary at Bangalore, Mangalore Seminary, the Kerala State Archives, and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and the Centre for Development Studies, triavndrum apart from the JNU Library. I also thank Friederich, Lukas, and Naima, for taking time out to help me with translations from German to English.

As I look back, I remember numerous people, many of whom I may not be able to thank enough, who have helped me plough through this PhD. Friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and the random acts of kindness by strangers have all come together to help me get through a rather lonesome world of research. Mathangi teacher, whose pointed defence of a motley bunch of students, way back in 2004-05 allowed us to pursue subjects of our interest. Her continued enthusiasm has been a source of much inspiration. Suchismita and Sharanya, the *stud machas*, whose friendship brings so much happiness than I can ever put in words or bad jokes! Thankan, Aardra, Nikhil, Sahil, Arjun, Ambe, Gaya, Rashmi, for patiently bearing me through the sun and the rain, and being pillars of assurance. Vaibhav, Rohan, Sam- for watching out for me from the sides, and of course, the grand old Malayali gang- Haneefa, Shafana, Reenu, Asha, Gabu, Khadeeja , Nisam, and Ranjith- we have bounced off conversations, ideas, and stories

off each other. These friendships, some old, and some new, have made the world a bit bearable. For a transnational friendship bordering on insanity, I thank Cyril, for his goodwill.

My stay in Gottingen, at CeMIS, and London was memorable because of the generosity and vivacity of Aparna and Nandu. They not only offered food and wine but provoked me to intellectually engage beyond my comfort zones. Mira helped me settle down and learn some of the ways of the Germans. In London, Appu Eleyacha, Omana Eleyammaa, Deepa, and Prashant provided me a home away from home. Their enthusiasm to listen to my meandering tales from the past cheered me no end. Christopher's non-historian outlook was of great help. To Vibha aunty and Akhil, for the generous helpings of food, and letting me run to Hauz Khas, as and when I desired, and to dozens of 'aunties' and 'uncles' who let me take refuge in their homes as I dealt with painful bureaucracy during archival work.

Of course, my years in JNU means a lot more due to three women, who shared their buckets and spoons, clothes to medicines, without batting an eyelid. Thank you, Resmi chechi, Shilpi, and Kim- my roommates, whose company I often took for granted, but without it, the harsh weather and overdose of *aloo* would have brought no respite.

A big thank-you to Cheri and Vidya- for a friendship newly forged over common grievances, cultural roots, and a love for all things edible. Your company and intellectual sharing has made this thesis an enjoyable experience, and Aditya, for sticking it out even when it did not make sense. Your immense affection, kindness, and patience, has meant a lot over these trying months.

Most importantly, I thank my brother and sister-law, Dileep and Haritha, who understood the travails of a research student, and offered all the help they could in more ways than one. I may have seemed a bit distant at times, often giving the same-old excuses, but if it were not for your encouragement, I would not have had the luxury of committing to my studies in peace. The arrival of my niece, Tammana, has only added to my happiness, and I am glad she has patiently borne a perennially exhausted aunt!

And to my mother and father, Shobhana and K.P.Kannan, whose endless encouragement, wry sense of humour, and an invincible belief in the transformative potential of education, has guided this work from the very beginning. It is to them that I owe this dissertation.

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Glossary

Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society

Christian Vernacular Education and Literature Society of India

Church Missionary Gleaner

Church Missionary Intelligencer

Church Missionary Record

Council for World Missions

Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle

Sri Mulam Popular Assembly

Introduction

By the mid-nineteenth century, the princely state of Travancore was hailed as a 'model native state', an epithet that continues to echo in the historiography of the region. Under the rule of Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma, assisted by the Dewan T. Madhava Rao, Travancore underwent a systemic overhaul, which resulted in an increase in trade revenues, opening of new administrative services, a regulated state system of education, and provision of infrastructure. Much of the credit was often attributed by the British authorities to the able administrative abilities of Madhava Rao.[1] The *Friend of India* commented thus,

> …he managed to draw Travancore out of the miserable quagmire in which he found it. He converted the Police from an engine of oppression and terror into one of protection and peace. The treasury was full; salaries were regularly paid; crime decreased; the pests in the shape of petty public servants disappeared; roads were opened; encouragement was given to education.[2]

While this picture presented a supposedly satisfactory view of the nature of matters in Travancore, internal social relations were deeply fractured. These fractures were most evident in the practice of caste untouchability, as various communities in Travancore observed stringent rules of contact, and a vast majority of illiterate and landless labourers were lorded over by a minority of wealthy upper castes. In its conversion from a highly debt-ridden and politically stagnant state to an enviable status of a model state, which

[1] James Grant, Cassell's Illustrated History of India, Volume 2 (London and New York: Cassell Peter and Galpin, 1876), 538.

[2] As quoted in John Murdoch compiled. *Indian Year-book for 1862: A Review of Social, Intellectual, and Religious Progress in India and Ceylon,* (Madras: Graves, Cookson and Co., 1863),113

impressed the colonial British administration, Madhava Rao and his aides swept under the carpet the reality of a brutal social order dictated by caste.[3]

Untouchable caste groups such as Shanars, Ezhavas, Pulayas, and Parayas were subject to extreme torture, bonded labour, and agrestic slavery, and denied any equal rights to participate in the fortunes accumulated by the state. This was also their condition in the neighbouring princely state of Cochin, and in British-administered Malabar towards the north, where land was cultivated by these most menial classes without adequate remuneration and recognition of their status as equal beings. Particularly, in the field of education, Madhava Rao's opening of English schools in the capital, Trivandrum, and an expansion of vernacular education under a separate department in 1870-71, meant little in practice to these castes who were unable to access them.[4] They looked towards other avenues which allowed them both access and opportunities to gain a rudimentary schooling. From the 1820s onwards, across colonial Kerala, these avenues lay with Protestant Christian missionaries who closely interacted with labouring populations, and navigated the complex caste-ridden landscape to win converts.

Why were the untouchable poor in colonial Kerala educated, and how? These two questions animate this study as it seeks to explore the socio-political dynamics involved in the adoption of schooling strategies for poor, untouchable caste-communities with reference to Protestant Christian missionaries in nineteenth and twentieth-century Kerala. I use the term 'untouchable' because in the period under consideration, rules of caste penetrated every realm of individual and community life, and labouring groups were branded as 'polluting' by upper-caste diktats. The central concern of my work are the processes by which schooling practices for these untouchable caste groups such as the

[3] S. Ramanath Aiyar, *A Brief Sketch of Travancore, the Model State of India: The Country, Its People and Its Progress Under the Maharajah* (Trivandrum: Modern Star Press, 1903)

[4] "A Native Statesman," *Calcutta Review* , Vol. 55, (Calcutta: City Press, 1872), 260

Shanars, Ezhavas, Pulayas, and Parayas in the region were mediated by various categories of caste, class, race, and gender.[5] How did the role of caste affect the provision of missionary schooling? In what ways were notions of Christian femininity imparted to poor girls? Which aspects of the discourse of labour and moral improvement were upheld, and, finally, how did education become a contested political site for the demand of civil rights? These are some of the questions addressed in this study.

By adopting caste as a central category of analysis, I place my enquiry within the growing field of the history of education in colonial South Asia that moves away from what Hayden Bellenoit calls, 'a semantic focus on institutions and policy'.[6] This shift situates itself within a social history of education that examines everyday pedagogical engagements inside and outside formal classroom spaces during the period under analysis. As it pertains directly to the question of the education of the poor, I rely upon the writings of those who were responsible for igniting such engagements in local society: European Protestant missionaries of the London Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society, and the Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society. Traversing the domains of religion and caste, these missionaries were active in determining discourses of schooling for the untouchable poor. Their writings, when examined in an historical context, also enable us to adopt an approach encouraged by historians such as Barnita Bagchi, which falls under the category of new empirical approaches such as trans-regional histories of education.[7]

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[5] The Nadar community in erstwhile south Travancore (present-day Tamil Nadu) were known as Shanars in the nineteenth century. I use the term 'Shanar' in this study as it pertains to the earlier period, and to maintain uniformity with its usage in missionary writings. Pulayas and Parayas were agrestic slaves, and bought and sold by upper caste and Syrian Christian landlords. The Ezhavas and Tiyyas were considered superior to the slave groups but were also considered untouchable.

[6] Hayden Bellenoit, "Paper, Pens and Power between Empires in North India, 1750–1850", *South Asian History and Culture* 3 (2012): 348-349.

[7]Barnita Bagchi "Connected and Entangled Histories: Writing Histories of Education In The Indian Context", *Paedagogica Historica* 50 (2014): 813-821. Also see ed. *New Perspectives in the History of Indian Education* ed. Parimala Rao (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014)

The entanglements of colonial rule which transgressed geographical boundaries can be prominently seen in the field of education. Classroom pedagogies and certain moral registers were brought by missionaries to regions such as Travancore and Malabar, and in their tense interactions with caste, gender, and poverty, literacy as a skill, and education as an asset assumed a plurality of meanings.

Building upon an existent literature that employs missionary archives and examines the trans-national networks of ideas and people in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, my study examines the negotiations, compromises, and conflicts involved in the processes of schooling the poorest classes. Such an investigation also departs from the histories of education in the decades immediately after 1947 which tended to overwhelmingly focus on the role of English education, government policies, higher educational institutions, and upper-caste life-histories.[8] What the children belonging to poor, untouchable communities learnt and how they did so remain under-studied questions, to which some answers can be found in by a scrutiny of those who interacted closely with them. This probing also breaks down the image of the 'model' state framework, which limits the history of education in colonial Kerala to the apparently benevolent and enlightened policies of its erstwhile rulers and missionary zeal to improve the lot of the labouring masses. I question these assumptions by zooming the historian's lens on to the relationships between the state, missionaries and the untouchable poor who participated in moulding ideas of the self through the right to schooling. Caste complicates

[8] Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974) , J. P. Naik, *Educational Reform in India: A Historical Review* (Poona: Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1978) Also see Clive Whitehead, *Colonial Educators: The British Indian and Colonial Education Service 1858-1983* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003), Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), and Suresh C. Ghosh, *History of Education in India* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007)

our understanding of an otherwise monolithic view of missionary education in colonial Kerala, even as they provide us with a rich source of information on pedagogical engagements.

Schooling was not viewed as a harmless affair of imparting literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy, but posed a grave challenge to upper-caste landlord authority which refused to see their labourers and slaves as anything but less than human.[9] The emergence of mission schools, scattered across various villages, gradually grew into an 'educational enterprise', governed by state regulations and community pressures, leading to cracks in the prevalent order. As Christians began to assert themselves in an emergent public sphere, and build more schools for their future generations, they were recasting themselves as individuals capable in their own right to stake claims in the changing polity. An exposure to new forms of language and conduct opened by a vocabulary of self-expression which was utilised in political struggles for freedom. The Ezhavas, for instance, challenged their caste superiors and aggressively mobilised themselves to gain the right to equal access to government schooling from the 1880s onwards.[10] he princely state was compelled to respond to their demands of equal recognition, and the opening of schools was the initial step into a larger struggle for representation in the political realm.

[9] "The Pulayas of Travancore", *Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record* April Vol.VIII, New. Series (London: Seeley, Jackson, & Halliday, 1883), 215-222

[10] George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1989), 51-55. In 1904, the Ezhavas of Travancore, guided by Dr. P. Palpu, established the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam. Naraya Guru, a philosopher was nominated as its head, under whom various Ezhava groups began to unite for community reform.

Education in the Historiography of Kerala

In historical narratives on Kerala's famed 'model of development', Christian missionary activity has found a prime place. The predominant trend in Kerala historiography has been to situate the missionaries within a simplistic impact/response framework.[11] They are portrayed as carriers of a modern education due to the provision of English in the colonies, which impacted different social groups and provoked responses in the form of socio-political reform. Such a perspective fails to take into account the multi-layered engagements of missionaries with various caste-communities and the specificities of historical experiences beyond the classroom for poor children. Instead, it assumes mission schooling as a largely homogeneous endeavour in colonial Kerala. Another dominant approach in Kerala historiography consists of representations of missionaries as solely 'saviours' and drivers of social change, especially with regard to the advancement of rights for the oppressed.[12] This tends to portray them as monolithic characters and ignores their roles as educators and political actors with ambivalent attitudes towards the poor. I argue, along the lines of studies by scholars such as John W. Gladstone that Protestant missionaries were viewed differently across the social spectrum in Kerala, which determined the nature of their interaction in the field of education.[13]

The opening of a wide array of missionary archives across the world has enabled historians to broaden the scope of educational research across geographical boundaries and

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[11] E. T. Mathew "Growth of Literacy in Kerala: State Intervention, Missionary Initiatives and Social Movements," *Economic and Political Weekly* 39 (1999): 2811–2820. For an analysis of Kerala's primary education development, see P. Gopinathan Nair, *Education and Economic Change in Kerala*, (Trivandrum: Centre for Development Studies, 1978) Also see V..K.Ramachandran, "Kerala's Development Achievements and their Replicability", in *Kerala: the Development Experience: Reflections on Sustainability and Replicability*, ed. Govindan Parayil. (London: Zed Books, 2000), 88-115.

[12] R. N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in* Travancore*: A Backward Class Movement for Social Freedom* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1975)

[13] John W. Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and Peoples Movements in Kerala, 1850-1936* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984)

time.[14] Hayden Bellenoit, in his study on the educational institutions in colonial United Provinces in north India, argues for understanding the continuities between pre-British and colonial traditions, in the making of 'communities of religious, aesthetic and affective knowledge'[15]. His focus on 'pedagogy on the spot' is an endeavour to assess the sociology of education at the ground level, in classrooms and playgrounds, and through the lives of missionaries who toiled for decades towards achieving their own goals of Christianising the various populations, particularly the upper-caste elites in higher educational institutions. Similarly, Tim Allender asserts that indigenous education, which was often dismissed as defective continued to exert an influence on government policies for rural schools in colonial Punjab.[16] Towards the east, Parna Sengupta explores the activities of Scottish and British missionary groups to understand the pedagogical aspects of mission schooling in refashioning the religious identities of Hindus and Muslims in colonial Bengal.[17] She throws light on the emergence of the figure of the school teacher, normal school training, and inculcation of pedagogical methods such as object-lessons brought by missionaries, which were remoulded by *bhadralok* reformers and nationalists to shape their own educational agendas and blunt the effects of evangelical work. Sengupta's study asserts that religion, far from withdrawing itself in the realm of modern education,

[14] For other regions that examines the relationship between missionaries and identity formation in colonial India, see Joseph Bara "Tribal Education, the Colonial State and Christian Missionaries; Chotanagpur, 1839-1870" in *Education and the Disprivileged: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2002). Also see John Thomas *Evangelising the Nation: Religion and the Formation of Naga Political Identity* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2016)

[15] Hayden J.A Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 8.

[16] Tim Allender *Learning femininity in colonial India, 1820-1932* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016) On rural education in colonial India, see Tim Allender, *Ruling Through Education: The Politics of Schooling in the Colonial Punjab* (Elgin: New Dawn Press, 2006) On processes of female schooling in northern India, also see Preeti, "*Schooling Women: Debates on Education in the United Provinces (1854-1930)*" (Unpublished PhD Diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2016)

[17] Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2011)

continued to exert its influence on adults and children alike, and shaped notions of discipline.[18] Linking religion and society through an examination of missionary encounters in Travancore and Cochin, Sanal Mohan argues that Christianity and literacy allowed untouchable caste populations to experience modernity through a new vocabulary that empowered them to seek equality.[19] Mohan's work is integral in understanding the social relationships of power that contributed to the constructions of slavery and imagining of freedom among the Pulayas, Parayas, and Kuruvars in the princely states. By drawing upon mission education and activities, leaders such as Poykayil Yohannan, a CMS convert in central Travancore, also used its repertoire of theological representations to eventually critique the hierarchized church structure that failed to live up to promises of universal fraternity and equality.[20]

Drawing upon such studies that integrate missionary archives into the histories of colonial education from below, I analyse schooling processes that prevailed in the construction of a poor, school-going child. The lives of rural children were moulded within mission schools (day and boarding) which were spaces for the promotion of conversion as well as Christianisation. The distinction between the two processes often blurred and overlapped in the manner in which Christian converts were also schooled in certain moral registers, codes of conduct, deportment, and speech, in order to 'prove' the 'authenticity' of their change in religious faith.[21] In the case of a large number of non-

[18] Ibid.

[19] Sanal Mohan *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015)

[20] Sanal Mohan, "Religion, Social Space and Identity: The *Prathyaksha Raksha* Daiva Sabha and the Making of Cultural Boundaries in Twentieth Century *Kerala*." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 28 (2005): 35-63.

[21] Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004),6

Christians, particularly upper-caste Hindus and Muslims, the mission schools argued for a process of Christianisation by which pupils were trained in a new time-work discipline and notions of self-improvement along the lines of Christian norms in the absence of direct conversions. While the princely states of Travancore-Cochin marked significant progress in literacy and Malabar fared better than other districts of colonial Madras Presidency on the eve of independence, there have only been a few attempts to assess the relationship between schooling and poverty in an historical perspective.[22]

This study adopts a broader conception of 'schooling', as one that encompasses processes of socialisation, political struggles over the right to a school education, and meanings associated with literacy, and considers schools as larger sites of ideological contestation. As a number of untouchable castes converted to Protestant Christianity from the mid-nineteenth century onwards in colonial Kerala, their demands for education included a concomitant demand for new jobs, change in social status and caste distinctions, and a recognition of equality.

Why did the Christian missions want to educate the poor? Their initial experiments in establishing schools had immediate objectives. The ability to read the Bible was fundamental to conversion. Faced with the challenges of a widespread illiterate society, these missions began their work by establishing schools, aware of their potential to attract those caste groups that were hitherto neglected as well as the upper castes desirous of an English education to further develop their social power. Besides, without local Christian employees comprising catechists, school teachers, and readers, a handful of European missionaries could not communicate with the vast local population. A network of local

[22]For an historical overview, see P. K. Michael Tharakan's two-part essays, "Socio-Economic Factors in Educational Development; Case of Nineteenth Century Travancore," *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. 14, No. 45 and 46, November 10 and 17, (1984):1913-28. For a comprehensive study on missionaries and social change in Kerala, see John W. Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and Peoples Movements in Kerala, 1850-1936* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984)

Christian evangelists was sought to be raised and trained in order to expand proselytization activities among adults and children alike. With the entry of mission employees and congregants from lower-caste groups, numerous attempts were made to exercise authority via the implementation of church regulations, discipline, and strict communal control. However, this was far from complete, and as Eliza Kent argues in the context of recasting gender relations in south Travancore, Protestant norms were mostly adapted and appropriated alongside pre-existing notions of authority and respectability.[23] In this study, I argue that young children were inculcated with some aspects of social change such as deportment, conduct, ideas of familial organisation, and attitudes to work required of poor converts within the arena of school education. Schooling regimes and the transmission of certain subject-knowledge contributed to the making of a certain morality undergirded by evangelical Christianity. These norms, which were sometimes challenged, influenced local Christianity, and were integral to the formation of children's identities outside the schools.

For the missionaries, education was *praeparatio evangelica*, laying the ground for the reception of Christianity and by extension, norms of European civilisation. Schools were considered as one of the main agencies of evangelical work for 'improving the minds and intellect' of Indian children and through them, their families, to make them realise the follies of the Hindu and Muslim belief systems. Such a discourse was premised on fundamental notions of racial difference, as Jana Tschurenev notes, wherein European ways of thinking were privileged over indigenous ones.[24] In the arena of education, missionaries also contributed to cementing this discourse of difference, by representing

[23]*Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)

[24] Jana Tschurenev, "Incorporation and Differentiation: Popular Education and the Imperial Civilizing Mission in Early Nineteenth Century India", in Carey Anthony Watt and Michael Mann eds. *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia*: *From Improvement to Development* (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 104-105.

'heathen' cultures and modes of knowledge production, especially oral traditions, as 'inferior' in the civilizational hierarchy.

The fundamental goal of mission education was also to instruct colonised children to make a break with their cultural pasts. These Christianising influences were meant to make them carriers of the Gospel to their 'dark and heathen' homes. Many of the children, the missions hoped, would impress upon their families to convert eventually. Evangelical missionary societies and colonial officials wanted to 'civilize' the poor, both according to the demands of the colonial labour market and in pursuit of cultural advancement through scientific innovation, consumption of manufactured goods, and the pursuit of industrious occupations. This was premised on a Christian way of life which upheld certain virtues such as honesty, hard work, thrift, self-denial, and charity as its hallmarks. But these racial markers were also undercut by class and gender distinctions. What must occur first - evangelism or education - remained a contentious topic. By the mid-nineteenth century, Christian missionaries running higher educational institutions and schools in colonial India acknowledged that they were not winning direct converts from amongst the upper classes and castes through such work.[25] Instead, there were calls to significantly shift to teaching Indians the habits and ways of thinking prevalent in Europe - ideas of European science and literature which would 'Christianise' the colonised by example. Christianity, it was argued, would be accepted as the 'true' religion as a consequence of this education.

European Protestant missionaries did not merely impact upon a 'static', traditional society. As Hayden Bellenoit argues, education became an arena of European-indigenous encounter, wherein different social groups of Indians engaged in getting their demands

[25] Sanjay Seth, "A Moral Crisis. Western Discourse and its Indian Object", in Andreas Beer and Gesa Mackenthun eds. *Fugitive Knowledge: The Loss and Preservation of Knowledge in Cultural Contact Zones* (Waxmann: Muenster and New York, 2015),107.

met to a considerable extent.[26] Similarly, the varying success of the missionary project in colonial Kerala was due to the ability of various social groups to fashion educational agendas. Thus, analysing missionary interactions with the poor along multiple axes will enrich our understanding on two counts. First, it will help provide insights into the formative processes of a discourse on school education and its implications for the poor. Second, a genealogy of the struggles over the right to education will throw light on the constitution of selfhood under colonial modernity.

Ideally, Protestant missions desired to convert upper-caste populations, such as the Namboodiris and Nairs, whom they believed would form a Christian elite leadership, helping to take the fruits of the Gospel to the oppressed. But soon, in the face of bitter opposition, they shifted their attention to evangelising laboring outcaste populations. Yet, owing to extreme poverty and the vicious usage of violence on poor converts, missionaries were often ridiculed for their association with 'rice-Christians'[27] a far cry from the material and moral achievements for which the missions wanted to be known.

Koji Kawashima traces the educational development of Travancore as a history of compromise and competition.[28] He argues that the Hindu orthodox administration constantly negotiated with private agencies such as Protestant missionaries, which led to the establishment of modern institutions at a quicker pace in the region. This argument highlights the different state-building processes which allowed the Travancore rulers to actively participate in shaping educational practices even as they restricted primary

[26] Hayden J.A Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920*, (New York: Routledge, 2007)

[27]The term 'rice-Christians' was derogatorily used by upper-castes to ridicule those from the untouchable communities who sought the help of missionaries during times of famine, epidemics, and sickness. They were mocked for flocking to the missions solely for economic benefits and disappeared afterwards. See M. Christhu Doss, "Repainting Religious Landscape: Economics of Conversion and Making of Rice Christians in Colonial South India (1781–1880)," *Studies in History* 30 (2014): 179-200.

[28] Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998)

education for the poor to the missionary sphere.[29] Dick Kooiman goes further and shows how the relationship of the indigenous groups with western missionaries opened up new avenues of employment and mobility through schooling which was partially supported by the government as long as it kept the poor out of their institutions.[30] By examining the work of the LMS in south Travancore, Kooiman links the missionary agenda to economic changes beyond its immediate religious aims. He argues that the provision of education to the Shanar Christians positively affected their opportunities for work through migration, and played a role in strengthening community involvement in schools and churches back home. Although the missionaries imparted a vernacular and English education to train converts as primarily catechists and mission school teachers, by the 1870s, many of the LMS schools' pupils were migrating to parts of colonial Sri Lanka, to work in European owned plantations. This allowed them to forge new networks of patronage, economic mobility and social status, and thereby signified both the limits and possibilities of the missionary educational project. Kooiman's work draws direct connections regarding the nature of education in the LMS schools and supply of labour to the new plantation economy, headed by European planters and businessmen, and opens up the contours of a debate which continues unabated - the relationship between commerce and Christianity.[31]

The interlinking of these two aspects has been a site of debate within missionary circles from the eighteenth century onwards, although couched in a language of evangelism. As Andrew Porter shows, Christianity was seen as synonymous with the idea of civilization and progress, and one group of missionaries argued that without the spread

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Inequality: The London Missionary Society in the Nineteenth Century South Travancore,* (New Delhi: South Asia Publications, 1989)

[31] Dick Kooiman, "The Gospel of Coffee*:* Mission, Education and Employment in Travancore," in *Conversion, Competition and Conflict: Essays on the Role of Religion in South Asia,* eds. Dick Kooiman, Otto van den Muijzenberg and Peter Van Deer. (Amsterdam: Free University Press,1984), 185-214.

of Christianity, the civilizing of the heathen populations would remain incomplete.[32] The other group considered that the imparting of Christianity required some basic prerequisites in place. This, missions believed, could be heralded only by markers of Western civilizations, particularly trade and manufacturing industry.[33] But the binding factor for these two camps was the role of education, which was accorded much importance.

Agrarian children had to be brought within the ambit of global colonial production as producers and, to a limited extent, consumers of new commodities. This required basic literacy skills but also a continued insubordination and deference to landlords and tax collectors. Among the upper castes, there was a constant fear of village boys turning against their superiors if they acquired a literary education. For the missionaries, this fear combined with an anxiety of the 'vagabond' who could not be contained. Also, European racial prejudice depicted the colonised Indian adult as an infant - in a 'child-like' state - emotionally immature and easily influenced by wayward tendencies. This discourse of 'infantilising' Indian adults was used as a justification for missionary intervention in schooling practices for the poor.[34] What poor children ought to learn was heavily circumscribed by their caste position; their labouring bodies were integral to the educational trajectories they were expected to follow, unlike that of their caste superiors.

In the mission boarding institutions, the nature of learning was gendered and varied. This is most visible in the way it was practised along gender divisions. In the village schools, girl children often attended the lower classes of elementary boys' schools but in reality, not many were sent to schools formally. Prevalent gender divisions and

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[32] Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004)

[33] Andrew Porter, "Commerce *and* Christianity': The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth-Century Missionary Slogan," *Historical Journal* 28 (1985): 597-621

[34] Satadru Sen, "Health, Race and Family in Colonial Bengal," in *Children, Childhood, and Youth in the British World*, eds. Shirleene Robinson and Simon Sleight,, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 144-160.

hierarchy disallowed women from acquiring literary skills. For the labouring classes, women's labour was important for the family's survival. Given their conditions of bonded labour, Pulaya and other outcaste women were tied to the lands of their landlords with their families. They were subjugated to the physical authority of the landlord apart from other indignities. This was a major obstacle for educational providers such as missionaries, who were interested in educating their Christian women converts on the lines of Victorian morality.[35] These notions clashed with the role of women in agrarian economies as active participants in the fields. Christian ideas of femininity found its way into girls' boarding schools set up by the European missionaries. They projected the Indian woman as a hapless victim, in dire need of spiritual and social salvation. The Christian woman became the site on which a new society would be moulded. The objective of educating girls was summed up by missionaries as 'producing useful wives and daughters'. But these notions could not be easily transplanted on to the poor in local society.[36] Poor and destitute Christian children, including a number of orphans, were fed, clothed, and lodged at the missions' expense, and supported by benefactors in their home countries and across British India. These children, though very small in number, tended to become the focal point of missionary educational agendas. It was by forging a Christian pedagogical community among them that missions hoped to expand their evangelical cause as well as transform the 'native' character. Many boarding-school educated girls from the lower castes were trained as Bible-women, without whom preaching to upper-caste households were far from complete. These educated women occupied a position of in-betweenness as

[35] Jane Haggis, "Good Wives and Mothers" or "Dedicated Workers"? Contradictions of Domesticity in the "Mission of Sisterhood", Travancore, South India' in *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific* eds. Margaret Jolly and Kalpana Ram, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 88.

[36]Jane Haggis, "Ironies of Emancipation: Changing Configurations of 'Women's Work' in the 'Mission of Sisterhood' to Indian Women," *Feminist Review* 65 (2000): 108-126.

they navigated the relations of race and caste, in the propagation of piety.[37] Their subversion of dominant norms in terms of transgressing so-called sacred spaces in colonial India has made them the subject of much attention.[38]

An emphasis on changing colonised children's natal behaviour associated with ignorance and superstition was also integral to the framework of graduated conversion in which poor congregants were judged. A declaration of acceptance of a new faith and an experience of spiritual change in the interior realm were insufficient and the poor had to regularly display outward signs of Christianity. It was in the boarding schools that poor Christian and orphaned children were instructed in those cultural practices that were to be perpetuated through monogamy, disciplining of children, familial organisation, and religious worship requisite of evangelical Christianity.

Boarding school children functioned in a highly restrictive atmosphere, with an insistence on strict-timetables, surveillance, and subject to disciplining measures. By an erasure of their natal cultural habits and customs in boarders, missions attempted to introduce ideas of Christian monogamy, notions of propriety, and a culture of literacy in converts. These destitute and orphaned children became the experimental ground for mission pedagogy. They were schooled in ideas of Christian monogamy, respectability, and upheld as the products of a civilised form of upbringing, an aspect allegedly absent in indigenous parents. As Karen Vallgarda has shown in her study on Danish missionaries in colonial Tranquebar, boarding schools were arenas of affective communities, functioning

[37] Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)

[38] Jayachitra Lalitha, "Did LMS Women Missionaries 'Save' Native Women? Triple Colonization of Travancore Bible Women in the Nineteenth Century," in *Construction of the Other, Identification of the Self: German Mission in India* eds. Martin Tamcke and Gladson Jathanna. (Zurich: LIT, 2012), 55-66. In the same volume, see Gladson Jathanna, "Negotiating Borders and Bridges: Indian Bible women in the Hermannsburg Mission", 67-74.

on the basis of disciplinary control.[39] Particularly, as the chapter in this study on female mission schools argues, the nature of instruction imparted to poor girls was more religion-oriented, and envisaged within the boundaries of piety. Yet, the advent of female schooling among the Christians from lower castes provided new kinds of employment such as teaching and mid-wifery. Girl pupils from boarding schools, trained in a regimented manner, were some of the earliest among the poor to move outside the realm of agrarian labour and into professionalised work such as Bible-women.

Protestant missionary societies exerted considerable influence on European constructions of childhood in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their interactions with poor, colonised children also shaped perceptions of childhood across continents. But these views largely used the European bourgeois, middle-class child as a template, viewed to be in need of nourishment - physical, mental and spiritual - by a world of adults, as Philippe Aries' classic study noted.[40] Schools, thus, became sites of protection where children would be socialised into a certain moral order and kept away from the adverse influences of sexual and other transgressions. On the one hand, Christian missionaries were represented as having the best interests of the child in mind while, on the other, Indian parents were condemned for their unscientific and dangerous ways by which children were not provided adequate protection.

But such an apparently universal notion of childhood was fractured by categories of class, race, and gender. Particularly with relation to the labouring classes in the non-western context, the history of childhood still remains an under-studied subject. Most

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[39] Karen Vallgarda, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

40 Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*: *A Social History of Family Life* (London: Pimlico, 1996). Aries argued that the concept of 'childhood' in Europe took shape from the thirteenth century onwards and by the eighteenth century was class-determined. For an overview of debates on his work, see Patrick H. Hutton, *Philippe Ariès and the Politics of French Cultural History* (Amherst and London: University of Massachusetts), 92-112.

constructions of the colonial child occurred in a legalistic and medical framework, focussing upon debates concerning age of consent among upper castes, undergirded by dominant scientific and racial theories of the period.[41] Poor children's voices remain mostly absent in archival material in Indian history but missionary writings give us a glimpse into their responses ranging from acceptance to resistance towards mission agendas. This study is also an attempt to look at the lives of boarding school children and the ways in which they interacted with missionaries.

In the project of self-constitution, these boarding schools stressed upon labour/work at the core of individual formation. Viewed from this lens, mission schools highlight the multiple ways in which poor Christian children occupied the lower rungs of a labour hierarchy within mission boarding establishments which, in many ways, resembled their caste-prescribed statuses. But what differed was the religious attitude infused in ideas of work in protestant Christianity, and attempts by missionaries to instil a particular work ethic in poor children. Emphasising on the idea of a 'calling', Protestant missionaries considered diligent manual work as the manifestation of one's piety. In opposition to a caste-determined labour hierarchy which condemned certain manual tasks as degrading and 'polluting', Christian missionaries perceived an individual's work as one's natural duty. These were replicated in the boarding institutions that largely admitted poor children where commitment to various manual tasks was a part of the disciplinary regime to mould a Christian subjectivity.

In short, mission education was not necessarily targeted at pushing these children out of their so-called respective social station in life. It was never intended that children must keep away from manual labour owing to a literary curriculum. Anxieties often arose

[41] Ishita Pande, "Coming of Age*:* Law, Sex and Childhood in Late Colonial India," *Gender & History* 24 (2012): 205-230.

regarding the various forms of resistance exhibited by children against the immense burden of manual labour placed on them. For instance, the Basel Mission, known for its Pietistic adherence to manual work as a part of socialisation and education, reported many cases of runaway children in its orphanages-cum-boarding institutions. Often, it was remarked that literate children, especially Christians, were looking down upon manual tasks as unbecoming of them, as they imbibed new learning from the very same Christian training. This devaluation of manual labour on the part of colonial children and families was due to the extreme oppression caused by caste rules. The desire to move away from agriculture was predominantly prompted by the obstacles placed by caste in denying dignity to labouring groups. Hence, families who sent their children to mission schools expected that their children would be able to achieve some occupational mobility and better wages, and also be treated as equal civil subjects. Resistance ensued as missionaries aspired to raise a better class of Christian agriculturalists and artisans who would further the evangelical cause in the villages and become model communities for non-Christians to emulate. The aspiration of poor communities to break free from caste-determined work and the missionary insistence on valuing manual labour for its spiritual worth was a constant bone of contention.

Within the political economy of conversion, indigenous converts began bargaining with the monarchical and colonial administrations to be recognised as equal subjects in the arena of law, albeit with varied results. They were able to assert themselves via means of education and a politics of petitioning which was actively pursued by the literate sections of lower caste communities by the twentieth century. They demanded state intervention in ensuring the right to enter government schools. This was a struggle waged both on paper and the streets.

Untouchable caste communities in the early decades of the twentieth century, both

Christian and non-Christian, mobilised themselves, sometimes with missionary support, to expand their civil rights. As Sanal Mohan has shown, articulations of equality amongst slave castes in Travancore-Cochin were encouraged by Protestant missionary activity and emergent discourses on rights.[42] A culture of literacy, though largely limited to Bible-reading and catechism, provided a new social imaginary to oppressed castes, who were able to fight the dehumanization inflicted upon them. Coupled with anti-caste ideology and propagated through popular religious idioms, philosophers such as Narayana Guru played a significant apart in self-respect campaigns. Narayana Guru led community reform initiatives by challenging Brahmin monopoly over temple worship and access to public institutions. His exhortations to the people to 'Strengthen through Organisation, and Liberation through Knowledge' became the clarion calls for wide-scale political agitations for education from the government. Education was pivotal to this process of democratizing knowledge. These attempts at democratizing knowledge have had a far-reaching impact on Kerala. For the Ezhavas, it meant a greater share of administrative jobs and distancing from their past occupations of 'toddy tappers' and 'manual labourers'. The Ezhavas, Pulayas, and Parayas, began to participate in deliberative politics and placed their concerns before the ruling administration through the Travancore Sri Moolam Popular Assembly. This avenue, though dominated by upper-caste landed groups, planters' and traders' associations, was the beginning of a protracted struggle to achieve the right to schooling for all children irrespective of caste or creed. Empowered by the skills of argumentation, propaganda, and mobilisation techniques, laboring communities consolidated their strength to compel the orthodox states to recognise them as free and equal subjects. Education became a crucial plank on which these protracted struggles were

[42] Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015)

fought.

Using Missionary Archives

Much of this study relies upon the corpus of mission writings that have become a valuable source in the past few decades. In the last thirty years, the opening up of various Protestant and Catholic mission archives across the world, particularly in Europe, has opened new arenas of historical inquiry. Moving away from theological debates, mission writings have brought to light the complex roles assumed by missionaries on the colonial field. As ethnographers, anthropologists, botanists, and linguists, apart from religious preachers and educators, the donning of various roles places the missionary in a unique historical location. In colonial Kerala, missionaries were one amongst many European groups that made inroads into the territory. But their work left behind a network of educational institutions and wealth of ethnographic information on the people, customs, languages and violence underlying social hierarchies. The archives, though heavily mediated by missionary idioms, still provide us a rich source of information on the history of education for the labouring classes. It helps us explain why poor children were taught and how communities and missionaries negotiated its terms. In the light of historical evidence, this study is an attempt towards understanding the constitution of the 'modern' schooled individual.

Despite their inherent biases and overarching evangelical zeal, missionaries in colonies were keen observers of everyday life and prevalent socio-economic divisions. Their observations, sometimes in convergence with ruling administrations, and on other occasions, in support of popular rights, throw up details of the complex processes that underpinned institutions such as schools. Hence, unlike much of the literature on the history of education that focusses on literacy rates alone, missionary writings allow new

questions to be asked about the meanings associated with education by various communities. It should be stated, however, that the study heavily relies upon insights about classroom functioning and attitudes of poor children in the schools from missionary literature as other dominant sources such as government archives do not throw much light on their everyday lives.

Children as historical actors has only invited recent attention from historians in India, and given their overwhelming absence in archival material, there remains a rather one-sided dependence on missionary observations. Yet, a reading against the grain enables us to differentiate the educational objectives pursued by mission schools for untouchable children vis-à-vis their upper-caste counterparts. Labouring children were made visible along various socio-political registers as mission schools negotiated the question of evangelism through schools.

Chapter Overview

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the various kinds of missionary educational institutions for untouchable caste children in colonial Kerala. It details the missionary encounters with both upper-caste landlords and labourers daring to attend these schools. Schools were perceived as threatening the status quo by caste orthodoxy, and prolonged violence marked the earliest efforts of missionaries and untouchable communities attempting to avail of a basic literacy. Chapter two is a close examination of missionary boarding schools for young Christian girls run by the LMS and CMS, especially of the Shanar and Pulaya castes in Travancore and Cochin. A religious curriculum dominated schooling experiences for female boarders as married female missionaries attempted to raise them within a sphere of evangelical domesticity. With boarding schools stressing upon the importance of manual labour for poor children, I

move to chapter three which studies the Basel Mission's schools. Unlike the British Protestant organisations, the Pietism-driven, German dominated Basel Mission was keen to establish vernacular Christian communities through educating their converts. They also established industries as an extension of sites of schooling, and trained their lower-caste Christians into a particular moral and work order. Chapter four draws together various aspects of mission schooling discussed in the previous chapter and analyses elementary school textbooks used in government and mission schools in the region. These school language readers were largely a compendium of moral lessons, and instilled certain virtues of work and morality in its young readers. Finally, chapter five looks at the ways in which the two dominant communities in Travancore – Ezhavas and Pulayas - contested with the princely state to attain the right to equal schooling. Their debates in the Travancore Popular Assembly and over the question of recognition of rights reveal the varied nature of state responses to its different class of subjects. While the economically mobile Ezhavas secured a better educational status over time, free Pulayas and other depressed castes struggled to receive adequate amounts of land and education, and continued to be neglected by the state until the mid-twentieth century. All these chapters highlight the making of pedagogical communities consisting of Protestant missionaries and untouchable caste groups, and expands our understanding of what constituted an 'education'. In conclusion, I point out that the history of education involving the poor enriches our understanding of the methods by which certain structural inequalities are perpetuated and make themselves evident in contemporary society.

Chapter One

Missionary Education in Travancore and Cochin: Contestations and Negotiations

Introduction

> …some school in Travancore…a little cottage with mud floor and walls, and the infant class seated on the floor, awith not a great amount of clothing on, learning to draw their letters on the sand…the older classes writing with their iron stylus on palmyra leaf in Travancore, and in other parts of India they would be using boards of tin or wood, and writing with little chips of wood dipped in chalk and water.[1]

The picturesque setting in which children gathered to be instructed by the school master, usually known as *asan*, dotted the pre-colonial educational landscape of Kerala. Before European missionary activity and colonial education interrupted this indigenous system, such schools known as *kudipallikoodams, pallikoodams* or *ezhuthupallis* , in the house of the upper caste teacher or a prominent village figure usually imparted elementary education to upper caste boys, and in some instances, lower caste Ezhavas.[1] Long recognised as an important constituent of local village society, *kudipallikoodams* relied upon local forms of patronage and the *asan* was engaged mainly in oral instruction and remunerated in kind.

But this conceals more than it tells us about the processes of knowledge sharing and production in pre-colonial Kerala. Behind this organisation of learning, a violent social hierarchy prevailed, making the provision of education a fuzzy endeavour,

[1] Speech by Albert Spicer at the Eighty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the London Missionary Society, as cited in *The Sunday at Home,* Vol. 30 (Piccadilly: Paternoster Row, 1883), 479.

determined by caste strictures. So-called upper caste Hindus monopolised Sanskrit education, Malayalam indigenous schools and access to scriptures, the 'interpretation' of which laid the foundation of a materially and socially exploitative caste system. Children belonging to lower caste communities such as the Ezhavas, Tiyyas, and Shanars, were not allowed to access most *kudipallikoodams* and some of them learnt under their own masters and schools modelled on similar lines. A minority of Sanskrit scholars, astrologers, and Ayurveda physicians among them provided schooling for a few while the vast illiterate majority were involved in coconut tree-climbing, toddy-tapping, weaving, stone-cutting, agriculture, and related activities.[2]

Other religious groups had educational arrangements of their own. Many wealthy and landed Syrian Christians also educated their boys in their own *kudipallikoodams.* Muslim children attended the small *madrasas* attached to mosques, and concentrated primarily on religious texts, while a large majority, especially the Muslims of Malabar, (known as Mappillas) were illiterate agricultural labourers and economically backward.[3] At the bottom rungs were the numerous untouchable castes existing in conditions akin to agrestic slavery such as the Pulaya, Paraya, Cherumar and Kuravar castes. Denied rights to freedom and access to roads, temples, markets, schools, and courts, and treated as 'beasts of burden', they were bought and sold by upper caste Hindu and Syrian Christian landlords, and also owned in large numbers by the princely governments until the final

[2] Owing to the presence of Buddhism in Kerala, some Ezhavas such as Itti Achuthan, were able to gain mastery over Sanskrit and through them, Ayurveda texts. The tracing of Ezhava origins to Buddhist tradition is a dominant narrative in their community histories. Madhav Gadgil, *Ecological Journeys*, (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 83. For an overview of various narratives of origin, see Cyriac K Pullapilly, "The Ezhavas of Kerala and their historic struggle for acceptance in the Hindu Society," in. *Religion and Social Conflict in South Asia* ed. Bardwell L. Smith, (New York, EJ Mill, 1976), 13-23.

[3] U.Mohammed, *Educational Empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-Historical Perspective*, (Calicut: Other Books, 2007), 75.

decades of the nineteenth century.[4] This caste-slavery complex relegated them to the margins, shunned from 'public view', physically and culturally.[5] Their experience of a formal literacy-based schooling and related skills occurred only with the advent of Protestant Christian missionary activities who as Dilip Menon notes, 'became the interface through which lower castes experienced colonial modernity'.[6]

By casting the so-called lower castes and slaves as 'polluting', the Namboodiris, Syrian Christians and Nairs condemned them to arduous manual labour without basic freedoms such as education, land ownership, access to temples, roads, wells, proper food, and clothing. The violence perpetuated by such a caste order was most visible on the untouchable's labouring body. Dictums inscribed with numerous dos and don'ts regarding dress, jewellery, food, language and marriage customs shaped their social position. Samuel Mateer, a long-standing LMS missionary in Travancore noted that the slave castes such as Pulayas led an inhuman existence. His observations, quoted here extensively, captures the disabilities imposed on them during the period under consideration.

> The Pulayan has no education, for who would be found willing to teach, or even to approach, the impure one?.. He dare not say " I," but" adiyen," " your slave;" he dare not call his rice " choru,"but " karikadi,"— dirty gruel. He asks leave, not to take food, but "to drink water." His house is called "madam" a hut, and his children he speaks of as "monkeys" or "calves", and when speaking he must place the hand over

[4] P. Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015)

[5] Samuel Mateer, a long-standing LMS missionary in Travancore left a descriptive account of the various castes. He described in detail the the slave Pulaya and Paraya castes. See Mateer, *The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and Its People* (London: John Snow and Co., 1871), 44-49.

[6] Dilip Menon, "A Place Elsewhere: Lower-Caste Malayalam Novels of the Nineteenth Century," in *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 439.

the mouth, lest the breath should go forth and pollute the person whom he is addressing.

The Pulayan's home is a little shed, which barely affords shelter from the rain and space to lie down at night, destitute alike of comfort and furniture…Very rarely has the Pulayan land of his own…The Pulayan is not allowed to use the public road when a Brahman or Sudra walks on it. The poor slave must utter a warning cry, and hasten off the roadway into the mud on one hand or the briers on the other, lest the high caste man should be polluted by his near approach or by his shadow…The Pulayan cannot enter a court of justice,—he must shout from the appointed distance, and take his chance of being heard and receiving attention. As he cannot enter a town or village, no employment is open to him except that of working in rice-fields, and such kind of labour.[7]

This landscape became complicated with the arrival of European Protestant missionaries, wielding Bibles but most importantly, armed with resources they considered integral to the spread of 'civilization' premised on their notions of progress. At the time, colonial Kerala was split between the two princely states of Travancore and Cochin in the south and British-administered Malabar towards the north. Although they were not the earliest Europeans to arrive in the coastal region, Protestant missionary work began unsettling existing power groups much more since they focussed their energies on various caste groups in the mainland through the vernacular languages.[8]

[7] Samuel Mateer, *The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and Its People,* (London: John Snow and Co., 1871), 45-46.

[8] Kerala claims a Christian presence as early as 72 AD when the Apostle St. Thomas converted people on the coast. With the coming of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, there were mass conversions to Catholicism, particularly amongst the Mukkuvar and Arayan fishing castes. These came to be known as Latin Catholics.

From the early nineteenth century, the London Missionary Society (LMS), Church Missionary Society (CMS), and Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society (Basel Mission or BM) established mission stations and embarked upon their proselytization activities in colonial Kerala. As a matter of principle, they agreed to not transgress into each other's mission territories, united by a single-minded agenda of winning converts to Protestantism, despite some of their theological disagreements.[9] While the Basel Mission functioned in British-administered Malabar from the 1830s onwards, the LMS and CMS had already begun work in Travancore and Cochin during the preceding decades, enjoying financial and land grants from many local administrators and support from certain British colonial quarters.[10]

For ordinary church-goers in Europe, who formed the mainstay of foreign evangelical societies, India was a tropical 'heathen' land filled with disease and vices such as superstition, idolatry, idleness, ignorance. However, on the ground, missionaries soon realised that the 'heathen' in India was not one but many, in terms of his/her social and religious identity. An identity, marked most prominently by a fundamentally unequal caste-based hierarchy. Finding their strongest adversaries in caste and its adherents, missionaries resorted to other ways of reaching out to the colonised alongside direct Gospel preaching. Propagating the religion of the word, they set out to impart what they

[9] Various missionary societies in the colonies agreed not to undertake evangelical work in each other's 'territory', a wary resemblance to the manner in which European powers carved out their colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

[10] Col. Munro, the British Resident (1810-1818) during the Lakshmi Bai's reign was also the Dewan of Travancore-Cochin. He observed that recruiting Syrian Christians into public service, and making provisions for the education would stifle opposition towards British rule amongst them. He encouraged the CMS to establish mission stations in central Travancore, and persuaded the Queen to offer money and land grants for the construction of the Cottayam College. For the LMS, he again convinced the administration to offer monetary and material help to build a house and school at Nagercoil. Munro was also keen on translating the Bible into Malayalam, and aided its work. See Grace George, "Missionary Activity and the Syrian Christians in Kerala," in *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools: Case Studies from the British Empire*, ed. Brian Holmes. (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 122-23.

thought constituted 'useful knowledge', beginning with how to read the Bible.[11] For this to succeed, they had to offer what was hitherto denied to a majority of the indigenous population, particularly the untouchable poor: literacy.

A programme of catechistical instruction in Sunday, night, and village schools for children and adults of the untouchable groups was initiated which gradually evolved into a formalised network of mission education. Such a provision of learning and the freedom to access Christian scriptures helped these groups achieve new modes of self-expression. This chapter examines the various negotiations and tensions between missionaries and various local groups on the question of education, and the ways in which they sought to refashion their individual and community selves as rationally deliberative beings, worthy of equality and freedom.

Asans and Indigenous Schools

Up until the early years of the twentieth century, indigenous schools also known as *kudipallikoodams, pallikoodams, and pyalls* enjoyed considerable community support from the upper castes, and Ezhavas to an extent. In 1891, V. Nagam Aiya, a well-known administrator and Census commissioner of Travancore, mostly referring to the upper castes, noted that a *kudippallikoodam* education was looked upon as a 'religious duty.'[12] He recorded 1,800 *pyall* schools in Travancore instructing 50,000 pupils, including a

[11] The missionaries actively pursued an agenda of diffusing 'useful knowledge' which mostly pertained to instruction in Christian scriptures. They encouraged English instruction and held the opinion that the existent knowledge traditions in India were faulty and deprived of moral values. The East India Company granted missionaries entry into colonial India after the Charter Act of 1813 to spread 'useful knowledge', and to raise the colonised populations to an elevated civilizational position. In 1836, Charles Mault and Charles Mead wrote, " Public opposition and persecution have nearly ceased; and the benefit of diffusing useful knowledge and improving the moral conditions of the inhabitants."

[12] V. Nagam Aiya considered himself a complete 'Travancorean'. He was educated in the Maharajah's High School at Trivandrum, and later graduated from the Maharajah's College. In 1875, he conducted the first census operations in Travancore, and became the Dewan Peishkar in 1883. See V. Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual* Volume 2 (Trivandrum: Gazetteers Department, 1999), 453.

minority of girls. All these schools were privately owned and managed with the help of village community members who mostly paid the teachers in kind. Aiya noted,

> When the boy's education commences, the village schoolmaster is brought to the boy's house and is given a fanam, betel and nut, some paddy, coconuts and plantains. This is the first remuneration for the *Vidyarambhom* or the boy's initiation in letters. The ashan then takes the boy to his school with music and beat of drum. A new manuscript book made of palmyra leaves written with an iron style either by the new master himself or his assistant, the first boy in his school, and daubed over with saffron is given to the pupil. This is the primer or first book with which he begins his school life.[13]

Lessons for these pupils, he stated, comprised astronomy, arithmetic, *neethi sastrom*, the thousand names of Vishnu, a portion of the Sanskrit dictionary, easy lessons in casting horoscopes, verses on medicine, and general poetry.[14] Writing was learnt on sand or palmyra leaves using a stylus and children memorised their lessons taught by either senior pupils or *asans*, a practice that caught the eye of Andrew Bell in early nineteenth century Madras.[15] As Kathleen Gough reminds us, these subjects served to fulfil the chief functions of literacy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which 'were to conserve custom, to organise and sanction the feudal kingdom, and to provide artistic entertainment and religious and philosophical enlightenment to the ruling castes'.[16]

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[13] Ibid., 453.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Jana Tschurenev, "A Colonial Experiment in Education Madras, 1789–1796," in *Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-Cultural Exchanges in (Post-) Colonial Education*, eds. Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs and Kate Rousmaniere (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 105-120.

[16] Kathleen Gough, "Literacy in Kerala," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies* ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 141.

Increasingly, by the 1860s, *asans* were seen as woefully inadequate by the Travancore administration in training children for non-traditional occupations such as those in the administrative bureaucracy. The curriculum and pedagogy of indigenous village teachers were perceived as stagnant.[17] Commenting on the laxity with which the teacher taught, and the overall inadequacy of his methods, Nagam Aiya labelled the *asan's* work 'neither heavy nor congenial'.[18] Though not largely remunerated in wages, the *asan* enjoyed considerable social respect and earned various benefits in kind from various castes who were keen to retain this exclusive mode of traditional schooling. The use of physical punishment was a characteristic feature of *kudipallikoodam*s and the *asans* were notorious for using the cane, among other disciplinary techniques on pupils, as and when they liked. In the schools, the *asan* or his assistant (a senior pupil) read aloud daily lessons and younger ones were expected to repeat after him in unison, failing which there was strict punishment.[19]

In 1867, on the eve of Travancore government's declaration of educational reforms, the figure of the *asan* seemed contradictory to the idea of the modern, colonial-trained school teacher envisioned by the likes of the then Dewan T. Madhava Rao, a product of the Madras High School. Under the English educated Rao's watch, Travancore embarked upon an expansion in public infrastructural works, cash-crop oriented

[17] V. Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual* Volume 2 (Trivandrum: Gazetteers Department, 1999), 454

[18] Ibid., 454.

[19] Physical punishment was a common feature in pyall schools. Nagam Aiya remarked, "The boys attend from early morning, sometimes even before 6 a..m. which would be a great merit in the boy, and would receive special recognition from the master in the evening when the attendance is noticed and due punishments to the late comers are meted. The special recognition that the first boy receives is a gentle touch of the palm of his hand with ·the rod of the master. The second boy receives two such gentle strokes on the palm of his hand; the third boy three, and when the the last boy's turn comes, the master puts on an air of great disapprobation and apparently in great anger asks his assistant, "Is this boy the latest comer in my school?. So saying, he gives him a good thrashing with the cane." V.Nagam Aiya 'Education' *A Reprint of Articles contributed to The Hindu and The Indian Patriot of Madras*, (Madras: Law Printing House, 1913), 9-10.

agriculture, reorganisation of vernacular education, and improvement in communication networks; all of which required a particular kind of educated personnel. In the previous year, in a prize-giving speech at the Maharajah's High School in Trivandrum, Rao made his intentions clear. He declared that as far as the government was concerned,

> all important posts under it would be filled by educated men, and by educated men alone, as soon as they become available.[20]

One of Madhava Rao's main goals was to improve the quality of traditional schools by integrating them into a state-regulated vernacular education in order to produce the educated workforce he desired.[21] The new system consisted of three kinds of schools- schools in every *proverthy* or village, district schools in taluqs, and aided schools receiving grants. The course of instruction in the village schools consisted of reading, writing- both on paper and *cadjan* leaves-, arithmetic, geography, both general and of Travancore; and writing from dictation. A similar course of instruction was followed in the taluq schools where the standard was higher and Indian history was also taught. A high school called Central School was established at Trivandrum, catering to children of the employees of the royal administration including non-Malayali Brahmins and Nairs. Another characteristic of the modified vernacular apparatus was that the schools charged fees uniformly at two annas, except in the Central School, which received between two

[20] Robin Jeffrey, The *Decline* of *Nair Dominance*: *Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908,* (Manohar: New Delhi, 1976), 69

[21] Ibid., 75-103.

and four annas.[22] But government schools continued to remain out of reach for untouchable populations.

As part of an emergent educational bureaucracy, a stringent set of regulations was introduced with regard to the usage of particular books in schools, qualification of teachers, and provision of basic infrastructure. With one broad sweep, the reforms attempted to put a brake on the activities of LMS and CMS which were prominent among the labouring castes. Citing the problem of 'religious sensitivity', the Travancore administration kept untouchable caste children out of government schools and preferred to provide grants to mission schools instead. As these mission primary schools overwhelmingly educated untouchable caste pupils, the state had very little interest in actively taking up the same and hence, the field remained open to missionary societies.

However, this did not mean a free rein in mission school management. The provision of grants following the Wood's Despatch in 1854 came with curbs on the usage of Bible during school hours, striking at the root of evangelical missions. Many ill-equipped village LMS and CMS mission schools stumbled and those which were unable to meet this requirement, among others, faced closure.[23] While salary and results grants provided financial relief, vernacular mission schools were 'forced into the position of becoming schools for the lower-caste children only'.[24] This resulted in an unofficial division of labour with the government schools serving the interests of the upper castes

[22] C.D. Maclean, *Standing Information Regarding The Official Administration Of The Madras Presidency In Each Department, In Illustration Of The Yearly Administration Reports Prepared Under The Orders Of Government.* (Madras: Government Press, 1879), 49

[23] Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore,* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1883), 208. In 1902, I.H Hacker reported on the closing down of primary schools for the poor due to changes in the educational code. The government reduced the slaray grants for teachers in aided schools from 3/4th to 2/3rd creating a fund shortage for the LMS. Unable to raise fees from poor pupils, some of the schools had to be shut down. See I. H. Hacker, Report of the Neyoor Mission District/ CWM/ South India/ Travancore Reports/ Box 8/ 1902

[24] I. H. Hacker, Report of the Neyoor Mission District/ CWM/ South India/ Travancore Reports/ Box 8/ 1902

alone. Noting this unequal state policy, Samuel Mateer, a long-standing missionary of the London Missionary Society based in Trivandrum, accused the upper castes of denying the poor their rightful share in public expenditure. He stated,

> Just think of the amazing selfishness and effrontery of the demand made on the part of the wealthier...They have any amount of pecuniary means at command to establish schools for themselves as exclusive in principle as they please...however, they claim admission to the public schools...and they not only accept this charity but even venture to assert a claim to its exclusive enjoyment...[25]

In practice, until the early decades of the twentieth century, the educational reforms did not disrupt traditional caste hierarchies and many government schools, largely due to the pressure of upper caste families and teachers, refused to admit untouchable caste children. The network of vernacular and English schools that peppered the region remained inaccessible fot the Pulaya and Paraya communities even after the abolition of slavery in 1855. The development agenda of Travancore, comprising vast backwater reclamation projects, laying of rail and road networks, and the expansion of cash crop cultivation were undertaken on the shoulders of the most downtrodden in society but they remained less than human.[26]

The advent of Protestant Educational Work

The 1813 Charter of the British East India Company which allowed partial entry of Christian missionaries into the colony was used advantageously by administrators such as Col. John Munro who became the British Resident and resident Dewan of Travancore and

[25] I. H. Hacker, Report of the Neyoor Mission District/ CWM/ South India/ Travancore Reports/ Box 8/ 1902

[26] K.T.Rammohan, "Caste, Public action and the Kerala Model" in *Development, Democracy and the State: Critiquing the Kerala Model of Development* ed. K. Ravi Raman (London: Routledge, 2010), 33.

Cochin during the years 1811 to 1814. Undergirded by political motives, Munro was extremely keen on altering the religious customs of the powerful Syrian Christian community in Travancore, and sought the help of the CMS to introduce reforms. In addition, he also pressurised the administration to appoint Christians as judges presiding over Hindu plaintiffs. However, missionary interference upset relations with the already-existent Syrian Christian community who perceived Munro's attempts as questioning their long-held church authority.

In 1817, the CMS which came as the 'mission of help' and the orthodox Syrian Christian community parted ways, and the former began to expand its evangelical base on its own. Since the eighteenth century, the Syrian Christian community had been bestowed with ritual privileges and the cultural insignia by various local rulers that accorded them a high status.[27] As owners of significant amounts of land, they tended to closely cooperate with ruling administrations and owned numerous Pulaya slaves. Backed by organisational support, the CMS was able to expand its work independently amongst the Pulayas in subsequent decades, although the Syrian Christians continued to remain the prime beneficiaries of CMS schools and collegiate education.

In an attempt to expand Christian missionary education and stem the strength of upper caste groups in political rule, Munro pressurised the Travancore queen, Lakshmi Bai, to provide monetary donations, tax reductions, and paddy fields to the LMS and CMS. He also urged the missions to establish theological seminaries in their major mission stations to train a class of useful and highly educated clergy. Owing to his efforts, the Queen granted a lavish amount of 20,000 rupees and 2,000 acres of land christened the Munro Island to the CMS and five thousand rupees for the permanent leasing of paddy-

[27] Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 241-280.

fields to the LMS.[28] A year before he left for England, Munro was also crucial in pushing the young queen to issue the Royal Rescript of 1817 which stated "the state should defray the whole cost of education of its people."[29] This was starkly different to the policy pursued in British-ruled provinces at the time where funds were mostly earmarked for higher education.

In the initial phase between 1820s-1850, the missionaries foregrounded literacy primarily for evangelical and not educational reasons. Schooling, when viewed from this perspective tended to be narrow as missions predominantly focused on training mission catechists and school teachers among the converts to reach a wider population. The ability to read the Bible and answer questions accordingly became the immediate requisite for those seeking to convert to Christianity, and missionaries expected idolatry and 'heathen' rituals to be replaced by biblical tenets of worship in the course of leading a 'Christian' life. The emergence of a group of Bible-readers was pertinent in forging new communal solidarities which derived a new code of morality from following the text. However, in a broader sense, by the mid-1850s, with an inflow of a further number of converts from the Shanar and Pulaya castes. A Christian education was envisaged as moving beyond literacy acquisition and comprised a training in habits of hygiene, discipline, order, industriousness, all of which, according to the various missionaries, was lacking in the region.

Evangelicals were also the agents of a civilising mission in the colonies, and schools became the spaces where such ideas were transmitted and measured along the

[28] Grace George, "Missionary Activity and the Syrian Christians in Kerala," in *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools: Case Studies from the British Empire* ed. Brian Holmes (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 122-23.

[29] Ibid.

yardstick of what constituted 'western civilisation'. Through the establishment of schools, missionaries believed that children could be raised in an appropriate environment that eliminated their low, 'heathen' beliefs, which tended to keep them in an and animal-like state. For this to succeed, a Christian education with evangelical and civilising objectives had to be pursued simultaneously. An educated community was expected to undertake tasks such as parenting, acts of worship, and social organisation in a manner befitting their new-found faith.

Such a wide conception of a school education in which literacy was only a significant component of socialisation and identity-formation remained at the heart of a prolonged and intense debate in missionary circles during this period and beyond. Differences existed about which should take precedence in the evangelical missionary work in the colonies: direct preaching or educational work. As Eliza Kent notes, an intermeshing of these motives was evident in the manner in which missionary engagements took place.[30] Those who propounded conversion as a fundamental goal of evangelical societies believed that 'authentic' or 'real' conversions were possible only through consistent preaching of the gospel and its practice in everyday life. Consequently, civilizational advancement, including a yearning for education, was bound to follow, inculcating in converts the consciousness that only Christian worship could grant them salvation from their sins. The other view was that school education and its disciplinary regime would help missionaries directly interact with various 'heathen' children who were believed to be malleable towards accepting Christian tenets easily. Through colonised children, missionaries targeted families and caste communities, to be brought into contact with new ideas of propriety, prayer, and conduct. But this was easier said than done

[30] Eliza Kent *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 121-122.

because Indian Christianity took on myriad forms depending on its geographical and cultural contexts. Some aspects of Christian beliefs and European culture such as sartorial forms, architecture, language, to name a few, were selectively appropriated, resisted, and modified, according to local caste dynamics. Even those who did not convert were influenced by these societal changes and attitudinal shifts; becoming 'Christianised' in moral outlook and conduct and yet firmly rooted in their caste networks.

A direct implantation of western Christianity into the colonies did not occur. By the late nineteenth century, many Protestant missionaries began to consider processes of Christianisation to be as important as conversion and often going hand in hand. Mission schooling began as an aggressive agency for conversion but eventually became a large enterprise with immense administrative tasks, negotiations, and conflicts with the state and orthodoxy, and entailed a range of responses from local society. With its provision of English instruction, at a time when the Travancore administration was seeking a particular kind of 'educated' personnel, missionary primary and high schools gradually grew in demand.

Nevertheless, contrary to the expectations of evangelists of winning upper caste converts, mission schools did not result in as many conversions as desired and were often countered by community and parental pressures. While English instruction lured some sections of the upper castes to these schools, a large number of the untouchable poor also looked towards education as offering a new means of mobility and change in social status through non-traditional employment after the abolition of slavery in 1855. Unable to turn a blind eye to the miserable plight of the labouring castes, and aware that the mission field was likely to reap benefits, European missionaries invested considerably in educating the untouchable poor.

In most histories of education, the tendency is to only look for the existence of formal spaces of learning. But for the untouchable poor in nineteenth century Kerala, the provision of schooling was not clearly delineated. Their demand for schools and teachers did not emerge in an organised manner but was contingent on material conditions. Protestant missionary work jolted orthodox forces with the declaration of open and equal entry to all castes in missionary institutions. Prompted by ideals of Christian universalism, the missions rattled upper caste communities by offering to teach untouchable adults and children even in physically dangerous and far flung terrains and in the midst of landlords. This was no mean feat in a climate of immense violence unleashed upon both converts and mission workers with tacit state support. In this context, their long drawn out struggles to read and write held greater ideological significance towards a restoration of their dignity. Schooling occurred, very often, at a heavy price and immense risks to the bodies and lives of slaves.

In 1806, the German Lutheran evangelist, William Tobias Ringeltaube offered his services to the London Missionary Society. He reached the Tamil-speaking area of Tinnevelly in south Travancore, upon the request of Vedamanickam, the first 'native' convert and evangelist of the LMS in the region. Here, Ringeltaube enjoyed the support extended by the British Resident, Col. Colin Macaulay in the form of land and monetary grants. Realising that the distribution of printed tracts would yield nothing among an illiterate population, Ringerltaube set up base at Mylaudy and erected elementary schools, chiefly attracting male pupils.[31] With his long itinerancy tours of neighbouring villages and commencement of village school operations, Ringeltaube is credited with having laid the foundations of a modern schooling system in Travancore.[32] His work was taken

[31] *Selections from the Records of Travancore*, Issues 1-3 (Travancore: Sirkar Press, 1860), 12

[32] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: 1707-1858*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 225.

forward by Charles Mead from 1818 onwards in Nagercoil who was soon joined by Richard Knill . By December 1819, Charles Mault joined the LMS workers and recorded about 3,000 people under instruction (referring mainly to catechism). Within a span of two years, the missionaries were receiving a far more favourable audience amongst the Shanar community in south Travancore and new outstations and churches were erected in villages such as Tittevilly and Agasteesvaram.[33] As for elementary schools, in spite of considerable fluctuations, they grew from 10 to 15 in 1820, to 32 in 1821, and in 1824 to 48, containing 1, 327 children. In 1831, combining the eastern and western divisions of the LMS Travancore Mission, the number of schools rose to 92 with 2, 651 pupils. Of these, 107 were girls, as compared to 50 in 1831 with one female school.[34]

While the LMS was slowly making inroads in the south, the first primary school in north Travancore was established by Thomas Norton of the Church Missionary Society in 1817. The first CMS missionary to Kerala, he began a small school for forty to fifty students at the coastal district of Allepey. Before embarking upon his journey from England to southern Travancore, Norton made an exaggerated appeal to the supporters of the CMS in 1827 replete with dominant stereotypes about colonised Indians during the period. Urging 'British Christian friends' to generously donate for the establishment of an asylum for destitute children in the coastal town of Allepey, Norton declared that gospel instruction would help the CMS train these children in "occupations calculated to fit them for useful stations in life, as mechanics, servants, etc."[35] Others found 'suitable' in habits and conduct, were to be trained as catechists, and schoolmasters, employed by the various

[33] "Religious Intelligence", *The Christian Advocate*, Vol. 11 (A. Finley: Philadelphia, 1833), 37-38.

[34] Ibid., 38.

[35] The Church Missionary Society', *The Christian Guardian, and Church of England Magazine* (London: Seeley and Sons, 1827), 160. (emphasis original)

mission establishments. In his vision, poor children outside Europe were to be converted and schooled according to Protestant Christian ethics and made 'useful beings' in agricultural society, put in the service of other classes in society. Such missionary devices of emotional rhetoric played an important role in exciting British church supporters towards participating in civilising missions among people whom they considered were still in an animal-like stage. His appeal is quoted in full here.

> To describe the moral condition of the lower classes of Travancore, would be to depict all that is morally *depraved, abominable, and disgusting* in human nature. Besides this, their POVERTY, the natural consequence of licentiousness, and idolatrous customs and habits, is EXTREME. THOUSANDS of children *perish* for want of care; their MOTHERS cannot support them; their fathers *they know not*. The boys who survive the rigid fate of their infancy, are abandoned at an early age to the *moral pestilence* that surrounds them: they grow up in sin, and become the corrupters of the succeeding generation. The GIRLS are reserved for the basest purposes. The *wretched, corrupted, brutalized* MOTHERS anxiously look forward to the period when they shall make gain by the degradation of their daughters. This, my Christian friends, is but a faint outline of the moral *depravation* of the parents, and the *miserable* condition of the children of the lower classes of Travancore.[36]

Everything that was wrong with the lower classes of Indian society, Norton dramatically claimed, was the result of terrible parenting, especially by mothers.[37] By labelling them *depraved, abominable, and disgusting,* he held the labouring poor of Travancore responsible for their destitution, suggesting that self-improvement was key to one's welfare. Implying that mothers in Travancore raised *bastard* (emphasis mine)

[36] 'The Church Missionary Society', *The Christian Guardian, and Church of England Magazine* (London: Seeley and Sons, 1827), 159-160. (emphasis original)

[37] Ibid., 160.

children, and subjected daughters to *sexually degrading* activities, he accused Indian parents as being 'incapable' of nurture and protection. The solution, he declared, lay in the spread of evangelical Christianity, which could take root through mission schools. 'Miserable' children in the colonies were to be schooled according to a particular moral register which would provide them *salvation* from such sins. Supporters of evangelism were encouraged to take forth this responsibility of providing, loco parentis, for the poor multitudes in colonies, and rescue them from the 'horrid dangers' of Hinduism and Islam, synonymously labelled as 'heathenism'. An inculcation of the traits of western civilisation, and not merely literacy, was upheld as laying the cornerstone of this transformation as it would remedy the defects of indigenous parenting, which was continuously depicted as unfitting for civilisation.

Young girls were a common target of European ideas of parenting, especially motherhood, which was to be taught, as part of their overall education both in the homes and schools.[38] Household care, by the nineteenth century, was perceived as a scientific management of child-rearing and spatial domestic organisation, with adequate knowledge of nutrition, disease, and general discipline. By alleging that poor, 'heathen' mothers in Travancore were utterly incapable of child-care, and their indigenous knowledge as lacking value, Norton and the CMS privileged Christian missionary notions of nurture and childhood.

Norton appealed for a sum of five pounds per annum for each child, asking his listeners to envisage the

> so many souls rescued and separated from idolatry, wickedness, and misery, educated in Christian principles, industrious habits, and useful knowledge, going forth, faithful

[38] Anna Davin, " Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop* 5 (1978): 9-65.

servants, industrious mechanics, and enlightened teachers, carrying the influence—the precious seed of the Gospel, into towns, villages, and families.[39]

He was not alone in presenting oppositional categories to claim that the idolatrous colonised had to be 'rescued'. The surge in evangelical activity from the early nineteenth century onwards across Britain and other parts of Europe employed a similar language to win supporters and recruit foreign workers. Missionary men and women were sent out with not just the gospel in hand but resources to transform ideas of work, faith, and most importantly, the self.

Often, familial arrangements in colonial Kerala were looked down upon as lacking the necessary affective bonds which missionaries thought they provided. By representing local parents and practices as violent and negligent, European missionaries sought to intervene in the upbringing of colonised children through a schooling regime in which they attempted to become quasi-parents.[40] This was paradoxical in two ways. One, according to changing European bourgeois notions of childhood and discourses on medical science, the development of children into 'healthy' beings presupposed the existence of a 'protective' and nourishing environment but poor families in the colonies were perceived as 'unsuitable'. In their boarding schools, missionaries largely admitted orphans or attempted to keep poor untouchable caste children with parents away from their natal settings to minimise the risk of being influenced by 'native' behaviour and customs.[41] Second, the children of missionaries themselves were sent away to Europe after

[39] The Church Missionary Society', *The Christian Guardian, and Church of England Magazine* (London: Seeley and Sons, 1827), 160.

[40] Karen Vallgårda, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India 1850-1945* (London: Anthem Press, 2005)

[41] European missionaries refused to raise their own children in the colonies, and send them back home, after the age of seven or eight. They feared that their children will be fatally affected by the tropical weather as

the age of seven or eight, separated from their parents for long periods of time. 'White' children were to be saved from the disease-ridden landscape of tropical colonies, and raised in an 'appropriate' cultural and physical environment, in order to be socialised into occupying their future roles in the metropole and beyond.[42] It was, therefore, not unthinkable that many missionary men and women forged emotional connections with the children they taught although racial prejudices were seldom overcome.[43]

Sites of Contestation

The ideological significance of a modern system of schooling for the poor went far beyond the provision of reading, writing, and catechistical instruction. As an avenue for community mobilisation, the physical space of schools contended directly with existing upper caste dictums denying untouchable populations a legitimate voice and visible presence. Within a historical context, these developments are striking in colonial Kerala, at a time when even the shadows of untouchable castes were considered polluting.

Schools became highly contested ideological spaces and constituted a core demand in the subaltern struggles for equal rights. Numerous applications were made to the Protestant missions for the establishment of primary schools and provision of teachers, many of which were rejected due to paucity of funds. This constant flood of appeals for schools more than churches located missionaries at a different tangent within local imagination. Missionaries also responded to these requests in order to gain access in

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well as 'contaminated' by mixing and adopting with colonised children. One of the biggest fears was that of the missionary child speaking in the language of the 'heathen' and acquiring their habits. see Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 133-134.

[42] Elizabeth Beuttener, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[43] Karen Vallgarda *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

hitherto unchartered territory. Contrary to popular notions that missionaries willingly came forth to educate the lower castes, mission writings reveal that much of the demand came from the latter themselves. This is particularly true from the 1850s onwards. The LMS, CMS, and BM were acutely keen, from the beginning, to attract the upper castes into their fold. But following numerous rejections and a low rate of conversions, they shifted their attention to the vast labouring population who yearned for schools and teachers. The active engagement of many missionaries with British authorities and princely administrations on the question of abolition of slavery allowed freed labourers to demand schools for their communities.

Broadly, there existed two types of formal mission educational institutions: day and boarding schools. Vernacular and Anglo-vernacular day schools, open to all castes, followed a literary curriculum comprising subjects such as languages, geography, history, and elementary science, apart from the three Rs. They were established in various neighbourhoods, where schoolmasters gathered local children when possible, and conducted one or two classes. In some of the prominent mission stations such as that of the LMS' in Nagercoil and Neyoor, and CMS' Cottayam, there were bigger primary schools, sometimes consisting up to four classes. As various castes opposed inter-mingling, missions tended to operate separate vernacular schools for children in the region. For instance, in the Shanar dominated congregations of the LMS in south Travancore, very few children of other castes could be found in these schools. Same was the case in the CMS schools monopolised by Syrian Christians who threatened to leave if Pulaya children were admitted. Even as the CMS opposed caste distinctions in their schools, the slave caste populations were taught separately in order to satisfy the dominant Syrian Christians; a practice that continued into the early decades of the twentieth century.

Much to the disdain of colonial observers, the poor child in colonial Kerala did not fit into European middle-class notions of childhood.[44] She/he remained devoid of age-specific formal education, habits, and unprotected for an extended period of time from the world of work. Categories of caste and class intertwined and those undertaking arduous labour from a very early age onwards belonged to poor, untouchable families. By seeking to bring them into a confined space of the school and impart literacy and training in certain habits, missionaries attempted not only a religious transformation but a redrawing of their labouring selves. Pulaya and Paraya children were at the mercy of their masters, and distant from the possibility of even accessing mission schools like the Shanars and Ezhavas who managed to do so. Their experiences of learning was marred by harsh structural inequalitiesHostility towards schools for labourers and lack of regular pupil attendance forced missionaries to frequently provide monetary incentives and basic training to local teachers to run the schools.[45]

Though heavily dependent on Sunday school teachers and Readers, John Cox, a LMS missionary in Trivandrum regularly accused these local teachers of mechanical repetition, and the 'inability to think'.[46] In 1840, he reported that teachers hired in his mission station visited him every Saturday to be instructed in Biblical verses and examined in a portion assigned to them for reading every week. [47] As to opening schools, his method was as thus,

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[44] Anna Davin, "What is a Child?," in *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State* eds. Stephen Hussey, Anthony Fletcher (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 15-36.

[45] Rev. Charles Mead of the LMS offered one fanam for every slave boy and one and a half fanam to every school girl brought to school by masters in the Neyoor mission district in the 1820s. As cited in C. M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore*, (Madras: SPS Press, 1903), 892.

[46] Letter from John Cox to W.Ellis, Secretary, Trevandrum/ CWM/LMS/South india/ Travancore/Incoming Correspondence/ Box 3/ 1840

[47] Ibid.

> begin with a man who can scarcely read or leave the people to the teaching of the heathen schoolmaster and their heathen books. If I can find a man of steady character, I adopt the former, and then have to teach him, which if be attentive, I am able to do so as to keep him ahead of the children and if he be not attentive I discharge him…the stimulus I employ is that of advancing the children according to ability to answer questions and of advancing the pay of the master in proportion to the advancement of the children.[48]

As foreigners, missionaries occupied a position of in-betweenness. Their relationship with labouring communities was complicated as they were looked upon as protectors, due to their proximity with British administrators, and the grants provided to them by local rulers. During Munro's tenure, Thomas Norton of the CMS and Charles Mead of the LMS were appointed as judges of civil courts although it invited considerable opposition.[49] The agricultural Shanar community, in particular, approached the LMS for various kinds of help, some of which filled missionaries with a prolonged anxiety about their true motivations for conversions. Many of them approached the missions for legal protection, and help in conveying their grievances to the local authorities. Even as they were looked upon as benefactors, rumours also abound regarding European missionary presence as kidnappers of young children. John Cox reported in 1840 that there existed rumours about the LMS shipping local children away to England.[50] Samuel Mateer recorded that rumours continued to be spread by upper caste landlords to scare away their

[48] Ibid.

[49] Charles Mead to LMS Secretary, 4 April 1818, CWM/MSS, South India/Travancore 1/4/B

[50] Letter from John Cox to W.Ellis, Secretary, Trevandrum/ CWM/LMS/South india/ Travancore/Incoming Correspondence/ Box 3/ 1840

labourers from interacting with missionaries. ‘They are told by their employers,’, observed a local LMS evangelist in the Trivandrum mission district, ‘that they will be exported by the missionaries as slaves, and that they will be baptized with water mixed with cow’s blood.[51]

While rumours intermittently died down, the violence inflicted on Christian converts and mission workers by upper castes remained unabated. In 1834, in a letter addressed to the foreign secretary, Mrs. Martha Mault and Mrs. Miller of the LMS stated the persistent assault on their converts from erstwhile untouchable communities.

> To put down the dangerous spirit of innovation, they have exerted themselves to the utmost; and have succeeded in obtaining a decree of the district court, to make the Christians conform in the erection of their houses, to the fashion of the caste to which they belonged while heathen, and to carry their dead by a different road from that which they had been accustomed to for twenty years past.[52]

This reportage revealed that conversion did little to alter the caste status of converts and permeated church congregations as well. With the help of the monarchical administration, caste elites issued dictums which denied converts from claiming equal rights outside the Hindu fold, imposed social boycott, and the opposition assumed the form of direct violence as evinced by the Nair- Shanar conflicts of the 1830s and 1850s over the usage of the breast-cloth. In most cases, caste strictures gave no respite to poor Christians.

In a bid to gain authority over their baptismal candidates and subvert landlords’ threats, missionary groups organised night classes for adults, and Sunday schools for

[51] *The Ninety-Sixth Annual Report of the Meeting of the LMS Directors*, (London: LMS, 1890), 112.

[52] Letter from Mrs. Mault and Mrs. Miller, Nagercoil *EMMC*, (London: LMS, 1834), 67

children so that labourers could attend[53] Small, single or two room sheds with thatched roofs functioned as schools and places of worship emerged in distant villages to enable instruction in basic reading, singing hymns and memorisation of biblical passages. Often, owing to the hostile weather and dangerous terrain in and around hilly and forested stations, mission workers were hesitant to pursue itinerant activities among hill-tribes and run-away slaves.[54]

J.Hawksworth describes a slave school fro run-aways which he founded in mundakyum. Owing to the difficult disease-ridden terrain, and reluctance of Syrian Chriistian catechsits to go forth and instruct them, Hawksworth sought help elsewhere. An energetic, old man, volunteered, and was sent to the school in return for his maintenance.

> We began by sending out Verkey to hunt up these poor slaves, talk to them, and an invite them to attend a Sunday school at Mundakyum. We began the school with the four individuals first discovered and a very few others; gradually the numbers increased to twenty, then to thirty. They collected in a large shed made of bamboos and thatched with elephant grass. About eight in the morning each brought some roasted roots, or jaca fruit,or rice boiled and tied up in leaves for the mid-day meal. They were divided into classes, some taught by individual communicants of the congregation, others by one or two young women who had been in the girl's boarding school.

[53] Local Christian teachers were provided meagre monetary incentives to gather children for instruction, particularly in the Sunday schools, ranging from half an anna to one anna.

[54] 'Mr. Hawksworth's District, '*CMI*, (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1862), 227.

Slaves and Schooling

As the CMS in central Travancore intensified its activities among different Pulaya groups from the 1840s onwards in the hilly areas of Mallapalli, Pallam and Melkavu, stiff opposition prevailed among Syrian Christians who were against any form of learning that would make their labourers retreat from bonded labour. Despite the Syrian Christians educating their children in the CMS schools and the Kottayam College, relations were strained over the question of imparting literacy to Pulaya converts. Both Nair and Syrian Christian landlords strongly resisted educational efforts among the Pulaya slaves, fearing that they would rise in rebellion against traditional authority. Violently opposed to evangelical work, they repeatedly burnt down small schools which acted as congregational spaces for Pulaya communities, and inflicted great torture on those seeking to learn. In the 1850s, the Mallapalli School was burnt down twice, and slave attendants beaten. One of the slaves who attended it 'was caught by two slave-owners one Sunday. They beat him cruelly and left him lying senseless', recorded the *Madras Church Record.*[55] The slave, upon heeding the missionary's advice, was unable to register a police complaint as he could not be seen or heard by the station, and had to convey by shouting at the top of his voice. His first two attempts failed upon being caught thrashed badly by the owners. Soon afte,r he succeeded in lodging his complaint but died of his injuries..

In 1850, Oomen Mammen, an ordained Syrian Christian pastor of the CMS who laboured among the Pulayas of Pallam observed that strong fears existed among all classes of people regarding the abolition of slavery which swept across the British Empire.[56] He observed a widespread fear among the landlords,

[55] As cited in 'The Pulayas of Travancore' *CMI*, April 1883, (Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1883), 219.

[56]Letter from Henry Baker, Pallam station *Proceedings of the CMS for the Year 1849-50*,(CMS House: London, 1850), 147

> the enlightenment of slaves will be followed by their liberation, and the consequent ruin of the interests of agriculture. We are therefore being regarded as enemies to the best interests of the country, though they are unable to attribute to us any sinister motive, save that of enthusiasm. Some men threatened to beat the ashan(school master) who goes to instruct them on Sundays, with a view to deter him from further persisting in his work. One man, and a Christian too in name, got some of his slaves actually beaten for coming to her of Christ against his order.[57]

A year later, George Matthan, another ordained CMS pastor appointed to work extensively among the Pulayas in the hilly outstation of Mallapalli, described the persistent hostility of slave owners towards missionary educational efforts and the continuing violence on labourers.

> all the slave owners except our men forbid their slaves to attend the place of instruction. But many occasionally attend though stealthily, and would regularly and willingly attend if they had rest from work on Sundays. The Schoolmaster who usually goes to instruct them fell dangerously ill some time ago, which our opponents attributed to the displeasure of the gods for instructing the slaves.[58]

He also referred to the social boycott imposed on Syrian Christian pastors such as himself and the growing congregation. Barbers and washer-men were deterred from offering their services to the Pulaya converts and mission workers.[59] Yet, Matthan believed that regular catechistical instruction was the only way to ensure positive results in

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 297.

[59] 'The Slaves of Travancore', *CMI,* Vol. VI, (London; Seeley, Jackson & Halliday,1855), 22-24.

freed slave populations. He reiterated that evangelisation would improve their existing religious beliefs and pave the way for the acceptance of the gospel.

> The case of the poor slaves is becoming more and more promising. We have had some strong evidence of their sincerity by their voluntary discontinuance of some foolish and idolatrous ceremonies usually performed in the time of the harvest, in order to appease the hill Gods. [60]

The project of converting the Pulayas was intimately tied to the idea of civilising them. Protestant missionaries of the CMS and LMS targeted a physical and moral transformation of the Pulayas just as much as they desired their acceptance of Christianity. Influenced by caste dominated prejudices against Pulayas and Parayans, many missionaries worked towards instilling in outcaste Christians a certain code of morality. Largely, this involved a visible change in attire, behaviour, attitudes towards work and superiors. It was these changes that they upheld as proof of the workings of Christianity, as upper castes continued to cast aspersions on the efficacy of evangelical work. Situated within a framework in which outcastes were condemned as 'savage', 'wild', 'dishonest', and 'deceitful', missionaries began instituting new customs and practices to supposedly enable their converts from attaining the status of 'dignified' and 'trustworthy' beings. Much of this was also done to impress upon the landlords that evangelism was beneficial in converting outcastes into better workers. Views were expressed that Pulayas, having experienced long decades of oppression, were unsure of how to utilise their new-found freedom. The missionaries portrayed themselves as hand-holding these freed labourers into an honest and diligent way of life. In 1878, Rev. W.J.Richards reported,

[60] Extract of Letter from Rev. G. Matthan to Rev. T.G.Ragland, November 10, 1851, CMS Archives C/I 2/ M 23, p. 296- 7

> There is a proverbial saying among the Natives , which well illustrates the improvidence of the Puleyans, though one would hope it is not true still. In time of harvest and plenty, the Puleyan "full of bread" will boastingly ask the master of the house, " Sir, can you sell or let me have an elephant?" but later on, when work is slack, then the tune is changed, and starving himself, he bids the watch-dog " Go!" lest there should not be enough in his hut for the human members of the family. I have been urging them to save in the time of plenty. According to the Native idea, I fear they live a life of extremes. Always either too full or too hungry, as freedmen, they do not know how to take that care of themselves which they former masters did when they were chattels.[61]

Such assumptions that Pulaya labourers, either in bondage or freedom, required the overarching presence of a protector prevailed. If the role of providing for their sustenance was not undertaken by the landlords, then the missionaries aimed to step in to fill those shoes by attempting to teach freed slaves to express themselves in a disciplined manner and not revert to a so-called uncivilised state of existence. Instruction, baptismal or formal schooling, was considered to be crucial in ensuring that such reversions did not take place easily.

Wary of the impending government policies outlawing slavery, landlords persecuted and prevented the slaves from interacting with the CMS mission agents.[62] In 1854, the *Madras Church Missionary Record* published a set of questions by a missionary and answers by slaves in Travancore on their pitiable conditions of existence. Some of the questions pertained to slave children, who also laboured from an early age onwards for the

[61] Rev. W.J.Richards, Cottayam, C I 2/ M 34/No. 15/ 1878-79, p. 472

[62] 'The Slaves of Travancore', *CMI* Vol. VI, January 1855

masters. Children of slaves were separated from their parents and bought and sold with impunity.

Question by missionary: Are slaves' children bought for sale?

Answer: About six months ago, two were bought, and sold. Afterwards, relatives came to take away: master would not suffer. Master's name: Thavalee Narayanan.

Q: How are children paid?

Answer: Not having proper food, children are weak, and unable to do hard work: therefore they are not paid any wages until fifteen years of age.[63]

The eldest son of the slave being questioned was twelve years old and attending a mission school. On this question, the missionary asked,

Q: Can any slave send his children to school until fifteen years of age?

A: The masters will not allow: lately, four children were driven and beaten away from the school by the master (a Nair) who got to hear of them attending.[64]

For long, upper castes and Syrian Christians demeaned their slaves as merely 'emotional' and 'intellectually incapable' beings and reduced them to menial servants. The landlords' greatest fear was their labourers turning against them in an act of rebellion and insubordination but many found the disciplinary controls of missions useful to their interests. Though acutely aware of the oppression that deprived slaves of a dignified existence and right to land, property and education, biases were also shared by some missionaries. They held that the slaves innately lacked the intellectual ability to think for themselves due to the long-standing oppression inflicted upon them and it was up to the evangelical missions to bring about a transformation. Conversion, which comprised

[63] Rev. Hawksworth, 'The Pulayas of Travancore', *CMI* February 1854, 52-53

[64] Ibid.

schooling, was highlighted as improving their conditions, and beneficial for the upper castes and governments who desired loyal, disciplined and 'productive' subjects. Missionary instruction was undergirded by a discourse of self-improvement, which urged believers to undergo a physical and mental transformation through acts of self-restraint. Docility and loyalty became desirable values in labourers, and missionaries did not intend to provoke an open challenge of the existing agrarian order. They reported to their overseers of the upper caste approval of obedient and honest Christian workers. John Barton, generally apprehensive about the 'moral and spiritual standard' of converts in central Travancore, recollected a conversation between CMS missionary Henry Baker (Sr.) who was active among slaves, and a Syrian Christian landlord. The latter is said to have stated,

> Sir, these people of yours are wonderfully altered. Six years ago, I had to employ clubmen to guard my paddy while it was being reaped. Now, for two or three years, I have left it entirely to your Christians, and they reap it, and bring it to my house. I get more grain and I know these are the very people who robbed me formerly.[65]

The reason for this attitudinal shift cannot be attributed to merely an awakening of kindness on the part of landlords. As much as they preferred disciplined and docile labour, considerations of labour scarcity in parts of Cochin and northern Travancore also compelled the owners to concede reluctantly and allow freed labourers to attend schools. At the same time, the making of 'useful' labourers was desired by landlords, many of whom discovered that the missionaries were not exhorting an abandonment of agricultural work altogether but rather encouraged Christians to pursue agriculture albeit with the adoption of a new time-work discipline.

[65] John Barton, "The Syrian Christians: Narrative of a Tour in the Travancore Mission of the Church Missionary Society", *Mission Life*, Vol. III (new series) (1872), 513.

In 1863, Henry Andrews of the CMS compared the intellect of a slave to that of an animal, utterly devoid of any mental faculties.

> The higher classes can understand an argument, and in a measure exercise their faculties in their mutual intercourse; but the slaves, naturally, can understand scarcely any thing, and have exercised only their lowest and most animal propensities…they present a state of mental stultification, united to a high degree of animal craftiness, that I can scarcely describe.[66]

Despite their opposition to the violence inflicted on slave labourers by landlords, missionaries like Andrews were keen to receive an acknowledgment of their work from the latter. He alluded to the apparently favourable disposition of the landlords who now wanted their freed slaves to be instructed, and erected prayer houses for them, in order to get them to stay and work, in the wake of the declaration of abolition of slavery in Travancore.[67] He was hopeful that the upper castes would eventually accept the Christian faith by observing the lasting changes in their labourers. By portraying a shift in the behaviour of outcastes, from so-called 'liars and thieves' to 'orderly and neat' individuals, missionaries harped on the effectiveness of evangelisation and its disciplinary results. Yet, biases seeped deep into the discourse of colonial and civilizational 'difference', and suspicions prevailed that poor converts would easily backslide into non-Christian cultural practices abhorred by Protestantism. Andrews worried that the rational ability of slaves to deliberate upon their life-choices was weak and required the intervention of a paternalistic and authoritative figure such as that of the missionary. In doing so, he infantilised the slave, and cast the British male missionary in the mould of a 'saviour'.

[66] Extract of Letter from Rev. Henry Andrews, Travancore in *CMI* May 1863, 122.

[67] Ibid.

> …the change in the Christian slave is as an epistle known and read of all. I have even used this argument for Christianity with the Maharajah himself…allowing slaves to hold property, show that the improvement in their condition as rational beings as not escaped the notice of this Government. The witness of a slave is now fully received in a court of justice. One of our greatest difficulties is to now prevent pride and idleness from vitiating their work…The lower the caste, greater the danger in this direction.[68]

With an eye on the upper castes whom they believed were more amenable towards becoming a better class of Christians, mission workers often reported to supporters of the approval they received from landlords. This was taken as evidence of the success of the mission's civilizing mission among the poor through education. A senior school master of a village, Puthoor, in Quilon, recorded of his untouchable caste pupils,

> a few days ago one respectable and rich sudra came in our school and wanted to hear some songs from the children. I told them to sing what they had learnt by heart to read and write on olas. On hearing and seeing all these that man said, 'I never thought that these children would ever come to this condition. Thanks and salaams are due to the European missionaries for their taking pain to make the low caste people civilized.[69]

In 1901, the official report of the Travancore census commended missionary work among the outcastes along similar lines. In the words of its author, mission activities was more praise-worthy for its civilising agenda than anything else. Overriding the pressing

[68] Ibid.

[69] Report of Native Evangelist, C.Samuel, Quilon, 1892 , CWM/LMS/ South India Travancore/ Reports/ Box 4/ 1888-91

social issue of caste bondage, the report stressed on missionary efforts in elevating the intellectual and moral status of the poorest classes.

> But for these missionaries, .these humble orders of Hindu society will for ever remain unraised. Their material condition, I dare say, will have improved with the increased wages, improved labour market, better laws, and more generous treatment from an enlightened Government like ours; but to the Christian missionaries belongs the credit of having gone to their humble homes and awakened them to a sense of a better earthly existence. This action of the missionary was not a mere improvement upon ancient history, a kind of polishing and refining of an existing model, but an entirely original idea, conceived and carried out with commendable zeal, and often-times in the teeth of opposition and persecution. I do not refer to the emancipation of the slave, or the amelioration of the labourer's condition; for these always existed more or less in our past humane governments. But the heroism of raising the low from the slough of degradation and debasement was an element of civilization unknown to ancient India.[70]

Poor congregations also placed a financial burden on the missions and regular appeals for donations from Europe and elsewhere were sent out. Teachers' salaries, infrastructure and school books also had to be managed out of church funds, with many mission workers blaming poor Christians for taking advantage of a free education. However, contrary to assumptions that the poor strained church funds, mission writings reveal that slave and lower castes contributed a considerable amount of unacknowledged labour and material resources to the erection and management of their schools. Rev. Andrews' letter, mentioned previously, reveals the monetary contributions that the untouchable castes made towards the education of their children.

[70] Rev. G.E.Phillips, *The Outcastes' Hope or Work Among the Depressed Classes of India* (London: Paternoster Row, 1912), 81.

Calling the liberality of the slave converts as a sign of the growth of self-supporting congregations, a CMS Permanent Church Fund was established with poor families contributing a measure of paddy after the annual harvest. Besides this Fund, church-fees, especially thank- offerings, and Mission-boxes for copper cash were also put in place. George Oommen argues that the Pulayas themselves came forth to instruct their lot, and the pre-Christian status of certain Pulaya head-men as teachers remained even after conversion.[71] Though not appointed as 'Readers' of the mission like Syrian Christians, these head-men teachers were able to communicate the gospel effectively using idioms of local belief traditions. George Matthan, a CMS pastor, validated the same when he reported to his superiors that a group of slaves known as the Eastern Pulayas of Travancore, considered the most polluting and lowest, were taught by a man named Xavier, one of the Western Pulayas.[72]

Xavier ran away from his master at Champakkuru and took refuge with the CMS missionaries at Mallapalli. Deeply influenced by the gospel instruction he received, he decided to instruct the Eastern Pulayas by night, to avoid being seen by the master. Praising these efforts by the slaves themselves, Matthan, a Syrian Christian pastor, admitted,

> The increase in the number of converts is attributable more to the zeal and diligence of the slaves themselves than to the endeavours on our part. They in general show a praiseworthy anxiety to communicate the inestimable treasure they have freely got to others of their own class, and thus afford an evidence of the sincerity of their

[71] George Ooomen, "Strength of Tradition and Weakness of Communication: Central Kerala Dalit Conversion" In Geoffrey Oddie ed. *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia: Continuities and Change, 1800-1990* , (Surrey: Curzon Press,1997), 86-88.

[72] How to Do More Work With the Same Means', *CMI,* Vol. XV March (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1864), 54. The Western Pulayas considered the Eastern Pulayas extremely polluting and avoided contact with them. Xavier's actions were seen as the growth of a Christian brotherhood instilled by gospel instruction.

> profession, the purity of their motives, and the love they have for their fellow-creatures.[73]

A Vocational Bias

In 1880, the Maharaja of Travancore, at his address to the students of the CMS College, Kottayam, echoed the prejudices of the caste elites who accused lower caste pupils of harbouring aspirations beyond their means.

> I heartily hope that the day will come, though slowly and gradually, when every field labourer and every day labourer, can find a couple of hours every day to sit under a shady tree and read his little manual of Travancore history and geography, his little arithmetic, his twelve page catechism of moral duties, and his little Robinson Crusoe or Hitopadesham…But to work towards that, the problem that remains to be solved, both by the State and by the private educational agencies, is how to reconcile education with the professions and occupations of even the poorest class. It is absurd to hold that all the educated men can obtain government employment or enter the bar…In a land like this of scant industrial development...cannot some industrial teaching of a profession of an elementary character be imparted to our schools?

What the monarch considered absurd was the 'aspirations' of literate lower caste populations to move beyond their immediate station in life. A formal schooling was expected to provide them with an opportunity to attain some limited means of mobility, which primarily involved a change in traditional occupations. With the spread of English instruction and government intervention in schools, there was a concentration of administrative jobs in the hands of the Nairs and a minority of Syrian Christians in Travancore. In a decade after the monarch's address, this inequality became a matter of grave contention between an emergent educated group of Ezhavas and the state.

[73] Ibid.

A majority of the poor either remained illiterate or struggled to find meaningful employment that could remove their dehumanising association with manual labour. The competition for scarce non-agricultural jobs, aggravated by the influx of the untouchables into schools, worried both the missions and government. The CMS and LMS wished to retain their converts to expand Christian communities but the latter desired respectability, wealth, and a breakdown of feudal status markers. Yet, in the wake of pressing poverty, and lack of industrial development pursued by the state, unemployment aggravated their troubles.

The monarch's suggestion of providing vocational training was given considerable thought by British missionaries. In 1894, the CMS started industrial schools for poor Pulaya boys and received small government grants.[74] These children were taken as boarders and instructed in vocations such as blacksmithery, carpentry, shoemaking and other artisanal trades, and operated on the principle instructing poor, lower caste children in manual occupations, in which they were expected to be more accustomed than encourage a higher education.

In opposition to a caste-determined labour hierarchy which condemned certain manual tasks as degrading and 'polluting' as a result of one's actions in previous birth, Christian missionaries perceived an individual's work as a spiritual end in itself. However, on the ground, missionary approaches to labour as constitutive of the 'modern' subject was ambivalent. Their instruction did not always alter earlier traditional structures but reaffirmed the locations of poor labouring communities.

When the earliest mission schools were established, the major goal was to supply adequate number of catechists and school teachers for the mission enterprises. But by the

[74] Bishop Hodges, 'A Review of Ten years Work of the Diocese of Travancore and Cochin, 1890-1900', *CMI*, 1901, 463.

latter decades of the nineteenth century, this was not a lucrative form of employment given the low pay and acute lack of chances to rise up the church ladder. European missionaries dominated as chief pastors, heads of school management, and controlled the finances, often resulting in tensions with their local employees. With the establishment of government schools and an attractive salary for school teachers, many mission school teachers defected. Those who had been trained as catechists found it most difficult to receive a decent pay. Since every pastorate was expected to pay its own pastor, the poorer congregations, especially the ones in north Travancore comprising Pulaya converts could barely afford to sustain mission workers. Within the churches, this was a matter of debate since many young men, owing to meagre pay looked elsewhere for meaningful employment. The Travancore government, with the establishment of the Public Works Department also employed freed slaves and landless agricultural labourers on road and railway construction works, which guaranteed some kind of long term employment and integration into the labour market dominated by wages in cash, especially in distressful times. In assessing the problem of the backward classes in 1921, P. I. Thomas,a native Syrian Christian argued,

> the advance made by the untouchable converts spiritually, culturally and materially is not even a reasonable fraction of what one would have expected...Many of them are on the borderland between Christianity and paganism...with hazy notions of their new faith...without lands, without education or leader, with no industrial skill and nothing between them and actual starvation for some months of the year, these classes remain a dead weight pulling the Church down to the very earth while she would fain soar high above the clouds...[75]

[75] P.I. Thomas, 'The Backward Classes', *CMI*, (London: CMS,1921) ,.84-85.

Proposals for the establishment of a community school were discussed by the CMS extensively.[76] The attempt was to make village life attractive for literate lower caste boys. They wanted to train these young men to become leaders of their communities and loans for cottage industries were sought from the government. A school for backward children was attached to the Nicholson Syrian Girl's School near Tiruvalla and Alwaye. The Alwaye Boys School began with ten boys between the ages of seven and ten in 1927 and rose to sixteen by 1930. Their lessons included hygiene, carpentry, agriculture, cattle rearing, weaving and poultry farming. The missionaries felt that "the rudiments of profitable agriculture are being taught so that grinding poverty may be removed."[77] Further, it was argued,

> Land work is also encouraged to teach the dignity of labour. Hygiene is imparted to expose the indignity of dirt and to remove the cause of much disease. They are becoming trustworthy because they are constantly given opportunities to act in a position which requires trustworthiness.[78]

Despite numerous warnings, many slave labourers belonging to the Pulaya community in central and north Travancore and Cochin and the numerically dominant Shanars towards the south, the Tiyyas and Cherumars of Malabar, began to approach missions, and take advantage of the new opportunities presented before them. Schools

[76]'Why We Need Community Schools?', *Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Magazine*, January 1926, 11-12.

[77] The Alwaye Settlement', *CMI*, July 1930, (London: CMS)102-103

[78] Ibid.

became central to what I argue, protest actions, which were intertwined with the quest for bettering one's social standing.

The congregational activities of the Christians played its part in provoking upper caste responses who accused missionaries of hampering traditional hierarchies, and turning labourers against their masters. The missions reported a school and place of worship, some in a rudimentary condition, in many villages. Such a picture was common across mission congregations in both the princely states and Malabar. With the provision of timber and land, often from local Europeans, or the government authorities, the missions were able to provide schools across the region, sometimes in interior rural areas that had not even seen the presence of a colonial government official before. Thus, schools held multiple meanings for defining selfhood for those involved. It provided a space for oppressed individuals to congregate and worship, assemble and forge solidarity in the face of persistent brutality from their landlords and other upper castes. As opposed to the strict restrictions placed upon untouchables from participating in the' social' and 'political' caste-controlled spaces such as temples and courts, the missions provided new forms of community consolidation through the site of schools and churches. Undeniably, local schools played no small part in the forging of a religious community identities.

Conclusion

The foremost challenge to upper caste orthodoxy came with mission schools opening their doors to all; a direct attack on the refusal of upper castes to commingle with those carrying out menial and laborious tasks for them. However, with their eyes set firmly on the upper caste populace, missionaries often compromised and managed separate schools for various caste populations to avoid persecution. Such a segregated nature of schooling revealed the iron-like grip of caste even on other religious groups who

intended to win converts using the language of universalism. But soon, this rhetoric of universal fraternity exposed internal inconsistencies and the presence of Christian missions amidst the untouchable poor brought to fore a great anxiety in the minds of the upper castes. Though lagging far behind, and devoid of considerable finances and teachers, the availability of any formal schooling for untouchable communities threatened their masters. Wary of disruptions to the traditional order, and shaken by the courage of many outcastes to acquire a basic literacy, landlords retaliated with violence. Sometimes, local teachers were warned against instructing the poor, and on other occasions, schools and chapels were razed to the ground. Isolated incidents of violence also occurred in which missionaries often found support and refuge in certain officials of the Travancore and British administration. However, this veneer of government protection lifted during the 1830s and 1850s when upper-caste Nair forces in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin colluded to attack Christian converts on the question of respectable clothing for lower caste females with tacit state support. Many Shanar Christians were physically assaulted and imprisoned under false cases.[79]

[79] Penelope Carson, 'Christianity, Hinduism and Colonialism in Kerala: Integration, Adaptation, or Confrontation?' in Robert Eric Frykenberg ed. *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-cultural Communication Since 1500* (Michigan: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing, 2003)

Chapter Two

‘Mission of Sisterhood’: Girls’ Boarding Schools

Introduction

Recent work on Protestant missionary women has pushed against earlier scholarship on the subject, which simply sought to locate women in history without viewing them as ideologically complex actors. New research has focussed on the intersecting histories of British imperialism, Victorian evangelism, gender relations, juvenile literature, and postcolonial histories of education, to name a few, which scrutinises the crucial involvement of women in the construction of ‘whiteness’ and expansion of the British Empire.[1] The subject of evangelical missions, in particular, has captured the historian’s attention, throwing up new questions on the nature of struggles waged by women in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the global shifts that allowed them to move out of their own homes. It has provoked an exploration of the effects of missionary interventions and the relationships of power mediated by class, gender, and race in the colonies.[2]

In the nineteenth century, middle and upper-class women’s roles in Victorian British society was being shaped as belonging to the private domain of the household and in

[1] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 1992). Also see Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination. 1830-1867* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[2] There is a vast literature on missionaries in colonial lands. For a brief overview on female missions, see Elizabeth Prevost, “Assessing Women, Gender, and Empire in Britain's Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Movement,” *History Compass* 7 (2009): 765-799. Important research includes *Women and Missions: Past and Present. Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* eds. Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener (Providence: Berg, 1993), Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790–1865*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007). *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* eds. Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999). Also, *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange* eds. Patricia Grimshaw and Andrew May (Brighton and Toronto: Sussex Academic Press, 2010). On colonial India, see Maina Chawla Singh *Gender, Religion, and the "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia 1860s- 1940s*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000). James Elisha Taneti, *Caste, Gender, and Christianity in Colonial India: Telugu Women in Mission: Telugu Women in Mission* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

companionate marriages as 'homemakers' and 'nurturers' of future generations, many of whom - presumably male - were to be trained as guardians of imperial socio-political ideals. There existed in British society a vigorous propagation of this gendered ideology of 'separate spheres' of work in which women's roles were relegated to the private domain characterised by virtues of self-restraint, charity, and submissiveness.[3] Yet, the challenges posed to a generation of women left to fend for themselves, with limited education and inheritances, also opened new avenues of professional work beyond the shores of Europe.[4]

In 1819, a young woman named Johanna Horst (later, Mead), sailed from England to Travancore, with her husband, Charles Mead, of the London Missionary Society (LMS). Considered a 'helpmeet', she reached the head mission station of Nagercoil, a Tamil-speaking region in southern Travancore. There, Johanna was responsible for the evangelisation of local girls and women, chiefly of the Shanar caste, through the organisation of schools, Bible-classes, prayer meetings, and zenana visitations - all of which were seen as a *natural* duty of a missionary wife on the field.[5] She arrived to provide the much-needed support and companionship to her husband in a hostile physical environment, including child-rearing and setting up of a 'Christian home', which was expected to be a model worthy of emulation by converts.[6] Married missionary women like Johanna travelled to far-flung places such as Nagercoil to supposedly showcase the ideals of English

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[3] Angelia Poon, *Enacting Englishness in the Victorian Period: Colonialism and the Politics of Performance* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008) Also, see Katrina Honeyman, *Women, Gender* and *Industrialisation* in *England, 1700—1870* (Macmillan: London, 2000)

[4] Rhonda Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003).

[5] Janaki Nair, "Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings,1813-1940", in *Cultures of Empire A Reader* ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 224-245

[6] Dana L. Robert, 'The "*Christian Home*" as a Cornerstone of Anglo-American Missionary Thought and Practice'. *Converting Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* ed. Dana L. Robert (Michigan: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 134-165.

womanhood and domesticity, which were prominent ideas during the Victorian era and considered requisite for a respectable living.[7] However, wives of missionaries were not recruited as official workers of evangelical societies - their efforts were unpaid and mostly unrecognised in mission history. Yet, in spite of a lack of recognition, from the nineteenth century onwards, Johanna Mead and her contemporaries in the LMS and CMS stations of Travancore and Cochin straddled both the worlds of the private and the public, often blurring the lines between teaching and preaching.

The schooling of girls in the colonies, akin to that of boys, comprised two kinds of mission educational institutions: day schools and boarding schools. While the vernacular day schools sought to attract pupils from various castes and were established in different neighbourhoods depending on demand and resources, the boarding schools mainly witnessed the entry of daughters of Christian mission agents and converts, and the orphans and the sick who belonged to lower-caste communities branded as degrading and untouchable. The running of these boarding institutions threw up further challenges for mission educators and poor, young Christian girls who dared to attend them. Frustrated by failed attempts to attract a considerable number of upper-caste girls to mission day schools, and unable to gain easy access into their homes or encourage inter-caste mingling, the LMS and CMS female missionaries invested their energies in running boarding schools cum orphanages for Christian children with their limited funds. Unlike the day schools where attendance was infrequent and caste pressures constantly thwarted missionary influence, the boarding schools provided a segregated space to train children. What were the implications of such a boarding school education for poor Christian girls? Did it signify a larger civilising

[7] Ginger Suzanne Frost, *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class, and Gender in Victorian England* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1995), Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Oxon: Routledge, 1982)

and moralising project? Who was an 'ideal' girl, according to the missionaries? The following analysis seeks to address these questions by examining the girls' boarding schools of the LMS and CMS in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Travancore and Cochin.

Beginning of 'Women's Work' among Women

Notwithstanding the gender-differentiated hierarchy within their own churches and organisations, British evangelical women zealously undertook various educational activities, both in their home country and outside, supported by a burgeoning philanthropic network of Ladies' Committees, church associations, and children's working parties.[8] They negotiated multiple tensions in the metropole and colonies by stepping out of their homes to interact with the domestic vagrant poor, working classes, and varied colonised populations.[9] Positioning themselves as carriers of piety, order, and literacy, British women began to carve out their own sphere of influence and in the civilising mission enterprise, they put forth their abilities to transform that section of the colonised population considered most resistant to conversion: Indian women.[10] It was through Indian women that missionaries intended to win over the men, and produce a class of Christians suitable to occupy various positions in society. Often, in the event of a male choosing to convert, missions reported the extreme opposition raised by wives and mothers, who either

[8] Frank K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)

[9] Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Classes, 1792–1850: the 'heathen' at home and overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

[10] Rev. J.Caley reported about the conversion of a young boy from the Chetti (weaver caste) in Kottayam. The boy was studying in the Model School attached to the Cambridge Nicholson Institution, when he expressed a desire to convert to Christianity. Upon hearing the news, his family, particularly the women, bitterly opposed it. Caley went to see if he could help and 'immediately on his arrival, the family of the boy, and all the neighbours gathered around; the women shrieking, weeping, and beating their breasts in great grief that he should think of forsaking them…' "A Youthful Convert in Travancore", *The Church Missionary Gleaner* Vol. XI, No. 128 (London: Church Missionary House, 1884), 89.

abandoned the convert or refused to engage with them further.[11] These reactions created many obstacles as converts struggled to adhere to their new beliefs without family support, and sometimes, resorted to returning to their old faith.

Although these British evangelical women shared racial and political affinities with colonial administrators, the presence of 'white' women in the colonies were often a source of anxiety.[12] In historicising their roles, we must be wary, as Kumari Jayawardena points out, not to reduce their activities to just being agents with good/bad intentions or as straightforward collaborators/opponents of imperialism.[13] The relationships between 'white' and colonised women were far more nuanced than what is generally assumed. As Jane Haggis asserts,

> Focusing on gender to the exclusion of race or class does little to capture the nature of relations between women across the colonial divide, while white women's own historical agency is limited by her all-encompassing status as patriarchal victim.[14]

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[11] 'The native convert is cut off from all his old associates, he is an outcaste from their society, his parents and children shun him, his wife may desert him, and he is looked upon as one dead. 'Hinduism and Christianity', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, Volume 39, May 15 (London: Strand, 1875), 634. Werkie, a sawyer and convert from the Ezhava caste in Allepie recalled: One day one of the mission-readers spoke to me of Christ, and I felt I should surrender myself to Him. But though I felt this myself, my wife, and two children were unwilling, and for two years, I did not know what to do…my son and daughter and grandson consented to be baptized but my wife stayed away six months longer. See Report of Rev. W. Johnson, Travancore, *Church Missionary Review* Vol. 28, April (London: Church Missionary House, 1877), 236

[12] Various European colonial states instituted regimes of control and surveillance of 'white' women in their colonies. For instance, the tensions of maintaining Dutch women in Java has been examined by Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002)

[13] Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia during British Rule* (New York: Routledge 1995), 21-51.

[14] Jane Haggis, "White Women and Colonialism: Towards a Non-Recuperative History," in *Gender and Imperialism*, ed. Clare Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 48.

Various ‘white’ women in South Asia, as Jayawardena notes, in differing capacities as teachers, doctors, explorers, writers, reformers, socialists, and trade unionists, also involved themselves in shaping colonial societies.[15] Thus, emergent middle-class British feminism which advocated a discourse of rights often functioned in an imperial context with missionary women's work assuming a highly ideological and political character, belying the oft-quoted assumption that women were simply the 'softer, evangelical' faces of the Empire.[16]

In monarchical Travancore and Cochin, congregations grew around the paternalistic authority of the male missionaries who also headed every major mission establishment. The men supervised the expanding network of boys’ schools, orphanages, medical dispensaries, printing presses, and official committees, and were responsible for handling finances, conducting meetings with local catechists, itinerancy, and correspondence with the missionary headquarters in London. However, the management of girls' schools, boarding institutions, zenana missions, Bible-women, and lace-work, fell under the purview of their spouses, undergirded by a discourse of ‘maternalism’, which was unsettled by single, professional, and paid missionary women during the latter decades.[17] While much of the historiography on women’s mission work focusses on single female missionaries in the

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[15] Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia during British Rule* (New York: Routledge 1995)

[16] Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790–1865* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 62-120. Also see, Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

[17] Barbara Ramusack, “Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists and Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945,” in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992),119-136. For the shifts in women’s work, transforming notions of ‘good mothers and wives’ to ‘professional paid workers’, see Jane Haggis, “Ironies of Emancipation: Changing Configurations of 'Women's Work' in the 'Mission of Sisterhood' to Indian Women,” *Feminist Review* 65 (2000): 108-126. For an excellent collection of essays that elaborate on the unequal social power between women and men in evangelical missions, see Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

colonies, this chapter examines the activities of the earliest generation of married women in colonial Kerala. These women upheld the making of the 'Christian home' and monogamy and laid the foundation for single female missionaries to professionally organise evangelical work further among colonised women by the advent of the twentieth century.[18]

On the ground, evangelical activity for married missionary couples was frequently interrupted by the vagaries of everyday life, especially the births and deaths of their own young children, and affliction by tropical diseases and ill-health for the missionary workers and their spouses. These posed huge hurdles to their intentions of functioning as stable Christian homes. As Andrew Brown-May notes,

> the core Protestant evangelical worldview of gender and family was put under immense strain by the forces of isolation and the lived needs of men and women who struggled to prosper in exceptional social and cultural circumstances.[19]

Very often, local Christian men and women, such as ayahs, also became part of an extended domestic set-up and much of the responsibility of child-care and educational work was designated to them.[20] For missionary women, hardships including separation from their own children who were sent back to England, meant that they had to strive doubly hard to fulfil their domestic and work tasks in the stations.

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[18] Dana L. Robert, 'The "*Christian Home*" as a Cornerstone of Anglo-American Missionary Thought and Practice' in *Converting Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* ed. Dana L. Robert(Michigan: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 134-165.

[19]Andrew Brown-May, "Sex and Salvation: Modelling Gender on an Indian Mission Station," in *Evangelists of Empire? Missionaries in Colonial History*, eds.Amanda Barry, Joanna Cruickshank, Andrew Brown-May and Patricia Grimshaw (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2008), 44.

[20]Ayah is a word of Portuguese origin referring to the house-maid/nanny employed in colonial households to primarily take care of children. Ayahs can belong to various castes See 'The Ayah', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, Volume 17 (New Series), (William and Robert Chambers: London, 1852), 249-250. A popular tract written for the use of ayahs in British-India was Martha Sherwood, *The Ayah and the Lady: An Indian Story* Third Edition (Wellington: Houlston and Son, 1818)

A dramatic appeal, circulated in 1820, by the LMS, defined the boundaries of women's work among women. Referring to British women as the *natural* guardians of colonised Indian females, particularly pertaining to those of the zenanas, the appeal construed them as the only ones who could impart the requisite traits for civilizational advancement such as the provision of education and home management.

> Here is a whole Empire, comprising so many millions of females, in which a single school for girls has not existed for thousands of years. The females have never seen a book, except in the hands of men, and have no knowledge of any one of the mental employments…in a civilized country. Their fingers have never touched a needle, a pair of scissors, a book, or a pen and they are entirely excluded from all intellectual intercourse with the other sex.
>
> … in these circumstances, to whom shall the appeal be made? Is it not manifest that the ladies in Britain are the *natural* guardians of these unhappy widows and orphans in British India? Is it possible that our fair country women, ladies of rank, of influence, of the most refined sensibility, the patrons of every charity, of all that is distinguished and benevolent in our country can, after knowing the facts in this circular, continue unmoved by the cries issuing from these fires and from the thousands of orphans which surround them, witnessing the progress of these flames, which are devouring the living mother and consuming her frame to ashes![21]

Colonised women and children, subjected to the violence of Indian customs set by men, were depicted as waiting to be 'saved' by British women who were mostly propagating Victorian norms of domesticity. According to the LMS, this so-called inherent violence of Indian society contributed to low intellectual development, reflected in the inability of

[21]'Address to British Ladies on Female Education in India,' *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* (henceforth, EMMC), Vol XXVIII (Bensley and Son: London, 1820), 439.

women to become worthy companions to their partners.[22] Considering themselves to be racially and culturally 'superior' beings, British women were urged by evangelical mission societies, headed by men, to fulfil their 'innate' responsibilities and 'rescue' degraded Indian women kept in seclusion. Educational initiatives, imbued with strong civilising undertones and aimed at a reformation of indigenous households and cultural practices were, thus, undertaken among colonised females. Their natal households were perceived to be the main sources of everything that was possibly wrong with colonial societies - wells of ignorance, superstition, and savage rituals.

In 1806, the German Lutheran evangelist, William Tobias Ringeltaube, remarked upon his arrival in Travancore that "girls never come to school in Travancore, which is a great loss".[23] But this was not peculiar to Travancore alone. A majority of women in nineteenth-century India, as was the case with many other countries in the world, were not allowed to access any formal kind of instruction and instead, subjected to the norms laid down by their caste communities and men in families. The burden faced by women belonging to the lower castes was multiple due to the rigid caste relations that reduced their communities into slaves and bonded labourers. When the LMS missionaries contemplated setting up schools in the districts of south Travancore, they had to face, like their counterparts in other evangelical societies, the prejudices surrounding the education of girls. But to gain new converts meant that the females of the colonies had to be reached out to at

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[22] Evangelical missions, as part of colonial reformist discourses, stressed on the 'home', particularly the Indian *zenana* as the space/site in which women ought to uphold the ideals of companionate marriage, scientific practices of child rearing, hygiene and domestic management, which had gained currency from the nineteenth century onwards in England. The 'educated' Indian woman was vested with the responsibility of ensuring domestic happiness, nurturing her husband and children. For a discussion on the attempts to introduce bourgeois conceptions of family, home and domesticity during the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987).

[23]As quoted in I.H Hacker, *A Hundred Years in Travancore, Centenary Volume of the work of LMS in Travancore, South India, 1806-1906: A History and Description of the work done by the LMS*, (London: Allenson Ltd., 1908), 31

any cost, in order to make inroads into Indian families and impart evangelising and civilising lessons. Schools were an evangelising agency central to this project and attempts were made to induce both the upper and lower castes into sending their girl children to attend them. Primarily, the necessity of education, in particular a Christian education, for girls had to be impressed upon the people.

But the 'Indian woman' who became the dominant subject of missionary rhetoric in the appeal usually referred to those belonging to upper-caste communities, who were mostly confined in their households with limited mobility. Female missionaries did not abandon their desire to preach and convert upper castes whose cultural norms were seen as more amenable to Victorian values than those of poor, untouchable women.[24] Yet, they resorted to educating mostly lower-caste girls due to a rising number of conversions in their communities and the stirrings of a demand for schooling. This desire was not simply borne out of Christian charity but propelled by the belief that it would, inevitably, also induce the higher classes to educate their daughters as well. Martha Mault of the LMS at Nagercoil argued that a process of reverse influence seemed likely in the case of female education which did not witness the same demand as boys' schooling in the region.[25] In the early years of schools for girls, she wrote,

> We shall be thankful if, through the bounty of Christian friends in England, and the readiness of the poor to be instructed, we are enabled to carry forward this work till, by its extending influence, the rich and great, as well as the poor and despised, shall become sensible of its

[24]To understand the zenana both as a site of appropriation and resistance, see Janaki Nair, 'Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian womanhood in Englishwomen's writings,1813-1940', in Catherine Hall ed., *Cultures of Empire A Reader,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 224-245

[25]Letter from Martha Mault to Rev. W.Ellis, Female Schools in Nagercoil, South Travancore, *EMMC* Volume 15 New Series, (London: Thomas Ward and Co,1837),198. She estimated that there were three hundred girls under instruction in the Nagercoil mission station across various schools.

blessings, and manifest as much readiness as to receive them as the Christian church does to impart them.[26]

Almost forty years later, this emotional 'prism of appeal', a term coined by Jane Haggis, through which women's missionary work was refracted was again employed when the CMS declared in 1849, that 'the poor Indian woman claims our pity, for she is the victim of studied neglect'.[27] They appealed to the British public for more concerted efforts towards the provision of Christian education to females in India, without which apparently no moral or intellectual improvement was possible.

> The education of girls is discouraged among the Natives of India. They say that women are so vicious, that to educate them would be as if you give milk to a serpent: it would be more venomous. There is no greater blessing than a good mother: there is no greater misfortune than an ignorant and depraved one…the Christian education of the native female of India is therefore of first importance.[28]

A general perception prevailed in missionary circles on the 'helpless, unenlightened and secluded' condition of women in colonial India, stripped of any agency in determining their life choices and bettering their circumstances. Such depictions sought to justify the entry of the British female missionary into the colony, and by default, indigenous homes.[29] On the

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[26] Ibid.,198.

[27]'Native Female Education in India', *Church Missionary Gleaner* Vol. IX,(London: Seeleys,1849), 38. See Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen, 'Imperial Emotions*:* Affective Communities of Mission in British Protestant Women's Missionary Publications c.1880–1920', *Journal of Social History* (2008): 691–716.

[28]Ibid., 39.

[29] The British East India Company and later, the colonial British administration, considered the practice of 'widow-burning' or 'sati' as the root-cause for the degraded status of Indian women. Their attempts at legal intervention, prompted by middle-class social reformers, and administrators, triggered immense debate during the nineteenth century. But colonial south India did not witness 'sati' as a pressing problem as much as the existence of bonded labour and agrestic slavery. For a persuasive analysis of debates on sati and colonial and

one hand, missionaries depicted Indian women in their writings as lacking control over the organisation of familial spaces and relations. On the other, dominant caste prejudices in local society opposed female education, and, as dramatically exemplified in the figure of the 'venomous serpent', viewed an educated woman as dangerous, uncontrollable, and resistant to family and societal discipline.[30] In this setting, British missionary women established boarding schools for local girls within the confines of the church premises, in order to 'remedy' their 'miserable' situation.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the implicit agenda of girls' boarding schools was to perpetuate values of Christian domesticity in local society. By doing so, the LMS and CMS intended to prepare their pupils for monogamy and requisite virtues with similarly educated Christian males of their congregations. But this was easier said than done. In the case of numerous female Christian converts from erstwhile untouchable communities, extensive manual labour was integral to their lives and continued to determine their caste status. No amount of instruction regarding women's exclusive roles within the household could alter the reality that poor Christian females laboured alongside their non-Christian neighbours, under the watch of their landlords, and lived in dire conditions of poverty. In this regard, a boarding school education attempted to offer poor Christian girls a new means of occupational mobility and norms of respectability alongside existing ones. As Eliza Kent notes, conversions resulted in the emergence of a 'restrictive form of femininity' promoted

missionary justifications for intervention, see Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[30] In 1893, Mrs. Duthie reported, "The tyranny of Hindu men over their wives is well known. Men have taken all privileges to themselves, and to women they have left none. Men may remarry, move freely in society and learn as much as they like. But the ignorant among them think that education will make women disobedient, immodest and lazy and are angry when they see us and the books in the hands of the women. One man went so far as to beat his wife for the great sin of learning." CWM/LMS/South India/ Travancore/Box 5/ 1893

by Christian values intermeshed with pre-existing norms in Travancore.[31] I argue that some of these values and practices were sought to be inculcated in female pupils at institutions such as boarding schools where missionaries enjoyed considerable authority over them.

Despite the underlying racial tensions and anxieties over the 'authenticity' of conversions among untouchable communities, female missionaries also argued that boarding school girls acquired a 'superior' sense of femininity compared to those who could not avail of such a Christian education, and this aspect of 'difference' was constantly driven home.[32] Christian girls trained in the boarding schools were defined on the basis of a new marker of identity hitherto unused for judging female respectability in local society: education. The missionaries believed such girls constituted the core of evangelisation in Indian society.

Situating Boarding School Activities

In 1819, Johanna Mead began the first LMS boarding school for girls at Nagercoil, with a handful of students and everything being provided for, "even a little fee paid to the children to induce them to come to school", as her colleague Martha Mault noted.[33] The main object of the institution, which grew in prominence in subsequent decades was to teach reading, writing, spinning cotton, knitting and weaving.[34] With most of their time taken up in

[31] Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9

[32] Mrs. Lowe, 'Girls Boarding School' Report of the Neyoor Mission Station for 1865, *Travancore District Committee* (Nagercoil: London Mission Press, 1866), 20. Mrs. Lowe wrote, "Most of the school girls marry Mission-agents, or those occupying good positions, and it is gratifying to be able to say that nearly all the old girls have given us great satisfaction after leaving school and getting married. The effects of their training is chiefly seen in the neat and tide appearance of their houses, their own habits of cleanliness, and the training and better behaviour of their children."

[33]Isaac Henry Hacker. *A Hundred Years in Travancore* (London: Allenson, 1908), 84.

[34] Martha Mault, 'Nagercoil Girls Boarding School' , *EMMC*, Vol. 29, (London, 1821),439-40.

domestic tasks, married female missionaries were dependent on ayahs and teachers for supervising pupils in these tasks and inculcating 'habits of neatness, cleanliness and industry'.[35] Gradually, LMS boarding schools were established in the other main stations of Neyoor, Parachaley, Santhapooram, Quilon, and Trivandrum. In the CMS' principal station of Kottayam, Amelia Dorothea Baker established the earliest boarding school in 1820, targeting predominantly, unlike the LMS, girls from Syrian Christian families. This school grew into a well-known institution and by the 1880s, it began to admit girls of the Arrian hill-tribe and freed Pulayas as well, as the CMS expanded its congregations among them in the out-stations surrounding Kottayam. Amelia's counterparts in other CMS stations of Mavelikara, Mundakyum, Tiruwella, Trichur, and Pallam, also ran boarding schools and targeted girls from their respective congregations.

Running these schools was no easy task because the home committees of the LMS and CMS in London, apart from offering verbal appreciation, did not provide substantial assistance, financial or otherwise, to the work of 'missionary wives'. Female education, though hailed as crucial to evangelical activity, was not encouraged as a full-fledged endeavour worthy of official funding. Nevertheless, married missionary women went ahead and drew upon the contemporary philanthropic and emergent women's movement in Britain to raise funds. Frequent appeals were made by the LMS and CMS to various groups, linked to denominational churches and voluntary societies.[36] Individual monetary subscriptions, toys, clothes, books, and sewing material were donated and many pupils in the boarding schools named after their benefactors. Sunday-school associations, children's working parties, and local church committees in Britain were also mobilised for these initiatives,

[35] Isaac Henry Hacker. *A Hundred Years in Travancore* (London: London Missionary Society, 1908), 87.

[36]The LMS Ladies Committee was formed in 1875 but no woman was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Society.

constituent of imperial reform, resulting in a widespread public involvement in missionary activity.[37]

These ideas of educating colonised children in seclusion, away from their immediate cultural and familial settings was a characteristic feature of missionary boarding schools across the world. Their establishment spatially marked missionary presence as distinct from local communities with school children bound within church compounds, which were seen as self-sustaining. But who were willing to be taught in the mission boarding schools of nineteenth-century Travancore, spatially and physically segregated from their families? It was no coincidence that many pupils in the LMS and CMS girls' boarding schools, ranging from four to seventeen years of age were mostly children of mission employees or those dependent on mission charity. Unlike the demand for boys schooling which grew tremendously, progress in girls' schools was slow, and missions recorded opposition even among the Christians.[38]

Money was a matter of grave consideration in the promotion of female education. Without any pay or substantial funding from their respective home committees, LMS and CMS missionary women had to rely on other means compared to their male partners in the stations. Fees could not be charged as most poor families were unable to pay for boarding school expenses, and depended on voluntary donations.[39] Although Syrian Christians attending the CMS schools contributed, the amount provided by such families was too small

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[37] Steven S. Maughan, *Mighty England Do Good: Culture, Faith, Empire, and World in the Foreign Missions of the Church of England, 1850-1915* (Michigan and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 178-239.

[38] 'Survey of Missionary Stations', *Missionary Register*, Vol. 24 March (London: L & G. Seeley,1836), 140.

[39] For instance, in 1827, it cost one pound and twelve shillings for a female pupil per annum in the LMS Nagercoil girls' boarding school. The rate of maintenance for boys and girls differed across stations. In the LMS Quilon girls' boarding school, 27 pupils were maintained at an expense of 16 rupees per annum each in 1837. "Survey of Missionary Stations", Missionary Register, Volume 25 (London: Seeley, 1837), 142. In 1908-09, Mrs. Duthie requested two pounds per annum for the maintenance of a boys and girl in the Nagercoil boarding institutions. See CWM/ South India/ Travancore/ Reports/ 1909

to meet the schools' annual needs.[40] On a visit to CMS schools in south India, the missionary Sarah Tucker observed the scarcity of funds. To support an orphan at Quilon, it was two pounds in 1837, while the CMS schools estimated three pounds in 1843.[41] Apart from six students directly supported by the CMS, the rest relied on private contributions. 'At present, one child in Mrs. Bailey's school is maintained by a gentleman and a lady at Kent,' noted Tucker, and

> another, by the ladies at the head of a young ladies' establishment near London; a third, by their pupils; and fourth, by a clergyman in the North of England. Others are supported by unappropriated sums placed at the disposal of Mr. Tucker, and by a very kind annual contribution from the same friends in Nottinghamshire, who assist the "Retford School" in Tinnevelly.[42]

Similarly, in Mrs. Peet's CMS school at Mavelikkara, six students were supported by CMS women at Essex and the rest, by the Female Education Society. Others included,

> Two from a couple in Kent,, one by girls of our Sunday school, 'who partly by acts of self-denial, and partly from the earnings of a small working party among themselves,

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[40] Letter from Mrs. W. Clark, 'Girls' School Cottayam', *CMI* , (London, 1891), 998. Mrs. Clark, daughter of Henry Baker Senior stated that her mother started offering dowry for Syrian Christian girls to stay back in the boarding school - an amount ranging from three and a half to ten rupees until they could read at least a testament and learn to sew.

[41]Rev. J.C. Thompson, ''heathen' Female Education: II- Communications from Missionaries', *EMMC*, Volume 15 (London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1837),146. Also see, Sarah Tucker, *South Indian Sketches Containing a Short Account of Some Missionary Stations connected with the CMS in Southern India, in letters to a young friend, Part Two: Tinnevelly, Travancore* (London- James Nisbet & Co., 1843), 150.

[42]Sarah Tucker, *South Indian Sketches Containing a Short Account of Some Missionary Stations connected with the CMS in Southern India, in letters to a young friend, Part Two: Tinnevelly, Travancore* (London- James Nisbet & Co., 1843), 194.

> under the superintendence of two or three teachers, have for the last three years contrived to raise a sufficient amount for her support.[43]

Tucker's observations throw light on the network of charity which was forged across Britain by different individuals towards sustaining missionary education in the colonies. Missionary work among colonised women assumed a transnational character from its inception, and despite the challenges on the ground, evangelicals attempted to advance their cause by reaching out to church supporters everywhere. Through the monetary contributions of well-wishers, particularly church-going women and children in Britain and across British-ruled India, missionary women in Travancore and Cochin were able to provide for the education of dozens of poor Christians girls in their boarding schools.

However, decades later, in 1891, Mrs. Duthie noted the obstacles erected by poverty in the education of female children.' Some have no proper cloth to wear and are unable to buy their lesson books.'[44]

> The others are so poor that the parents feel great difficulty in sending them to school nd are often obliged to take them away. Either to help them in their work or to make them earn their living by gathering herbs, roots, crabs, fish etc.[45]

Similarly, Annie Allan also recorded noted that educated mothers wanted to encourage their daughters to study but poor Christians in and around Nagercoil were still largely hesitant to send them beyond the standard of the village school because of the demands of early marriage and social customs. She noted that most illiterate women continued to be governed by their communal rules and caste customs.

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[43] Ibid., 205

[44] Mrs. Duthie, 'Report of the Girls' Schools', CWM/LMS/South India/Travancore/Reports/ Box 4/1891

[45] Ibid.

> It is example not precept that the children need. If it is true that the India of the future will be what its mothers make it, then how important it is to see to it that we are doing all in our power to raise and train alright the girls entrusted to our care who are to be mothers of the future! Our own experience is, that, while exceptions have to be regretfully acknowledged, mothers who themselves have enjoyed the benefits of a boarding school education are generally the most anxious to push forward the education of their daughters.[46]

Poverty, Annie noted, was often a major impediment in educating young girls in lower caste families. Yet, partially unconvinced, she recorded,

> for a girl is fed and educated at a charge of eight annas a month, whereas to keep their girls at home must cost at least four times that amount. More probably, the real reason is lack of interest and the desire to have their girls at work in the house.[47]

In spite of their congregants' poor economic status, missionaries harboured suspicions about their 'genuineness' towards the Christian faith. The reluctance to educate girls was often viewed as a negation of their responsibility as 'proper' Christian parents who were expected to invest in children's schooling. But this reluctance was also largely because of the overwhelming influence of local caste norms of propriety and control exercised over females, and conversions did not result in an immediate transformation in that realm. Even

[46]Annie Allan, *Report of Parachaley Girls Boarding School*, Council for World Missions (henceforth, CWM)/LMS/ Travancore/ Reports/ Box 5/ 1893

[47] Annie Allan, *Report of Parachaley Girls Boarding School*, Council for World Missions (henceforth, CWM)/LMS/ Travancore/ Reports/ Box 5/ 190

as boys gradually entered mission schools, aiming at better employment opportunities and social acceptance, girls lagged behind, as notions of family and community respectability mandated early marriages and limited choices for them.

In wider missionary circles, opinion was divided on the necessity of boarding schools for Christians. E. Storrow, a former LMS missionary in Calcutta, noted that girls' boarding schools, depending on the number of years of a pupil's residence, was a costly affair for the mission.[48] Pointing to the humble economic means of most Christian converts residing in Indian villages, he remarked,

> To take girls (native Christians) too far away from such surroundings into houses, and to food and habitudes very different from those of the class out of which they come, and to which most of them must return, is alike an error in policy and finance.[49]

His biggest concern was that boarding school girls would grow distant with their local culture, and consider themselves unsuitable for a 'humble' position in their households and communities.[50] Storrow held that boarding schools tended to disrupt traditional gender roles in colonial India by making Christian girls ambitious beyond their reach. This was not to be the intention of missionary education, he asserted, as it was primarily targeted at moral improvement of colonised females and the provision of literacy to help lay the foundation for Christian communities.[51] At no point did the missions want poor, Christian girls to demand a greater share of resources or shun their prescribed social functions. Instead, they

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[48] Edward Storrow, *Our Sisters in India* (New York and Chicago: Flemming H, Revell, 1898), 225

[49] Ibid, 226

[50] Edward Storrow, *Our Sisters in India* (New York and Chicago: Flemming H,Revell, 1898), 225

[51] Ibid.

were expected to balance both but with a renewed Christian zeal. Such a similar view was echoed by Henry Baker Jr. of the CMS in Kottayam. 'Our object is to teach girls to be useful at home', he stated,

> And not lifting them out of their station, not making displays of them, but to give them a quiet influence in their own circles, scarcely heard or seen, but manifestly felt.[52]

These objectives prevailed in the boarding school institutions of Travancore and Cochin. Girls' boarding schools combined religious and secular instruction in the vernaculars, either Tamil or Malayalam. A religious curriculum dominated in which a considerable portion of time was devoted to the study of Christian scriptures, prayer meetings, and hymn-singing.[53] In the primary classes, young girls learnt biblical texts, along with basic lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, history, and geography. Higher classes included advanced lessons in the same subjects, and long afternoon hours spent in learning how to sew. In the 1850s, the texts taught in the LMS schools of south Travancore were issued from the Madras Christian Vernacular Education Society and mostly included Nehemiah, the New Testament, a few chapters of Genesis, Luke, A compendium on Scriptural History called "Line Upon Line", Curwen's Hymns, Watt's Catechisms, apart

[52] Extracts from Henry Baker's report on Travancore, *Church Missionary Paper for the Use of Weekly and Monthly Contributors* No. CCXXIV, December, (London: Church Missionary Society, 1871)

[53] Mrs. Duthie, CWM/LMS/South Travancore/Reports/ Nagercoil/Box 4/1896. Some of the senior girl pupils from the 'Training Class' volunteered to teach children hymns and Bible-lessons in the Sunday classes of various day schools.

from books on geography, grammar, and arithmetic in Tamil.[54] English was not taught to all, unlike in the boys' boarding institutions.[55]

Divided into primary and senior classes according to age, the LMS and CMS boarding schools organised the girls into a monitorial system, a method which was also popularised for working-class schools in Britain and other colonies as well.[56] Morning hours were spent in subject lessons provided by local teachers, and afternoons on completing chores in the school compound, alongside sewing, and singing which was mostly taught by the British missionary women. Prayer sessions formed a major activity around which boarding schools functioned, and pupils mandatorily attended every morning and evening and on Sundays, when the congregation members of the stations assembled.[57] Young girls were groomed to occupy their roles as pious beings, within and outside their households, and lessons in character-formation included attending the mission church, singing during chapel services, and leading by example in community service.[58] For instance, Mrs. Abbs

[54] Report from Neyyoor, *First Annual Report of the LMS Travancore Dist.Committee*, (Nagercoil: LM Press 1858), 36

[55] Mrs. Wilkinson 'Girls Boarding School' Report of the Quilon Mission for 1867, *Travancore District Committee* (Nagercoil: London Mission Press, 1868), 9

[56] The monitorial system of instruction is said to have originated in colonial Madras and popularised in England by Andrew Bell. It was organised according to 'merit' than the age of children. A 'monitor' was chosen from a senior set of pupils, who was advanced in learning, and designated tasks involving teaching the younger ones. See Jana Tschurenev, A *Colonial Experiment* in Education: Madras, 1789–1796. In Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, Kate Rousmaniere eds. *Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-Cultural Exchanges in (Post)Colonial Education* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 105-118

[57] M.Nallathamby(on behalf of James Duthies), Nagercoil Girls' Boarding School in Report of Tittuvelei District, 1895.' The schools are commenced and closed with prayer- first a lyric is sung, then a verse from the small book - "Scripture verses for children" edited by Mrs. Duthie is taught and prayer offered, and in some places, the scholars in the higher classes are made to pray by turn.' CWM/LMS/South Travancore/Reports/ Nagercoil/Box 4/1896

[58] Rev. J.H. Bishop, Extracts from the Annual Letters, 12 January 1883, Trichur *CMI* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1883), 624. Pupils in this CMS Girls' Boarding School were also engaged in 'conducting a mothers' meeting for catechumens, teaching poor girl catechumens on Sunday mornings, and giving Bible criticism lessons in the schools.'

described the different prayers offered by her pupils in the LMS Nagercoil Boarding School throughout the week, conveying the pupils' embodiment of faith-inspired instruction.

> On Sunday night, they pray for Mrs. Mault, who established the school forty-seven years ago; on Monday night, for the conversion of the Jews; on Tuesday for the Rev. J.O and Mrs. Whitehouse; on Wednesday night, for Mrs. Dennis and those have had the charge of the school since, including ourselves; on Thursday, for the Rajah, the Queen and Royal family, and for the Directors of our Society; on Friday, for their supporters; and on Saturday they pray for the sick, the poor, and for all who are in distress. [59]

Mission boarding schools functioned on the basis of regimented routines. A disciplined regime, with time apportioned for various activities, including games and exercise, provided a new orientation to ideas of what constituted 'work' and 'leisure' in the lives of Christian girls.[60] Such an education was considered a panacea for the character defects of girls in Travancore and Cochin who were accused of whiling away their time in 'wasteful' activities, and not committing to their tasks with honesty and efficiency.[61] Missionary couples lived adjacent to the school-house or slightly away from it, and could not monitor the pupils regularly. In effect, missionary women were not a constant presence in the lives of boarding school pupils and a substantial responsibility rested on the shoulders

[59] Mrs. Mabbs, Nagercoil Girls Boarding School, *Annual Report of the London Missionary Society*, 1867, 147.

[60] 'Being without education, moral training, or real knowledge of the world, many women spend much time in gossiping with their friends on the most frivolous and profitless topics- dress and ornaments which are their chief delight; their husbands and neighbours and scandal of the village, stories of devils, tigers and so forth.' Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*`(London: W.H.Allen, 1883), 209

of local mission staff, often unrecognised in missionary writings and forgotten when accounting for histories of education.

Symptomatic of Victorian reconfigurations of social organisation, detailed timetables introduced new ideas of temporality to school children in the colonies.[62] A strict adherence to fulfilling tasks according to a routine prescribed by the British missionaries was insisted upon, thereby subordinating subject-learning to the acquisition of a time-work discipline for girls. Older pupils were entrusted with the responsibility of tending to the younger ones to maintain discipline and neatness. Various cleaning and cooking chores of the schools were also delegated to them. Mrs Whitehouse elaborated on this system prevalent in 1854 at the LMS Parachaley boarding school.

> The domestic duties of the school are principally carried on by the girls themselves. Ten of the senior girls are employed as monitors, each having the charge of five or six girls, whose clothes are put under their care with girls, with a box to enable them to keep them safely. They are expected to see that they are clean and neat. These by turns help in the cooking department, and sweep and clean the school rooms, and carry water from the well.[63]

A letter from Mrs. Baker of her CMS Girls' Boarding School at Pallam also noted the detailed time-bound movements of the girls. These fine details were conveyed to supporters as indicative of the changes instilled in Indian children on the judicious use of time and cultivation of certain habits to prevent unnecessary delays and interruptions, and maximise their bodily energies. Schooling, in short, was considered as a work-task which

[62] Maria Damkjær, *Time, Domesticity and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1-55

[63] Letter from Mrs. Whitehouse, Council for World Mission Archives/India/Odds/1854

was to be undertaken with diligence. In 1847, the Pallam School had sixteen boarders on its roll. 'They rise at six, dress and clean their school and bed rooms and look over the verses of scripture which they had learnt the day before', noted Mrs. Baker in her letter.[64]

> The bell rings at 8 when the boys and girls schools meet, repeat their portions of scripture, sing a hymn and are examined in a chapter, which they have prepared the day before, and conclude with prayer. After breakfast, they come to me and learn to sew and knit till 1 o' clock- after dinner, they are taught by the master to read and write. They learn Watt's catechisms, Cliff's Geography, and accounts but the new Testament forms the principal part of their studies- the greater number have committed almost all of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles to memory. At five, they have prayers in the school, they have an hour or two to amuse themselves in the compound. At 7, the younger girls go to bed, they elder ones make and mend their clothes for an hour longer- the day boarders come at 8 and stay till five, being engaged in the same classes as those I have in the house- the elder girls are employed on alternate days in cooking their meals and preparing rice. I thus endeavour to teach those entrusted to me to be industrious, and at the same time usefully employed.[65]

Poor children, accustomed to laborious tasks outside the schools, were made to undertake similar tasks in the mission schools. Such labour could not have been extracted from upper-caste pupils in day schools. A kind of schooling which involved arduous labour neither freed Christian pupils of erstwhile lower-caste communities from manual work nor

[64] Letter from Mrs. Baker to Mr. Tucker, Pallam, October 12, 1847, , C I 2/ 0 30/2 / Church Missionary Archive, Cadbury Special Collections, University of Birmingham

[65] Ibid.

did it disrupt a caste-determined hierarchy of work.[66] These timetables and chores point towards an ambiguous feature of missionary attitudes towards the education of the untouchable caste children. Christian missions subscribed to dominant notions about untouchable caste-communities as being suitable for manual work, and their children in the boarding schools were also directed to perform physical chores of washing, cooking, cleaning, husking, and gardening. Putting boarders to work chiefly served an economical purpose for the LMS and CMS, owing to a paucity of funds and employees, but was also connected to the idea of work as a constituent of piety for the poor. Boarders' unpaid labour was utilised to maintain these institutions and their degree of commitment to everyday tasks was also considered as evidence of fulfilling Christian tenets for spiritual ends. Young girls in Travancore, already familiar with household and agricultural work, was being trained to do the same but with a greater zeal and sense of self-denial than non-converts.

The picture was no different in the LMS boarding schools, where the main agenda of the earliest group of married missionary women was to raise potential brides and make them fit for future roles as wives and mothers. However, the management of time was integral to evangelical domesticity, without which, according to the missions, Christian households could not exist. In Neyoor, pupils resided with the Matron in the LMS compound, and were taught by a male headmaster trained at the Nagercoil Seminary. The children slept together in one room with coconut fibre mats on the floor. "They rise at six", Mrs. Baylis wrote to her juvenile British readers, "when they sing a hymn, and the Matron prays with them. After washing and arranging their simple toilet, it is seven o'clock when

[66] Utilising children's labour in mission boarding schools was a common phenomenon but not without resistance. For instance, Nancy L. Stockdale *Colonial Encounters Among English and Palestinian Women, 1800-1948*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007)

the gong is struck, and they collect in the school room for their first lessons."[67] There were four classes a day for reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, Old and New Testaments, Malayalam or Tamil grammar, elements of natural science, ancient history, histories of India and England, singing, and lace-making. Their dining patterns were also regulated. Each girl had a brass or earthen vessel for food. "At eight o' clock, they have their first meal which consists of rice and mullaguthanni (pepper water, kind of liquid curry). From nine to twelve, they have lessons and then they have their mid-day meal which is canjee, or boiled rice...," she noted.[68] After the mid-day meal, the children resumed their lessons from one to two o'clock. The younger ones were taught to spin cotton by the Matron until four o'clock when school hours were over. From two to five o'clock, the elder girls assembled at the Missionary bungalow verandah where they were taught lace-making by the European lady missionary, and some of them, embroidery.

While sewing was viewed as an activity to enhance Christian femininity, it was pursued for definite economic ends in the boarding schools. Boarders were taught to stitch both their own clothes and for the poorest members of their congregations who received them on special occasions. Their work, which was often commended by government authorities, was also exhibited at many places. The LMS noted that the children's lace which gained a money prize at an exhibition in Mysore was 'very willingly' sent to the Belgian Relief Fund.[69] Similarly, boarders also donated to various war funds realised from the sale of the rice they put aside daily from their allowance.[70] While it is almost impossible to gauge

[67] Mrs. Baylis, A Day in a Boarding School in Travancore-Neyoor. *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, 31 (1874), 190.

[68] Ibid, 190.

[69] Jackets were stitched for 170 widows of the district by the girls in the embroidery classes. Winifred Hacker, Report Of The Neyoor Mission District, CWM/ Travancore/ Reports/ Box 8/1903.

[70] A. Parker, CWM/ Travancore/ Reports/ 1914/ Box 9/ Trivandru

the extent of this 'willingness', such reports reveal that children's labour had implications outside the boarding schools. In undertaking physical work, these poor girls experienced schooling very differently from those attending day schools.

There also existed limits to the missionary educational project pursued by married missionaries. The reluctance to introduce English instruction for girls reflected conservative missionary aims with regard to female education. All girl boarders were encouraged to learn history, geography, and elementary science in the vernaculars, but learning English was seen as a worthless pursuit, except for a chosen few. Instead, poor girls were to be taught in the vernacular so that they could be at the forefront of organising Bible-instruction, read scriptural passages to illiterate neighbours and families, engage in family prayer, and manage the religious affairs of their homes and congregations. Nevertheless, missionary writings reveal the prevalence of a demand for English instruction for girls among the dominant Shanar Christians as it promised them respectable work such as teaching. 'The native Christians are too anxious though to have their daughters taught too much in English', wrote I. H. Hacker of the converts in Neyoor, and stated that English instruction,

> is a mistake for the mass of girls, many of them are poor and must necessarily go to poor homes, and would find a thorough grounding in their own language, a good knowledge of the Scriptures and a proficiency in needle work, far more useful in their future lives. Pick out some of the bright, clever girls who promise to make good teachers and send them up for a higher education in English is the best plan in my opinion.[71]

The LMS and CMS held that a familiarity with English would distance educated girls from their traditional environs, particularly agricultural work, and induce them to demand the same privileges as their superiors. English, though perceived as a 'passport' for boys to

[71] I.H. Hacker, Report of the Neyoor Mission District/ CWM/ Travancore Reports/ Box 8/ 1902, p. 26.

economic and occupational mobility was seen to hold different meanings for indigenous females. It was considered a language that would unsettle girls' roles in their families by provoking new thought that questioned tradition, and create unnecessary tension if it provided them with uncalled ideas of freedom, something alluded to by Storrow as well. A process of 'Europeanisation' was feared would take place, leading to a denouncement of traditional cultural and work roles by poor, labouring women.[72] Practical difficulties also affected the provision of English learning. In 1891, Mrs. Duthie reported that although some progress was made, 'the difficulty was to keep our girls long enough to make English of any real use to them.' She noted the provision of small scholarships which induced some of them to keep at it but owing to lack of funds, that could not be continued.[73] Yet, the status of a few literate females among Christian converts was heralded as important in the growth of local congregations. But these were cast within certain acceptable limits, especially for caste groups, who did not desire female education to bring about a radical development in Travancore at the time.

However, shifts in this agenda occurred as the Travancore government began to gradually invest in female schooling and offered grants to mission institutions. The demands of local Christian communities also compelled missionaries to reorient their objectives and promote new forms of work among literate Christian pupils, but these were not without internal discordance. The Nagercoil Girls' Boarding School, the most prominent LMS institution is illustrative of these changes. Many boarding school pupils were encouraged to become school teachers, a development that began1830s. In 1838, five LMS village schools were managed by local Christian female teachers, amongst whom were four young widows.

[72] Edward Storrow, *Our Sisters in India* (New York and Chicago: Flemming H,Revell, 1898), 225

[73] Mrs. Duthie, 'Report of the Girls' Schools', CWM/LMS/South India/Travancore/Reports/ Box 4/1891

Noting their 'approved character and good abilities'[74], Rev. Mead conveyed to readers in England,

> …we have been obliged to adopt this method of raising up female teachers, from the extreme difficulty of finding persons in any degree qualified for such employment among the women of this country…[75]

A bustling town, Nagercoil was home to numerous Shanars, many of whom were the earliest to accept Christianity. Unlike the Pulaya and Paraya converts towards the north, many Shanar Christians were economically mobile, owning small plots of coconut farms, and lands. While they worked as agricultural labourers for Nair landlords, they also seized the opportunity to avail of LMS schools. Girls from poor out-stations came to the Nagercoil School from all parts of the district, after completing their education in the vernacular schools. A 'Christian' home cum orphanage was built adjacent to the school to accommodate some of them.[76] Some of the girls at the home attended the boarding school, and others day schools, and those who did not show an aptitude for study were organised into a lace class.[77] Female lace-workers contributed significantly to various church and mission funds at home and abroad, and undertook the donations promised by the missionaries to its poorest congregants.

The superintendence of the Nagercoil Girls' Boarding School passed through the hands of many female missionaries, due to constant changes brought about by ill-health and

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[74] Extract of Letter from Charles Mead, *EMMC*, October (London: Darton and Co.,1838), 513.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Beatrice J.Duthie, CWM/ LMS/South India/ Travancore/ Reports/ 1909

[77] G.Parker, Report of the Nagercoil Station, CWM/South India/Travancore/ Box 8/1907

transfer. The provision of government funds under the grant-in-aid scheme and support of the local congregations ensured that the Nagercoil school survived these changes. A small fee was also charged on account of the better facilities provided by the school but money was also often hard to come by.[78] By 1902, the school had bifurcated into an English High School and a Vernacular Middle school, receiving separate grants. Some of the pupils were sent to the Maharajah's High School in Trivandrum and began to appear for the Matriculation exam of the Madras University. Delighted at the efforts of the pupils, Mrs. Allan wrote, "Our small experience has shown us that they are at least girls as capable as boys. Truly the day of the redemption of India's women is coming, though it may yet be a good way off".[79]

A few years earlier, she had stressed on the importance of boarding school girls becoming great mothers, but priorities were clearly multiple with the efforts taken to train many as teachers. The school reoriented its role in local society, and began promoting new work opportunities, although its larger aim was to help the Mission establishments survive. Stringent government educational regulations compelled the LMS to actively undertake teacher training classes. The preparation of girls for various government Normal school teacher training was to fulfil these conditions to prevent the shutting down of mission schools. Incidentally, the shift in focus from raising good Christian home-makers and carers to salaried employees, created no small anxiety for the LMS. In 1903, a Girls' Orphanage was established to educate poor girls more strictly for mission work.

[78] A.L. Allan, Report of the Nagercoil Station, CWM/ South India/ Travancore/ Reports/ 1892-1895/ Box 5 Annie reported that Nagercoil mission agents paid a fees of one-fourth to one-half of a rupee per month, but even this was 'thought by more than one too much to spend every month on the education of a daughter.'

[79] A.L.Allan, 'Report of the Nagercoil Station', CWM/South India/Travancore/ Box 8/1902

> At the opening of the Home, we made no tamasha and held no public meeting. . These girls, it is intended, will receive at least a good primary education but not along the lines of the present day governmentt Educational Rules, as we shall have to have control of their time. They will have to do more work for themselves than girls in the schools following the government syllabus have time for.[80]

A decade later, in 1915, at a time when the Christians of Nagercoil were encouraging girls to pursue a higher education, there were differences in attitude and approach in the Malayalam mission. Harold Wills and his wife complained that their girl pupils were showing signs of aversion towards manual work, and expecting the mission to invest in providing them with different skills.[81] He argued that poor girls and their parents demanding mission funds for this purpose was increasingly unacceptable.

> It is true that the curriculum at the Government School is very stiff for our girls, but the fact is that they can always find time to go to any meeting or entertainment that they fancy. The trouble really is that they are growing proud and look upon manual work as beneath them. They mix with Hindus and Eurasians in the School and get these ideas from them…Here again the lack of money is the hindrance. These girls come from poor families and will have to work hard at home, and we find this education unfits them for it. But the parents persist in compelling their girls to go on, hoping they may become qualified as teachers and earn money, whereas very few will do this. We refuse to spend Mission funds on the higher training. They have to find their own fees.[82]

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[80] A.L.Allan, 'Report of the Nagercoil Station', CWM/South India/Travancore/ Box 8/1903.

[81] Harold Wills, 'Report of the Trivandrum Station' CWM/ LMS/ Travancore/ reports/ Box 9/ 1914

[82] Ibid.

Burdened by growing finances, and insistent on poor girl pupils committing to manual labour, Wills and his wife, were unable to expand the functioning of their boarding schools. The influx of Pulaya converts into their congregations worried them more as funds to boarding establishments dwindled. With the opening of girls' schools by the Travancore government in Trivandrum, Christian converts urged missions to offer them new avenues for pursuing a better quality education.

Challenges and Confrontations on the Question of 'Rights'

Young wives and mothers in colonial India, as per missionary views, also lacked the necessary training to provide for the material and emotional comfort of their husbands and children, stemming from a lack of proper education-based socialisation. 'Heathen' homes, in particular, were depicted as cold, lifeless places, devoid of the order and charm apparently possessed by English households. They could only change into worthwhile places of comfort and nurture in the presence of an educated woman, carefully trained in matters of organising the home with various artefacts signifying a better form of living.[83] A direct correlation was made between the degraded character of a 'Hindu' man and his home, indicative of the status of women in Indian society. This status was sought to be corrected by instructing the women in subjects of morality and domestic management which revolved around a distinct time-work discipline that would raise them from a slavish position to one of companionship with their husbands. Such ideas were highlighted by juxtaposing indigenous spatial organisation with that of the British and labelling the former as inferior on the so-called civilizational scale.

[83] Letter from Mrs. Whitehead CWM/LMS/India Odds/ Box 16/ 1854

> The very appearance of his (Hindoo's home) is uninviting: the bare walls and bare floor seem strange and comfortless: the numberless little ornaments and conveniences with which an Englishman seeks to furnish his home, and which are so many proofs of his attachment to it, are altogether wanting…There is no family circle, no social board, around which happy parents and happy children meet…the father sits alone on the floor, and eats in silence. The wife is there but she sits not with him as his companion: she waits on him as his slave…[84]

However, the category of the colonised female constantly shifted with the realisation that missionaries were often unwelcome in the homes of their desired targets: Hindu upper castes such as the Namboodiris, Nairs, and richer sections among Muslims, Ezhavas, and Syrian Christians. Their staunch defence of the sphere of family and women's lives, as declared by dominant caste strictures caused many obstacles to British missionaries who knew, without conversions, their project stood on shaky grounds. The universality of 'sisterhood', which evangelicals often trumpeted and couched in the language of 'benevolence', was internally ruptured.

In Travancore, untouchable females did not match the representations of 'Indian women' frequently depicted in missionary literature, which was usually that of the zenana female. By contrast, labouring women moved outside the household, usually under the control of their masters and male community members, and were involved in arduous labour and subject to sexual exploitation. They neither had the right to gain schooling nor the luxury to recede into the homes completely. As LMS and CMS missionaries turned their attention to the large number of Shanars and Pulayas joining their churches, they also became embroiled in the processes of engaging with poor, lower and slave-caste girls, Christian and

[84] 'Native Female Education in India', *Church Missionary Gleaner*, Vol. IX, (London: Church Missionary Society,1849), 38

non-Christian. Poor females, in missionary discourses, came to be portrayed as rights-bearing subjects, capable of becoming 'civilised' and improving their intellectual capacities through a formal school education.

Such a process mainly involved a gradual individuation through an undoing of their immediate selves within a religious framework in order to initiate the fashioning of a Christian subject. This was a major feature of mission boarding school education for girls in the region which intended a radical re-socialisation of untouchable caste females into a new order in which their caste status did not define their rights as individuals. However, owing to the pressures of evangelical organisations and the need to appeasing supporters, such changes were usually conveyed by missionaries mainly through binary categories, pressing upon the 'marked difference between their (boarding school girls') behaviour and of those who have been brought up under their own parents' - mission-educated girls being shown to be of much better moral standing.[85]

In spite of missionary stations occupying distinct spaces, and the claims of distance from 'heathen' influences by female missionaries, the seclusion of boarding school girl pupils was far from complete as many of them continued to maintain links with their local environment, mostly through their involvement in family matters and agricultural labour. This greatly troubled Protestant missionaries whose attempts to exercise supreme authority and impose a divide between the private and public spheres were thwarted by the frequent movement of outcaste children from the fields to the classrooms and back. Many poor pupils did not return to the schools after periods of sickness and holidays, and often due to parental opposition against missions preventing early marriages.[86] Such a confinement also pointed

[85] Report from Mrs.Duthie, Nagercoil Girls Boarding School, *Annual Report of the Directors of LMS*, (London, 1886), 126.

[86]"One of our principal trials arises from the children being so constantly kept at home after their holidays; sometimes to mind the baby; sometimes because the child herself does not wish to return. Sometimes, they

to the sexual regulation of pupils, which were otherwise considered lax in their own families. There arose suspicions of 'transgressions' in these circumstances of children returning to their homes, of a moral and sexual nature, or relapses into 'heathen' practices which the boarding schools had hoped to stem.

> We have gained a greater insight into the character and habits of the Malayali converts. The women do not appear to be kept as secluded as among the Tamil people and they remain longer unmarried. This, in a country like India, leads to great evils.
> It is difficult to know how to act in cases where young women have been led astray, but we feel that to let them alone without help is to allow them to go on from bad to worse…I mention this here as our kind subscribers will learn by it how great a blessing a boarding school is, and how essential it is to elevate the moral tone of these poor people who scarcely think that a sin which we should blush to speak of.[87]

A Christian education was intended to pave the way for the boarding girls' transformation into 'new creatures', as Annie Allan reported,

> after being here for four or five years, or in some cases longer, return to their homes, not only knowing more about books etc., than their fellow villagers but much refined in their manners and greatly improved in matters of thrift and tidiness and prepared to exercise quite an elevating influence on the women of the village and congregation to which they belong.[88]

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are kept away for months." Mrs. Baker, 'A mountain trip in Travancore', *Coral Missionary Magazine*, New Series, Vol. 86, (London: Wells Gardner,1874), 18-20

[87] Report from Quilon, *Annual Report of the LMS Travancore District Committee*, 1868.

[88] A.L.Allan, "Report of Nagercoil Mission, 1892," CWM/LMS/ South India/ Travancore/ Reports/ 1892-1895/ Box5

In colonial Travancore, evangelical work amongst untouchable caste girls was hindered by problems of early marriage, agrestic slavery, and religious customs. It was difficult to retain them in the schools for a considerable period of time as most of them worked on the fields owned by upper-caste Hindus and Syrian Christians, and were subject to severe restrictions. As for the missionaries, the success of missionary pedagogy was dependent on ensuring the girls' longer residence, at least for four years, in the boarding schools. During the 1890s, the LMS girls' boarding schools reiterated that pupils should remain at school till sixteen or seventeen years of age.[89] At the same time, missionary workers also conflicted with dominant power groups, demanding the freedom of slave and lower-caste girls to attend schools. Slave children, treated usually as the property of their mothers' masters were put to work in the fields without any wages.[90] In spite of an official proclamation on the abolition of slavery in 1855, children from the Pulaya and Paraya castes in Travancore and Cochin continued to be bought and sold.[91] Those who attempted to learn in the various mission schools were brutally punished, particularly slave women. Some were flogged by their masters for attending church and Sunday schools.[92] Poor girls were forcibly removed from the mission schools by slave-owners, who found missionary interventions unsettling. In 1830, Martha Mault wrote to the Foreign Secretary of the LMS stating this concern,

> the owner feels himself under no obligation to provide for his slaves any longer than it is convenient to employ them; hence he calls them to work during seed time and harvest, and

[89] Mrs. Bach, *Girls Boarding School, Trevandrum*, CWM/LMS/ South India/ Travancore/ Reports/ 1891

[90] P. Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 76-82.

[91] Ibid, 74.

[92] Mr. Hewitt, *Report of the Trevandrum Mission Station* CWM/ Travancore/ Reports/ Box 5/ 1895

then dismisses them to gain for themselves a scanty and uncertain pittance in the best way they can, till the returning season.[93]

She wrote about a master who came to take back his slave girl. No amount of persuasion and offer of money by the missionaries could change his mind. The Maults' desperate attempts to prevent the girl from being forcibly taken fell on deaf ears. 'A girl in this school had become big enough to work in her master's field, he therefore came to make his claim on her.', she reported,

> I asked him if it would not be well for her to learn to read; whether he should not allow her to do so? He replied, it may be well for you to instruct her, as you will get a better place in heaven thereby; but it is enough for me if my bullocks and slaves do the work required in the fields.[94]

Such a feudal hierarchy in which the monarchical states also owned a large number of slaves greatly interfered with the mission's educational programme. Missionaries, unable to retain girls for a considerable period, devised measures to alleviate the condition of slave girls, so that they could remain in the school. The incident brought to fore the stronghold of orthodoxy on the lives of the untouchable poor, even those in touch with Christian missions. Though guided by motives of proselytisation, the LMS missionaries were the earliest to demand the rights of freedom for outcaste females. In 1831, Martha mentioned to a friend at St. Neot's Huntingtonshire a strategy adopted to circumvent the matter.

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[93] 'Letter from Mrs. Mault to the Foreign Secretary of the LMS, Nagercoil, 1830', *EVMM* New Series, (9) 1831, p.540

[94] 'Letter from Mrs. Mault to the Foreign Secretary of the LMS, Nagercoil, 1830, *EVMM* New Series, (9) 1831, p.542

About one third of the girls in our schools are slaves; and as the children of slaves here are always the property of the mother's master, we have formed the resolution that each girl, by her own industry, shall purchase her freedom before she leaves the school.[95]

In the boarding schools, they sought to do this by teaching a skill with which the British women were most familiar: sewing. Shanar girls were the first taught to make lace in Nagercoil, introduced by Martha Mault, and embroidery in the Neyoor boarding school by Johanna Mead. Many lace-products such as flounces, chemise tops, blouses, wedding veils, bedspreads, to name a few were sold across British-India, and some sent for sale in England and America. A small portion of their earnings accrued from sewing was kept aside to buy their freedom from masters before leaving the schools.[96] Over the years, such a practice continued and many pupils were taught the craft, which grew into a small profitable industry. In 1830, when the plan was first put to test, Martha Mault reported that eight slave girls had managed to gain their freedom with the savings from lace work in the Nagercoil girls' school.[97] Referring to instruction in sewing, she wrote,

> These classes consist of those who make lace, and those that learn plain needlework…not a few of these girls are *slaves*; and it is our wish that they should, if possible, obtain their freedom, while they are in the school, that, when they leave it, they may go *free*…[98]

[95] Ibid.

[96] 'Letter from Mrs. Mault to the Foreign Secretary of the LMS, Nagercoil, 1830, *EVMM* New Series, (9) 1831, p.542

[97] Ibid., 542

[98] Ibid.

Freedom was a necessary condition for slave caste girls to pursue a regular education in order to become 'better' Christians. Missionary women concluded that slave girls should be able to earn enough to buy their freedom from masters. In a state of bondage, the evangelical project was bound to fail.

In order to disseminate the notion of a good 'Christian home', the LMS and CMS looked towards the educated Christian youth of their congregations to marry and raise families to uphold the significance of monogamous households. A 'mission of domesticity', which the British women advocated was sought to be extended into indigenous households and families via a boarding school educational network. But in the face of a caste-determined hierarchy and the oppressive conditions faced by poor girls, the challenges to this ideal were multiple. Local norms of social respectability differed from those of British missions, and practices such as early marriage continued to exist. Protestant missionaries, assuming the role of quasi-parents, negotiated with Christian families to delay marriages of their girl boarders, or arranged matches with those educated in their boys' boarding schools. In 1843, Martha Mault noted,

> Elenora Muscutt, left the school three months ago to assist in a school in another missionary station. She has for nearly two years shown a very thoughtful mind and paid great attention, not only to her lessons and duties in the school, but on all occasions of a religious nature…Her case is an interesting and encouraging one; for it will be in the recollection of some that the poor girl was rescued from the hands of her wretched father when he was about to force her into a 'premature alliance that would have ruined her for life.[99]

[99] Letter from Mrs. Mault , Nagercoil on September 1843, *EMMC,* 1844 Vol XXII p.645

For producing a virtuous Christian community in Travancore, there could hardly be a better way than encourage such marriages between mission-educated men and women, who held similar values with the stamp of missionary approval.[100] Often, these boarding-school educated Christian couples, especially the local catechist and his wife, were crucial to mission work in the out-stations. The catechist and his wife was expected to perform tasks akin to that of the European missionaries who worked in the major mission-stations and towns. In many cases, the couple managed large congregations and a number of schools in the out-stations and distant villages with only an occasional visit from their European overseers.[101] They were portrayed as the ideal products of a mission boarding school education by practising monogamy, and leading lives along the lines of Christian virtues. The activities of these married Christian women, in particular, who were sometimes the only literate women in distant congregations, were hailed as testament to the usefulness of boarding schools.[102] They were lauded for making concerted efforts at spreading literacy in their neighbourhoods and organising women and children for Bible-classes. A note by a catechist about his deceased wife, captures this central missionary objective, which they hoped to replicate across the colonies. Such instances were used, or to use contemporary parlance 'advertised' to home supporters for further donations.

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[100] Report of Neyoor Mission Station for 1865, *Travancore District* Committee (Nagercoil: London Mission Press, 1866), 20. Mrs. Lowe , in-charge of the Girls' boarding School at Neyoor remarked, "Most of the school girls marry Mission-agents, or those occupying good positions, and it is gratifying to be able to say that nearly all the old girls have given us great satisfaction after leaving school and getting married. The effects of their training is chiefly seen in the neat and tide appearance of their houses, their own habits of cleanliness, and the training and better behaviour of their children.

[101] Mrs. Hacker records her distress in not being able to attend to the Neyoor girls' boarding school daily, as she lived ten miles away from it, in the mission bungalow. See I.H Hacker, *Report of the Neyoor Mission District*, CWM/LMS/ Travancore/ Reports/BOX 8/ 1906

[102] I.H Hacker, *Report of the Neyoor Mission District*, CWM/LMS/ Travancore/ Reports/Box 8/Neyoor/ 1902 "In several of the poorer churches, the catechist's wife is the only educated woman and to see how all the women look to her and are influenced by her is a splendid testimony to the great boon this Girls' School is to our district."

Upon the death of his young wife, named Miriam Glover, after her benefactor, a catechist wrote of her pious character.

> She (Miriam) was remarkably clean in her habits and diligent in her work. Obedience and generosity she possessed in a high degree, and when I think of the tender affection she bore to me, my mind refuses to be comforted. She was instant in prayer, and never retired to sleep without reading the Scriptures, or some interesting biography.[103]

Regardless of these engagements, the problem of retaining girls in the schools still persisted. Missionary women reported the strong influences of traditional caste norms of social respectability especially with regard to marriage among Shanar converts. Even as Christians were willing to educate their daughters in mission schools, they resisted the attempts of missionaries to assume authority over familial decisions such as marriage. Missionary strategies to replace parental control was bitterly opposed on numerous occasions. Mrs. Wilkinson reported on one of her older pupils, named Ellen Wyld, whose 'indiscipline' and 'secret marriage' caused a shock to the LMS Boarding School at Santhapooram,

> She (Ellen) had previously given me trouble by her conduct, and I had determined to send her from school but finding that that was just what she desired I kept her. After a time she tried another plan to get away from school. She came to me asking for a day's leave of absence, as her father was very ill. I refused, as I had only her word for the illness of her father…a day or two after her eldest sister came to me weeping and begging me to let Ellen Wyld go, as her father was dying. I allowed her to go, and four

[103] Ebenezer Lewis, Report for Santhapooram Mission Station,*Travancore District Committee for* 1858 (Nagercoil: London Mission Press, 1859), 28

> days after I was grieved and shocked to hear that both she and her eldest sister had been married secretly to heathens…I do not think such a sad event has ever happened before in the Boarding School.[104]

In 1900, Mrs. T. W. Bach also commented on the pressure on poor girls to be married early in and around the Trivandrum mission station. 'In this country, it is supposed to be almost impossible for the honour of an unmarried girl to be preserved', she reported,

> partly because women are considered so weak, partly because in the lower castes, they cannot be carefully protected, and on this account, a girl is a great anxiety to her parents until she is safely married and under the protection of her husband. There are a number of girls whose parents would gladly take them away from school tomorrow and marry them to the first men of their own position in life.[105]

These observations conveyed a deeper understanding amidst British missionaries of the caste-related practices prevalent in the region. Mrs. Bach sympathised with Christians from erstwhile lower castes marrying off their daughters early and yet, believed that missionaries held the best interests of the girl pupils, in contrast to their own parents and communities.[106] She narrated an instance in which she successfully convinced a groom to delay his marriage, to enable the girl to complete her education.

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[104] Report of the Santhapooram Mission for 1865, *Travancore District Committee* (Nagercoil: London Mission Press, 1866), 11.

[105] Letter from Mrs. Bach: Girls Boarding School, Trevandrum,*The Report of the Directors to the One Hundred-and Fifth Meeting of the Missionary Society, Usually Called the London Missionary Society*, 1900.

[106] Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840 1900*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

> The other day, the mother of one of my girls came to me saying that she had received an offer for her daughter, aged nearly sixteen, & would I let her accept it? The man was a Christian of good character. 'Men' she said plaintively, expressing a desire common to the masculine heart all the world over, seemingly, 'want either beauty or money & my girl has neither; if I let this chance go she will' never get another & then what will become of her? I felt the force of this statement and yet did not want to break my rule so pleaded myself with the impatient youth to wait longer, which he, to my relief, promised to do.[107]

Similar instances were reported from other mission stations as well. Writing about one of her pupils named Mary Feltham after her benefactor, in the Mundakyum boarding school, Miss Baker of the CMS noted that Mary's friends were 'anxious to marry her to a young man in Cottayam, and asked our advice about it'. The CMS missionaries at Cottayam disapproved as he was not of a 'good character'.[108] She wrote,

> the relations were very vexed with us for refusing to give our consent but a short time since they came and acknowledged we were right; the young man had been sent to prison for fighting, and nearly killing a man in a drunken fit.[109]

Later, Miss Baker felt vindicated that Mary 'was now married to a respectable man from the south'.[110]

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[107] Mrs. Bach, *Report of the LMS Boarding School*, CWM/LMS/ Travancore/Reports/1899

[108] Ms. Baker, Mundakyum Report from 1881, *Coral Missionary Magazine* (London: 1882): 15.

[109] Ibid.,15

[110] Ibid.

A ‘good’ girl was also a good Christian, according to the missionaries, and a good ‘Christian’ girl was disciplined and morally ‘superior’ in judgment, deportment, and work. In 1893, Elizabeth, the wife of evangelist K. P. Thomas wrote about the Malayalam mission school in Trivandrum which consisted of fifteen boarders.

> To take a girl away from the ages of twelve to seventeen from her heathen surroundings (for even in Christian homes heathenism is all around them) and place her where she will be surrounded by Christian influences under the direct care of a missionary's wife is a blessing of untold value.[111]

This construction of a colonial girlhood, heavily laden with aspects of an evangelical morality was cast upon non-Christian girls. A physical transformation in which girls from downtrodden classes would shed their ‘wildness’, such as the case of Arrian hill-tribe girls, was considered as important as their spiritual progress. From the 1860s, a handful of Arrian hill-tribe girls were admitted into the CMS boarding school at Kottayam. Constant attempts were taken to discipline young ‘listless’ Arrian girls in ways considered appropriate for a ‘civilised’ engagement.[112]

> They came here wild little things- up to the tree or over a wall in a minute- now merry enough, but as sedate as sober as any civilised child can be, hard at work, sitting in rows, in our sitting room, round my wife and daughters.[113]

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[111]K. P. Thomas (evangelist), Report of the Trivandrum Girls Boarding School, CWM/LMS/Travancore/Reports/189

[112]‘Girls’ School, Mundakyum’, *Coral Missionary Magazine*, No. LXXXVIII June (London: Wells and Gardner, 1866), 94

[113] *Coral Missionary Magazine,* No. XXXVIII, February (London: Wells and Gardner, 1870), 28.

Incidentally, the inability of the CMS to easily regulate the movements of tribal girls in central Travancore was in contrast to that of poor, Shanar girls encountered by the LMS towards the south. They precisely targeted the improvement of the girls' sense of self to enable a more active participation in the schools, and later, in the capacity of married women, among their communities. Their 'heathen' condition of submissiveness was sought to be changed into making them increasingly self-aware. Of the Shanar Christian girls, it was reported,

> At first when they came to us they were timid, as if they expected only severity from us; but now on returning to school after the holidays, it is with faces beaming with smiles and gladness. Instead of looking as if they expected a beating, they will come up and make salaam with confidence and affection. During school hours and in church instead of looking about with a vacant stare as if they were hearing Greek spoken, they now listen with attention and try to understand what they hear.[114]

British Protestant missionaries in Travancore, partly necessitated by financial shortage, wrote to supporters about their desire to send indigenous children out as 'lights' to their villages.[115] A spirit of fraternity was forged between those who funded the work of evangelical missions. Supporters were appeased with messages of gratitude from the pupils; an assurance that their benevolence did not go wasted upon the lives of unfortunate children. Anna Muriel, a fourteen-year old raised as a Christian in Mrs. Bishop's CMS boarding school at Trichur wrote in return for the gift she received from the Coral Fund Society.

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[114] Mrs. Wilkinson 'Girls Boarding School' Report of the Quilon Mission for 1867, *Travancore District Committee* (Nagercoil: London Mission Press, 1868), 6.

[115] Ibid.

> The evening of the 12th of June was very delightful for me… Every one of these according to their ability, give a penny or a farthing that the children of India also may obtain salvation through Jesus Christ…When the box was opened, we saw silk threads of various colours, pictures, mark books on which it is written "I love thee," needles, scissor, thimble, buttons, wool and such article for needlework, and we were all exceedingly joyful and thankfully prayed for you all.[116]

An autobiographical note provided by a young female convert, known as the Tavistock Ladies' Teacher employed by the LMS, is typical of the way in which missionaries conveyed the 'success' of their enterprise.[117] But her description was refracted through certain missionary 'registers' that required missionaries to present such perfectly reformed subjects to supporters in England. The young woman's letter to 'friends' in England, translated from the Tamil by Martha Mead, employs missionary idioms and refers to the centrality of Bible learning in the lives of the poor. Born in Nellyraconam, two miles east of Neyoor, this young Shanar woman (whose birth name is not mentioned) was ten years old, and her sister, seven, when their mother sent them to the LMS Girls' Home at Mundycaudu. Her father was a palmyra tree tapper and died without leaving any property to his wife and daughters. She describes him as 'a deluded and devoted worshipper of female demons'. At the school, she claims to have discovered a new world, empowered by her ability to read.

> My mind was much delighted with the passage I had to commit to memory, and with what I daily read of the miracles of Christ…I often felt thankful to God for his providence towards us; praising him for the great kindness of the friends of East Indian

[116] 'A Coral Simile', *The Coral Missionary Magazine* New Series (London: Wells Gardner, Darton and Co., 1882),180-181.

[117] "The Tavistock Ladies' Female Teacher", *The Missionary Magazine and Chronicle*, Vol. XI, September (London: The Directors of the LMS, 1847), 499-501.

> children in England, who have been the means of delivering us from the slavery of Idolatry and Satanic Worship, by sending to us the invaluable treasure of the Gospel.[118]

Two years after leaving the school, the young woman married a LMS Reader and both were hired as teachers in one of Martha Mead's village schools. She taught eighty children subjects lessons from

> The Companion to the Bible'`, Bible teacher, proverbs, geography, hymns and three Rs. They learnt to spin and sew, and were engaged part of the day in bringing water from the well, beating paddy, &c., duties they will have to be engaged in hereafter in their own houses.[119]

Educated girls, particularly Christians, were represented in missionary texts as having visibly changed, mentally and physically, compared to a negative stereotyping of Hindu and Muslim girls as 'backward-looking, superstitious, and ignorant'. The boarding school pupil was constantly represented as epitomising the values of domesticity and professionalism that European missionary women were seeking to inculcate.

> The Boarding School is a new world to these children, the outward change that soon passes over them is striking. After receiving years of training…the girls return to their homes; most of them well fitted to occupy respectable positions and exercise an influence for good on their respective congregations.[120]

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[118] Ibid., 499.

[119] Ibid., 500.

[120] Report from Mrs. Duthie, Nagercoil, *Report of LMS Directors*, London, (1886), 126.

Christian girls became the recipients and conveyors of a piety, premised on Biblical tenets. A 'knowledge' which was heavily circumscribed within the parameters of religiosity sought to be exhibited in familial and communal duties.[121]

Material Interventions and Christian Decency

Broadly, Protestant missionary education for females had two major objectives; civilizing, and the formation of 'productive' bodies. While the first entailed the shaping of new work habits, norms of sexuality, and sartorial choices, the second aimed at inculcating new time-disciplines, changes in deportment, speech habits, and most importantly, freedom from bondage for lower caste women. The moralising agenda, which was intertwined closely with the civilising project, was geared towards instructing converts in Christian norms that governed gendered divisions of labour and sexual propriety. 'Usefulness' vis-à-vis work included training girls in occupations that would utilise their 'femininity' and prevent them from being vulnerable to the direct physical control of agricultural landlords. It also attempted via habits of regular prayer, games and exercises, to keep their bodies agile and minds alert. This was pitted against what the missionaries perceived as 'immoral' and 'petty' behaviours in colonised female populations. It became pertinent that their energies be channelized into 'other worldly' activities through prayer and Bible reading. Missionaries prided themselves on 'correcting' what were assumed to be inherent habits of colonial children such as 'pilfering, falsehood, swearing, and abusive language'.[122]

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[121] Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840-1900*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

[122] Mrs. Mault, "Female schools at Nagercoil in South Travancore," *EMMC* Vol. 15, New Series, 1837: 199. She writes, "…the habits of pilfering, falsehood, swearing, abusive language, and various other crimes to which most of the children are found addicted when they join the school, show the sad want of domestic discipline, and are sufficient indications of the imperative necessity of the taking the children entirely and training them to better habits, and to a useful employment of time."

A preparation towards Christian marriage also required a physical transformation of young Christian pupils. This was sought to be carried out through the elimination of certain local practices and habits deemed as uncivilised. Certain indigenous habits such as betel-chewing and boring of girls' ears in Travancore were considered abhorrent and primitive by the missions.[123] In 1894, a voluntary association amongst girl pupils called 'Daughters of the Court' in the Nagercoil boarding school, modelled on LMS schools in Australia, was formed. 'The two rules they promise to follow are, to speak evil of no one, and to try and do some kind act every day…,' Annie Allan reported,

> when the girls joined, I got them to give me a promise that they would never chew betel (a habit common in the country even among women whom I regret to say) and also that they would do all in their power to discourage the ugly custom of boring girl's ears. This is done when the children are but a few months old. At first only a small hole is bored; but this is gradually increased by heavy ornaments made usually of lead. The idea is that the ears should be loaded with jewels when a girl is married as part of the marriage dowry. Seven of the Boarding school's girls have lately with the consent of their parents had their ears put right. This is easily done and causes but little pain.[124]

Another domain where visible changes were desired was with regard to sartorial customs. When the Nagercoil boarding school began functioning, Martha Mault was also the first to introduce lace-making, and Johanna Mead introduced embroidery in Travancore. The introduction of a skill such as sewing, emblematic of a 'virtuous femininity' in the Victorian

[123] The torn ear of girls in Travancore was called a 'terrible deformity'. Maria Mitchell, *Scenes in Southern India:* In Southern India: A Visit to Some of the Chief Mission Stations in the Madras Presidency (Paternoster Row: The Religious Tract Society, 1885), 234

[124] A.L. Allan, Girls Boarding School Nagercoil, CWM/LMS/ Travancore/ Reports/ 1894

era, was propagated via educational activities in the colonies, adapted for new purposes. As Malathi Alwis argues in the case of girls' boarding schools in colonial Ceylon, it was central to shaping a particular Christian womanhood, which combined new notions of 'respectability, and character traits such as docility, neatness, cleanliness and decency.[125] In refashioning existing notions of propriety in caste society, sewing and material interventions vis-a-vis sartorial changes became a part of the missionary project. Orthodox forces denied outcaste women from wearing a breast cloth and anything below the knees in Travancore and Cochin. Those who violated these caste prohibitions were often subject to severe punishment. These norms conflicted with missionary notions of modesty. The Shanar community, in particular the Christian converts, driven by social aspirations, emergent political consciousness, and educational advancement came to be at the heart of a struggle to gain the right for their women to wear the breast cloth.[126]

An instruction to school girls about 'modest' attire was of immense importance to the missionaries. In the case of converts from Shanar and Pulaya communities in Travancore and Cochin, sewing was not merely a 'womanly duty' or chore. It was a means of earning a livelihood for adult women of the various churches and to raise funds by boarding school pupils. Thus, the quintessential image of the English woman nimbly sewing by the fireplace in her parlour could not be translated into the mission stations. Here, women supplemented their meagre agricultural wages with sales from lace-work. It was in pursuit of meeting the immediate needs of the family and churches than withdrawing into the private

[125] In the context of mission girls' boarding schools in colonial Sri Lanka and the imparting of such values, see Malathi D. Alwis, "The Production and Embodiment of Respectability: Gendered Demeanours in Colonial Ceylon," in Michael Roberts ed., *Sri Lanka: Collective Identities Revisited,* Vol.1 (Colombo: Marga, 1997), 105-43.

[126] On the Shanar breast-cloth controversy See Robert L. Hardgrave, "The *Breast-cloth* Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 5, 1968. Also see Bernard S. Cohn, "*Clothes*, Caste and Colonialism," in *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 106–115.

sphere. Senior boarding school pupils were instructed in and British missionary women, particularly by the LMS, wherein missionary women became employers in a small industry. This added a dimension of economic usefulness, both for the foreign missions and, to an extent, for lace-workers. Sewing was taught to two groups of lace-workers in Travancore; adult women of the Christian congregations and elder girls in the boarding schools. Having stipulated that only those who possessed the skills to read, write and count would be accepted in these classes, the missions ensured a steady supply of lace-workers from the boarding schools which continued into the twentieth century.[127]

Why sewing? This was more so because British missionary women introduced into the colonies skills they knew best.[128] In the mission boarding schools, girls were taught sewing for extensive hours while boys undertook agricultural and garden work. The prototype for such a labour division was also the British missionary family, where the women were expected to be involved in meeting the needs of the household and not stepping out into the otherwise male dominated public sphere of work. But, as the previous sections show, both British missionary and colonised females were active outside of their homes, and entered into negotiations and confrontations with various power groups.

While financial difficulties motivated female missionaries to impart training in needle-work, the moral significance attached to it was greater. Sewing came to be a major 'educational' activity in the girls' boarding schools to impart Protestant norms of femininity. Finding their tapered fingers most suitable for such work, missionary women managed lace-workers in the production of commodities which were sold to European clientele in India

[127] G. Parker, *History of Mission Fields, From Records in Travancore and the Mission House*, March 1927. LMS Archives, United Theological College, Bangalore. Christian females, above fifteen years of age, and able to read the Bible was admitted into sewing classes.

[128] Rosemary Seton, *Western Daughters in Eastern Lands: British Missionary Women in Asia*, (California and Denver: Praeger, 2013), 121-122

and some, abroad. The pedagogical aspect of sewing classes were also in step with the missionary aim of regulating the bodies and movements of Indian females. Classes were usually held in the verandah of the missionary bungalow, where the work of elder pupils and local adult lace-workers were regularly examined by the missionary wife who also used the opportunity to exhort the Bible.[129] Under the keen eye of the female missionary and her closest aides, the work was judged, most particularly, for its cleanliness.[130]

The earliest generation of female missionaries encouraged local Christian women to adopt a cotton garment in the form of a jacket or loose spencer, different in design from the one worn by upper-caste women. This was also translated into action in the boarding schools wherein girls were taught by missionaries how to sew their own jackets. A report from the Parachaley station in 1863 writes of the wearing of jackets by native Christian women as ushering in winds of change.

> several who have left the school also continue to make jackets …for themselves and others, and thus an easy way of supplying those who need jackets has been opened. what decency, what respectability, what Christian like graces accrue By the wearing of jackets!! It is a great blessing, and a great improvement in our former habits.[131]

The wearing of these jackets meant conveying to larger society the message that Christianity imparted decency and dignity to its followers. Moreover, the wearing of jackets by boarding school girls set them apart in appearance and 'respectability' from the rest of the natives.

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[129] Ibid., 122

[130] B. Parker, Nagercoil Lace Industry, LMS Mission Station Report, 1919

[131] Report from Parachaley, *LMS Travancore District Committee*,1863, p.25

Conclusion

The presence of a boarding school, though valued for the provision of basic literacy and a particular disciplinary regime, was not always welcomed for its involvement in local power relations. Labouring caste parents did not hesitate to act decisively when they felt the mission had crossed its limits and upset the status quo. Owing to pressing poverty and caste indignities, destitute girl children also found it difficult to negotiate this contested terrain of education. Yet, Protestant schools allowed them to explore the limited possibilities of a new horizon. This was manifested in the provision of training for professions such as teaching, nursing, lace-workers or as bible-women. An affective community grew within the site of the boarding school notwithstanding its hierarchy of authority. Protestant missionary women spent long hours, monitoring the lives of their pupils around the clock but in the process, assumed many roles; 'quasi-family', 'teacher', 'mentor', 'patron', 'employer', and 'authority figure'. These roles, often overlapped with varying effects in the boarding schools.

White missionary women got embroiled in local power matrices and attempted to articulate a language of rights for females, but failed to fully overcome traditional authority. These women were some of the earliest to alert evangelical supporters about the lack of rights of untouchable females in colonial Kerala. Going beyond the prescribed domain of 'missionary wives and mothers', they made the poor visible through their observations. This visibility provided to the oppressed castes make missionary activities a complex and interesting field of study. Often subsumed under the title of aggressive proselytisers, the multiple hats donned by female missionaries are side-lined. Many Protestant women wrote in children's magazines, missionary periodicals, and spoke extensively at their associational gatherings and fund-raisers, sparking a range of debates on slavery, women's education, religious customs, and cultural differences in colonial south India. They were, as was

mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, ideological in their work and outlook, and as Midgley notes, linked domestic and imperial concerns.[132] 'Women's work', in many ways, also constructed ideas of colonial girlhood given their proximity to a major group of the local population, usually missing in the pages of history. By competing for authority, educational work amongst poor girls in Travancore witnessed the inter-mixing of politics and religion in which women – both the colonisers and the colonised - actively participated.

[132] Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790–1865*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007)

Chapter Three

Ora Et Labora: The Basel Mission in Colonial Malabar[1]

Introduction

The undifferentiated story of British rule in India is increasingly being recast by new research on the complexities of colonial power. This scholarship pays greater attention to the shifting and more contingent aspects, which especially foregrounds those who may have benefitted from colonial rule. European Protestant missionaries traversing transnational networks in colonial India fall under this category, revealing various dimensions of their own cultural conflicts and exchanges with indigenous populations. One such group of people were the missionaries of the Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society, founded in 1815, (henceforth, Basel Mission or BM). They arrived in Malabar, on the south-western coast of present-day India in the 1830s and negotiated multiple tensions during the course of their existence. This chapter attempts to complicate this picture by studying the ways in which the Basel Mission engaged with poor children and adults on the question of education during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In British-administered Malabar, the Basel Mission occupied a peculiar position. As a Switzerland-based and predominantly German-speaking group, the missionaries were subject to tensions of a 'foreign' body operating in British territory but not without considerable mutual cooperation. Having enjoyed the support of the CMS since the early nineteenth century in other colonial mission stations, the BM remained on amicable terms with the Malabar administration.[2] Some evangelical-minded officers extended a

[1] Acknowledgements are due to Naima Tine, Lukas Klaus, and Friederich Kropfhaueser, for helping me with the translations of BM's German reports and writings into English.

[2] Since the Church Missionary Society (founded in 1799) did not have enough candidates of their own in its initial years, men trained at the Theological Seminary in Basel were sent for the former's mission work. Out of the twenty-four missionaries CMS sent to mission fields in the first fifteen years, seventeen were German.

considerable amount of land and grants to the mission.[3] This enabled them to establish mission compounds in mainland villages and undertake various educational and itinerant activities.[4]

The Basel Mission's work arose from the specificities of Pietist movements spread across eighteenth and early nineteenth century Germany. In particular, they were influenced greatly by what is generally known as Wurttemberg Pietism, which witnessed the inflow of a significant number of missionaries and non-ordained workers from south-west Germany into the colonial mission stations. While the global evangelical movement concurred on the fundamental importance of literacy, there was also a substantial emphasis by the Basel missionaries on a 'wholesome education' towards forging pious Christians. This was encapsulated in the concept of *Erziehung*, which primarily meant a particular kind of upbringing involving the forces of church, community, and family.[6] The onus of a piety-filled 'Christian upbringing' for children was on the entire community which also wielded

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For an exploration of such evangelical cooperation, see Ulrike Kirchberger, "Fellow-Labourers in the same Vineyard": Germans in the British Protestant Societies in the First-Half of the Nineteenth Century', in Stefan Manz, Margrit Schulte Beerbuehl and John R. Davis eds. *Migration and Transfer from Germany to Britain, 1660-1914*, (Munich: K.G.Saur Verlag, 2007), 81-92. Also in the same volume, see Frank Hatje, "Revivalists Abroad. Encounters and Transfers between German Pietism and English Evangelicalism in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," 65-80. On the cooperation between various European Protestant societies, see Andrew F. Walls, 'The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in its European Context', in Brian Stanley ed. *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment,* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co & Curzon Press. 2001), 22-44.

[3] The sub-collector of Mangalore, Finlay Anderson, helped the earliest Basel missionaries to purchase a house and some land to establish their station. In Calicut, they were aided by the District collector, Conolly. Many English judges and officers of the military regiment stationed at Cannanore were also helpful to the BM.

[4] Mission compounds refers to walled settlements erected by the BM in the hilly parts of their mission stations. They were walled to mark them separately from non-Christians, and comprised a church, boarding institutions, and residences of the missionaries and native catechists, the printing-press, and a small book-bindery. Mrinanli Sebastian argues that the architecture of the 'mission compound' on raised land was intentional to indicate the lack of caste divisions and the elevated status of Christian residents. Mrinalini Sebastian, "The Scholar-Missionaries of the Basel Mission in South-West India: Language, Identity, and Knowledge in Flux", in Heather Sharkey ed. *Cultural Conversions: Unexpected Consequences of Christian Missionary Encounters in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 182.

considerable disciplinary power to punish those who did not conform. For instance, it did not suffice to simply send children to the parochial schools maintained by congregations. Instead, it was far more necessary that fellow Christians participate in socialising children into their Pietist faith through personal conduct, work, social gatherings, and practices of common worship

Pietism targeted the 'will' of an individual, which had to be moulded to achieve a consciousness of one's state of sinful being, and continuous efforts made towards achieving a spiritual 'renewal' or rebirth.[5] Believers were subjected to the norms of close-knit communities which aimed at the transmission of knowledge through practices of apprenticeship, Bible-study, and communal worship, usually led by a group of church elders. Advocates of Pietism stressed on the importance of Bible-reading and following the text as a source of normative authority.[8] Thus, a significant feature of the BM's evangelical work was that the 'education' of a convert did not end at baptism. Instead, the true test of one's acceptance of a new faith lay in post-baptismal instruction and a display of what was frequently upheld as 'practical Christianity'.[6]

The Basel Mission's activities were also distinct in colonial Malabar due to the establishment of factories in the region during the mid-nineteenth century (unlike the areas in which the British LMS and CMS functioned). With an eye on providing a decent means of employment to their converts from lower caste communities, the BM established tiling and weaving factories which eventually grew into large-scale enterprises with branches,

[5] 'Erziehung' is not easily translatable into English. It means 'pulling up', or 'raising' someone. A pedagogical objective which aimed at 'character' formation and the imparting of traits such as punctuality, diligence, obedience, cleanliness and an appropriate moral behaviour.

[6] Believers were required to express 'practical piety' through acts of obedience in their daily lives, as evidence of their submission to God. Roger E. Olson, Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2015)

managed by a separate Industrial Commission at Basel from 1852 onwards. Countering opposition, both within mission circles in Basel and elsewhere, surrounding the business motives of an evangelical society, the Malabar mission justified these ventures as making provisions for church members to attain a dignified living to further the cause of Christianity.[7] But it had implications for the forging of a Christian community in the region and the schooling of young adults in a particular moral framework.

The BM's situation changed dramatically with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 when the British invoked the Custodian of Enemy Property Act, exposing the fragility of political relations between the two countries. The men from Germany in the Basel Mission were interned and sent back on the suspicion of promoting anti-British sentiments on Indian soil and they could not return to resume their work fully until the 1930s. By then, their congregations had amalgamated with the South India United Church (SIUC) and factories brought under the British Commonwealth Trust Limited Company.[8] Today, the Basel Mission is remembered as one of the forerunners of education, industrial, and language development activities in northern Kerala.

Wurttemberg Pietism and Missionary Strategies

From the eighteenth century onwards, Pietism arose out of various philosophical strands in Germany and appealed to groups across the social spectrum, the most well-known being at Halle led by August Hermann Francke.[9] Another region immensely influenced by Pietism

[7] Carter Lindberg, 'Introduction' in Carter Lindberg ed. *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 8

[8] In 1908, the non-congregational Presbyterian churches of South India and Ceylon amalgamated into the South India Church Union. In 1919, the churches of the Basel Mission in Malabar joined the union.

[9] August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), a Pietist theologian, conceived of introducing social reform by establishing a network of orphanages in Prussia. His most famous model was established at Halle with orphanages, schools, and workshops for the poor. Francke wanted to raise poor children in these orphanages to occupy leading positions in various spheres of public life, and propound Pietist principles.

was Wurttemberg in south-west Germany.[10] In the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War, conditions of famine, and growing industrialisation, Pietist peasant, artisan groups and petty producers, wary of sudden changes, began to emphasise an austere life to sustain their village communities.[11]

The religious practices of some Pietist groups involved meeting in private gatherings or Bible-reading groups outside of official church circles which was often subject to social ridicule for their exclusive rules.[12] This included forging a social arrangement which would advance individual lives, and thereby communities, towards a new spiritual frontier. In practice, this meant a governance of adherents' lives by certain communal regulations within a bounded territory, which upheld deference to age-related authority, independent livelihoods, submissiveness, and austerity. Owing to the gradual changes wrought by industrialisation, Wurttemberg Pietism advocated that individuals should not be uprooted from their rural identities. Petty agricultural producers and artisans who formed the support

[10] Wurttemberg is a region in south-west Germany. The strand of Pietism which emerged in Wurttemberg in the 18th century was affected by distinct developments. Two of the most prominent philosophers of Wurttemberg Pietism were Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) and Freidrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782).

[11] Pietism is a movement with many strands that emerged in the late seventeenth century German Empire within both Reformed and Lutheran Protestantism. While it had its origins in urban centers such as Bremen, Frankfurt and Leipzig, amongst others, it also gained influence in the rural areas of Wurttemberg and Pomerania. Shantz notes that 'the Pietists introduced a new paradigm to German Protestantism, one that included personal renewal and new birth, conventicle gatherings for Bible study and mutual encouragement, an emphasis of practical Christianity, social activism and millennialism.' See Douglas Shantz ed. *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015),1. The scholarly literature on Pietism is varied and rich. For an overview history of various Pietist movements, see Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition,* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015)

[12] Stunde were private gatherings of Pietist believers involved in the reading and study of the Bible. Meyer points out that attendees tended to be a minority and subject to general social ridicule for their insistence on a strict and sober way of living. Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 30

base of Pietist congregations strove to protect their ownership over small amounts of land, based mostly on family-household labour to ensure self-sustenance.[13]

During the early nineteenth century, Wurttemberg responded enthusiastically to the appeals of the newly formed Basel Theological Seminary in Switzerland to train evangelical workers for overseas activities. Men from humble backgrounds were recruited for a four to five-year period of training after a close scrutiny of personal applications detailing their own experiences of confession and spiritual rebirth. Gradually, there was an outflow of lower-class men with limited schooling into regions such as Malabar as mostly preachers, school teachers, and artisans.

Recent research argues for the need to locate the contribution of Pietist beliefs in the making of the modern bourgeois self in Europe.[14] Pietist directives prominently emphasised processes of self-learning and self-disciplining. This is evident in the voluminous writing undertaken by Basel missionaries, which recorded minutest details of their daily lives. Ulrike Gleixner, in her study on Pietism and gender, shows that such a project of autobiographical reflection and writing was integral to Pietism and led to the constant regulation of individual emotional experiences.[15] It was a tool to develop the skill of making oneself increasingly self-aware, particularly during times of distress, where one was taught

[13] Although Pietism was a radical movement for its times, calling for reforms in the Church and state administration, it did not seek to overturn social hierarchy. Landlessness and loss of wage labour were considered as most dangerous tendencies. See Paul Jenkins, 'Villagers as Missionaries': Wiirttemberg Pietism as a 19th Century Missionary Movement" *Missiology: An International Review* 8 (1984): 427.

[14] Florian Schui, *Rebellious Prussians: Urban Political Culture Under Frederick the Great and His Successors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[15] Ulrike Gleixner, "Enduring Death in Pietism: Regulating Mourning and the New Intimacy," in *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lynne Tatlock. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 215-230.

to accept life's consequences as leading towards a greater personal and spiritual advancement.

Some of these aspects of Wurttemberg Pietism influenced missionary strategies and attitudes in Malabar, especially with regard to work and community organisation. However, the BM also had to contend with the pressing poverty and landlessness of converts arising out of their low-caste status. Caste threw up challenges both on the religious and socio-economic fronts and the BM soon realised that an open declaration of a new faith was insufficient to ensure the adoption of a distinct way of living. Both the 'door of utterance' and the 'door of faith' marked the Basel Mission's evangelical outlook.[16] While the former allowed the removal of obstacles to the *free proclamation of the gospel* (emphasis original), the latter referred to the absorption of the meaning of Christian tenets in the lives of those who came into contact with it.

In 1839, Hermann Gundert was appointed to initiate the activities of the BM in Malabar by establishing a station in the Malayalam-speaking town of Tellicherry.[17] Much like his contemporaries in other missionary organisations, Gundert sensed the importance of schools as an essential agency of evangelical work. Unable to penetrate easily through the stiff walls of resistance raised by upper-caste orthodoxy, these vernacular schools attracted children predominantly from the agricultural, lower caste Tiyyas in the initial decades, alongside a few Muslims, the fishing community of Mukkuvars, and agrestic slaves comprising Cherumars.[18] Confronted by an array of adversaries, the BM intended to

[16] *The Fortieth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1879* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1880), 44

[17] Hermann Gundert (1814-1893) was not an ordained minister of the Basel Mission but offered his services to them in south India, nonetheless, and came to be associated with them.

[18] Tiyyas in Malabar were considered to be the equivalent of the Ezhavas in Travancore, and were mainly associated with artisanal and agricultural labour, and to an extent, petty trade.

start schools, implement curbs on practices such as alcohol drinking, polygamy, animistic worship etc., and win converts through an ardent preaching of the gospel. Opposition ensued and the growth in the number of converts was painfully slow and far less than they had desired.[19] The village mission schools were woefully ill-equipped and suffered due to a lack of attendance and the poverty of labouring children, often leaving the missionaries in the lurch.[20] But with its handful of European staff and local catechists, the BM persisted, and the school network, which comprised parochial, vernacular, Anglo-Vernacular, and boarding schools, slowly began to expand from the 1860s and 1870s onwards.

The BM established more stations in north Malabar at Cannanore (1841), Calicut (1842), and Palaghat (1858), and out-stations at Anjerakandi, Chombala, and Codacal. During the 1830s and 1840s, the number of converts were very small and the Mission's services largely restricted to a mixed population of English soldiers stationed in military cantonments (such as Cannanore), Portuguese traders, Tamilians, Telugus, and Anglo-Indians, scattered across the towns in Malabar. Often, the BM reported on the struggles they encountered in making inroads among the Malayalam-speaking populace which was sharply divided along caste lines. The missionaries and their entourage of agents confronted ridicule, jeering, and direct threats during their street- preaching and household visitations and many rumours abounded of their presence on the coast. In one instance, the Nair landlords and Roman Catholics are said to have misled poor, untouchable labourers into

[19] In 1856-57, the number of converts were 23,614; in 1861-61 it rose to 27,539; 1866-67, it was 30,435, and in 1871-72, it was 41,642. As quoted in W. W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India: Madras Presidency to Multai*, Volume 9 (London: Truebner & Co, 1886), 228

[20] Huber reported in December 1851 that the primary schools in and around Coilandy were abandoned due to a lack of attendance and hostile rumours. *Magazin für Die Neueste Geschichte der Protestantischen Missions und Bibelgesellschaften*, (Missions Institut: Basel 1852), 190. This title can be translated into Magazine for The Latest History of Protestant Missions and Biblical Societies.

thinking that the BM wanted to steal children and send them away in ships to Europe.[21] Another rumour was that the missionaries possessed a magic powder with which miracles were performed.[22] The fear of being transported across the high seas, and into the unknown, scared many with whom the mission had managed to initiate a dialogue. Much to the BM's disdain, such rumours by the upper castes and by Catholic opponents repeatedly frustrated attempts to ensure sustained evangelical work.

Although brushed aside by missionaries in their reports, the existence of these rumours revealed the deep-rooted distrust of evangelical work prevalent in Malabar at the time. Contrary to their hopes that conversion would usher in a lasting spiritual effect and induce various castes, particularly the Namboodiris and Nairs, to evangelise, the act of conversion was fraught with violence and uncertainty. It comprised extended negotiations with families threatening to disown converts, involvement of the police and the judiciary on some occasions, and a risk of losing any ground the missionaries had gained.[23]

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[21] 'Berichte zum Malabar', *Magazin für Die Neueste Geschichte der Protestantischen Missions und Bibelgesellschaften* , (Missions Institut: Basel 1852), 78

[22].Christian Irion, 'Report of the Tellicherry Boy's Institution, *Magazin für Die Neueste Geschichte der Protestantischen Missions und Bibelgesellschaften*, (Missions Institut: Basel 1852), 79

[23] In 1874, a missionary reported, '…a Cheruman family consisting of 11 persons came to our outstation at Wadakanchery. They were originally slaves of a rich land owner in the Cochin territory, whom they'd left, as they alleged, on account of ill-treatment with the desire for bodily freedom and eternal salvation…their former masters assisted by friends or by Police Constables did all in their power to get hold of these persons. Flattery, promises, intimidation, bribing the catechist, waylaying were all tried in vain.' *The Thirty-Fifth Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission Society* (henceforth, BGEMS) (Mangalore: The Basel Mission Press, 1875) In 1881, Mr. Weismann reported of a disappointed enquirer in Chovva in 1881. A young Tiyan school-boy, he wrote, wished to become Christian proclaiming. "I have not become your enemy" he replied, "I do not believe in our Demons and idols. There is only one true God, whom I long to know and to serve. If I believe in Jesus Christ, whom the Christians know and to whom they pray, my soul shall attain bliss, when I die." Shortly after, his mother came and protested, and two days later, en route to school, 'he was waylaid and carried off by a band of men'. The mission had no news of him since. *The Forty-Second Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission Society* (henceforth, BGEMS) (Mangalore: The Basel Mission Press, 1882), 28

The BM's schools suffered as a result of these rumours and discontent. Sometimes, the presence of a Christian teacher or the imparting of biblical lessons met with great resistance.[24] In many cases, due to the shortage of trained Christian teachers as well as the pressure from families of pupils, the BM resorted to employing non-Christian school teachers. The success of their vernacular school establishments depended largely on pupil attendance, and non-Christian teachers provided some sense of assurance towards this.[25] These compromises played a considerable role in blunting the effect of proselytisation activities in the BM schools for non-Christians.

The Mission School Network

Upon his arrival, Gundert began a small, vernacular village school at Nettur, a few kilometres away from the town of Tellicherry in 1839. It was thrown open to children of all castes and imparted elementary reading, writing, arithmetic, and biblical lessons. Unable to attract pupils from the upper castes, the Basel missionaries turned towards the numerically dominant lower caste Tiyya population across Malabar which sought formal schooling, and particularly, English instruction.[26] Unlike the slave Cherumar castes, the Tiyyas had some indigenous schools of their own, as well as occupational diversity as artisans, weavers,

[24] *Drei und Dreiszigster Jahresbericht der evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft zu Basel* (Basler: Felix Schneider, 1844), 115. In 1854, the primary school at Chombala was forced to shut down following the conversion of a male pupil. 'Station Tschombala- Quartal-Uebersicht ueber die neuesten Ereignisse auf dem Gebiete der Mission' *Magazin für die neueste Geschichte der evangelischen Missions-und Bibel Gesellschaften* (Missions Institut: Basel, 1854), 23.

[25] However, the BM provided monetary incentives to non-Christian school masters. They were paid according to the number of pupils gathered in the 'heathen' schools. *Drei und DreiszigsterJahresbericht der evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft zu Basel* (Basler: Felix Schneider, 1848), 26.

[26] In 1844, the British government declared English as a qualifying criterion for administrative employment.

physicians, and agricultural labourers; this was reflected in the favourable response of many Tiyyas to mission instruction, especially the provision of English.[27]

This was the beginning of Gundert's, and through him the Basel Mission's, lingering association with Malabar and her people. Together with his later colleagues, he was keen to develop a standardised Malayalam to enable the printing and dissemination of Christian literature without which the schools would be unsuccessful ventures for the mission. An ardent linguist, Gundert took an interest in compiling old Malayalam prose, poetry, and proverbs, and also wrote and published the earliest school books.[28] Stressing upon the importance of the vernacular language in forging a common identity and sense of territoriality, with the help of local school teachers and fellow missionary employees, he began to expand the BM's school network. By 1841, he was joined by Samuel Hebich at Cannanore, and J.M.Fritz in Calicut, followed by others in subsequent decades.

The BM ran four kinds of schools. First, parochial schools were organised for every congregation where Christian children learnt the three Rs and memorised Christian scriptures in the vernacular until the age of fourteen. The missionaries expected congregants to take this obligation seriously, and immense efforts were made to persuade children to attend these schools. Much of what was taught there was religious in nature, and fees were kept meagre due to the poverty of most converts. Second were the Middle Schools or Preparandi, as they were known; crucial to the BM as feeders for the Mangalore Seminary

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[27] K.K.N Kurup, *Modern Kerala: Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1988), 83

[28] Hermann Gundert compiled an Anglo-Malayalam dictionary in 1871, considered a monumental work on Malayalam literature. He also published the earliest history and geography books on *Malabar: Keralapazhama* (1868) and *Malayalarajyam*(1879) respectively. Other books include a collection of old proverbs in colonial Malabar at the time known as *Pazhancholumaala* (1845) and *Orayiram pazhancholukal* (1850).

or BM teacher training school at Tellicherry. Third, vernacular schools (for non-Christian children, also known as *heidenschule* (heathen school)) and Anglo-vernacular schools (also attended by Christians) were established. From the mid-1850s, these schools were geared towards meeting the requirements of the Department of Education in the Madras Presidency, and over the years, availed government grants. Located in the major towns of Tellicherry, Cannanore, Calicut, and Palghat, the Anglo-Vernacular schools were mostly attended by fee-paying children of the Tiyya, Nair, and relatively better-off Christian families, whose main goal was white-collar employment. Later, a Christian High School was started in Nettur, solely for Christian pupils selectively chosen from the orphanages and parochial schools to enable them to pursue higher education.

Fourth, another educational institution which specifically targeted Christian children, with a sprinkling of those from other communities, were the mission orphanages cum boarding institutions for poor boys and girls. These establishments for boys at Tellicherry and Paraperi and girls at Calicut and Chombala, occupied a prime place in the BM's educational apparatus for various reasons. Though interchangeably called 'Boarding Institutions/Schools' and 'Orphanages', many pupils were not actually 'orphans' but belonged to destitute Christian families, or were runaways from places in and around the mission stations. The BM persuaded, albeit with some coercion, poor Christians of the congregations to hand over their children for a period of time to be educated in the orphanages.[29] Sometimes, children of poor Christian widows, homeless children, and those living away from the mission compounds also joined and were clothed, fed, and educated.

[29] *Zwei und Dreiszigster Jahresbericht der evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft zu Basel* (Basler: Basler Mission, 1847), 110.

During times of crises such as famine and epidemics in adjacent regions such as south Mahratta and Canara, the government authorities send orphaned children or 'famine-orphans' to BM boarding institutions.[30]

The basic agenda behind boarding school management was to raise a generation of Christian men and women who would form self-governing churches in Malabar. These pupils were to be trained in becoming exemplary Christians who would display appropriate morals and be socialised into certain cultural practices. Much like the CMS and LMS, parents in Malabar, including adult Christian converts, were faulted for their inability to exert adequate control and discipline over children and the failure to instil in them desirable virtues.

Poor families were accused of falling short of their responsibility as Christians by not ensuring a regular education for their children. The lack of steady attendance in the parochial schools was taken as a sign of supposedly lax morals of converts, reminiscent of their natal influences, which the mission intended to rectify. Yet, the orphanages also indulged in unequal labour relations and benefitted from the unpaid labour of their pupils, which was seen as indispensable to their training as self-reliant individuals. This ambivalence, which was also noted in the LMS and CMS schools with regard to poor girls' labour, marked the BM's boarding schools in colonial Malabar as well.[31]

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[30] *The Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1879* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1880), 46. In 1877, 30 famine-orphans were received in the course of the year and cared for partly in the Calicut Orphanage, partly in private houses. *The Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1878* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1879), 44-45

[31] Parinitha Shetty, 'Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens: The Educational Institutions introduced by the Basel Mission in Mangalore', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 45, No.4 (2008), 501-551. A similar argument regarding the extensive use of freed child slave labour in the BM stations in Ghana has been made by Koonar. See Catherine Koonar, 'Using Child Labor to Save Souls: The Basel Mission in Colonial Ghana, 1855–1900', Atlantic Studies, 11:4 (2014), 536-554

The parochial school was perceived to be the pivot of congregational life but this was far from easily achieved. The mission stipulated compulsory attendance in the parochial schools until a child's confirmation at fourteen years of age, and constant tensions arose with many families failing to do so.[32] Poor Christians of the BM's churches were unable to spare children's labour from agricultural and household work and found it difficult to adhere to mission regulations. When not employed in the fields and homes of their masters, they were busy tending to cattle, domestic chores, or younger siblings. These factors frustrated missionaries who found the 'Christian-ness' of the convert very much wanting in foregoing their child's schooling.[33] Notes of disapproval against parents for not sending children to the parochial schools prevailed throughout the decades, and in 1880, a missionary reported,

> Parents are either totally unconcerned, whether their children grow up in ignorance or not…or they are so eager that their children should learn and rise in life, that the Christian element in the education seems to them not only unnecessary, but gives them the impression that their education is materially retarded thereby.[34]

A petition by a local congregation submitted in the same year to the mission revealed that these sentiments were not wholly misplaced. The signatories, left unnamed in the report, demanded lesser emphasis on the repetition of biblical texts and hymns learnt by heart in the parochial schools. Instead, they argued that there was no good in expecting children to

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[32] *The Thirty-Third Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1872* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1873), 33. In 1876, the BM accused some poor Christian parents of unwillingness and indifference, 'who are too ignorant or too little ruled by Christian principles, to care for education.' See *The Thirty-Seventh Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1876* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1877), 63.

[33] *The Forty-First Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1880* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1881), 57

[34] *The Forty-First Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1880* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1881), 57.

remember these lessons as they were of no use in the after-life![35] Such opinions on the part of poor Christian parents manifested the growing conception of education as an important resource towards acquiring material privilege, respectability, equality, and freedom from bondage, in contrast with what was perceived by the Basel Mission as a means of evangelisation, cultural change, and moral instruction. If poor parents were expected to realise the importance of schooling, they also had to be convinced of its usefulness in achieving a better station in life than the one in which they found themselves by virtue of birth. By contrast, the Basel Mission's insistence on an excessive religious instruction in the parochial schools seemed to be a disincentive for poor parents upon whom schooling expenses in the form of books, clothes, and payment of teachers' salaries were additional burdens.

The vernacular schools established in various mission stations attracted a slightly more diverse set of pupils, though mostly dominated by Tiyyas. Depending on local demand and mission funds, the BM established such schools in neighbourhoods for boys and girls, and undertook instruction by employing native Christian teachers and catechists, if available. Chief lessons in the elementary vernacular schools included memorising scriptural passages and hymns, reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, and the basics of geography, science, and history. Some of the classes were also instructed in Sanskrit and English. Tiyya and Nair children were sent to mission schools usually on the condition that there would be no Christian teacher instructing them particularly on religious portions. This proved to be a grave obstacle to the BM's educational objectives and compromises had to be struck for the sake of keeping the schools open. The missionaries themselves were also not devoid of suspicion regarding the abilities of non-Christian teachers and commonly

[35] Ibid.

accused them of harbouring vested interests and lacking efficiency in their jobs.[36] However, on a number of occasions, the mission refrained from replacing these school teachers as it was aware that attendance was likely to suffer, on account of the opposition by many parents to Christian teachers.[37]

By the 1860s, when the BM was able to expand its own staff and avail of government grants, changes were proposed in the running of vernacular schools. In 1864, the BM decided to revamp its system of school organisation, and as a first step, the Malabar Mission Committee resolved that 'henceforth, only Christian masters are to be employed, and that Sanskrit is not to form part of the instruction in elementary schools'.[38] Such a step was counter to increasing parental demands for Sanskrit lessons which required the hiring of non-Christian school masters. The BM was unwilling to concede and suffered low attendance in some of their village vernacular schools as a result. According to BM statistics, in 1855, there were seven Christian school masters and seven non-Christian school masters, and no female teachers in the BM vernacular and Anglo-Vernacular schools. This later became nineteen Christian masters, four non-Christian masters and five school-mistresses. In 1875, the number of Christians went up to 24, non-Christians to 14, and school-mistresses to five respectively. By 1913, 132 Christian men, 165 non- Christian men, and 65 women were employed in the mission schools.[39]

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[36] *Drei und Dreiszigster Jahresbericht der evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft zu Basel* (Basler: Basler Mission, 1848), 128.

[37] Ibid., 128.

[38] *The Twenty-Fifth Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1864* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1865): 53.

[39] Compiled from the annual reports of the BM in south-western India for the years mentioned.

In the schools, what should be taught and how much? How should children use their time for work and leisure? Notions such as these were encapsulated in a timetable, infused by racial stereotypes about non-western bodies, and aimed at training pupils in a meticulously planned schedule devoted to more 'efficient and useful' activities.[40] As a parallel to the militaristic tradition, schools had become a key site in Europe to impart those mechanisms of power that made children's bodies, according to Foucault, docile.[41] Inherited from the seventeenth-century monastic tradition, it was implemented to instil a routinized instruction and sense of order through a precise apportioning of time for various subjects. In their establishments, the Basel missionaries prided themselves upon their ability to devise time-tables to the minutest details. Particularly for boarders, time was decided for tasks requiring considerable physical labour. In 1875, the number of hours spent on the chief subjects in the Basel vernacular primary schools in a week were as follows:

> Bible history(4 hours), memorising songs etc. (one hour), Reading (six hours), Writing (four hours), History of India (four hours), Geography of their own province, General Geography (two hours), Maths (five hours), Languages (two hours), Singing (two hours for the elementary) classes and Sanskrit (two hours) and Greek (four-six hours), Memorising the catechism (two hours and not obligatory for heathens), Mother-tongue Grammar (two hours), Native Literature (two hours) English (five hours).[42]

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[40] Kavita Philip, *Civilizing Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 147-170.

[41] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 17.

[42] *The Thirty-Sixth Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission Society in South-Western India for 1875* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1876), 39

For the middle-school, which was divided into four classes (starting with the lowest) it included:

> Bible classes (four hours), Catechism (two hours), English (five-six hours), Malayalam grammar (four hours), Malayalam literature (two hours), Arithmetic (two to four hours), Geography and Geometry (two hours), History of India and World History (two hours), Singing (two hours) – the last two subjects being taught in the two higher classes.[43]

Even as religious instruction assumed highest priority, a significant amount of time was also devoted to the study of scientific knowledge in the development of which the Basel missionaries keenly participated. Geography, astronomy, and literature, which were also expanding in Europe, were preferred in the BM schools, and many missionaries including Gundert and Hebich contributed tracts, magazine articles, and textbooks popularising these subjects.[44] The *Keralopakari,* a monthly journal published by the BM in Malayalam targeted their congregations and consisted numerous expositions on subjects ranging from anatomy to poetry. Such a wide array of interests exhibited by the missionaries was symptomatic of their insistence on encouraging a biblical and scientific education supported by Enlightenment traditions. As Kavita Philips argues, the mission found no contradiction in imparting science and religion to children and adults, and firmly believed that 'heathenism' could be countered only by 'scientifically' proving their false ways. The BM encouraged children to think in rational terms of the natural world around them but based

[43] Ibid.

[44] *Grahachaaraparishodhana* {What are the Planets?} (Mangalore: Basel Mission Book and Tract Depository, 1886)

on a notion that it was the power of a Supreme Being which guided all action.[45] In 1880, when science became a compulsory subject in high schools of the Madras Presidency, L.J. Frohnmeyer who headed the Basel German Mission High School at Kallayi wrote a science textbook for Malabar students and sought donations to improve the library's collections. The initial laboratory apparatus was received from C.M. Barrow, then head of the Government Provincial school, Calicut, after which additions were made in subsequent years, sometimes worth hundreds of rupees.[46]

With their eyes set upon attracting upper-caste children as well, the BM also invested in Anglo-Vernacular schools, situated in the major towns of Tellicherry, Calicut, and Palaghat. But they were aware that it was the provision of an English instruction which pushed non-Christian pupils into these schools, rather than a genuine interest in evangelism. As fee-generating institutions, the Anglo-Vernacular Schools were valued, both by the local communities and the Basel Mission, to the extent that pupil attendance remained fairly steady through the years, and many appeared for the various exams of the Madras Presidency. [47]

Exerting a Christian moral influence on non-Christian pupils was considered vital. The missionaries consoled their superiors in Basel by pointing out that the colonised populations, in general, stood to gain from such a Christianising education even when there

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[45] Kavita Philip, *Civilizing Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004)

[46] *History of the B.G.M High School, Calicut* (Calicut: B. G. M. High School Book Depot, 1907), 13.

[47] In 1856, a B.G.M English School was established at Tellicherry for imparting education in English. It consisted of three classes, and the upper two were charged a fees of 4 and 6 annas respectively, which rose to 6 and 8 annas in 1858. The number of students enrolled increased from 143 to 172. Following a donation of 1500 rupees from a Parsi merchant, Kaikhosru and Darashaw of Mysore, the school was renamed as 'The Parsi School'. In 1862, after the amalgamation of the B.G.M English School the Brennen School, the institution was known as the B. G. M. Brennen English School. This was raised to a High School in 1868 and students were sent up for the Matriculation Examination for the first time in 1871. For further details, see *The History of the B. G. M. Parsi High School 1858-1908* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1908), 3-8.

were no corresponding conversions. An extract from J. Strobel, the in-charge of the Anglo-Vernacular School at Palghat illustrates this further,

> Though I cannot report any conversions, yet I may confidently state with respect to a good many heathen pupils that they are Christians, not merely in their views but also in having given up idolatry..... Even as regards those who attend the Bible lesson unwillingly, the influence of the Word of God cannot be mistaken. It becomes manifest in the change which takes place in the whole behaviour of the pupils after a few months' attendance.[48]

Strobel narrated an instance which he believed pointed to these winds of moral change; a veiled attempt to appease home supporters whose donations to BM schools showed a decline in the latter decades in the wake of zero conversions from schools.

> Our boys know that lying, stealing, card-playing and the like are not tolerated. I remember very well a scene that occurred in the middle of the past year, when at the beginning of a lesson I asked for three boys who were absent. I soon learned that they had been detected playing cards, and had been summoned before the head master. It was not long before they appeared—three young men of 17 to 20 years of age—with downcast and tear stained eyes, to take their seats in the class. This moral influence of our school is certainly not to be underrated.[49]

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[48] *The Fifty- Second Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1891* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press 1892), 6

[49]Ibid.

The rarity of conversions among day-school attending non-Christian children, the BM alleged, was due to the fear of social boycott and loss of inheritance and family connections imposed by caste prohibitions.[50] By making such justifications, the BM underplayed what was increasingly seen by the end of the nineteenth century as a secularisation of school education regulated by government policies of grant-in-aid and bureaucratic inspection in the Madras Presidency.

Essentially, mission schools played a part in the construction of a new code of morality in local society. Drawing upon religious principles, school-going children were exposed to Christian norms of worship, personal conduct, deportment, ideas of marriage and work in the BM schools. These aided a larger process of Christianisation across the social spectrum in Malabar, with regard to what was right or wrong, and the system of reward and punishment that ensued was dependent on their behaviour. As detailed in previous chapters, schools became those spaces of socialisation, where a time-work discipline was imparted to children, under the watchful eye of the teacher, which was meant to strip them of certain habits acquired in an agrarian order. Certain traits were sought to be cultivated in poor children to put in place a hierarchy in which a submission to community regulations was considered important. Those deviating from prescribed norms were punished by the European missionary, school teacher, or factory-supervisor; each of whom assumed the role of a quasi-parent.

A 'Model' Educational Institution

[50] *The Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1875* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1876), 39. Mr. Schauffler, in-charge of the Calicut AVS school stated, "Most boys who have gone to our school for years, take with them some seeds in their hearts, and we are sure the Lord will quicken some of these…Why should we demand fruit immediately in the case of schools, whilst we must wait patiently for fruits from the Preaching of the Word to adults?"

In colonial Malabar, the BM orphanages cum boarding institutions served pedagogical and philanthropic purposes. The mission argued that future generations of Christians in Malabar had to be withdrawn from 'evil' influences emanating from their 'heathen' surroundings as far as possible when young, and raised in a Christian ethos, which was apparently missing even among the converts. They admitted poor and destitute children of the congregations, with no one to make immediate claims over them, such as those of "either heathen parents or inquirers, or orphans, or those whom the Mission considered morally unable to educate their children, or of poor Christian parents".[51]

Towards this, they persuaded those whom they called 'unworthy' parents, including converts, to turn over their sons and daughters to missionary care. In other cases, children of Christians in the distant out-stations were encouraged to reside in the orphanages located in the major mission towns. Among the pupils, there were also those rendered destitute by famines and epidemics which occurred intermittently across south Mahratta and Canara through the 1860s and 1870s. Such an intake assured a steady source of labour for mission establishments, and the BM keenly invested in their maintenance, despite several anxieties arising from incidents of children running away and disobeying mission regulations.[52] Undoubtedly, coercion reigned in these institutions and the labouring poor could not always turn away completely if they were desirous of protection and relief for their children during times of distress.

Since its inception, the education of orphans and poor Christian children in a secluded environment was intended at training them to occupy various roles in the mission

[51] The Thirty-First Report of the Basel Evangelical German Missionary Society for 1869, (Mangalore: Basel Mission Printing Press,1870), 20.

[52] *The Thirty-Third Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission Society for 1872* (Mangalore: The Basel Mission Press, 1873), 38. The Tellicherry Boys' school reported many cases of run-away pupils during this period.

as school-masters, catechists, and workers in the printing presses, weaving, and tiling factories. It was also considered relatively easier to raise Christians among a mixed group of poor children, with no one to make immediate claims over them, rather than via direct preaching activities in hostile caste-communities. Labelling even children with either a single or both parents alive as 'orphans' was a device by which the mission sought to forge a distinct Christian community from scratch. It was desirous of instructing these 'orphans' away from their families and surroundings, and to encourage an adoption of evangelical norms of living. The schools were to be a witness ground for a 'rebirth' of sorts for 'orphans' who would become civilised Christians.

Soon after the establishment of the Tellicherry station in 1839, a number of poor and neglected boys gathered around Hermann Gundert and he undertook to teach them in a boarding institution in 1841.[53] Christian Irion, who later took charge, noted that the majority of the earliest children under Gundert's care were not Malayalam speaking but mostly Tamilians, Telugus, and Portuguese descendants. Irion labelled them as 'degenerates' who were deprived of all education and supervision until their entry into the school, and commented upon 'the wickedness associated with their wandering lives since childhood' and that their education was no small task.[54]

Irion's statement is indicative of the general Basel missionary attitudes towards poor children in the orphanages/boarding schools. It was assumed that they possessed the most undesirable behavioural traits, and were desperately in need of moral 'rescue', which the BM sought to provide. In colonial Malabar, such moral decay was attributed to untouchable caste children who were already considered 'polluting' and 'unintelligent' by upper-caste

[53]Christian Irion, *Malabar und die Missionsstation Talatscheri* (Basler; Missionshauses, 1864), 118

[54] Ibid.

orthodoxy and found doubly difficult by the BM to civilise because of their lack of familiarity with sedentary, clean, and disciplined habits.

During Gundert's tenure, ages of the boarders varied, and they were usually baptised when quite young. But if they had crossed the tenth year, baptism was delayed until the age at which the children were confirmed in Christian scriptures, which was usually fourteen. There were also a few boys and girls older than fourteen in the orphanages who stayed longer than expected before pursuing different forms of work or getting married. Classes were taken by Christian school-masters and examinations were periodically held. Daily timetables prescribed prayer services in the morning and evening, and specific allocation of time to various subjects and chores. In 1847, boys in the Chombala Orphanage were divided into four classes: two for lower, and two for higher. The boys were instructed in Bible history, church and world history, geography, arithmetic, singing, and elementary English. During the afternoon hours, the pupils were taught handiwork and put to various tasks to hone their skills in gardening, binding, and carpentry, taught either by a missionary worker or a local artisan.

At the Calicut Girls' Orphanage in 1851, the following timetable was put in place by Mrs. J. Fritz. Under the tutelage of a native schoolmaster, Abraham, lessons in reading, catechism, biblical history, and writing were held at 10 o'clock after morning ablutions. There were two hours for meals, and time for rest from 11 o'clock to 1 o'clock. In the afternoon, from two o'clock to five o' clock, under the guidance of a local Christian woman, the girls learnt singing and prayer. By six o'clock in the evening, food was served, and the girls took turns working in the kitchen.[55]

[55] Chirakkal- Maedchen Anstalt', *Magazin für Die Neueste Geschichte der Protestantischen Missions und Bibelgesellschaften*, (Missions Institut: Basel 1852), 139

Those who entered the orphanages were put through a rather long period of catechistical and post-baptismal instruction. Additionally, their conduct was regularly monitored by the matrons and supervisors who reported the progress in the pupils' character-formation to the BM missionaries. These two features were predominant in the schools as pupils were closely observed in order that the missionaries could assess their moment of spiritual renewal. Frequent reports were sent to home supporters and donors about the improvements, if any, achieved by the children. Some of the brief descriptions of the girls chosen for baptism in the Chirakkal Orphanage reveal the manner in which children were characterised. Caroline, a report mentioned, was often unreliable unlike Susanne who was by nature, very passionate and had shown signs of improvement. A blind pupil, Elizabeth, was branded difficult and ignorant, and apparently told the missionaries that 'she would rather die and go to hell than wait longer here.'[56] Ruth was the only girl in the orphanage that year who had borne a good testimony of being a hard-working and honest person, and the mission pinned their hopes on her.[57] Several other girls also asked to be admitted to the number of communicants, for instance, Elise, who was believed to have known her sins in 1847.[58] But she was among the very few conscious of her spiritual growth, and the BM thought it fit to wait for the admission of the others until a serious desire had appeared. They expected the girls to prove that they felt an inner change, and wished to redeem themselves of their sinful state.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Chirakkal- Maedchen Anstalt', *Magazin für Die Neueste Geschichte der Protestantischen Missions und Bibelgesellschaften* , (Missions Institut: Basel 1852), 139-140

In the case of poor children belonging to lower-caste communities, already presumed to be unruly, undisciplined, and ill-mannered, these descriptions, placed an excessive onus on their conduct and speech. Similar to the attitudes of the LMS and CMS towards their lower caste converts, the BM was deeply suspicious of the intentions of their poor congregations, and weasre keen on school pupils manifesting a so-called visible transformation.

Inevitably, such a scrutiny of children's behaviour, based on their conduct, speech, and appearance, led to several doubts on the part of the missionaries. Those who were chosen for baptismal instruction sometimes faltered, and the mission adopted punitive measures including a denial of baptism.[59] Such incidents created conflicts in the orphanages, and sometimes resulted in pupils running away. Although the direct cause of children's dissent cannot be traced to a denial of baptism alone, the stringent disciplinary regime also aggravated matters. Children had to impress upon the missionaries and school supervisors that they had certainly undergone a spiritual transformation and learnt to submit to Christian tenets. Any instance of indiscipline such as acts of lying, stealing, use of abusive language, disobedience, and refusal to work, were met with a range of punishment.[60]

Often, the BM did not hesitate to use the cane and other harsh measures, and considered severe punishment necessary to break the elements of 'stubbornness' and 'defiance', which were said to be innate in children. Mr. Hasenwandel reported on strict punishment imposed on girls in the Tellicherry boarding school which he justified as one that the children also considered necessary for their improvement. This reference to the so-

[59] *The Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1878* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1879), 20. Young married girls were refused baptism on account of their early marriages.

[60] *Seibenundfuenfzigster Jahresbericht der Evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft zu Basel* (Basler: Felix Schneider, 1872), 81

called acceptance of punishment by pupils was pointed to the ways in which deference was being inculcated in them in situations that threatened the missionaries.[61] 'The cane has been less used this year than formerly, and in the cases in which I was forced to use it, the girls punished acknowledged the necessity', Hasenwandel wrote, and added

> One girl, who was punished now and then, would afterwards try in different ways to reconcile me and draw a kind word from me, either by bringing flowers or by some other means. Another girl was severely punished for telling lies, she came afterwards, asked my pardon, and said the punishment had been necessary as she had really been on the point of becoming a bad girl.[62]

Since its inception in Malabar, the BM confronted the issue of runaway pupils. These pupils were written off as 'bad' influences, harming the entire spirit of the institutions, and used as a warning to other boarders on how not to behave if they wanted to be favoured by the missionaries. Such was the case of a young boy, Muttoren, who locked horns with Irion in the Tellicherry Orphanage. He ran away after being repeatedly refused baptism, claimed the missionary. In February 1845, Irion reported that Muttoren urged him with a letter containing a few Christian phrases and pressed urgently for baptism, or otherwise, threatened to abandon the Orphanage.[63] This 'mischievous hypocrisy', as Irion put it, went on for a short time and his demands were grudgingly accepted,

> I told him that I baptised him out of pity. Not that he deserved it, but he would never be able to regret it, in case he should, on his own initiative…I gave him a hearty welcome, showed him the love and mercy of Jesus, and let him go. The next morning,

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[61] *The Thirty-Sixth Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1875* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1876), 42

[62] Ibid.

[63] *Magazin für Die Neueste Geschichte der Protestantischen Missions und Bibelgesellschaften* (MissionsInstitut: Basel 1852), 143-44

> Muttoren was not to be found and he had made his way out without listening to anything better at all.[64]

Distrustful of children, the BM expected those questioning their authority to eventually suffer from their 'sins' and hoped that they would repent in order to start afresh their lives as faithful believers. These narrations presented to supporters as proof of a spiritual confession among colonised children, clearly revealed ruptures in missionary influence through educational institutions. The running away of children and their refusal to submit to the BM's stringent rules, point to the ways in which indigenous children responded to schooling agendas and exercised their agency within certain limits.[65]

Job Thruwen, a young Tiyya boy, entered the Tellicherry boys' school in February 1848. His birth name was Poken, and the BM accepted him along with his sick mother who joined the mission's poor-house. He was about nine years old when he was admitted. 'He was a quiet boy and happy in school', remembered Irion, and Poken was baptised as Job and continued learning until his confirmation in May 1854. Afterwards, he was appointed in the adjacent BM's weaving factory, where he is said to have willingly undertaken the work assigned to him. But soon, complaints emerged, and Job found his work too long, and apparently became 'grumpy'.[66] In December 1856, he quarrelled with another apprentice, and ran away. Irion recollected that Job's weariness grew, and instead of begging others for forgiveness, for he was 'obviously wrong', he chose to run away. Later, the young man was found in Cannanore and taken to the mission compound. Soon afterwards, Job was bitten

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[64] Christian Irion, *Malabar und die Missionsstation Talatscheri* (Basler; Missionshauses, 1864), 114-115

[65] Karen Vallgarda, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

[66] Christian Irion, *Malabar und die Missionsstation Talatscheri* (Basler; Missionshauses, 1864), 114-115

by a dog, and he did not address it with due seriousness. In 1857, the young man passed away in the hospital from an infection.[67] This narration, however, does not end with Job's death but an explicit attention to the final confessions made by him. Irion derives satisfaction in the fact that at a time of grave illness, the young man *apparently* (emphasis mine) wished to seek forgiveness for his sinful actions. Job is said to have written letters to Irion, requesting to see him and beg for forgiveness, so that he could die peacefully. 'Well, is not it wonderful?' wrote Irion,

> this poor youth runs out of the Mission, and while he goes astray, he is overcome by death, but in such a way that he still has time to repent; and when he finds himself, the Lord takes him away, and he is still saved after all![68]

Job's discontent with the Basel Mission and his side of the story is never revealed in the report and subsequent events are couched in this missionary trope of a death-bed narrative of triumph; a victory of spiritual acceptance over degraded human instincts. Irion uses the incident to claim to readers that Job's transformation came about due to the mission's spread of gospel knowledge, and efforts made in Tellicherry and nearby stations to enhance the conditions of poor children. Yet, this also showed that children defying mission regulations was, perhaps, a more frequent occurrence than missionaries were willing to admit. As mentioned previously, according to Pietist beliefs, children were to be suffering from vices such as disobedience, stubbornness, and impatience, all of which werethreats to a Pietist patriarchal authority and deference to age-related hierarchy. In order to 'correct' these tendencies, elders, including older children were given the right to punish.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 115.

In 1897, the BM published a novel titled *Sukumari*, written by a BM convert and well-known school-master, Joseph Muliyil, and the story was situated in and around the BM stations of Tellicherry and Cannanore, with a young woman, Sukumari, as its protagonist.[69] The novel, one of the earliest in Malayalam by a Christian belonging to a lower-caste community, depicted the social changes of the period. Placing the BM at its crux, the story revolved around the impact of Christianity on shaping pious individuals in Malabar, and the introduction of a new moral and, thereby, social order considered far superior to the existing one.[70] The novel also threw light on the experiences of Sukumari, who had been left to fend for herself and her ailing grandfather, in the BM orphanage at Chirakkal, and the ways in which it instilled in her certain Christian virtues which made her a kind and compassionate being.

At the age of nine, on her way to the Chirakkal orphanage for the very first time, Sukumari is warned by her guardian, Jnanabharanam, of the harsh disciplinary regime in the institution, and not to lose hope in difficult times.

> The *sahib* and *madamma* may rebuke you many times but you must bear with it because they only mean well for you. Even if you believe your actions are right, if they think it is a mistake, consider and accept it so. Remember that they punish only because they care deeply for you. When I was at the school, as a young girl, I often found such measures to be bitter. But now I am enjoying its fruits. Imagine if I had not submitted myself to their authority then, I would not have found any inner peace amidst these

[69] Joseph Muliyil, son of a Tiyya convert, was employed as a school master in the BM, and retired as the Head master of the Tellicherry High School. Joseph Muliyil *Sukumari* (Malayalam novel), Reprint, (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013)

[70] Dilip Menon, "A Place Elsewhere: Lower-Caste Malayalam Novels of the Nineteenth Century," in Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia eds. *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 483-515.

> current troubles…this educational institution lays the foundation for the growth of good children, good women, and good men, in our community.[71]

Jnanabharanam also alerted the young girl to the monitorial system prevalent in the school. Younger girls were designated to older pupils for overseeing various personal tasks, and the latter exerted considerable authority and pressure on the former to perform. With reference to the coercion exerted by this age-segregated hierarchy, Jnanabharanam advises the young girl to tolerate whatever her senior in-charge commanded rather than to refuse and face terrible consequences. "If you do not tolerate some of the excesses, it may lead to further stress. In such institutions, these difficulties and injustices are rather unavoidable', she reminds Sukumari.[72]

Muliyil's description of Sukumari's life in the BM orphanage uses a mixed vocabulary of criticism and praise for the surveillance that prevailed upon poor children. At the Chirakkal Orphanage where Sukumari spent her formative adolescent years, the tasks assigned to older pupils ranged from helping younger ones bathe, wash clothes, study, and ensure that they followed the rules of the Matron, and ultimately, the missionary overseers. In the beginning, Sukumari was entrusted to Vatsala and much to her dismay, the older girl was unkind, impatient, and abused her power often by inflicting pain on Sukumari instead of extending help. Compassion was lacking, and soon, Sukumari was gripped by a deep fear of Vatsala's physical assaults.[73] However, this could not last long, and the female Basel missionary-in-charge discovered the prolonged misdemeanour during a routine inspection. Vatsala was duly punished and another pupil designated to be in charge of Sukumari. Yet, this

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[71] Joseph Muliyil, *Sukumari* (Mal.novel), Reprint, (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013),75

[72] *The Forty-Fourth Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1883* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1884), 70

[73] Joseph Muliyil, *Sukumari* (Mal.novel), Reprint, (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2013), 76

unfortunate incident, mentions the author, brought the girls close, with both forgiving each other and extending a hand of friendship. The story continues to speak highly of Sukumari's merciful character that won over Vatsala, and the 'good' that came out of this distressful period.[74] After leaving school, the reader is informed that Sukumari feels grateful, much like Jnanabharanam, regarding the suffering she underwent which resulted in her becoming disciplined, obedient, and tolerant.[75]

In spite of the evangelical message in the colonies that Christianity was accessible to one and all, power struggles between the 'European' and 'non-European' also determined local relations. Christianisation in colonial Malabar was not considered synonymous to a process of Europeanisation, which, the missionaries felt, was beyond the reach of the 'heathen' convert. Any trace of 'Europeanisation' in the 'native' was scorned upon as a desperate attempt to imitate their 'white' superiors. Racial differences, and class and caste prejudices, marked a hierarchy of Christian believers, and although converts were socialised into new modes of consumption, modes of speech, and cultural practices, they were discouraged from adopting western habits completely. Evangelisation, which went hand-in-hand with a civilizing mission would raise the 'heathens' morally to enjoy the fruits of material progress but not bring them at par with their colonial masters.

In 1872, Mr. Schmolk, in charge of the Basel Mission's Tellicherry Boarding School, reported on a young boy who was giving them a difficult time.[76] Afflicted with epileptic fits, he was apparently tended more to by the school supervisor, and becoming,

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[74] Ibid., 79-81.

[75] Ibid., 81

[76] *The Thirty-Third Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission Society for 1872* (Mangalore: The Basel Mission Press, 1873), 27-28.

with the passage of time, more uncontrollable and undisciplined. “In January he was sent to Palghaut for change of air”, Schmolk reported,

> After his return, we had the impression that he rather liked the return of his fits; he grew overbearing, was not content with his food and clothes, would always idle about and insulted his comrades. When he one day got a sound beating for this bad behaviour, his epileptic fits ceased and never returned. A few weeks afterwards he ran away with another discontented boy, first to Palghaut where he had some relatives, and from thence to Cochin. The clergyman there put him in an English School, and several months afterwards sent him back to his (European) father in Calcutta. On his way there he paid us a visit, looking like a scarecrow in his European clothes, pretending to have forgotten his native tongue and to know only English! [77]

Schmolk did not hide his condemnation and contempt for the young runaway whose change in appearance and conduct unsettled missionary authority. Despite the imposition of corporal punishment, the boy refused to succumb, and escaped to another place. This reportage is indicative of the sphere of influence exerted by the Basel Mission and its limits in the region of Malabar.

The boy’s ‘overbearingness’ was, perhaps, a direct challenge to the BM’s stringent regulations and imposition of an arduous work regime in the boarding school. With no relatives to immediately account for his well-being, Schmolk and his counter-parts wielded control over the pupil and were unhesitant to adopt violent means of disciplining. It was, as per the Pietist beliefs, to ‘break the will’ of the child, and teach him deference.[78]

An infantilisation of colonised populations seeped deep into the discourse of cultural difference, in which missionaries played a part. Even as they were the earliest to

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Richard Gawthrop *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 158.

articulate a discourse of rights for the poor, and throw open schools for all, racial biases were seldom overcome in their establishments. The remaking of the colonised 'child' had to be refracted through an evangelical Christian lens, wherein 'heathen' and children of Christian converts would be subject to a time-work regime that made them 'useful' beings'. The 'scarecrow' boy, mentioned above, having forgotten his native tongue was contrary to the notion of a 'good' child which dominated such missionary discourses.

Work as a Test of Faith

'Practical Christianity', a school of thought in Christian theology, held that the adoption of Christian tenets remained incomplete if material conditions were not favourable to it. According to the BM, their poor converts belonging to erstwhile lower-caste communities struggled to become 'true' Christians under conditions of poverty and oppression. Primarily, these conditions impeded them from emerging out of debt and continued to suppress them under old relations of power with non-Christians. Moreover, it also reduced the ability of members to contribute to the various charity and welfare measures instituted under the guidance of the churches, for their widows, sick, and homeless. This was crucial as the Basel Mission was desirous of raising self-governing churches, but felt that the dependence of converts on mission funds was hampering their goals. Pietist congregations in Germany upheld the care of the poorest, infirm, and disabled among them as a communal responsibility and raised funds through various church taxes and donations. In Malabar, these taxes were also decided upon by church pastors, but much to the consternation of the Basel missionaries, many poor converts pursuing agricultural occupations were not forthcoming with their donations.

> There is still a great lack of the consciousness of solidarity among our people. They do not hold themselves responsible for the well-being and for the shortcomings and sins of their brethren, as they ought to do. This may be accounted for, to some extent, by the difference of origin, but one cannot help thinking that if the Spirit of Christ had really taken possession of them, they would feel themselves more as members of one body, so that, if one members suffered, all the others would suffer with it, and if one be honoured, all the others would share its joy… What we must characterise as a great lack is that the ordinary Church member does not hold himself responsible for his brother and the Church as a whole, as he ought to. It must be conceded that, in former times generally, and even now in many places, the co-operation of the ordinary Church member was not and is not sought for.[79]

Another adverse effect of conversions was that caste boycotts prohibited older forms of work to be pursued without further persecution, and many congregants looked towards the BM to sustain a livelihood. In such a financially strained climate, the Basel Missionaries, most of whom belonged to rural Wurttemberg, decided to embark upon instructing school pupils in various artisanal trades and agriculture, and establish small industrial workshops for adult members. Such a strategy of investing in manufactured goods, apart from agriculture, was consonant with the missionaries' own skills, many of whom had limited resources to rely upon in parts of Germany and Switzerland.[80]

In the boarding schools, there was a heavy emphasis on committing oneself to manual and agricultural labour. Apart from the everyday tasks of cooking, cleaning,

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[79] *The Sixty-First Report of the BGEMS for* 1901 (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1902), 36-37.

[80] Paul Jenkins, "Villagers as Missionaries: Wurttemberg Pietism as a Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement," *Missiology* 4 (1980), 425-432.

winnowing, gardening, and washing, which girls and boys undertook, there was also an extra stress on teaching older boy pupils skills in carpentry, weavings, tailoring, and smithery, and girls learnt sewing. An instruction in these artisanal skills speaks directly of the missionaries' own backgrounds, and the trades in which they were most familiar. They sought to train pupils in some of these occupations, and appointed boys as apprentices either with European industrial-brothers/managers in the BM stations or with local master craftsmen, akin to the German system of integrating the youth in work.

There also prevailed a general aversion towards imparting higher education to Christian children in Malabar and only a handful of boarders, if considered 'bright' and 'capable', were encouraged to pursue higher studies after leaving. The rest were to be accustomed to various manual trades, which would be in the service of their communities, and help sustain the independence in the villages. Higher education was considered to distance students from their cultural milieu, and take many of them away from the villages. Instead, the BM intended to forge a distinct Christian community rooted in the local vernacular traditions, which would occupying an important position in local society. But as they confronted the bane of caste which imposed a stigma on manual labour, the BM made several attempts to instil a sense of duty and dignity through manual labour. However, apart from the objective of achieving sustainable livelihoods, the BM also took into account the amenability of poor children towards manual labour. This duality of purpose was prevalent in the ways in which poor pupils in the boarding schools were put to extensive work, in a manner similar to what they were accustomed to in their familial and communal settings.

Work was used as a tool to detect the 'genuineness' of probationers and willingness to practice Christianity in everyday life.[81]

In 1849, the report of the Tellicherry boys orphanage claimed that although the children complained about the manual training, they enjoyed it after some time.[82] What constituted this 'enjoyment' is subject to speculation but this mention reveals that poor children from lower caste backgrounds were reluctant to undertake long hours of labour as part of formal schooling. They were desirous of the instruction provided to upper-caste children which was solely geared towards examinations for clerical service. As mentioned in previous chapters, the inclusion of manual labour as part of schooling, albeit marked by religious motives for the missionaries, did little to allay the anxieties of poor families who wanted their children to move away from traditional agrarian activities that accorded to them little social respect. The BM made attempts to break down the mental-manual distinction with regard to work and respect, but it did not translate to substantial transformation owing to the composition of pupils in the orphanages. Most of these Christian pupils belonged to lower-caste communities, and were involved in agricultural activities during holidays, and sometimes, were taken back by their parents to contribute to household labour. However, the BM's focus was to overturn the prevalent casteist assumptions that manual labour was 'dirty' and 'polluting' and far inferior to so-called intellectual work. To the contrary the BM upheld manual labour as productive, and sought to help believers practice a better code of moral conduct and knit societal connections. Subsistence-based production was regarded as a preferable mode of livelihood, and work in itself was an exercise in devotion.

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[81] Knobloch commented "Another advantage accruing from an extended term of probation is that it acts as a safeguard against imposition : unworthy, dishonest characters are unmasked or abscond in time." *The Fortieth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1879* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1880), 38.

[82] *Jahres Bericht, Basler Mission,* (Felix Schneider: Basle Hause, 1849), 55

Within the boarding school establishments, poor Christian pupils were trained in activities such as book-binding, gardening, weaving, and printing, and were usually employed in the mission workshops or in bigger industries afterwards. At the same time, there was also an emphasis on training them for agricultural pursuits, a goal which dominated the setting up of the Paraperi Orphanage. As a result, children spent a considerable amount of time cultivating small plots of land, vegetable gardens, palm-trees etc. The BM considered such forms of learning more suitable for them than a focus on the three Rs. [83]. It was keen that Christian youth should remain as tightly-knit groups deriving sustenance from the land within their villages. Those venturing out to the port towns and emerging cities was looked down upon as indulging in material excesses such as drinking, gambling, and engaging in unregulated sexual activities. These attitudes were indicative of the BM's fear of losing control over its church members, a matter that was a bone of contention through the decades, especially with younger generations. Educated Christian youth were encouraged to pursue livelihoods in their villages and establish independent homesteads. Those desirous of leaving for towns such as Calicut were scorned upon for their apparently transgressive behaviour and indulgence in 'sinful' pleasures, a tacit reference to gambling, drinking, and sexual promiscuity.[84] Akin to the anxieties they felt in their home region, German missionaries were wary of the influences of ports and larger urban settlements, where their converts would interact with people from various walks of life. In a way, these concerns also stemmed from the missionary's slippery control over his church

[83] In 1882, the Tellicherry and Paraperi Orphanages were merged, and the former closed down. It was decided that the Paraperi Orphanage must focus on imparting an agricultural education, and kept on simple footing, *The Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1878* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1879), 43

[84] *Report of the Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society*, 1889 (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1904), 34.

members by the turn of the century. Away from the overarching authority of the European missionary and church elders, many young Christians tended to form other associational networks and express dissent.[85] This is captured in the reported observation that

> Quite a number of people murmur against the elders and pastors, and complain of not being looked after properly by these office-bearers. Now there may be some elders, here and there, who look upon their office more as a matter of honour than an office involving great duties and responsibilities, yet, as a whole, our elders are discharging their duties, which are not always pleasant, satisfactorily. What we must characterise as a great lack is that the ordinary Church member does not hold himself responsible for his brother and the Church as a whole, as he ought to. It must be conceded that, in former times generally, and even now in many places, the co-operation of the ordinary Church member was not and is not sought for.[86]

In comparison to the LMS and CMS which received groups of converts throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the Basel Mission formed myriad congregations comprising individuals from various communities, including a sprinkling of Nairs, Muslims, and Roman Catholics, along with the rest who were Tiyyas and Cherumans. Rooted in a Pietist understanding of exerting hierarchical control, the Basel missionaries assumed for themselves the role of 'shepherds tending to their flock' and instituted disciplinary measures against church members. Changes in this regard occurred in colonial Malabar in two discernible phases. During the 1830s-1850s, when the stations were founded, the earliest

[85] *The Forty-Fourth Report of the BGEMS for* 1883 (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1884), 69. "Calicut being a town of some importance, we suffer under various difficulties. Christians from all quarters, impatient to break asunder the bands and to cast away from them the cords of order and discipline, congregate here; most of the efforts to reclaim them are scorned and rejected."

[86] *The Sixty-First Report of the BGEMS for* 1901 (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1902), 36-37.

missionaries struggled immensely to form congregations. At its nascent stage, these congregations, comprising members of various lower castes with relatively few upper-caste individuals, were largely reliant on the missionary for spiritual guidance and temporal help. However, from the 1850s onwards, sensing the need for self-administering churches, the BM attempted to persuade congregations to be led by a group of church elders or presbyters, elected by male church members. Under their supervision, congregations were expected to make necessary contributions towards the maintaining of their pastors, school teachers, and running of institutions such as the orphanages.[87] These changes, under the overall watch of a new generation of younger Basel missionaries who felt that congregants lacked self-reliance, was not without tension. The shift in missionary leadership witnessed a growing rift between members of the churches and the missionary over the question of the latter's authority and use of coercion in settling matters.[88]

To further what they believed was a morally higher standard of Christian living, impositions were placed on practices such as alcohol consumption, idol-worship, native singing and festivals, and non-monogamous marital arrangements. Much like the infliction of punishment on disobedient and erring pupils in their schools, the pastors also instituted measures such as warnings, fines, expulsion, and direct excommunication of members found to be indulging in condemnable practices such as drinking, gambling, lying, and sexual promiscuity. This mission of moral rectification was central to the BM's efforts at forging so-called distinct Christian communities. But such hierarchies of control, and the overbearingness of the European missionary and council of elders in the churches did not

[87] Rev. B. Graeter, 'Basel Evangelical Missionary Society', *The Missionary Conference, South India and Ceylon*, Vol 2, (Madras: Addison and Co, 1879), 187-190

[88] *The Fifty-First Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1890* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1891), 21

go unchallenged. From the 1850s onwards, complaints arose regarding converts dismissing pastors' warnings and not attending prayer regularly. The missionary at Chombala in 1884 reported with dismay,

> We regret to say, that some Church-members in Chombala under discipline have not yet repented. The spirit of revolt, especially on the part of those, who have been benefitted by their becoming Christians, has abated, yea, we should like to say, died out. The vice of drunkenness has still its adherents in our midst. There are parents, who instead of ruling their houses well and punishing their children for transgressing God's law, dote on their children like Eli. Children and the younger Church-members are pretty regular in attending Divine Worship.[89]

Such a transition is said to have deeply influenced the development of the Basel Mission's work in subsequent years. After an inspection carried out by members of the Basel Home Committee in 1879-1880, the BM's Malabar stations underwent considerable changes. The orphanages were the first to bear the effect of these shifts, and in 1880, missionaries resolved that it was more desirable for Christian children to be raised in their families than boarding institutions where only actual 'orphans' would henceforth, be admitted.[90]

Some of the older boys from the orphanages were chosen for apprenticeship. In Mangalur a beginning had been made in this direction by the dispatch of a European schooner and carpenter, Böfinger, and a black wood watchmaker, Sebastian Miller. A small book-bindery and weaving workshop already existed, and the two men supervised the

[89] *The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for* 1884 (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1885), 71.

[90] *The Forty-Third Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for* 1882 (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1883), 9-10.

beginnings of these activities. A few young men of Tellicherry among those who had been sent for apprenticeship - one to be a locksmith, another a bookbinder, and the third a weaver. The weaver became far advanced enough in his trade that he was taken back, and under his direction in Tellicherry a small weaving factory was set up. In another instance, under Böfinger's direction, four looms were built in Mangalore, and he brought them to Tellicherry, accompanied by the weaver, Warid. Despite shortages, production began with boys employed at the looms but in 1851, Warid passed away.[91]

Despite numerous protestations within the Home Committee and across its own stations, the BM decided to invest funds and personnel in the establishment of industrial enterprises. This was a novel feature in the evangelical field in mid-nineteenth-century Kerala. All Protestant missionary societies owned their own printing presses and book-binding workshops to cater to their immediate needs but for the first time, the BM embarked upon supplying trained men known as industry-brothers (*industriebrueder*) to found factories in Malabar. Not ordained, and trained for a shorter period of time in Basel, industry-brothers reached India as mainly weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths, book-binders, and tailors.

In the 1850s and 1860s, the BM pursued agricultural projects for converts, hoping to settle them as rent-yielding cultivators for a considerable period of time. But these ideas were short-lived as the mission increasingly reported a stiff opposition among their converts to undertake agricultural work.[92] The Basel Mission bought land in the hilly tracts of north Malabar but they found it difficult to convince families to stay in that region. Afterwards, they attempted to introduce crafts such as clock-making but in vain. Soon, mission workers

[91] Christian Irion, *Malabar und die Missionsstation Talatscheri* (Basler; Missionshauses, 1864), 133-134.

[92] Gustaf Adolf Wanner, *Die Basler Handels Gesellschaft 1859-1959,* (Basler Mission, 1959), 257.

realised that industry using locally available material and skills was more feasible, and began establishing small weaving and tiling units in Tellicherry, Cannanore, Calicut, and Palghaut. This attracted a number of Christian converts as well as artisans from the Tiyya caste who were traditionally involved in activities such as weaving. In 1852, the Mission Trading Company was formed (subsequently incorporated into the Commonwealth Trust Limited) and the managers began organising non-agricultural labour, and integrated them into the international and domestic export economy. These industrial establishments, managed by separate Mercantile Boards, invested the profits generated over the years into sustaining these ventures than directly funding evangelical work. In 1873, the first tile factory in Malabar was established at Calicut, while weaving units began way back in Cannanore in 1852. Later, new units were set up at Tellicherry, Chombala, and Codacal., which catered to the demand for fine cotton products from Sri Lanka, Burma, and Europeans living in India.

Under the direct supervision of the industry-brothers, the BM constantly justified its business engagements as having four main objectives - philanthropic, pedagogical, civilizing, and financial.[93] The BM-owned factory, thus, became a site of education, beyond the formal classroom, to inculcate certain Christian values in converts. Although, they were not directly employed for extensive itinerant and educational activities, there was immense pressure on factory managers and overseers to introduce the religious element in their workplaces. Tensions often arose between the factory managers and ordained evangelicals over the BM's commercial engagements, which were seen as antithetical to a mission of the Gospel. The industry-brothers took great pains to constantly justify their presence in the mission stations and argued that they were indeed contributing to the overall evangelisation

[93] *The Fortieth Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 187*9 (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1880), 86

and educational project of the BM. To them, as long as their converts languished in difficult economic conditions, it brought no particular benefit to the spread of Christianity and was self-defeating. Soon, the factory floor was depicted as a microcosm of a church, and workers equated to that of a flock in need of attention, wherein the superintendent wielded a distinct authority to discipline labourers to put them on what was thought to be the 'right' path. An average BM working day began and ended with prayer, either led by a European missionary or a local *maistry*.[94] This set the tone of the factory's Christianising role where workers were assessed on the basis of their commitment to honesty, diligence, hard work, and adherence to prayer routines.

By chiefly employing Christian converts and graduates of the boarding schools, the BM intended to provide adequate means of livelihood to poor Christian men and women, in order that they be able to lead debt-free lives, and to also own small bits of property. These conditions were considered necessary by the mission to raise a class of Christians who were devout believers as well as honest and useful workers in their communities. The BM argued for the need to improve the 'quality' of their converts, criticizing the British missionary societies' inclusion of large numbers without adequately making provisions for their economic welfare. In Malabar, the mission focused on providing converts with alternate employment and conditions in which their lives could be disciplined according to Christian beliefs.[95] They were worried that an increasing dependence of the poor congregants on the mission for material help would drain their unstable resources and hamper the growth of evangelism. Since its inception, the BM in Malabar harped on the importance of self-reliance through work. Unlike the CMS and LMS which witnessed conversions en masse in

[94] *The Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1873* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1874), 69-70

[95] Ibid., 33

certain stations, the BM consisted of individual accessions. This created a situation wherein the BM was hard-pressed to devise measures for gainfully employing their converts. The display of 'practical Christianity' was hailed as an indispensable constituent of evangelical commitment and missionaries in Malabar argued that without adequate livelihoods, their converts would continue to lead hand-to-mouth existences. Frequent famines, drought, and epidemics in and around Malabar had caused a strain on mission activities and confronted them with a wave of homeless and destitute people seeking refuge and work. Disinterested in welcoming everyone into their fold without a proper instruction and examination of their motives, the mission began to insist upon the provision of work as a litmus test of faith.[96]

> The object of these establishments is to teach our converts honest labour and trade, to provide for them the possibility to earn a livelihood without asking for alms, to prevent their roaming about in the country, and to make a trial with inquirers about whose sincerity we are doubtful.[97]

Alms for the poor were reduced and converts pushed to manage the financial matters of their schools and churches on their own. It was resolved that converts should acquire the right of property, or at least of perpetual tenancy of some land, and work towards building independent homesteads. The Christian workers in the employ of the Mission, earning daily wages, were expected to clear their outstanding debts with their former masters and neighbours, and to undertake savings.[98] These changes were a direct result on the intense debates occurring within the inner circles of the Basel Home Committee and missionaries

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[96] *The Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1876* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1877), 46

[97] *The Thirty-Second Report of the Basel Evangelical German Missionary Society for 1870* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Printing Press,1871), 18

[98] *The Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of the BGEMS in South-Western India for 1873* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1874), 69-70

in the colonies on the necessity of industrial establishments.[99] There were murmurs of discontent elsewhere as well. The display of 'practical Christianity' required a self-sustaining religion which promised material improvement. As Kavita Philips argues, such projects of uplift for the lower castes required them to be educated in certain ways.[100] With each passing year, the mission introduced new technologies and expanded their production outlays to cope with increasing competition. Said to have been a temporary measure to meet the livelihoods of their converts, the factories had now turned into commercial enterprises with hundreds, including non-Christians, earning daily wages. However, not many, particularly other evangelists, approved of this. A CMS missionary stated his organisation's opinion on the BM's profit-generating industries, which was considered to be beyond the original agenda of evangelisation.

> The reason is that the converts have not come over to us in large numbers, having a settled means of livelihood, as the palmyra climbers of Tinnevelly or the paddy-fields labourers of Travancore, but by ones and twos of various castes, often cut off from their families, and absolutely penniless. It is not easy to find work for them, and the higher the caste, the greater the difficulty. I do not think the German system of huge factories, involving an enormous outlay, is the right solution of the problem. No doubt it benefits the country and the people, and attracts converts. But they become mere employee of a foreign industry, and lose all independence and robustness of character.[101]

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[99] In 1884, the Basel Mission Inspector, Otto Schott resigned over his differences with other members of the Home Committee regarding the industrial activities of the Mission. He was strongly of the opinion that the mission should solely focus on evangelisation alone in the colonies. See Hans Werner Debrunner, History of Christianity in Ghana, (Waterville Publishing, 1967), 261.

[100] Kavita Philip, *Civilizing Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 215-217.

[101] Rev J. H. Bishop, Tiruwella, Extract from the Annual Letters, Church Missionary Society, December 12, 1895,615.

Aware of the general disapproval of fellow missionary societies, J. Frohnmeyer, in support of the industrial work, highlighted the need to demonstrate the 'greatness' of Christianity in the colonies to the decennial gathering of Protestant missionaries of south India at Bombay in 1893.

> The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but as long as we belong to the *ecclesia militans* we cannot do without it. I think it is mere duty and duty of love for a Missionary to try his utmost that such, who by their conversion have lost their means of livelihood may earn their daily bread by some good and useful work. How could converts believe in the sincerity of our love if the whole of our Christianity would but consist in spirit and words without any manifestation of what is called "practical Christianity"?[102]

This dictum of 'whoever does not work must not eat' was predominantly echoed in the discussion on the industries as sites of promotion of a Christian order. H. Kuhner, superintendent of the industrial establishments at Calicut and its outstations in Codacal and Palghaut explained their unique position vis-a-vis educational work,

> First of all our workshops have been established to give a livelihood to our Christians…but in addition, our establishments are also educational institutions and it is this what I must consider the crown and beauty of my calling. To the head of an industrial establishment opportunities are offered to exert a beneficial influence over his people, which is even not always attainable by the Pastor of a congregation.I remember a Missionary, who, when I was introduced to him said : 'O, you belong to the money making missionaries! I should very much like to give that friend an opportunity to be the Manager of one of our Establishments…and I am sure he would be astonished to find himself confronted with an overwhelming amount of spiritual

[102] J. Frohmeyer, *Report of the Third Decennial Missionary Conference*, held at Bombay, 1892-93, Volume II, (Bombay: American Mission Press, 1893), 500.

work, if he did his duty as a Christian.[103]

All these measures, the mission hoped, would lead to a community of self-reliant Christians, able-bodied physically and morally, to deliberate upon the matters of their own lives and churches. Such Christians were also immensely desirable to the Basel Mission who were desperate to improve their standing in local society, and shun the image of a religion comprising 'rice-Christians' alone.

Conclusion

What emerges from the above analysis is the ways in which the BM sought to demonstrate the 'practical' implications of a Christian way of living. Unlike the CMS and LMS that allowed groups to convert, the BM focussed on individuals, whom they sought to transform into better Christians and workers. Their provision of schools and industries were part of a larger programme of enabling poor Christians to demonstrate the values of their new faith. The missionaries, given their own agricultural backgrounds, took the lead in demonstrating the same, and were desirous of a distinct Christian community in Malabar, marked by self-reliance, industriousness, and piety. These aims, however, were implemented withtin a racially charged framework in which norms of Pietism were propagated. It involved the wielding of excessive control; religious and physical, over the lives of poor children admitted to the Basel orphanages, workers, and church members. This assumption of authority with punitive measures did not go unchallenged. The running away of children in the orphans, and the refusal of educated youth to be restricted in the villages, were signs of the greater tensions underpinning these interactions.

[103] The Fifty-Eighth Report of the Basel German Evangelical Mission for 1897, (Mangalore,: Mangalore Mission Press, 1898), 116.

Chapter Four

Cultivating Virtue: Children and Classrooms

Introduction

The Protestant missionary message that anyone can learn to read and directly access the Christian scriptures carried with it an emancipatory potential.[1] Denied access to traditional Hindu scriptural texts and discriminated in indigenous schools, untouchable caste groups found opportunities in Protestant educational establishments. Within the churches and outside on the streets, markets, and households, Christians and non-Christians encountered a variety of printed literature through these missionaries such as hymn-books, religious tracts, Bibles, school-books, magazines, and newspapers from the early nineteenth century onwards. These led to new technologies of literary production which gave way to avenues for self-expression, political propaganda, and contributed to a longer struggle for democratisation of education. Most importantly, for the missionaries, a culture of literacy which revolved around the ability to read the Bible was paramount to the fashioning of a Christian subject.[2]

Books also came to symbolise colonial British administrative power.[3] They comprised, as Bernard Cohn notes, a system of knowledge about colonial subjects which

[1] P. Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[2] Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal,*(New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012), 44. For a detailed exploration of the influence of Bible reading on the formation of a Christian self, see Ian Green, 'Hearing' and 'Reading': Disseminating Bible Knowledge and Fostering Bible Understanding in Early Modern England," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530-1700* eds. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith, and Rachel Judith Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 272-286.

[3]Eliza F. Kent, "Books and Bodies: Material Culture and Protestant Missions in Colonial South India", in *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions* eds. James C. Scott and G. Griffiths (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 67.

was collected, classified, and codified, according to dominant racial prejudices and Orientalist stereotypes.[4] The written word came to be associated with the exercise of a bureaucratic power that devalued indigenous oral traditions. Both religious and secular knowledge came to be conveyed through the usage of printed books, many of which were translations and adaptations of European works.[5] The transmission of English in the colony, as per the agenda of the Anglicists who trumped the Orientalists in the infamous controversy over the best medium of education in colonial India during the 1830s opened a new market for the British and local publishing companies. The spread of primary education and formulation of school curriculums in the post 1854 phase also contributed to the emergence of disciplines such as geography, cartography, ethnography etc., which were intricately linked to imperialism.[6]

However, in the nineteenth century, cultures of orality in colonial Kerala could not be easily replaced by print.[7] Instead, printed books were used alongside a range of existing literary and oral traditions, and not available for a greater number until the latter half of the period. Amongst these, it was the school text-book that was able to quickly gain a wider audience due to the demand from schools, growth in literates, and educational policies.

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[4] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996)

[5] The infamous Anglicist-Orientalist controversy of the 1830s in colonial India favoured English education. It was held that European works of literature and science were superior, and should be translated and adaped into the vernacular languages for educational purposes. For an overview, see *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist Controversy*, *1781-1843* eds. Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir (London and New York: Curzon Press, 1999)

[6] For a collection of essays on the relationship between cartography and imperialism, see *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire* ed. James R.Ackerman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009). On the emergence of geography as a discipline see, *Geography and Imperialism, 1820-1940* eds. Morag Bell, Robin Butlin, and Michael Heffernan (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

[7] Stuart H. Blackburn, *Print, Folklore, and Nationalism in Colonial South India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), 1-26.

Textbooks became a dominant pedagogical aid in mission and government schools which was conveyed to pupils via the medium of the teacher. Within the classrooms, textbooks came to be increasingly perceived as a more 'authorised' source of knowledge and mediated by state approval; a repository of facts and information on various subjects, on which examinations were conducted to assess school-going children's performances and eligibility for future administrative employment.[8]

Ezhuthupallis and *kudipallikoodams* were part of a literary culture based on palm-leaf manuscripts. Into this, Protestant groups and the colonial government introduced printed schoolbooks of various kinds, including primers, readers, grammar books, and dictionaries, reaching children across the region. School-book readers comprised aspects of various subject-knowledges in a graduated manner to enable children of varying ages to learn reading. Influenced by an increasing emphasis on a reading tradition as prevalent in Europe, which was spurred on by the advances made by printing technology and mass education, Protestant missionaries found it difficult to navigate the colonial landscape without similar resources.[9] In addition to their cultural outlook, evangelicals also looked towards reading skills as crucial to baptismal instruction. Christians were required to know how to read the Bible without which distinct practices of prayer were not possible. If schools were to attract pupils to Christianity in a widespread illiterate society, mass printed books were indispensable as it was hoped that children would read aloud to their families and immediate neighbours.

[8] Krishna Kumar, "Origins of India's Textbook Culture," *Occasional Papers on History and Society*, XLVII, New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1987)

[9] David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000)

Eventually, textbooks became a major commodity that a large number of children, cutting across backgrounds, consumed together at a given point in time. There was no fixed list of textbooks used in the mission schools during the 1830s and 1840s, when formal schooling initiatives were taking place. Mostly religious in nature, mission vernacular schools in the villages used biblical tracts and catechistical texts interchangeably as school-books to teach reading and writing.

Since the mid-nineteenth century onwards, a process of standardisation of the Malayalam language and developments in printing also emerged.[10] Under the aegis of some of the Protestant missionaries such as Charles Mead of the LMS, Hermann Gundert of the BM, Benjamin Bailey of the CMS, and many others, school-books began to be written and compiled in the vernacular language.[11] These were used in various mission educational institutions and remained largely unregulated. This scenario changed after the declaration of Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854 which directed provinces to establish Text-Book Committees. A curricula was drawn up for various levels of instruction and authors were assigned to write textbooks in a manner appropriate to the age and learning abilities of pupils.[12] Responsibility was placed on the provincial textbook committees, with nominated members consisting Europeans and Indians from the educational inspectorate, to prepare textbooks. However, private schools, aided or unaided still enjoyed a relative independence with regard to the selection of their own set of textbooks from the prescribed list.

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[10] School textbooks employed a standardised language where certain vernacular dialects and scripts were formalised. These played a central role in developing the language of the 'public sphere'. See Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2007)

[11] Benjamin Bailey of the CMS at Kottayam established a printing press and undertook the translation into Malayalam of Syriac scriptures. He published a Malayalam dictionary in 1846, which was followed a version by Richard Collins in 1865. In 1872, Hermann Gundert published the Malayalam-English dictionary.

[12] The Travancore Text-Book Committee was established during Ayilyam Thirunal's reign in 1867.

A subject that was most prioritised in mission schools was moral education, and it was sought to be instilled through language readers which were popular in elementary schools. With curbs placed on the usage of bibles and Christian scriptures during school hours, school textbooks began to emphasise on the transmission of idioms of self-improvement and appropriate moral behaviour. School-going children were targeted for inculcating in them a set of moral traits, considered requisite for the practise of discipline and Christian norms of respectability.

Of these, language readers were prominently used during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Kerala as efforts began to be concentrated upon primary education. With an aim of expanding literacy among labouring populations, primary schools used Malayalam and English language readers, anthologies of poetry and prose, moral fables, and other subject-related books. These readers also combined aspects of various subjects such as physical geography, history, elementary science, morality, health, and political economy, to enable the development of reading skills while often adopting a didactic tone. Two sets of language readers will be examined in this chapter. Targeted at colonised children inhabiting an agrarian world, these books primarily harped on an idiom of self-improvement and sought to construct labour and learning as virtues. The readers under consideration include some Malayalam readers approved by the Department of Public Instruction of the Madras Presidency and Travancore. Another set consists of the English language readers published by the Christian Vernacular Education and Literature Society of India (CVELSI) at Madras; an umbrella organisation of major Protestant missionary societies in southern India. These books were used in the various LMS, Basel Mission, and CMS schools of

Travancore and Cochin, which functioned on grants-in-aid from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.[13]

Print Pedagogy and Protestantism

Although Jesuit and Catholic missionaries used certain books for ecclesiastical purposes between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries on the south-western coast, they were not available for mass circulation and remained in the hands of a few. This changed with the establishment of printing presses by the three main Protestant missionary societies active in Travancore-Cochin and Malabar; the LMS, CMS and the Basel Mission. Upon their arrival, unable to pursue preaching among local populations without a knowledge of the vernaculars, the missionaries felt the need for grammars and dictionaries which would aid them. They also required large amounts of Christian literature such as bibles, tracts, and handbills to be distributed on their itinerancy tours so as to reach a wider audience. In 1820, Charles Mead of the LMS began the earliest printing press at Nagercoil to publish religious tracts and Tamil translations of the Bible and prayer-books. Over time, young male pupils of the LMS School of Industry were trained for the printing and book-binding workshops.[14] At Kottayam, a press was established in 1821 by Benjamin Bailey of the CMS, from where a Malayalam translation of the Bible was published in 1842. Along with his fellow workers, Bailey cast one of the earliest Malayalam fonts used by the press, which quickly gained popularity. Impressed by these developments, the Maharajah of Travancore, Swati Thirunal,

[13] Textbooks in a continuous time series for various editions were unavailable in the archives and libraries pursued. The exact year of publication of the CVELSI readers from the SOAS Archives were not specified. But most of them are from the 1870-1900.

[14] V.Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual* Volume 2, (Trivandrum: Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1999), 484

urged the establishment of the first government press in 1838, of which Mead became a Superintendent in 1863. Printing began in Malabar and south Canara with the Basel Mission presses in Mangalore (1841) and Tellicherry (1845) for Kannada and Malayalam respectively.[15]They produced better-quality works and the Mangalore Press, in particular, was later entrusted by the Department of Public Instruction of the Madras Presidency to undertake the printing of numerous school books in the vernacular until the first half of the twentieth century.

An aspect of the bitter polemical debates between Christianity and various religions in colonial India was the critique of oral instruction based on recitation and memorisation in indigenous schools by Protestant missionaries and East India Company officials.[16] Primarily targeting upper caste and madrassa learning traditions, traditional pedagogy was accused of producing 'parrot-like' pupils, who learnt by rote and repeated verses without understanding the meaning of words. These far-reaching condemnations of the stress on sound in pre-colonial education, indicated a wider ideological difference, and framed colonial discussions on what constituted a 'proper' pedagogy.[17] But as Ankur Kakkar asserts, indigenous schools in the major provinces employed creative ways of teaching, and transmitted a moral and practical instruction.[18] There were continuities with colonial traditions of schooling, as many indigenous teachers were absorbed into the new system.

[15] Graham Shaw, "Printing at Mangalore and Tellicherry by the Basel Mission" *Libri* , 27 (1977), 154-164.

[16] Robert A. Yelle, *The Language of Disenchantment: Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 103-105.

[17] Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 32.

[18] Ankur Kakkar, "Education, Empire and the Heterogeneity of Investigative Modalities": A Reassessment Of Colonial Surveys On Indigenous Indian Education," *Paedagogica Historica,* 4 (2017): 381–393

However, teaching the poor to read posed new challenges to missionary educators. Before the advent of a bureaucratised educational structure, owing to the lack of well-equipped schools, trained teachers, and irregular pupil attendance, mission schools attempted to impart reading solely intended at catechism. Untouchable caste children and adults were gathered in Sunday school services, night schools, and sometimes, mission day schools, where they were instructed in the scriptures. Books were scarce and much of the learning involved memorisation of Biblical passages from catechists or teachers who read aloud to listeners, a method akin to that of indigenous education. Mission catechists desired that children learn biblical verses and read or utter them aloud to their illiterate families and communities, thereby spreading the evangelical message. The habit of reading aloud which formed the crux of indigenous schools, thus, persisted in missionary pedagogical strategies for instructing the poor, until the turn of the century.

> '…it has been cheering to gather round us little groups of women and children able to read the Word of God, and to hear them repeat texts they have learned, telling of a Saviour's love and power to save. Christian lyrics are sung by many of them, hymns are committed to memory, in various ways, the truth is finding an entrance into these homes…[19]

In 1898, Miss Baker reported on the Sunday-schools under her charge, and reiterated that **"**everything has to be taught by word of mouth". [20]

> Adults and children are seated on the ground in semi-circles round each teacher who may be honoured with a stool or seated on a mat. One teacher may be repeating the Lord's Prayers, a word or a short sentence at a time. The class repeats it after him in an audible whisper at first, which produces a confused murmur. As they warm to their

[19] James Duthies, Nagercoil Station, as cited in Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* (London: W.H.Allen & Co, 1883), 215.

[20] Miss. Baker, "Sunday-Schools in Travancore", *CMG* Vol. XXV, May (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1898), 74

> work, it rises into a din of sounds, dying away when suppressed, only to rise again louder than ever. Another may be giving a Bible lesson, or a class may be spelling out a chapter in the New Testament.[21]

Unable to comprehend the centrality of long tradition of story-telling within local communities, Miss. Baker remarked that children suffered from the "the curious inability to read to themselves in silence, or to commit anything to memory without reading or saying it out aloud".[22] But she concluded that it served another purpose which was useful to the mission

> …though distracting and productive of headaches to English people, has one great advantage. As a child learns its lessons at night, all in the house are beneffited by hearing it. The Lord's Prayer and texts are often learnt in this way by the parents and relatives of the children.[23]

Children and adults from slave and lower castes were instructed in the fundamentals of the gospel comprising various prayers, the Ten Commandments, and biblical excerpts during their 'probation time', i.e, between the candidate's acceptance of catechistical instruction and actual baptism.[24] Reading the scriptures was infused with a sense of the sacred which conveyed a deeper meaning for those who listened.In a letter to an acquaintance, Charles

[21] Ibid., 74.

[22] Miss. Baker, "Sunday-Schools in Travancore", *CMG* Vol. XXV, May (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1898), 74

[23] Ibid., 74.

[24] George Oommen, "Strength of Tradition and Weakness of Communication: Central Kerala Dalit Conversion" in *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia: Continuities and Change, 1800-1900* ed. Geoffrey A. Oddie (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), 82.

Mault of the LMS argued that Christian instruction made a difference to 'native character', due to the technological innovations occurring in Western Europe.[25]

> That mighty engine- the press, that has made such a moral revolution in Europe, is also in motion here…as printed books in this part of the world are a novelty, they are generally received and read with avidity. And though the Hindoo is reluctant in the extreme to deviate from the way in which forefathers walked, yet he likes to talk about something new, so that a knowledge of the things contained in the tracts will reach the ears of those who are not able to read, who form the great mass of the people.[26]

The printing and distribution of Christian literature and expansion of mission schools led to the creation of a new reading public in Travancore beyond Christian communities. It reached those hitherto denied access to a public-sphere dominated by caste fissures. W. Miller of the CMS noted that tracts were distributed whenever opportunities occurred.[27] 'They are, in general, cordially received, and read by many, who still are professed heathens,' he recorded,

> …In the schools which are situated in forty-six different places, there are about two thousand children instructed in the doctrines of the Bible. The art of reading has thus been extensively diffused, and hence has risen a greater demand for books.[28]

With an entry of a larger number of illiterate children from various castes into different mission schools, Protestant missions felt an acute need for textbooks. Soon, they introduced school primers and readers for use in their Sunday, vernacular and Anglo-

[25] Letter from Rev. Charles Mault to C.J.Metcalfe, Esq, Bedfordshire, *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, (London: LMS, 1824), 542.

[26] Ibid., 541.

[27] Letter from W. Miller from Palamcotta, *The Missionary Herald at Home and Abroad*, Volume 29, (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1833), 210.

[28] Ibid.

vernacular schools in Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. Often, with the help of local scholars and teachers, the translation and adaptation work of textbooks was undertaken, usually on the lines of those prevalent in England and America at the time. In the 1830s, the Nagercoil LMS Press printed Tamil and English spelling books, Watt's first and second Catechisms, and a compendium on English grammar for use in their schools.[29]

School primers helped children learn the alphabet by breaking down syllables and teaching them words through association. The school readers, as the name suggests, were primarily meant to enable reading, according to the level of progress of the pupil, and was a myriad mix of scriptural passages, moral fables, stories and songs; some of which were selections made from books popular in contemporary England and America such as the Edinburgh based Chambers' moral readers.[30] The examination of children in Travancore in1840 illustrates how missionaries negotiated the subject of religious education. On a tour of the LMS Tamil stations in Travancore, John Abbs examined forty children in a school at Culootoorry. "I was pleased," he writes,

> …to find that although all the children are of heathen parentage, they were tolerably acquainted with the facts of Scripture, and the leading doctrines of the Gospel. It was cheering to hear them bear testimony to the truths of our Divine religion in the presence of their idolatrous relatives. In answer to my questions, they said ,with greatest readiness, "There is but one living and True God;", "It is wicked to offer sacrifices to devils, or worship images;", "We are all sinners by nature",… and other such

[29] 'Religious Intelligence- Missions of the Madras and Travancore District Committee of the London Missionary Society', *The Oriental Christian Spectator*, Volume 4, No 12 (Bombay: American Mission Press, 1833),210

[30] Many of the excerpts in the English Readers of the Madras School Series were taken verbatim from school books used in nineteenth century America and England. These were criticised for not connecting with the lives of Indian children. See *Report of the Indian Education Commission* (Calcutta: Government Printing Press, 1882), 346

declarations…The people looked at each other and whispered, but made no audible objections.[31]

The Bible in colonial Kerala's indigenous reading culture began to occupy a central place for poor Christians who were slowly acquiring literacy skills. Intermeshed with a culture of orality, the use of Bible in prayer-meetings and other gatherings held different meanings as its contents struck a deeply sentimental chord for the labouring classes. Notions of suffering and sin resonated with newly converted untouchable communities who found in the Bible an outlet for their spiritual feelings.[32] In Mundycadoo, a LMS agent named Devasagayam narrated the value of religious books in his life, and the ways in which he turned to them. Having successfully remembered his lessons in school after a period of prolonged illness as a young boy, he was rewarded with the first book printed at the Nagercoil press titled 'Spiritual Instruction' which contained principles of religion and a few verses from the Psalms.[33] 'I valued it very much,' reported Devasagayam, to his benefactors,

On one occasion, when one of my younger brothers was attacked with cholera, and I was alone with him in the house, I thought not of medicine, but knelt down and prayed with him till my parents returned…[34]

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[31] Extract of a letter from Rev John Abbs, Neyoor, south Travancore, dated May 15, 1840, *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, October, New Series, Vol 18 (London: Thomas Ward & Co.1840), 517.

[32] P. Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015) PAGE

[33] *The Missionary Magazine and Chronicle*, Volumes 10-12, November (London: Thomas Ward & Co., 1847), 75

[34] Ibid.

As Daniel Resnick argues, being a religion based on the book, the ability to read, if not write, was essential in Christian mission schooling.[35] Pupils responded to a set framework of questions and memorisation became key to learning. Many missionaries, acutely aware of the problems emanating from this method urged employers back home to offer more books and learning aids such as maps and globes. A.F.Cammerer of Nazareth, Tinnevelly stated,

> The chief defect in our method of education is sameness. All the knowledge that the boys acquire is scriptural. They get tired of always reading the same book, and their reverence for the Bible is lessened by familiarity.[36]

This worry is indicative of the blurring of lines between the sacred and secular sphere of learning in mission schools. In an attempt to impress upon children the distinct textual authority possessed by the Bible, its use as an everyday school book minimised this very objective. Perhaps, this partly explains why Bible classes in schools attended by Hindu children across castes did not easily translate into conversions. Very often, missionary intentions were ignored by local teachers, including Christians, for whom Bible instruction seemed to be yet another mundane task and treated it as a compendium of stories to be narrated. John Murdoch, a prominent missionary educationist, upon becoming the Secretary of the Christian Vernacular Education Society, points to this 'defect' as he called it.

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[35]Daniel P. Resnick, "Historical Perspectives on Literacy and Schooling," *Daedalus*, Vol. 119, No. 2, Literacy in America (1990), 15-32

[36] "The Urgent Need of Increased Efforts on Behalf of India" *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Vol. VI, (London: Seeley, Jackson,and Halliday, 1855), 81.

> …in Scripture lessons the teachers content themselves, in the great majority of cases, with examining the children on the mere facts: they only put verbal questions; they rarely attempt to draw practical instructions from God's word- to teach their scholars to apply its precepts to the regulation of their lives.[37]

Despite bitter opposition to Bible-teaching, many non-Christian children attended scriptural classes in the schools, and missionaries pointed to the larger role Biblical texts played in creating a sense of order in children, and inculcating certain disciplinary values in them. They argued that the study of the Bible in government schools was a sign of the change in attitudes occurring in local society. It was oft-quoted that when the teacher John Roberts became the Head Master of the Rajah's Free School in Trivandrum, he requested that Bible-classes be rescinded.

> Thus the sacred Scriptures found their way into houses and palaces to which Missionaries could have no access, and were read in the hearing of the great, the proud, and the hostile perhaps, by their own children.[38]

The monarch not only permitted the continuation of the classes, but also donated 250 rupees for the purchase of Bibles.[39] Perhaps, the Bible as a text imparting lessons on morality was greatly appreciated than its evangelical potent. Underplaying the resistance towards bible-learning that prevailed in the same school, the author noted,

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[37] Ibid.,83.

[38]'Christian Education for India', *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, Volume 3 (Wesleyan Conference Office: London, 1864), 346

[39] Ibid.

> …after a while, not a single dissident remained: and from that time to the present the Bible has been read in the school by the Brahman, the Sudra-, the Chogan, the Mohammedan, the Parsee, the Papist, the Syrian-in short, by all who are able to read it, and without any objection or murmur of complaint.[40]

The Bible as a text was supposed to be privately read to enable in-depth study and reflection, and pupils were encouraged to follow the same. Such habits of following the Bible was heralded by evangelical missions as a marker of change in transforming the 'native' character of children in Travancore, and making them question their traditional beliefs. It was the first step towards accepting conversion, according to mission educators, and they continued offering the Bible as rewards in their schools for best conduct to encourage children to take the religious message to their illiterate homes. An extract from J.Harding's journal from Allepie capture these evangelical sentiments. Writing about a young Chogan (Ezhava) boy of nineteen years of age, Harding noted,

> His parents are respectable Chogans, and he was the heir, also, to a good deal of property belonging to his uncle about two years ago, he began to attend one of our village schools, two miles from hence, and has ever since been *privately* reading and learning Christian books; for his relatives were all greatly opposed, and had threatened to use violent measures if he persisted in attending our church and schools. He was forcefully taken away once, but has since returned to be baptised.[41]

[40] Ibid., 346.

[41] Extracts from J. Harding's journals, Alleppie, May 23, *Church Missionary Register* (London: Seeley, Jackon & Halliday, 1853), 474

Books in the Classroom

The catechism mode of instruction continued well past the 1840s but a significant change was visible in schooling practices due to policy and institutional changes. These included developments in educational theory, expansion of vernacular and teacher-training schools, and increase in the usage of textbooks in Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. Immensely influenced by shifts in pedagogical theory across the world, Protestant missionaries and colonial authorities in south India adopted methods such as the popular object lessons of Johann Pestalozzi and initiated Friederich Froebel's kindergarten classes.[42] Since the early decades of the nineteenth century, they advocated object lessons in schools for the working poor in England and Scotland, which was simultaneously brought to colonised populations.[43] According to Pestalozzi, the object lesson ought to encourage children to discover the world on their own.[44] By providing the freedom to explore and question, their sense perception and cognitive skills were sought to be developed from the concrete to the abstract. Children were taught using natural objects from their immediate surroundings, and spontaneous activity was promoted. In colonial India, however, objects came to be largely replaced by pictures in schools. These methods made way into school-textbooks which comprised descriptive information on various objects, animals, birds, and commodities, with a set of instructions to teachers to ask specific questions to the pupils.

A definite policy of textbook formulation emerged in Travancore as part of the

[42] Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was a Swiss educational reformer who emphasised on allowing the child to determine his/her learning by observation and self-discovery. Friederich Froebel(1782-1852) was one of Pestalozzi's most famous students, and established the model of schooling for infant children known as kindergarten (German term), popular in the Madras Presidency

[43] Parna Sengupta, "Object Lesson in Colonial Pedagogy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 1 (2003): 96-121.

[44] Gerald L.Gutek, *An Historical Introduction to American Education: Third Edition* (LongGrove: Waveland Press, 2013)248

modernisation reforms set in motion by the administration. In 1867, a Textbook Committee was appointed to select suitable textbooks for use in government schools, especially modelled on European works of literature. This heralded the expansion of modern Malayalam literature, notes K.M George, as textbooks pushed changes in literary genres.[45] The first chairman of the Travancore Textbook Committee appointed by the Dewan Madhava Rao, was Annaji Subbayar, the English tutor to the young prince. But he did not know Malayalam, and much of the work was assigned to the other members, Raman Thampi, a grammarian, and famous of them all, Kerala Varma Covil Thampuran.[46] Under the aegis of Kerala Varma, a litterateur and Sanskrit scholar, who later become the chairman of the Committee, textbook production was actively taken up. With a keen interest in modernising Malayalam, and producing textbooks of good quality, Kerala Varma ordered the translation of prevalent school books such as Euclid and Duncan's Geography into the vernacular. For the higher classes, he compiled school anthologies known as *Gadyavalis* (prose) and *Padyavalis* (poetry). To name a few, these included Euclid, Duncan's Geography of India, and Treatises on Truthful Evidence, Health, and History of India, all of which remained in use for decades.[47]

A decade earlier, in 1857, Hermann Gundert of the Basel Mission was appointed the first school inspector of government schools in Malabar and south Canara. In recognition of his long standing work on Malayalam literature and language, including the publication of

[45] K.M.George, *Western Influence on Malayalam Language and Literature*, (Thrissur: Sahitya Akademi, 1972), 71-72

[46] Kerala Varma Covil Thampuran (1844-1917) was the husband of the senior Rani of Travancore, and nephew to the King.

[47] The textbooks used in Travancore were prescribed by the Department of Education of the Madras Presidency for Malabar schools. For details of the curricula for high, middle, and primary schools, see Appendix No.XCVI 'Curricula of Study in the Different Classes of Government Educational Institutions' in *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, Vol.2 (Madras: Government Press, 1885), 535-542

an Anglo-Malayalam dictionary, Gundert was considered suitable for the job. His assumption of multiple roles was, however, not coincidental. He was an enthusiastic philologist and linguist and spent a considerable period of time documenting local Malayalam dialects, proverbs, songs, folktales, prose, and verse. Upon his arrival in north Malabar in the late 1830s, Gundert felt an acute lack of vernacular school books, a sentiment repeatedly echoed across official and missionary circles. Keeping with the Basel mission's overall policy of promoting vernacular education, and his own interest in recording local histories, Gundert, drew from prevalent oral and literary traditions to compose history (*Keralapazhama*) and geography (*Malabar Rajyam*) books on Malabar.[48] The production of a local history and geography, intended to instil in children a sense of territoriality and certain linear notions of the past. *Keralapazhama* and *Malabar rajyam* found immense success as school textbooks, where for decades, children were schooled in a supposedly homogenous understanding of the region's historical development, some of which was also borrowed from mythical traditions.

Gundert also found success with the publication of *Orayiram Pazhanchol* (A Thousand Proverbs) and *Pazhamcholumala*, (A Garland of Proverbs). These were used across the Basel mission's schools, finding popularity in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin as well. His writings marked a process of vernacularisation in textbook production which hitherto had been dependent on translating European literary works. However, in his school anthology such as *Paatamala*, certain elements of long -standing

[48] Hermann Gundert was also the first school Inspector of Malabar and south Canara, from 1857-59. *Keralapazhama* traced the history of the Malabar Coast for thirty years from the arrival of Vasco da Gama. *Malabar rajyam* traced the geography of a similar period.

moral traditions found space such as the tales from the Panchatantra, *Hitopadesha*, *Ramayanam* and *Nala charitam*.

Apart from the textbooks distributed by the Madras School Book Society which was founded in 1821, mission establishments were also supplied and monitored by the Christian Vernacular Literature and Education Society, a joint effort of four British Protestant missionary societies. Its ardent aim was to establish a system of Christian education by training Christian teachers and supplying mission schools with Christian literature. Established in 1858 after the tumultuous events of the previous year, the Society played an important role in compiling and circulating school books for village schools under the secretary-ship of John Murdoch. In this capacity, he extensively revised mission school books and instructed missionaries across colonial India frequently on Christian modes of teaching.[49] A staunch advocate of a Christian education, Murdoch sought support from the British government and sent petitions to administrators on the 'problematic' content of their school-books and teaching methods. The government did not always respond favourably but sometimes the Text Book Committees took note of Murdoch's interventions.

Writing about the importance of establishing an exclusive Christian literature society, Murdoch called indigenous education "corrupt at the core in all its moral teaching, poor in its mental training, and defective in its whole scholastic apparatus"[50] while governmental education was described as,

on principle, non-Christian, having a direct tendency to emancipate the heathen from the thraldom of idolatry, without substituting in its place any faith in, or respect for, true

[49] John Murdoch compiled., *Hints on Education in India with Special Reference to Vernacular Schools*, (Madras, The Christian Vernacular Education Society, 1871)

[50]*First Annual Report of the Christian Vernacular Education and Literature Society for India*, 1859, (London:CVELSI,1859),12 Council for World Mission Archives, SOAS: United Society for Christian Literature, Christian Literature Society (India), FBN 1, p. 13.

religion; and thereby raising up a large class of intelligent natives, who are proving themselves bitter enemies to Christianity...[51]

Murdoch was extremely critical of indigenous models of education and books, as well as existent missionary techniques of teaching. Often, he accused missionary teachers of rote-teaching, neglect of younger children, and lack of discipline. He was insistent on the paramount importance of Christian lessons in the schools and advocated that 'care should be taken to use *expurgated* editions of Native classics.'[52]

In 1873, a resolution was passed by the Government of India seeking an inquiry into the question of text-books in different provinces. Based on the reports received, a meeting of representatives was convened to discuss the formation of textbook committees.[53] An earlier proposal that there be a set of imperial readers across government schools in the colonial provinces was vehemently disapproved by local authorities. It was not a feasible idea in economic terms and was believed to have negative cultural ramifications.[54] Hence, in 1877, it was decided that a more appropriate policy would be to establish separate provincial Vernacular and English textbook committees which would be mandated to select, designate authors, and publish vernacular textbooks in various subjects. It was also resolved that the committees should draw up a list of textbooks which were to be used in government and aided schools. On the question of the principles guiding the preparation of vernacular readers for primary instruction, the Committee maintained the following,

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[51] Ibid.

[52] John Murdoch compiled., *Hints on Education in India with Special Reference to Vernacular Schools*, (Madras, The Christian Vernacular Education Society, 1871), xxi

[53]*Report of the Indian Education Commission* (Calcutta: Government Printing Press, 1882),338

[54]Ibid., 339-340

(1) Reverence for God, parents, teachers, rulers, and the aged;

(2) A simple sketch of the duties of a good citizen and universally admitted principles of morality and prudence,

(3) Cleanliness of habits, politeness of speech, kindness of conduct to other human beings, and the brute creation.

(4) The dignity and usefulness of labour, and the importance of agriculture, commerce, the various trades, professions, and handicrafts.

(5) The advantages of bodily exercise.

(6) The properties of plants, uses of minerals, and metals

(7) The habits of animals, characteristics of different races, common natural phenomena, fables, and historical and biographical episodes chiefly derived from Oriental sources.[55]

These provide an insight into the workings of an educational bureaucracy that shared many civilising objectives with mission educators. The insistence of certain virtues of conduct was part of the emergent civics education in British-India which sought to produce 'dutiful', governable and law-abiding subjects.[56] The colonial state's agenda of instructing children on topics such as health, agriculture, geographical landscapes, and natural properties of the world was a bid to 'educate' the colonised about themselves through a colonialist ethnographic lens. Much of the information on the readers was based on the numerous surveys carried out by the administration in order to study its subjects, and based on many assumptions about the low intellect and civilizational advancement of the colony.

[55]Ibid.,340.

[56]Sudipa Topdar, "Duties of a 'good citizen': Colonial Secondary School Textbook Policies In Late Nineteenth-Century India" Volume 6, Issue 3: Childhoods in India: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives, *South Asian History and Culture* 3 (2015): 417-439.

These essential guidelines determined the content of Malayalam language readers as well which exposed children were also exposed to a variety of information laced with moral maxims. In Malabar, Liston Garthwaite, the chief school inspector, was appointed as the President of the Malayalam and Canarese books revision committee but even until 1875, no report had been forwarded on the matter.[57] Garthwaite was known for having undertaken a revision of Gundert's catechism of Malayalam grammar, and the writing of a set of Malayalam readers. He adopted a new pedagogical approach whereby the pupil was not to learn the whole alphabet before beginning to read but only one or two of the common letters, only at a time, by being combined into easy words. These easy words were then connected to form easy sentences, and by the end of their lessons, pupils could graduate towards learning all the letters of the alphabet.[58] This model was widely used in the schools of the Madras Presidency and Travancore.

Shaping Morals

Textbooks also shaped constructions of childhood through its representations. Who was an 'ideal' or 'good' child in these textbooks? Schools became arenas for fashioning the moral subjectivities of child readers, and even for non-Christian converts, a process of Christianisation through missionary education was meant to shape them. This dual-intention laden project for improvement became a characteristic feature of education for the colonized and evident in the content of textbooks used in their classrooms.[59] As long

[57] *Report of the Committee for the Revision of English , Telugu, and Tamil School Books in the Madras Presidency*,(Madras: Government Press, 1875), 51

[58] Ibid., 51

[59]For a detailed explanation of the various 'civilizing missions', see Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann eds. *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India*, (London: Anthem Press, 2004). See also, *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Post Colonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development* eds. Carey Anthony Watt and Michael Mann (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2011).

as missionary schooling did not make pressing demands and create dissent amongst the poor, the governments--colonial and princely-- did not intervene greatly as well.

From a missionary perceptive, it was the converted Christian child who underwent an inner transformation and displayed belief through action. A'good child' was kind, hard-working, loyal, honest, trustworthy, and self-reliant; traits that lay at the core of his/her 'usefulness', both as a Christian and a law-abiding member of the larger society. Industry became the characteristic virtue, dependent upon a regime of learning. Pitted against 'idleness' and 'slothfulness', the cultivation of industriousness in children was to advance their moral and physical selves. Emerging out of the changing economic conditions in industrial England, the discourse of industry, however, was a broad one. It not only encompassed attitudes to work, but life itself, and encouraged children to use their time and energies efficiently to maintain spiritual and material health.

Robert Chambers' *Moral Class-Book*, from which excerpts were widely used in school readers in colonial India from the 1850s onwards, highlighted the overwhelming importance of industry.[60] His book emphasized the need for children (particularly boys) to be taught the values of compassion towards animals and fellow-beings, truthfulness, loyalty, compassion, to name a few. Compiled using excerpts from other moral books prevalent at the time with his own expositions of each moral trait, Chambers' *Moral Class- Book* became a standard textbook whose lessons were adapted for children across colonies in their school education.[61] Hailing from a humble, village background, the Scottish brothers, Robert and

[60] William and Robert Chambers eds., *The Moral Class Book* (London and Edinburgh: W & R. Chambers, 1856) This was a compilation of moral lessons from various American and English moral books, on a number of virtues which the authors considered important for every reader to acquire. To name a few, lessons were divided into industry, contentment, respect towards elders, honesty, courtesy, modesty, conscientiousness, generosity, benevolence. Etc. It also included lessons on temperance, heroism, and other 'healthy' habits for the preservation of the body.

[61] Ibid

William Chambers, entered the world of educational publishing, and targeted the industrial and agricultural working classes. They believed that cheap educational literature comprising various subject-knowledges should be made available for those unable to attend formal schools. Self-education was key to moral improvement for these groups, and went beyond mere literacy skills. Knowledge acquired through such habits of learning was upheld as a remedy for slothfulness and dishonesty, of which colonised populations were also immensely accused. It was viewed as a necessary pathway towards the acquisition of certain moral resources, without which societies could not progress. Those who failed to partake of such an education was considered susceptible to social ills. The preface to the fifth English reader of the Madras School Series which borrowed heavily from the Chambers' texts, stated these aims as follows.

> in the selection of Poetical pieces, one object has been to place before the native pupil duties to God, to one's parents, to our neighbour, the virtues of Integrity, Charity, Truth, Honesty, Industry and such Moral lessons as may be inculcated in the simple language of verse and in a form easily impressed on the memory.[62]

John Bradshaw, the author, was keen to adapt and include only those excerpts from well-known English moral texts, which would be suited for the Indian child reader. The Madras English School series were primarily targeted at improving reader and each section consisted of simple 'didactic stories or narratives, a lesson in natural history, and a technical piece'.[63] However, though these textbooks were solely intended to cultivate reading but also adopted a tone of Christian morality. There were frequent references to 'God', and the

[62] 'Preface', John Bradshaw, *The Fifth Anglo-Malayalam Reader*: Madras School English Series,(Mangalore: Basel Mission Book and Tract Depository, 1889)

[63] Ibid.

supposedly invisible power that guided all human action, particularly in the formation of self-hood. Comprised of selected extracts from books by Dr. Johnson, *Robinson Crusoe,* William and Robert Chambers' *Moral Class Books* and others by Matthew Hale and Thomas Fuller, the lessons taught values such as tolerance, hard-work, patience, and honesty, and verses on village life and commitment to labour. Similar themes were also present in the Malayalam school readers, which extolled the virtues of learning and labour. These depicted school as a productive pursuit which children were expected to undertake for their own self-improvement.

In 'Madiyanaaya Oru Balante Katha' (The Story of a Lazy Boy), the idea that there is a specific time for work and play is illustrated. It is a story about Kunkkan, a young boy who, one early morning, hides in the field instead of attending school. There, he requests various creatures to play with him but much to his disappointment, is rejected.[64] At first, Kunkkan asks a dog to play with him."Hey dog! Come, let's play together," said Kunkan. But the dog replied, "Oh no, I cannot afford to be lazy. I am going to protect my owner's house. Otherwise, some evil persons will break in", and sped away. Then, he spots a crow carrying sticks in his beak. The crow replies,

> I am building a nest. It has to be finished before the monsoon arrives. I cannot play with any one right now. I have an entire day's work ahead of me.[65]

Desperate to find play-mates, Kunkkan asks the bees and ants in the field but is repeatedly turned down. Upon seeing everyone busy and hard at work, the boy undergoes a transformation. He tells himself,

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[64] 'Madiyanaaya Oru Baalante Katha', *Malayalam Moonam Pusthakam*,(Bombay: Macmillan & Co.`, 1905), 11-13.

[65] Ibid., 11-12.

> What is this! Except for me, nobody in this village is lazy. The dogs, birds, small ants, and bees are active. Even I ought not to be lazy.[66]

Resolving not to waste any further time, Kunkkan runs to school before his master arrives, and 'enthusiastically begins to learn'.[67]

The CVELSI readers also exalt upon the importance of attending school, and warns readers of those who remain ignorant and unproductive in its absence. A short lesson from the Second English Reader stated,

> Now is the time to learn, if you wish to be wise when you are men. It is a sad thing to lose time…Never be late for school. A late boy is often a lazy boy. Lazy people never do much good to themselves or anybody else.[68]

Another brief extract from a lesson titled, 'The Man Sleeping by the Wayside', again stresses upon a similar theme of the correct usage of time for 'work' and 'leisure' and the ill-effects of indulging in excess.

> Look! There lies a man besides his trunk on the street…Is it good for him to sleep like this? …He who is careless is lazy. Should one sleep when there is work to be done? Do not sleep during the day. You must rest only after completing your tasks. The correct time for sleep is at night. Sleeping excessively can even cause ill-health.[69]

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[66] Madiyanaaya Oru Baalante Katha', *Malayalam Moonam Pusthakam*,(Bombay: Macmillan & Co.`, 1905), 13.

[67] Ibid., 13

[68] *Second Standard English Reader*, (Madras: CVELSI), 5. The CVELSI English Readers were accessed at the Council for World Mission Archives, SOAS, London. Some of the publications did not have the year printed in them. The archivists suggests the textbooks are from the latter half of the nineteenth century.

[69] 'The Man Sleeping by the Wayside', *Malayalam Second Reader*, (Bombay: Macmillan and Co., 1905), 8.

The Fourth Reader in the Madras English Series highlighted the need for pupils to be docile to school masters, in their own interest. In a lesson titled 'Duties of School-boys', readers were encouraged to abide by two principles. First, the importance of respecting teachers by becoming docile, which according to the author,

> consists in their submitting to the directions of their masters, and in practising what they are taught, is properly the virtue of scholars, as that of masters is to teach well.[70]

Other duties of school-boys included,

> obedience, respect for their masters, zeal for study, and a thirst after knowledge joined to an abhorrence of vice and a sincere and fervent desire of pleasing God, and referring all their actions to Him.[71]

Young pupils were also introduced to ideas of other populations and methods of schooling around the world. This created a universal connection regarding school learning. A familiarity with other cultures through depiction of children also served to construct different imaginations. In the Malayalam Third Reader of 1918, readers were introduced to children from other countries in the world. Notably, Japanese and Chinese children were described, along with their eating habits, dress, and behaviour.

> The children of Japan are well-behaved. They are extremely respectful and obedient to their *Asans* As soon as they see their teacher, they bow in respect, and the teacher does the same…They also love and worship their king ardently. They do not hesitate to even sacrifice their lives for the king. The Japanese people are very courageous. Their staple food is rice and fish… They are a country that has striven to become better. Until a

[70]*The Fourth Anglo-Malayalam Reader*, Madras English School Series, 3rd edition, (Mangalore: Basel Mission Books and Tract Depository, 1889), 1

[71] Ibid., 2

> while ago, they were in a backward condition. But today they compete with countries such as England and Germany[72]

In another chapter, the pupils were introduced to Chinese children as given below,

> Schools in china are like our *asan's ezhuthupallis.* Children sit together and read aloud. If one boy remains silent, the teacher will think he is lazy…often, the teacher keeps a cane with him to punish pupils… Chinese children do not mind being beaten with a cane but they find it disgraceful to be beaten with a broom. It is considered unlucky for their lives in the future.[73]

The CVELSI readers used object lessons for conveying moral aphorisms. In the *English Second Reader*, lessons on sensory organs and the human body referred to their inter-connectedness but presented them as a result of unique divine creation. Children were to cultivate virtues emanating from an appropriate use of each of these sensory perceptions, to lead truthful and devout lives. A lesson titled, 'The Tongue,' was as follows,

> The tongue is made to tell the truth. When the tongue tells a lie, it does that which is very wrong...When the tongue speaks bad words, it is a vile tongue...My young reader, what sort of a tongue have you? Can you tell me how to correct an evil tongue? I can tell you. Take care of your heart and think right thoughts, and you will be sure to speak right words. Pray also, "O Lord! Keep the door of my lips.[74]

Through these readers, the CVELSI also wanted to expand the reach of Christian education. Their books openly critiqued Hindu belief-systems by presenting them as superstition-

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[72] 'Japanile Kuttikal', *Malayalam Third Reader* (Macmillan and Co, 1918), 41-43

[73] 'Chinayile Kuttikal', *Malayalam Third Reader* (Macmillan and Co, 1918), 61-62

[74] Ibid., 34

ridden and fatalist. Short lessons with a moral maxim at the end was the usual format. A lesson, 'The Fortune-Teller', in the *English Third Reader* was as follows,

> An Astrologer sitting in the street, told the fortunes of passers-by. A person ran up to him in great haste, calling out that the door of his house had been broken open, and that all his goods were being stolen. The Astrologer, much troubled, ran home as fast as he could. A neighbour, who saw him, said," Oh you fellow! You say you can tell the fortunes of others; how is it you did not foresee your own?"
>
> There is no truth in astrology or omens.[75]

In a similar vein, 'The Master and the Servant', in the *English Second Reader*, accused Hindus of suffering from false beliefs.

> One day a servant stole something belonging to his master. When the master began to punish him, the servant cried out, "Master, master, why do you beat me? It was my fate to steal."
>
> The master, who had stopped beating him for a moment, replied," Very good; but it is also written in the book of your fate that you should be beaten." He then beat him harder than ever.
>
> The servant was thus cured of stealing, and throwing the blame on fate.[76]

The books, across ages, contained many Christian hymns, prayers, and juxtapositions of biblical beliefs with Hindu notions of worship. Apart from imparting lessons on developing

[75]'The Fortune Teller', *English Third Reader,* (Madras: Christian Vernacular Education Society, 1893)

[76]'The Master and the Servant', *English Second Reader,* (Madras: Christian Vernacular Education Society) .27. This book was accessed at the Council for World Mission Archives, SOAS, and the year was unavailable. It can be a part of the series published in the 1890s.

reading skills, it provided children with such material to benefit the evangelical cause, interspersed with short lessons on various commodities, animals, plants, instructions on health and moral fables. The main objective was to support Christian tenets with an inculcation of 'civilised' forms of living and commodity use.

Notions of Property and Theft

But textbooks side-stepped the issue of deep-rooted structural inequalities that dehumanised the labouring castes. Instead, the issue of poverty during this period came to be represented as a lack. This lack was not only material such as land, money, and access to financial resources, but moral.[77] Poverty was depicted as the problem of an 'individual' who failed to adhere to certain norms of work and conduct. Using child protagonists, these short textbook narratives also placed the onus of solving issues stemming from poverty on the poor themselves. Young pupils seemed to indulge in only a symbolic engagement with the idea of manual labour even as external realities remained unchanged. Instead, labour as a virtue tended to be cultivated through textbook lessons, urging children to work industriously in their traditional roles. Such a characterisation was constituent of an emergent discourse of political economy in school education. Common problems plaguing the poor such as debt and disease were frequently highlighted. 'Wage-labourers', a story of two brothers, illustrates this argument further,

> Shankar and Raman are brothers. Their father was a wealthy farmer. Upon his death, the brothers received a large plot of cultivable land, four bullocks and three hundred

[77] On the historical roots of philanthropy in European colonies, see Van-Nguyen Marshall, *In Search of Moral Authority: The Discourse on Poverty, Poor Relief, and Charity in French Colonial Vietnam*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2008)

> rupees each. But these boys were unintelligent. They did not work hard and thought that their wealth would last. But soon they became impoverished and were forced to borrow from the money lenders to even feed their poor mother. Now, they work as daily labourers. Had they not squandered their wealth, they could have become rich too. Never borrow money. Debt results in tragedy. It is like a heavy stone around one's neck.[78]

Here is another story of two sisters whose virtue of self-reliance kept them in good stead and prevented them from spiralling into a vicious cycle of debt.

> Once upon there were two sisters. Rukmini and Lekshmi. Their father send them to school but they did not pay attention and their teacher failed them. Then, one day, their father brought home a sewing mistress/teacher to teach the little girls sewing and she taught them many different types of stitches and patterns to make with *kallakuru*. Unfortunately, their father soon fell ill and died. Following this, their mother collected some *kallkuru* and gave it to the girls. Soon, they started making bags and caps and earned from this livelihood.[79]

School readers frequently warned children about the 'evils of debt', urging them to make wise economic decisions, and preventing suffering. In particular, the CVELSI books linked the burden of debt to the committing of sin and labelled debtors equivalent to that of thieves. This parallel about a non-religious action was brought into religious thought by drawing lines between 'honourably' earned wealth and otherwise. In one broad sweep, the dishonesty of incurring debt was attributed to the nature of Indians who were considered unwise and

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[78] 'Koolikaar-(Wage Labourers)', *Malayalam Second Reader,* (Bombay: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1915), 31-32

[79] 'Manikorkal' (Stringing beads), *Malayalam Second Reader,* (Bombay: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1915), 11. *Kallakuru* referred to a locally available bead

foolhardy with their money. The lesson intertwines political economy into a realm of religious action infused with cultural stereotypes. For instance, in the lesson titled 'Evils of Debt',

> A very common fault of the people of this country is their proneness to run into debt…they pay dearly for their pride. Sometimes debts are contracted from thoughtlessness. Most ryots are in debt…Clerks and others in situations get into debt, and are obliged to make over part of their salaries to creditors…To obtain property of another without a prospect of paying, or, after such property has been received, not to endeavour properly to discharge such claim, is dishonesty. The debtor who acts this part is in God's sight a *thief,* and as such must he account for his dishonesty at last.
>
> This conduct is almost always connected with lying, and the thoughtless or careless debtor is almost certainly a liar.[80]

These stories were primarily framed around ideas of reward and punishment. Children were reminded of the consequences they would face on account of their 'character'. A tract distributed by the Basel Mission, for example, presented a moral lesson with reference to the rewards a 'good' character may reap. Titled, ' Satyam Maathrame Parayavoo' (Always Speak the Truth), it narrated the story of a young boy, Raghavan. Having received a pen-knife from his father, he excitedly cuts down a ripe lemon from the garden, against strict instructions.[81] Upon finding his father enraged at this act of disobedience, he admits his mistake instantaneously but is not punished. Instead, he is commended for his honesty. The story's ending reminds the reader, thus,

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[80] "Evils of Debt" *Second English Reader* (Madras: CVELSI), 112-113. Year of publication not printed.

[81] *Satyam Maathrame Parayavoo* (Truth Must Always be Told), Tract, (Mangalore: Basel Mission Tract and Depository, 1892)

> Raghavan grew up to become an important person in his village. His honesty was well-known and the people asked him to be their leader. He never cheated anyone and led a truthful and just life.[82]

Notably, the repeated mention in the Malayalam readers of children 'stealing' from gardens and streets is also indicative of new ideas of private property into which they were educated. What may have once been a non-offensive act of plucking fruits from trees in the 'public' view was construed as a breach of private property and law. In such lessons, acts of transgression are intercepted by various sources of authority, particularly parents, and the overarching reach of the colonial state, vested with the provision to punish through its judicial institutions. Set in a conversational mode between two young boys (meant to depict opposing characters), Govindan and Raman, *Moshtikaruthu* (Do Not Steal) showed the ways in which children were socialised into disciplining themselves, understanding laws, and the increasing restrictions on what they viewed as their customary rights.[83] On their way back home from school, Govindan spots a mango tree laden with ripe fruits, by the street, and desires to pluck a few.

> Govindan: Rama! Look at this mango tree! Can you not see the ripe mangoes? I do not feel like moving my feet from here. How about plucking two of them?
>
> Raman: What are you saying? Is this mango tree ours? Is it right to pluck someone else's fruits without asking them?
>
> Govindan: Cheey! What is the problem? The tree is full of ripe mangoes. What loss will the owner suffer if we take two of them?

[82] Ibid., 13

[83] Moshtikaruthu' (Do Not Steal), *Malayalam Second Reader,* (Bombay: Macmillan & Co., 1914), 60

> Raman: The loss might be negligible. But if we pluck these mangoes, it is equivalent to stealing another's property.
>
> Govindan: Stealing? Have I stolen anybody's money or jewellery? How can plucking a fruit from a tree at the edge of the road be theft?[84]

Raman narrates to his friend, the condition of Kuttapan, the local thief. He explains that the man began by stealing small things such as people's jackfruits, coconuts and such but now robs more valuable goods. Upon hearing that Kuttapan was caught and arrested by the police for robbing the *adhikari's* house, Govindan is anxious. Raman informs him of the consequences of being arrested.

> He was taken away in handcuffs. That itself is such a grave insult. Soon, he will be produced in the huzur cutcherry where the Magistrate will sentence him to jail.[85]

Raman reminds Govindan that passers-by on the road, if not the police, will see them plucking fruits. Most importantly, he states, “God will certainly see us. What did our guru tell us? God shall punish those who steal!” Clearly upset, Govindan thanks his friend profusely for telling him the right thing to do and resolves to not repeat the mistake.

> If you had not been with me, I would have stolen. Gradually, I would have also become a thief. From now onwards, I will not even touch the smallest object without it's owner's permission.[86]

The theme of deceit and theft is played out in another lesson in the *Third Malayalam Reader*, with a stern reminder to readers at the end. It was narrated using oppositional categories of good/bad and right/ wrong. It was about two sons of a Chetti, The young one was was named

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid

[86] Ibid.,6

Dharma (the righteous one) and the elder was *Dushta* (the evil-minded one) While walking through a forest, the brothers stumble upon a treasure chest full of gold and decide to hide it under a tree. But at night, Dushta steals it. In the morning, when Dharma goes to claim the gold, he finds it missing, and complains to the king. Fearing the king's soldiers, *Dushta* and their father hides in a haystack behind the tree. But tragedy strikes them when the men light fire to the haystack and *Dharma* gets his share. The lesson ends, with the maxim that lying leads to death, deceit, and punishment.[87]

A lesson titled 'Vivekam (Wisdom)' in the 1918 *Malayalam Third Reader* discusses the question of money and commerce.[88] The story revolved around a father who offered equal amounts of money to his three sons. Upon his return, he found out that the eldest son had invested the money in trade and yielded profits, while the second son used receive a decent interest on lending it. Both these sons, had in fact, doubled the money they received. However, the third son returned his share and stated that neither did he invest nor did he spend it. He kept the money safely and returned it to his father. This enraged the father who called him a fool for not using the money provided to them by God wisely, and considered it a sin for being unproductive and lazy.[89] This story highlighted the introduction of the idea of money and commerce in school books. By not using his father's money, the third son had committed a folly by remaining idle. Instead, he was expected to undertake commerce, and profit from it. Money begets money is a dominant theme of the story, as it familiarised readers with the idea that one must work productively in life to make the most of what is at disposal. A lack of initiative was condemnable.

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[87] *Malayala Moonam Paatha Pusthakam*, Macmillan and Co Ltd, (London and Calcutta: 1909), 14

[88] 'Vivekam', *Malayalam Third Reader* (London and Calcutta: Macmillan, 1918), 3-4

[89] Ibid, 4

Learning to Labour

'Usefulness' in Travancore became a key word for the developmental agenda pursued by the state during the 1860s. It was associated with the ability to maximise one's productivity for material development.[90] Lower caste children had to be reoriented towards these changing work norms, even as they remained excluded from the ongoing benefits of state policies. While the government grappled with the question of fewer jobs in the wake of an expansion in vernacular education, all fingers were pointed at the poor for harbouring aspirations beyond their reach. Instead, poor children, argued colonial and princely administrators, should be encouraged to gain training in occupations most familiar to them; a thinly-veiled effort at declaring the local elites' intentions to restrict the mobility of the labouring poor.

Both missionary and government educators were not desirous of providing village boys an education that would turn them away from agriculture. For the Christian missions, the progress of Christianity depended on the evolution of village congregations and churches. They wanted Christians to stay rooted in their local surroundings, and found migration to towns and cities worrisome for the different moral challenges it posed. Agriculture was viewed as a 'respectable' occupation, involving service to the family, community, and laying the foundations for pious churches. The Basel Mission in Malabar, for instance, promoted vocational classes and agricultural tasks for boarding school children, the implications of which were discussed in the previous chapter.

[90] K. T. Rammohan, *Material Processes and Developmentalism: Interpreting Economic Change in Colonial Tiruvitamkur, 1800-1945*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, (Trivandrum: Centre for Development Studies, 1996)

Agriculture came to be considered the most suitable occupation for village children, with an elementary education. The colonial and princely states were keen to promote agricultural production for increased land revenue. Agricultural labour was portrayed by the administrators as an essential task, and if one may add, 'responsibility' of the agricultural classes to maintain societal (caste) welfare. In 1874, the first Prince of Travancore, Rama Varma, addressed the Trivandrum Debating Society on the pressing issue of unemployment among the educated youth, and the necessity of undertaking agricultural and industrial pursuits, and was particularly impressed with missionary efforts to introduce industrial work in schools for children.[91] He argued that the Pulayas of Travancore were the most industrious group in Travancore and compared them to the "hill-squirrels in our menagerie, which ceaselessly scramble over the revolving barrels in their cages"[92], and urged other young men to follow such occupations, and reduce the burden on the government to absorb every graduate in the administrative service.

> I am conscious that up to a certain point the people of Travancore, more especially the poorer and lower classes, are extremely industrious. Take for instance, the poor Pulayas of north Travancore working in the Puncha paddy lands. For some six or seven months of the year-that is from the beginning of the south-west monsoon to the end of the north eastern one, these lands are scarcely indistinguishable... and are worked by the Pulayas from morning to sunset.[93]

In an attempt to hold manual labour in considerable regard, Rama Varma proposed a solution to meet the growing problem of discontented young men in the region, who were unable to find suitable employment.

[91] *Our Industrial Status: A Lecture delivered by the H.H the First Prince of Travancore to the Trivandrum Debating Society,* 26 Sept 1874, (CM Press: Cottayam, 1874), 1-13.

[92] Ibid., 2

[93] Ibid.,11.

The sooner the idea that Government employment is the ultimate goal of education is scooped out of the heads of our youths, the better. Be assured that the wielding of a spade, or the driving of a plough, or the treading a watering lever, in one's own interest, is not a whit less honourable than scratching foolscap with goose-quills, taken in itself. ..I do not mean that those who are being educated should learn to shoulder a spade or drive a plough; but with their sharpened intelligence and ability to read, they can learn much that is practical and theoretical in the various industrial operations; and the knowledge so gained can be employed hand in hand with the capital which our yet undeveloped country must draw to itself. '

The Indian Educational Policy Resolution of 1904 echoed a similar sentiment regarding the aim of rural schools.

…to give to the children a preliminary training which will make them intelligent cultivators, will train them to be observer, thinkers and experimenters in however humble a manner, and will protect them in their business transactions with the landlord to whom they pay rent and the grain dealers to whom they dispose of their crops.[94]

Yet, caste dictums continued to frustrate missionary educational efforts at integrating children into an agrarian work regime imbued with self-respect. Missions found the 'devaluation' of manual labour as a major impediment and many Christian converts from erstwhile untouchable castes wished to move away from it. It affected the congregational churches which were derided by the orthodoxy and princely governments as a 'religion of the poor', catering to temporal motives. Schooled in ideas of a Protestant Christian work ethic and originating from lower-class backgrounds themselves, missionaries wanted to instil the principle that work was an act of Christian piety. Missionary biases also

[94] *Indian Educational Policy 1904*: Being A Resolution Issued By The Governor General In Council , 11th March, (Calcutta, Government Printing Press, 1904), 20.

intertwined with ideas of what work the poor ought to do. Even as poor children were being encouraged to view their labour as worthy of respect, the rigid caste hierarchy continued to impose various indignities on them.

A reading of CVELSI school readers show how Anglican missionaries attempted to weave respect for manual labour into textbooks as a counter to dominant caste perceptions. In a lesson titled, 'Who Works for Me?', a poor woman, weary after work, sits at her door and laments about how she has no one to work for her, when all she did was toil for the good of others. Upon hearing this, her neighbour states,

> You are very much mistaken. You are going to cook your rice, who sowed the paddy, Cut the grain when ripe, thrashed it and carried it to the bazaar? Who grew the curry-stuffs? Who made the salt from the great water of the ocean?...Who hewed the curry-stones? Did you make the pots in which you make your rice? Look at your dress! It is made of cotton. Farmers ploughed their fields and sowed cotton, women and children picked it; the cotton was cleaned, spun into thread and woven into cloth. What would you have done for clothing if all these people had not done work for you? Do not say again that nobody works for you. People all work for one another, although they may be thinking only of their own gain.[95]

Nevertheless, by describing the spectrum of inter-dependent occupational relationships in local society, the lesson attempted to highlight the inherent value of labour in the usage of everyday objects. The necessity of division of labour was stressed in textbooks, underlining that it was the basis of every developed society. Agriculture, was represented as the base of this division, providing for all those involved in other non-agricultural pursuits. Everybody, in short, was dependent on farmers, for their sustenance.

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[95]'Who Works for Me?, *English Fourth Book or Fourth Standard Reader,* The Christian Vernacular Education and Literature Society for India, p.91-92.

> The cultivation of the ground is an honourable and useful employment. Every year the Emperor of China ploughs a little as encouragement to his subjects...By skilful tillage sufficient food is raised, not only to support the farmers themselves, but to provide sustenance for mechanics, learned men, and others, who in various ways benefit those who labour in the fields. Without this division of employment, there can be no great advance in civilization. [96]

Such ideas of agriculture as an 'honourable' job was also conveyed through songs in primary school textbooks. Its inclusion in the curriculum had a history in England, where advocates of musical education such as W.E.Hickson viewed it as a 'means of social enjoyment', especially for the poor. [97] Making a case for music to be part of the national system of education in England, the *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* of 1837 noted that songs,

> …relate exactly to the class of subjects which all who wish well to the industrious orders would wish to see imprinted on their inmost nature- contentment with their lowly but honourable lot, the blessings that flow from industry, the fostering of the domestic affections and aspirations for the improvement of society.[98]

Educators owed it to poor children, Hickson argued,

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[96]'Agriculture', *English Fourth Reader,The Christian Vernacular Education Society for India* ,p.27

[97] Excerpt from W.E.Hickson's lecture, 'Introduction of Vocal Music as a Branch of National Education,'on 29 May 1838, as cited in 'Music as a branch of education', *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*, October, No. 351, (London: Paternoster Row, 1837), 308.

[98] Ibid., 308.

> …after all that can be done for the amelioration of the condition of the working-classes, they will have to submit to quite enough of privation, as compared to the lot of a rich man, without withholding from them any innocent source of pleasure which we might enable them to command.[99]

His 'The Labourer's Song' found its way into an English reader published by the Madras School Book and Literature Society, exemplifying the 'simplicity' of the agricultural labourer, who did not lust after excessive material pleasures. 'Honour' was seen as more valuable than the ordeals one endured. With a slight change in title in the school book to 'The Contended Labourer', the song's verses are as follows,

> Let none but those who live in vain,
> The useful arts of life disdain;
> While we an honest living gain,
> Of labour we will not complain.
> Though some for riches daily mourn,
> As if their lot could not be borne,
> With honest pride from them we turn-
> No bread's so sweet as that we earn.
> With food by our own hands supplied,
> we will be contend whate'er's denied.
> The world would not improve the store
> Of him who feels he wants no more;
> Among the rich, among the great,
> For all their wealth and all their state,

[99] Ibid.

There's many a heart not half so free

From care as humble honesty.[100]

Such songs echoed the concerns of industrial England at the time. While it alludes to the lives of the wealthy and powerful, it depicts the labourer as embodying honesty, simplicity and truth; values that were seen as threatened in the wake of rapid economic and technological shifts. An lesson in the Anglo-Malayalam Fourth Reader used in government schools highlighted the same.

> If we would have food, clothing, house-shelter, or anything beyond what the earth naturally bears, we must work for it. Happily, however, this is no real hardship, as God has kindly given us faculties for all kinds of work, and made work, on the whole, a source of happiness to us.[101]

Integrated into lessons on agriculture and labour were new production and consumption practices during colonialism. They offered information on wide-ranging agricultural and industrial commodities produced in Europe and colonies. By introducing new modes of travel and communication, such as bicycles, motor cars, and railways, to name a few, ideas of what is desirable for a civilised living were also being propagated. By instructing children in the uses of these products which were increasingly in circulation in the global colonial economy, children were becoming familiar with the idea of the 'modern'. According to the textbook lessons under review here, colonial modernity required children to participate in

[100] Song of the Contended Labourer', in the *English Fifth Reader*, The Madras School Book and Vernacular Literature Society, 1888), 114.

[101] 'We must all Work' – selection from Chamber's Book of Common Things, *The Fourth Anglo-Malayalam Reader*, Madras English School Series, 3rd edition, (Mangalore: Basel Mission Books and Tract Depository, 1889), 41

the supposedly universal consumption of certain goods, regulated by imperial trade. In the Malayalam readers, Object lessons on various commodities exposed colonised children to a larger economic structure in which their lives were embedded.[102] Ideas of colonial modernity were premised on the efficacy of technology in production. Children were also introduced to new technologies in often in a framework comparing Europe and India. Developments in transport, for instance, were extensively covered in the school books, pointing to the efficiency of societies that used them. In the domain of agriculture, lessons elaborated on agricultural tools in the colonies and Europe, and their particular characteristics.

Most notably, children were familiarised with food commodities such as sugar, coffee, wheat, to name a few, which were produced in the different colonies but mostly consumed in Europe.[103] With colonial trade promoting the use of certain commodities over others, these lessons also implicitly attempted to wean children away from existing and what was considered 'bad' consumption habits. Already in circulation through global commercial networks, these became the standard references for consumption habits. Reduced to pictures instead of objects due to the difficult availability of some of the commodities, the lessons gave information on their characteristics, uses, and the people producing them. At the same time, it signalled a shift towards educating children about market institutions as well.

A lesson on productivity and value from the Chamber's books was included in the Anglo-Malayalam Fourth Reader, with an emphasis on private property arising from 'individual' labour.

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[102] Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal*, (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2006), 61-79.

[103]Ibid.,62-63.

> Whatever a man saves out of his labour, is justly his: it becomes his property. When a man is sure that he will be protected in the enjoyment of his own, he has a strong reason for saving so as to make up capital... As the increase of capital, then, is beneficial to all, it becomes manifestly of great importance that the laws of property be supported.[104]

As the case of colonial Kerala shows, civics education for primary school children, also occurred through language readers. The series of Malayalam language readers used in the schools of Malabar and Travancore comprised 'civics' lessons, prompted by changes in British educational policies and sedition laws. Secondary school students were viewed suspiciously for fostering anti-colonial sentiments and participating in strike movements[105] But the government was aware that unless children were instructed from a young age onwards, it would be difficult to mould them into submissive, law-abiding beings.

Stephen Heathorn points out that elementary school reading books in Britain moved beyond moral education in the 1880s and focussed on creating the idea of a socially cohesive British nation bound together by loyal, obedient citizens, which subsumed class and gender divisions.[106] This idea of Britishness was predominantly masculine with women being relegated to the private, domestic sphere as 'useful wives and mothers', a sentiment echoed by missionaries as well. He argues that schooling was an attempt to integrate the working classes into the idea of the wider 'imperial empire'- to make them feel that they have a part to play and a stake in its resources. But this emerging sense of British nationalism was founded on a racial hierarchy in opposition to the 'other' within English society and across

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[104]'Labour, Value, and Capital', *The Fourth Anglo-Malayalam Reader*, Madras English School Series, 3rd edition, (Mangalore: Basel Mission Books and Tract Depository, 1889), 85

[105] Sudipa Topdar, "Duties of a 'Good Citizen': Colonial School Textbook Policies in Late Nineteenth Century India," *South Asian History and Culture* Vol.6, No 3 (2015), 417-439.

[106] Stephen Heathorn, 'Let Us Remember That We, Too, Are English": Constructions of Citizenship and National Identity in English Elementary School Reading Books, 1880-1914 , *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Spring, 1995), 395-427

colonies. Within Britain, the Anglo Saxon racial identity was privileged over the others. This argument, though based in the context of Victorian England, has resonance with colonial Kerala at the turn of the twentieth century. The attempts to integrate the colonised into the wider conception of the British empire is apparent in civics lessons. Poor, labouring children in schools were taught the 'superiority' of Western forms of governance and science. A recurrent lesson in the Malayalam primary school readers of the Madras Presidency was the 'Advantages of British rule in India', which elaborated upon the communication, transport, legal and postal networks introduced by colonial rule.[107] The lesson sought to instruct pupils on the benefits of colonial governance, and the ways in which technological developments helped India. They stressed on the larger administrative unity forged by colonial rule, thereby 'protecting India' from internal and external enemies. In this regard, vernacular school books for primary classes also became constituent of a larger project of shaping 'governable' subjects. Such lessons tried to instil in pupils a sense of duty to state authority, and expected them to perform acts of 'civic piety' through various institutions.

Conclusion

School-readers, adapted and translated from English, were one of the most popular among printed literature in nineteenth century India. An examination of some of these school-readers throw light on the ways in which school-going pupils were brought within the global ambit of production and consumption, as well as trained to adhere to a particular moral outlook, shared by British authorities and missionaries, as both considered themselves to be the harbingers of civilisation. As greater numbers joined schools, these readers were

[107] *The Fourth Malayalam Reader* (London and Calcutta: Macmillan & Co, 1909), 35-38.

integral in imparting reading and writing skills but I argue that the content of the lessons were mostly targeted at forging certain values of morality. The context prevalent in most lessons continued to be British in nature, as evinced by the CVELSI Readers, which were used in various mission schools. In comparison, the Malayalam readers published by the government made attempted to introduce new commodities, technologies, and moral codes to young children within a local context carrying larger implications. Children learnt reading and more importantly, familiarised themselves with notions of, self-improvement, political economy, and the presence of state authority in their everyday lives.

Chapter Five

Popular Representation and Struggles for School Entry

Introduction

A major consequence of the educational reforms introduced by the Travancore administration in the 1860s was the enhancement of mass education. The princely state, ruled by Ayilyam Thirunal (1860-1880) decided to expand its investment in the provision of vernacular and English education, especially at the primary and secondary levels, which was dominated by indigenous schools and mission institutions. These policy changes were prompted by pressures from the British administration, as well those from below, as various lower caste communities sought equal rights to schooling. An anxiety loomed large that Christian missionaries were making greater inroads into the 'Hindu' population by attracting untouchable castes through the provision of educational and medical facilities.[1] Despite virulent opposition and assaults on catechists, teachers, and converts, mission schools continued to instruct untouchable caste children, prompting the state to address the matter seriously.

Drawing upon missionary strategies of community mobilization, various lower castes, including Christian converts, began to demand equal rights from the monarchical administration. In particular, the Ezhava and Shanar communities, with their diverse

[1] A large number of conversions among the Pulayas and Shanars to Christianity induced great anxiety in the Travancore administration from the 1880s onwards. Missionaries reported that the grant-in-aid codes were aimed at curbing mission school influences. See W.A.Stephens, *A Review of Work done in the Allepey and Tiruwella Districts of the CMS,* Travancore Mission, South India during 1915, 7.

occupational base, and indigenous tradition of education, were among the earliest to demand equal access to schools and government job opportunities.

In the 1860s, as Robin Jeffrey notes, the Nairs made great strides in terms of educational qualifications and employment.[2] They benefitted from their close proximity to Malayali and non-Malayali brahmins, in general, and the monarchy, in particular. Nair *tharavads* were as yet to witness the severe disintegration of families and property and amendments in inheritance laws. Favoured by the administration and aided by *kudipallikoodams*, they began to enjoy the privileges of both mission and government schooling that was available in the region. For instance, in 1862, there were no Ezhava and Pulaya children in any of the nine English schools owned by the government, whereas 424 Nairs, 315 Christians and 266 Tamil brahmins were recorded on its rolls.[3]

The Ezhavas of Travancore did not convert to Christianity en-masse unlike their Tamil-speaking Shanar counterparts although many attended vernacular and English mission schools in the Malayalam-speaking districts. From the 1880s onwards, they began to organise themselves using limited resources and demanded that the Travancore monarchy accord them same rights as the upper castes, especially with regard to government school entry. Unlike the Pulaya and Paraya castes who were painstakingly emerging out of conditions of agrestic servitude, the Ezhavas, led by a small, educated leadership, began to mobilise for protest actions. By the 1890s, various community leaders such as P. Palpu, Narayana Guru, Vagbhadanandan, Kumaran Asan, among others across colonial Kerala, formed associational networks and exhorted fellow caste people to abandon certain outdated

[2] Robin Jeffrey, The *Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1976), 62.

[3] *Travancore Administrative Report for 1863-64*, (Trivandrum: Government Printing Press, 1864), 21

customs and embrace the fruits of a modern school education. Influenced by the activities of the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and other Hindu reform organisations in British-India, Ezhava leaders ? sought to unify various sub-castes to demand a greater share of 'public' resources from the state.[4]

Their demands were also buttressed by shifts in economic conditions during the period. An expansion of cash-crop oriented industries such as coir, the licensed production of arrack and jaggery, increased waged labour in the public works, and rising prices in the world market, benefited a small section of the Ezhavas and Tiyyas across Travancore and Malabar.[5] A number of Shanar converts, educated in the LMS schools of Nagercoil and Neyoor were also employed as supervisors and contract-labourers in the coffee plantations of Ceylon.[6] But the lack of a corresponding change in their status in local society inflicted further humiliation, and formal schooling was conceived as the most significant avenue of freedom from traditional hierarchies.[7] The ripple-effect of the SNDP's campaigns were many. The Pulayas of Travancore and Cochin, influenced by the spiritual philosophy of Narayana Guru and the aggressive strategies of petitioning, began to organise under leaders such as Aiyan Kali.

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[4] The Ezhavas were fragmented into various sub-castes known as Thandans, Panickers, Chovans, Ezhavas, Tiyyas etc., prior to the formation of the SNDP. Narayana Guru's immediate priority was to bring these sub-castes into a united front, for purposes of self-identification and mobilization.

[5] George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1989), 38. Also see, Dilip Menon *Caste, nationalism and Communism in South India. Malabar, 1900-1948*. (Cambridge. University Press), 1994.

[6]Dick Kooiman, "The Gospel of Coffee*:* Mission, Education and Employment in Travancore (19th Century)", in Dick Kooiman, Otto van den Muijzenberg and Peter van der Veer (eds), Conversion, *Competition and Conflict: Essays on the Role of Religion in Asia* (Amsterdam, 1984),185-214

[7] Between 1909- 1913, there were only 87 Ezhavas in government service earning between 5-25 rupees mostly. None earned more than 100 rupees. Kumaran Asan requested these figures from the government in the 1912 SMPA Proceedings. See *Vivekodayam* 1914, as cited in *Kumaranasante Gadyalekhanamgal* (Selected Essays of Kumaran Asan*),* (Trivandrum: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 23.

To placate the growing assertiveness of the Ezhavas and Pulayas who increasingly invested in community reform and resorted to various modes of protest, the Travancore government allowed them representation in the Sri Moolam Popular Assembly (henceforth, SMPA), which came into existence in 1904. On behalf of the Travancore administration, the Dewan presided over annual sessions which lasted three to five days, and sometimes more. From the outset, the Assembly was filled with those holding landed and commercial interests such as representatives from non-Malayali brahmins, Nairs, Syrian Christians, planter's associations, and Town Improvement Committees, who had little concern for the conditions of outcaste communities.

Despite acute landlessness, the Pulaya community's foremost demand was also the right to equal school entry. In 1910, Aiyan Kali defiantly took a Pulaya girl to be admitted into the Ooruttambalam primary school which was violently resisted by local Nairs.[8] This protest-action, coupled with his presence in the SMPA from 1912 to 1933, , stepped up the demand schooling of the outcaste populations to better employment prospects and social respectability. However, the absence of land ownership or any valuable property among the Pulayas unlike the Ezhavas affected their ability to negotiate and bargain with the administration. Far greater social support for the Ezhavas gradually emerged, while the grievances of the Pulayas were addressed only with the limited view of preventing them from converting to Christianity. This chapter explores the debates that ensued in the SMPA on the question of equal rights to school education and the extent to which the Ezhavas and Pulayas were able to construct schooling as a basic civic right.

[8] John W. Gladstone *Protestant Christianity And People's Movements In Kerala: A Study Of Christian Mass Movements In Relation To Neo-Hindu Socio-Religious Movements In Kerala, 1850-1936* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984), 269.

Education for Social Elevation

The timing of the education reforms, initiated by Dewan T. Madhava Rao, during Moolam Thirunal's reign is pertinent. As Lemercinier and Houtart point out, the abolition movement against slavery across the British Empire, which later affected Travancore, sought to free labor for the newly opened mines and plantations across the colonies.[9] In a situation of flux, the princely state was compelled to reformulate its policies bowing to British directives.[10] At the same time, Protestant missionary work among outcastes, shifts in the education policy of British India beginning with the Wood' Despatch of 1854 and various Grant in Aid Codes, echoed in the halls of the Travancore administration as well.

It was also an attempt, in the wake of the inflow of colonial capital, to re-orient the traditional bases of power which had hitherto depended on landlordism. As Manali Desai argues, the reforms were indicative of the state acting in self-interest.[11] This helped the princely state retain its status-quo 'Hindu' character while accommodating subaltern protests and demands to a limited extent. Thus, the policy move towards mass education had a two-fold objective. On the one hand, a literate work force was required for supply to the emerging capitalist enterprises and public infrastructural works undertaken by the government. On the

[9]Genevieve Lemercenier and Francis Houtart, "Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production: Part One," *Social Scientist,* 11 (1978): 4.

[10] John W. Gladstone Protestant Christianity and people's movements in Kerala: a study of Christian mass movements in relation to neo-Hindu socio-religious movements in Kerala, 1850-1936 (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984), 152-175. Some of the missionaries such as John Cox of the LMS were embroiled in political debates with the Travancore and colonial British administration in the Madras Presidency, over the question of equal treatment for Christian converts. He forwarded numerous petitions for the English Parliament's perusal. During the violence inflicted by Nairs on converts and other lower castes during throughout the 1830s-1850s, Cox and fellow missionaries in the LMS and CMS demanded the intervention of the British government in removing corrupt officials, and sometimes calling them to annex Travancore completely. See 'Papers Relating to Recent Disturbances in Travancore- Memorandum on Petitions Presented to Government from Travancore and of Correspondence Connected With Them', dated March 1859 in *Accounts and Papers: East India: Travancore,* Session 2, 31 May- 13 August, 1859, Vol.XXV (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons, 1859), 13-19.

[11] Manali Desai, *State Formation and Radical Democracy in India* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 57.

other, it provided a tool to 'educate' and train social groups into a new form of 'subject-citizenship' which required their participation in civic institutions.[12] Nevertheless, Travancore's 'enlightened benevolence' was not a natural outcome of a policy targeted at general societal welfare, as is generally believed.[13] On the contrary, government-regulated education enabled upwardly mobile caste and religious groups such as the Nairs and Syrian Christians to profit from new opportunities and salaried work. Madhava Rao also put in place regulations that explicitly linked government employment to academic qualifications, even in the lower grades.[14] The vernacular School Leaving Certificate became a mandatory requirement for being selected for administrative employment, which upset ill-equipped mission schools, and resulted in a growing demand for government schools. This also ensured the preponderance of these dominant social groups in the modified apparatus.

A landmark protest against the Travancore administration took the shape of a petition famously known as the Malayali Memorial in 1891. For the first time in Travancore's history, the petition saw the coming together of prominent educated men from the Nair, Syrian Christian, and Ezhava communities, drawing upon their 'Malayali' identity as the basis for demanding greater access to education and employment in a system dominated by non-Malayali brahmins.[15] Led by the Nairs, the petition highlighted the exclusion the

[12] Niraja Gopal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2015)

[13] Scholars such as Amartya Sen note that the 'enlightened' and benevolent rule of Travancore monarchs was a major factor for its achievements in the field of education and health. This has, however, been critiqued, to show that Travancore tried to hold onto its Hindu orthodox dominance, and the push for educational and health reforms came mostly as a result from below and other negotiations between the state and society.

[14] Robin Jeffrey, The *Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1976), 69-74.

[15] The Dewans of Travancore were either Telugu or Tamil-Brahmins, who migrated from neighbouring regions and settled in parts of the capital Trivandrum. Non-Malayalis were appointed as Dewans continuously until 1877. In 1857, an estimate of 18,000 non-Malayali brahmins resided in Travancore. 'Caste in its Stringency of Action as Exhibited in Travancore', *Church Missionary Intelligencer* Vol. VII (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1856), 253.

signatories faced in higher education and administrative jobs and sought redress. But in response, while the complaints of other communities were regarded with due seriousness, the grievances of Ezhavas were ignored and ridiculed by the monarchical forces.[16] Unwilling to open government schools to all castes, in the name of upholding 'tradition' and 'social harmony', the monarch reportedly stated that there was no Ezhava worthy enough of a government post, and that the community should remain contended in its traditional activities of toddy-tapping and paddy cultivation.[17]

This insult, aimed at shaming the Ezhavas about their association with manual labour, however, had the contrary effect. Agitated at the state's perpetuation of caste inequalities, on 3rd September, 1896, a petition signed by more than 13,000 Ezhavas, popularly known as the Ezhava memorial, was submitted to the monarch which detailed the injustices faced by the community in Travancore. The petitioners stated,

> ...if you compare the number of educated among us (*adiyangalil)* to those castes enjoying many comforts, our pathetic situation will be made clear. Especially in the case of the English education, which is important for today's progress, our numbers are scarce.[18]

They requested the entry of Ezhava boys and girls into government schools and recruitment of qualified pupils into various levels of administrative service. Pointing towards the

[16] John.W.Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and people's movements in Kerala, 1850-1936* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984), 46

[17] Ibid.

[18] Excerpt from the Ezhava Memorial, presented under the leadership of Dr.P.Palpu in 1895. Cited in Velayudhan Panikkasseri, *Dr.Palpu*,(Kottayam: Current Books, 2009), 43. Palpu belonged to to the Ezhava/ Tiyya community in Travancore. He passed the Madras Medical College exams in 1889 but was denied a job by the Travancore administration. Later, he served in the princely state of Mysore. He was also the third signatory to the Malayali Memorial in 1891. *Adiyangal* refers to a subservient form of address, meaning 'subjects', 'inferiors'.

relatively better-off conditions enjoyed by their Tiyya counterparts in British-administered Malabar, who were allowed to enroll in government institutions, the petitioners, headed by P. Palpu, demanded that the Travancore government reconsider its claims of being 'modern'.The right to education for all subjects, the memorial stated, was integral to the advancement of the state as a whole.[19]

A month later, Dewan Sankara Subbaaiyyar responded and revealed the persistent apathy of the administration.

> It is the government's policy to encourage the spread of education among all castes...It has permitted the memorialists to enter the Maharajah's College, High School, and other important educational institutions, and is also taking necessary steps to extend their entry into many more schools...However, the attempt to compulsorily educate children of all castes together shall not only be unsuccessful but hamper the general progress of education...we feel the suitable arrangement will be to establish separate schools for different communities...[20]

The proposal for 'separate' schools was rejected by the petitioners as a devious ploy. Sankara Subbaiyyar declared grants for communities such as the Ezhavas if they were willing to take up educational initiatives of their own. These grants were an attempt to keep untouchable caste children away from government schools which was hitherto a preserve of upper caste pupils alone. However, this plan faltered as the number of private schools were abysmally low. C. Kesavan, a prominent leader from the Ezhava community mentions in his autobiography that only two Ezhava primary schools were founded in the Quilon district to

[19] Ibid, 44.

[20] Dewan Sankara Subbahaiyar's response to the Ezhava memorial, 1 October 1896, as cited in Velayudhan Panikkasseri, *Dr.Palpu*,(Kottayam: Current Books, 2009), 46.

avail of these grants, one in Paravoor, and another at his birth village of Mayyanadu.[21] The Mayyanadu primary school was established in 1895 by C.V.Kunjuraman, the noted Ezhava journalist and reformer, along with his two friends. The main capital investment for the school comprised the money kept aside for wedding expenses among the Ezhavas, noted Kesavan, who was a nephew of Kunjuraman and attended this school in its initial years. Prominent families contributed to the school's fund, sometimes up to twenty-five rupees.[22] This school with three classes was open to children of all castes though dominated by Ezhavas.

Despite being touted as a 'model' state by colonial British officialdom, the monarchical regime was an orthodox 'Hindu' state-- in thought and practice-- and policies such as the spread of mass education remained highly caste-inflected. Subbaiyar's response was a reflection of the exclusionary principles with which the orthodoxy functioned and wished to corner the bigger share of administrative benefits. Snubbed by the monarch and his coterie, humiliated socially and politically, and subject to the violence of untouchability, the Ezhavas of Travancore decided to expand their support base, and unite various factions amidst them through agitation politics. In the following decades, associational networks, print propaganda, fund–raising campaigns, rallies, associations, and petitions, and the participation of ordinary men and women resulted in the Ezhavas jolting upper castes and princely governments into engaging with them.

As a small literate section among the Ezhavas began to undertake campaigns for mobilisation, and invest in educating their children, the Pulayas, Parayas, Samabavars and

[21] C Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram* (Kottayam: D.C.Books, 2004),35. Kesavan was also the Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin during 1950-1952.

[22] Ibid., 35

Kuruvars were struggling to lead meaningfully free lives. The official declaration of abolition of slavery in 1855 did not spell an immediate change in material conditions for slave communities, as illustrated in previous chapters. In a situation of persistent oppression and extreme poverty, schooling was a difficult task to achieve without adequate state support. These groups were relegated to the margins, and this was evident even in their exclusion from the two landmark memorials that changed the political landscape of late nineteenth century Travancore. Rules of untouchability continued to dominate their lives, and their children kept out of government schools. Both Christian and non-Christian Pulayas were dependent on the British LMS and CMS to impart rudimentary schooling in their various institutions.[23] Many among the Pulayas converted after 1855, in what is known in missionary literature as 'mass movements', and created a further demand for schools and better teachers from the evangelical missions.[24] However, Protestant churches were deeply divided on the question of treating the Pulayas at par with Syrian Christians and converts from castes considered superior to the slaves, and until the 1900s, schools were separate. In particular, the Syrian Christians who partook of the CMS' schools and churches refused to instruct Pulaya children with their own. 'Slave schools' were begun by CMS catechists in far-flung congregations situated in Pallam, Mallapalli, and Mundakyum, where there was a concentration of Pulayas.

Beyond a set of literacy skills, education was intricately tied to the idea of respect which was believed to help shed the stigma associated with 'degrading' manual labour. Palpu argued that a labouring community with a diversified occupational base such as the

[23] In 1861, a Pulaya Charity School was established by Samuel Mateer of the LMS in Trivandrum. Donations were made by the physician to the royal Durbar, Dr. Waring, with a support of a daily amount of rice from the government. Mateer gained the name 'Puliar Padre' for his long-standing work among this community. *The Missionary Herald: At Home and Abroad,* Vol. 90 (1894), 166.

[24] W.S. Hunt, *India's Outcastes*: *A New Era* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1924)

Ezhavas, must highlight their 'industriousness' and 'usefulness' to the development of the state, and acquire a suitable education to enhance their already existent skills.[25] Unlike these former slave castes, there were a number of Ezhava ayurveda physicians, Sanskrit teachers, weavers, traders, and sharecroppers; a fact that Kumaran Asan , a prominent poet and SNDP Assembly representative frequently mentioned in his speeches to highlight the economic usefulness of his community. In his demands for equal rights to school-entry and representation in jobs, self-help and self-improvement became overarching framework.[26]

Education would enable the Ezhavas, argued Asan, to be able to 'speak' for themselves and set in motion a process of regaining their self-respect. This 'speakability' was integral to a community that had been marginalized on account of its low caste status, and denied participation in the emergent public sphere.[27] By the late nineteenth century, the Ezhavas were unwilling to let rules of distance pollution deter them from availing the benefits of economic development. Upholding education as fundamental to an individual's being and through that, a wider community good, Asan stated,

> One of the main goals of education is to encourage a sense of self-respect. Without this, every other virtue is useless. Any educated person who has undergone an intellectual and mental transformation will never dare label a fellow human being as lower and degraded. It is unfortunate to see that such terms are being used even in public letters

[25] Letter from P.Palpu to Dr.Mitchell, Educational Secretary, Travancore. *Palpu's Private Papers*, (New Delhi: NMML) Palp was very keen to introduce innovative technologies and products among the Ezhavas. He took initiatives to demonstrate the various ways in which the coconut processing industry could develop, and constructed various exhibits of products in his own home. However, the SNDP took very little interest in these endeavours

[26] Dilip M. Menon, 'Intimations of Equality: Shrines and Politics in Malabar, 1900–1924', *in Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India*, ed. Peter Robb (New Delhi: Oxford University Press,1993), 266.

[27] M.S.S.Pandian *Brahman and* Non-Brahman*: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007)

and notices by educated persons…we request the government to prohibit such unethical practices.[28]

Another strand of argument strongly underlying Ezhava grievances was the supposedly favourable treatment shown by the administration towards Christian converts. Prompted by Palpu's own experience of humiliation at the hands of the administration while seeking higher education and employment, he disapproved of what he considered a lop-sided attitude towards the Ezhavas vis-à-vis other lower caste converts to Christianity.[29]

"In today's situation, no Tiyya desirous of serving his government can do so without resorting to religious conversion", wrote Palpu, in a memorandum submitted to the government in May 1895, a year before the Ezhava memorial.[30] Hinting that foreign missionaries had provided more for the education and health of the people than their rulers, he further stoked the discomfort of the administration with Protestant missionary proselytisation in the region. It was also, more importantly, a strategy to hold the government responsible for its own failure to fulfill grandiose claims of defending 'Hindu' customs. As a subtext, in Palpu's imaginary, the Ezhava community came to be viewed as firmly within the realm of Hinduism, based on the principle of just rule, but devoid of caste divisions which subjugated rights to freedom.

Hindus cut links with a person who is degraded in religious status by labelling him *chandalan.* However, in violation of this Hindu principle, the government provides encouragement, as per law, to those who have converted. But no such encouragement

[28] Excerpt from Kumaran Asan's Speech at the 11th Annual Proceedings of the SMPA in 1914, in N.K. Damodaran compiled and edited, *Kumaranasante Gadhyalekhanangal (Essays by Kumaran Asan*) Volume 2, (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 33.

[29] Ibid., 41-42

[30] Ibid., 40.

is provided to the Tiyyan who believes in the Hindu religion and does not choose conversion.[31]

According to the Census of 1881, Tiyyas occupied only 120 government posts as compared to the 5,590 Nairs, 3,048 Christians and 2,594 Brahmins.[32] Though Pulaya and Paraya Christians suffered due to their lingering caste status, there was a widespread feeling that Christian communities enjoyed more advantages.

The discriminatory attitudes within the CMS and LMS churches and schools antagonised converts from the Pulaya community. Though largely dependent on mission charity for school instruction, the segregated nature of mission educational activity did little to improve a sense of respectability for Pulayas. Aware of these church dissensions and unwilling to seek a solution in conversion, in the early years of the twentieth century, Aiyan Kali declared a militant protest against the orthodox administration to implement reforms. He argued that leaving the Hindu fold was no solution towards correcting the indignities imposed on erstwhile slave communities. This argument did not bode well with the British missionaries who watched Aiyankali's actions warily since it seemed opposed to their evangelism. They were certain that the protests ignited by Aiyankali carried wider repercussions for the future of the depressed communities as a whole and resulted in a 'lost opportunity' for the missionaries.[33] Although Pulaya Christians were not at the forefront of these movements of self-assertion from the very beginning, mission influence in prompting

[31] Ibid., 37.

[32] Jeffrey, *Decline of Nair Dominance*, 56.

[33] An LMS missionary reported in 1914, 'Now there has arisen a strong movement among them (the Pulayas) which is antagonistic to us, and for the present we have, I fear, lost our opportunity. The leader of this movement is one of themselves, a man named Aiyun Kali, who seems to be a born leader. *Annual Report of the LMS*, 1914, p. 180-181.

lower caste mobilization was unmistakable. In a letter in 1914, R.Sinclair, acting missionary at the Parachaley station recorded the outbreak of violence and caste persecution against the Pulayas in southern Travancore.

> …there was a strong movement among these people to assert their new rights rather aggressively, and even to shy off from the help which our Christian organisation and schools provided for them. Many of them seemed to feel that if they could send their children to sit on the same benches as the highest caste children, they were not going to allow them to keep only their own humble company in their own schools.[34]

Aiyankali was semi-literate but accorded the provision of education as the highest priority in the struggles for equality. The access and acquisition of formal schooling enabled various communities, including the Ezhava and Shanars, from attaining some mobility, towards better employment and social status. The Pulayas, emerging out of long-standing decades of oppression, also desired the same opportunities and wanted to partake of the state's modernization programmes. Yet, their extreme poverty, illiteracy, and backward caste status prevented them from competing with other caste-communities, and their landlessness kept them in persistent conditions of agricultural bondage. To alleviate this misery, Aiyankali insisted that Nairs should allow Pulaya children into taluq schools in and around Trivandrum.[35] He refused to bow down to upper caste intimidation and threats, and in 1904, availed a government grant to establish a primary school for Pulayas at Venganur. There was Stiff opposition to the functioning of the school. Not the kind to surrender, in 1910, when the government of Travancore allowed Pulayas to enter the same schools as Ezhava children, Aiyankali accompanied a young Pulaya girl to the Ooruttambalam School, near

[34] Letter from R.Sinclair, Parachaley Mission Station, (Nagercoil: Travancore Home Society), 1914.

[35] Aiyankali's address, Proceedings of the Second Annual Session of the SMPA, 1913, 81.

Neyyantikara, as mentioned previously.[36] It is highly significant that he decided to enroll a female child into an upper caste dominated school, as a mark of protest. However, he was prevented from doing so, and groups of Nairs threatened to assault Pulaya neighbourhoods, creating a riot-like situation. Soon after, many Pulaya homesteads, including that of Christians, were burned down by opponents, and Pulaya families beaten and tortured. The police did little to curb the brutality, and watched on indifferently. Velu Pillai commented on the serious clashes that took place between Nairs and Pulayas in Neyyantikara taluq, Thalayolaparambu in Vaikom and at Cape Comorin.

> They had to be put down by the strong hand. It may be mentioned that these riots had their origin in local disputes or communal tension and did not mean an organized attempt to overawe the government by force of the show of force.[37]

By reducing the conflicts to a 'local' problem, Velu Pillai tried to undermine the larger threat Pulaya resistance caused to the political regime. The administration sided with the Nairs, and blamed the Pulayas for provoking their superiors. But his words, though chosen to underplay the growing assertiveness of the Pualayas, revealed that the government was clearly shaken. These clashes lay the ground for a more assertive mobilization on the part of the Pulayas, under Aiyankali's leadership. In 1912, the SMPA nominated him as a representative from the Pulaya community, and the leader seized the opportunity to present his concerns to a wider and more influential audience.

[36] John W. Gladstone *Protestant Christianity And People's Movements In Kerala: A Study Of Christian Mass Movements In Relation To Neo-Hindu Socio-Religious Movements In Kerala, 1850-1936* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984), 269.

[37] T.K.Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual,* Vol. 2 (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1940), 707.

Ezhava Deliberations in the SMPA

The first of its kind in any Indian princely state, the Travancore Legislative Council was formed by Moolam Thirunal on March 10, 1888. It comprised eight members nominated by the Maharaja, out of which six were government officials and two, non-officials. In 1921-22, the Council expanded to fifty members, of whom thirty-five were non-officials. However, sensing growing ferment for popular representation and as a counter-tactic to the intrigues of palace politics, the Sri Moolam Popular Assembly (SMPA) was established on October 22, 1904. As the lower house of the legislature, the SMPA opened its doors to nominated members from various taluqs, Town Improvement Committees, merchants' and planters' associations and community organisations. Franchise was based on property owenership which severely restricted membership to high tax payers from dominant interest groups. The earliest Ezhava representative, Kumaran Asan participated in the Assembly from 1907 onwards and the first Pulaya representative, Aiyankali, was nominated only in 1912.[38]

The SMPA became an arena for deliberating upon matters that affected different constituencies, and which called for state intervention. A glance at these session proceedings indicate that every nominated member pushed for the demands of his own community or association, tending to limit the possibilities of a united front against many matters of state apathy. Issues deemed very important were passed on to the Legislative Council and respective administrative departments for further consideration.

In such an arena of petition-based politics which largely employed a language of obeisance, efforts were taken by representatives of untouchable castes towards deepening

[38] In 1911, the SMPA nominated P.Govinda Pillai to represent the Dalit populations, instead of choosing a representative from amongst them. See T.H.P.*Chentharasherry, Aiyankali: Oru Jeevacharithram* (Biography), (Prabhath Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1979), 45

their social and economic rights of 'subject-citizenship'.[39] The SMPA reflected, as Manali Desai notes, the extent to which communities welcomed state action for improving their welfare instead of a withdrawal.[40] The struggles for schooling went hand in hand with struggles for the right to access spaces such as temples, roads, courts, and government hospitals. Exclusionary practices invoking caste pollution were opposed by protestors as antithetical to the idea of the 'modern' in Travancore. They argued that qualifications, as laid down by the educational bureaucracy, and not caste, should determine individual merit. Many SMPA members from the Ezhava, Paraya, and Pulaya communities delivered impassionate speeches over the years on the need for removing obstacles to school entry and job provision in government departments for graduates.

In 1867, the same year a scheme for expansion of vernacular education was formulated, and celebrated as a positive step, the Dewan declared,

> The religion of the high caste pupil forbids his associating with the low caste pupil, and if the state, in the present circumstances, throw the schools open indiscriminately to all castes the practical alternatives offered to the high castes are either that they should forego the advantage of state education or secure that advantage under serious violence to religious feelings. Both these alternatives are to be deprecated.[41]

By frequently invoking the notion of 'religious hurt', the state absolved itself of any responsibility to provide an equal and compulsory education for all castes in Travancore. As noted in previous chapters, the existence of mission schools instructing poor, untouchable

[39]Niraja Gopal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2015), 25- 3

[40] Manali Desai, *State Formation and Radical Democracy in India* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 57.

[41] *Travancore Administration Report* (Trivandrum: Government Printing Press, 1867), 82-83

children, antagonized the caste orthodoxy. But the Travancore administration deemed it better to keep untouchable caste children out of government schools and preferred to provide grants to mission schools. Nevertheless, this did not provide mean a free rein for missionaries in school management. The provision of grants came with stringent regulations such as the curbing of Bible-teaching during school hours, requirements of teacher-training, passing of examinations and regular government inspection were declared, signaling greater state intervention in the provision of education.[42]

Many underdeveloped village mission schools, which catered to poor children, such as that of the LMS and CMS, and were unable to meet prescribed standards, were forced to close down. While salary and results grants provided some financial relief, vernacular mission schools with one or two classes were 'forced into the position of becoming schools for the lower-caste children only'.[43] This resulted in an unofficial division of labour in educational provision with the government schools solely serving the interests of the upper castes. Noting this imbalanced state policy of educational reforms, Samuel Mateer accused the upper castes of denying the poor their rightful share in public expenditure.

> Just think of the amazing selfishness and effrontery of the demand made on the part of the wealthier...They have any amount of pecuniary means at command to establish schools for themselves as exclusive in principle as they please...however,

[42] 'By this means the schools of the South Travancore Mission have been thoroughly reinvograted and raised to the present total of 176 with 8,396 scholars, of whom 1,651 are girls'. Samuel Mateer, ' The Malayalam Country: London Missionary Society', at *The Missionary Conference: South India and Ceylon* in 1879, Vol.2 (Madras: Addison and Co, 1880), 159. Mateer also noted that the grant-in-aid given to the Trivandrum mission for threes improved pupil enrollment from 204 in 1874 to 495 in 1876 to 680 in 1878.

[43] Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore,* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1883), 208

> they claim admission to the public schools...and they not only accept this charity but even venture to assert a claim to its exclusive enjoyment...[44]

By the 1880s, even as private educational efforts were lauded, depressed communities, including Christians and Muslims did not witness an expansion in voluntary initiatives. But the wedges in society were stark with numerous Ezhava and Pulaya children excluded in the name of upholding 'tradition'. As in the case of Palpu's own life, those who could afford an education were also debarred from entering government higher educational institutions on account of caste pollution.[45] In 1904, the government of Travancore declared free primary education, irrespective of caste or creed.This was a step further from the earlier promulgations such as the 1894 Travancore Educational Rules and the revised grant-in- aid code of 1895. However, the state avoided the question of making schooling compulsory. According to the policy of free education, some measures were also taken for educating the outcaste poor. The state bore the expenses of running schools for children from specified backward classes. Steps were also taken to train their teachers in the government's Normal schools. In areas lacking such schools, the government sought to establish them.[46] These provisions, though ideal in spirit, were half-hearted in action and did not drastically improve the conditions of poor children who continued to be discriminated and kept out of government institutions.

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[44]Ibid.

[45] Both P.Palpu and his elder brother, Velayudhan were barred from entering higher educational institutions in Travancore. Palpu studied medicine in the Madras Christian College, and upon applying for a job to the Travancore government, was again discriminated. Later, he joined the Mysore service.

[46] V.Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual* Vol. 2 (Trivandrum: Govt. Press, 1906), 459. There were 480 schools for backward classes in 1904 as against 471 in the previous year. The government estimated 43, 580 backward class pupils enrolled in schools compared to 43,000 in 1903, including in schools open for all. See Dewan's Address, Proceedings of the First Annual Session of the SMPA 1904, 11

Six years later, in 1910, the Travancore Education Code came into effect. Considered a significant departure from earlier policies, its promulgation codified the state's interventionist policy and expanded the educational bureaucracy. Alongside the abolition of fees in the Lower Grade Elementary Schools maintained by the Educational Department, the Code introduced a qualifying School Leaving Certificate Scheme for elementary and secondary courses, revised courses of instruction for Vernacular and English schools and issued an Inspection Code. Arrangements were also made for the publication of a new and improved set of Malayalam school-books by the Textbook Committee. In a short period, the students in government schools went up from 28 to 31%. In private aided and unaided schools, the percentages were 38 and 31 respectively.[47]

Almost a decade after the Ezhava memorial, when the SMPA began to gain prominence, grievances of the lower castes remained the same but the tone and tenor of demands became intense. Contrary to declarations that *all* government schools were open to Ezhavas from 1905, and to Pulayas from 1910 onwards, a number of boys and girls of these communities, particularly the latter, were refused entry until the 1920s. In 1910, only 35 schools were open to the Ezhavas. The following year, holding the administration accountable, Kumaran Asan asked the Dewan during his address, 'How can we compete with those who have gone ahead in the race for the past hundred years',

> When we follow them, do you think they will stay put? The government must deeply reflect on this. Then, it shall understand our sad reality...The number of qualified people are increasing. But our employment is not increasing correspondingly. This is why we are forced

[47]Dewan's Address, Proceedings of the Seventh Session of the SMPA of Travancore,(Trivandrum: Government Press,1911), 6.

to voice our grievances. We have no intention of preventing others and racing ahead. Do not let us be pushed to the ground anymore.[48]

Asan repeatedly reminded the SMPA in his various addresses that the state had to shed its conservatism and throw open all schools to the Ezhavas. Although the government granted permission, when it came to implementation, many schools refused entry to poor Ezhava children. Asan raised this issue and pointed to lower-end educational officials and conniving headmasters who discriminated villagers, either out of personal prejudice, or bowing to the pressure of upper caste elites. Bringing the Dewan and the Assembly's attention to the matter, Asan sarcastically noted that some of the tricks used by these forces to prevent Ezhava children were indeed hilarious[49] 'According to existing rules, more children cannot be enrolled' or 'we have fulfilled the quota of pupils in our school', he said, were commonly heard, and nothing new to Ezhava complainants. He went on to narrate a frequent obstacle that occurred whenever complaints were lodged to the higher authorities about such cases of discrimination. 'I need not add that the information about the Inspecting Officer's arrival would have already reached certain people's ears', noted Asan.

> When the Inspector arrives, they see that the school is brimming with pupils on that day. The complainants have no choice but to drop the matter. But we know that the pupils included in the attendance register are from the upper castes found roaming on the streets or engaged in various tasks. There is indeed space in the schools to

[48] Kumaran Asan's Speech at the Eighth Annual Proceedings of the SMPA in 1911, N.K. Damodaran compiled and edited, *Kumaranasante Gadhyalekhanangal (Essays by Kumaran Asan*) Volume 2, (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 65.

[49] Ibid

accommodate our children too. But what can we do? We have no evidence to prove our case. Whom shall we approach with our grievances? [50]

Asan's pointed criticisms echoed in an incident in the princely state of Cochin which was also virulently anti-Ezhava and Pulaya children commingling with upper castes in the schools. In 1915, the Ezhavas of Cranganore presented the Dewan of Cochin with a petition by the. stating that Ezhavas paid land and other additional taxes, and it was "…highly regrettable to see such an enterprising class of people being refused the rights and privileges enjoyed by other communities."[51]

It referred to the hardships caused by the head master of the girls' school in the locality who provided no adequate reason to refuse entry to Ezhava girls, and appealed to the authorities to address the matter urgently. A number of petitions had earlier been addressed to the Director of Education and Chief Inspector of Schools but in vain. The petitioners were hopeful that the Dewan would provide them with some relief. However, a month later, the Dewan responded and confirmed what the administrative officials had been saying all along. He pointed towards religious objections to allowing mixed schooling for girls across castes, and rejected the petition.[52] He extended a vague assurance with regard to removing the girls' school away from the temple in Cranganore.

At the SMPA of 1915, the Dewan of Travancore responded to Kumaran Asan that only 24 government boys' and 34 girl's schools out of a total of 1,771, placed restrictions on

[50] Ibid.

[51] The Petition of Ezhavas of Cranganore to the Dewan of Cochin, October 1915, *Vivekodayam* 1916, Vol. 12, No. 9, 273. The *Vivekodayam* was the prominent magazine of the SNDP, under the long editorship of Kumaran Asan. It was popularly known as the'Gazette of the Ezhavas' and published various discussions and commentaries on the issues faced the Ezhavas of Travancore and Cochin, and the Tiyyas of Malabar.

[52] Ibid., 276.

Ezhava children, and therefore, it was no longer a pressing question.[53] He assured that efforts were being taken to address the matter. Dissatisfied, Kumaran Asan entered into a heated exchange with the Dewan on the issue of school entry in Cherthala. He highlighted the discrimination faced by the 63,000 member strong Ezhava community in admitting girl children into the Thaneermukkam Lower Elementary school. The Dewan responded by claiming that the Director of Education was unable to address the situation as the school was located near a temple, an oft-quoted objection in many cases. Asan, unwilling to accept this so-called justification, argued that it was only a minority of upper castes who raised objections. Pointing towards the general support for primary education among people, 'it was not right to favour the interests of such a small section and create distress to the majority', stated Asan.[54]

His defiance was not misplaced. The question of school entry was a politically volatile debate, and the Ezhavas, within the TSMPA and outside, demanded their right to be treated as equal. While the struggle to admit Ezhava boys into government schools achieved significant results, Ezhava girls were refused the same. The SNDP did not let the question lie low, and Asan, along with his colleagues consistently pressed the administration through their petitions to promote equal female education. Irked by such persistence, the Dewan claimed that caste sentiments were too important to be ignored. Making it near impossible for Ezhava girls to access an equal to government education, the Dewan replied to Asan in 1908,

[53]'Mister Kumaran Asan in the Sri Moolam Praja Sabha', *Mitavadi* 1915 March, Vol. 3, No.3, as cited in *Kumaranasante Gadyalekhanangal Volume 3* (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 33

[54] Ibid.

> …the first effect of forcing Elava girls into them(government schools)) would probably be to empty them of the Brahmin and Nair girls. His Highness' Government are not prepared to force matters in that direction. They hope that the time would come when public feeling would so far have changed that it be possible for Brahmin, Nair and Elava girls to sit together in all rural places, as the boys of those communities are now doing.[55]

He ventured to offer an alternative which was rejected with equal force by the petitioners. The government would establish girls' schools for Ezhavas in taluqs where there were none and provide grants to private initiatives.[56] This was far from satisfactory, and the campaigns for equal school entry continued.

Presenting meticulous lists of schools barred to Ezhava boys and girls at various Assembly sessions, Kumaran Asan and other nominated Ezhava representatives reiterated the demand for equal access to schools, colleges, hospitals and jobs. There was much hostility and apathy from various Dewans and caste members, who often sidestepped the issue calling it religiously sensitive and upholding a 'traditional state policy'[57] But Asan insisted that the wait could not be indefinite. A few years later, he continued to argue for schools near temples to be removed to other places in such cases and liberal grants be made for privately-managed schools.[58]

Grudgingly, after repeated appeals, the Travancore administration permitted the entry of Ezhava boys in government schools but the opposition to Ezhava girls was prolonged and bitter. Asan accused the government of debarring Ezhava and Pulaya children

[55] Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Session of the SMPA, 1908, 74.

[56] Ibid, 74.

[57] Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Session of the SMPA, 1908, 73.

[58] Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Session of the SMPA, 1914, 96.

into schools on 'flimsy' grounds wherein apparent hurt to religious sentiments were invoked. "Some of the reasons for denial are indeed very silly. Oh! At a distance, a *kavu* (sacred shrine) can be seen from the school. A temple can be seen!", he remarked in a mocking jab at orthodox opposition in the SMPA.[59] Referring to the problems faced by Ezhava girls at the Arippad (also known as Harippad) Girls School in Karunagapally taluk, he countered this rhetoric of 'religious sensitivity' as nothing but a pathetic attempt to reinforce caste inequalities.

> The government spent more than 22,000 rupees for its(the school's) relocation. Yet, opposition erupted from religious scholars crying hoarse that there is a *kavu* adjacent to it. Again, Ezhava girls have been denied entry into the school.[60]

These impassioned appeals for female education among the lower castes, and government recognition of equal rights were inevitably linked to future employment and processes of identitiy building. Time and again, as representational politics steadily grew in Travancore and elsewhere, community identities drew heavily upon the notion of a past or 'origins' when learning was venerated. Some groups of Ezhavas knew Sanskrit, practiced Ayurveda medicine, and were supposedly held in high regard by the Brahmins and Nairs alike in a

[59] 'Editorial notes', *Vivekodayam* Book No.1, 1904. The editorial noted that under Dewan Ramaiyar and Sankarasubbaiyar's tenures, strict prohibition rules came into effect, hampering the progress of Ezhava children. An appeal from P.M.Raman, an Ezhava boy to be admitted into the Attingal School was rejected by Ramaiyar on the flimsy grounds that the people of the locality were against it. This was again repeated in the case of the Paravoor school.

[60] Excerpt from a summary of his speech, 11th SMPA Proceedings, *Vivekodayam,* in N.K. Damodaran compiled and edited, *Kumaranasante Gadhyalekhanangal (Essays by Kumaran Asan*) Volume 2, (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 32

previous era, argued Asan, demanding the government to open the Ayurveda and Sanskrit colleges to the Ezhavas[61]

Towards A New Social Order via English

A constant harking back to the past was central to rewriting an Ezhava community lineage. As Manuela Ciotti argues in the case of Chamars in present-day Uttar Pradesh, literacy and education became essential aspects to such community-engineering processes.[62] Education, as Ciotti asserts, was perceived as a shared 'substance' with a considerable emphasis on its moral aspects. This project of experiencing modernity by the lower castes, thus, placed education as an indispensable acquisition that would mark their passage from a so-called state of ignorance and superstition, of which they were commonly accused, to a civilized existence.[63] It struck at the core of a refashioning of the self in which an 'educated' person was capable of taking rational decisions, shed conservative beliefs, and worked to improve the material and moral welfare of the community, as a whole.

During colonialism, and in the wake of never ending forms of discrimination instituted by elite caste forces in Travancore and Cochin, the lower castes mobilized themselves to acquire education as a community asset. The opening up of formal schooling by various missionary organisations, and the subsequent democratization that was pushed forth enabled Ezhavas to make claims to equal rights as monarchical subjects. This 'substance' of education, thus, historically, also lay in the development of individual

[61] Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Session of the SMPA, 1908, 73. Kumaran Asan requested that the Sanskrit and Ayruveda Colleges be relocated if objections were raised to the entry of Ezhava boys, in proximity to temples.

[62] Manuela Ciotti, *Retro-modern India: Forging the Low-caste Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010),118-145

[63] Ibid,120.

capacities, and through them, a civilizing mission for larger communities. A formal education, signified by the school and college leaving certificates recognized by the state was meant to enable lower castes to participate in public sphere debates. However, this could only be achieved if a majority of the community was elevated to a better-status. With a similar objective in mind, the SNDP and fraternal organisations launched vigorous campaigns to promote education among its members and sub-castes.[64] The agenda behind expanding school enrolment and establishment of schools was not merely literacy-oriented. While the acquisition of literacy was valued, the socialization processes experienced in the space of schools, and its concomitant results in one's deportment, language skills, development of notions of self-respect, civic rights, and participation in a public culture, were highly coveted.

Illiteracy was perceived as a burden which the Ezhavas had to shed by 'educating' themselves on the necessity of abolishing outdated customs such as *talikettu*, and without attending schools, their children would have to shoulder the burden of being labelled as 'backward'.[65] It was pertinent, the SNDP often declared, that Ezhava men and women be made aware of the long term advantages of educating their children, not with regard to new government jobs alone, but to steer social change and bring about general advancement.[66] This belief indicated the gradual triumph of regulated, formal schooling over traditional knowledge systems, primarily because of the respectability it accorded for non-manual labour. The hierarchized nature of work in which manual labour was associated with caste

[64] Asan urged supporters at the Travancore Ezhava Educational Mahasabha to enrol their children into government schools, and in the absence of any, to organise and start their own by availing grants, *Mitavadi* 1918 April, Vol. 6, No. 4

[65] 'Speakers of the Yogam', *Vivekodayam* Book No.2, 1905, as cited in *Kumaranasante Gadhyalekhanangal* Volume 3, (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 52

[66] Ibid., 51-52.

backwardness, continued to reinforce ideas that only a formal schooling could provide new means of mobility.

Most visibly, in their demands for an English education, the Ezhavas came together to demand what they knew was a passport to a more favourable employment and income, which the Nairs displayed through their new occupations, accumulation of wealth and respect. The English language, already prevalent in colonial government transactions, and imbued with a symbolic power of its own, was a much desired skill, and one that the government was not willing to share easily with the lower orders.[67] Hitherto, Christian mission schools were the only institutions willing to provide an English instruction to lower caste populations but their strained finances could not accommodate the burgeoning demand. The desire to learn English dominated discourses of self-respect. While vernacular education laid the foundation of a community's recast identity, an English instruction exhibited stronger ties with the colonial and princely state bureaucracy and ability to participate in official decision-making. It also imparted a new status to learners who commanded respect and attention from peers and caste superiors. In villages, reformers like C.V.Kunjuraman was at the forefront of campaigns among the Ezhavas for the promotion of an English education. In Mayyanadu, he held door-to-door campaigns to persuade Ezhava families to invest in an English education for their children, even as it involved considerable expenses.[68] Schooling in the vernacular, he believed, would not suffice if Ezhavas desired

[67] A perusal of the SMPA Proceedings through the decades show the ardent demand for improved English education by all representatives. In 1923, the Dewan declared a scheme of fee concessions, which was divided into two: depressed and backward classes. The latter again into those backward with respect to vernacular and English and the other, English education only. Provision of full fee remission for depressed class and half fee for backward class children. See Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Session of the SMPA 1923, 15 It was also decided to establish English schools within three miles where there are no English, aided or private schools and that there is a demand for it, and government receives applications of parents and guardians. See Dewan's Address,

[68] C Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram* (Kottayam: D.C.Books, 2004), 66

the emergence of a professional and culturally 'refined' class among them who could participate in political and economic affairs of the region.[69] In 1920, a meeting of the Mayyanadu English School's Students' Association was held It was presided by the Kollam Sessions Judge. Prizes were awarded to two Ezhava girls who stood first, having passed the second and third forms. At the same meeting, the association resolved to encourage education among Pulaya children, and a Pulaya lad, Narayanan was asked to address the crowd. He requested the inclusion of pulayas in English schools along with basic scholarships and fee-concessions. To this, the Mayyanadau school-managers agreed to admit Pulaya children for free.[70]

In its initial decades, the SNDP was dominated by a small coterie of educated Ezhava men who used organizational strategies such as petitioning and popular meetings to raise their demands to the government. Membership fees was as high as 100 rupees per year for SNDP, which prevented the bulk of the agricultural class from participating in official decision-making.[71] Notwithstanding these internal differences, the campaigns to consecrate temples and establish Sanskrit schools for the Ezhavas and Tiyyas across the region by Narayana Guru won numerous supporters from the members, as well as the organisation's general efforts to enroll children into government schools. One of the methods adopted for awareness programmes by Narayana Guru was the appointment of certain SNDP members as 'speakers' to address village gatherings on diverse issues concerning the community.

[69] Ibid.

[70] *Vivekodayam,* Book No. 16, April 1920, 26.

[71] P. Chandramohan, *Developmental Modernity in Kerala: Narayana Guru, S.n.d.p Yogam and Social Reform* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2016)

Nominated speakers were assigned to various taluks across Travancore such as Kollam, Karunagapally, Neyyantikara, Varkala, Trivandrum, among others, to address gatherings mainly targeting poor Ezhavas and Tiyyas.[72] Narayana Guru mandated that they speak broadly on topics such as religion, morality, education, and industry; the lines along which he wanted the community to reform themselves.[73] On the question of education, a lack of literacy was posed as a danger to lower caste men and women. Calls for reform were given to strengthen the community by investing in schools for young boys and girls. Such initiatives went a long way in boosting social reform among the Ezhavas and had a ripple effect on other communities as well. Along with literacy, the undertaking of various artisanal activities, trade, and commerce to diversify an occupational base was also encouraged. In line with their urge to contribute to the state's progress, Ezhava community leaders rallied for the promotion of agronomy, and improving scientific methods of cultivation.[74]

A massive school enrolment campaign during the 1900s was launched under the aegis of the SNDP, urging Ezhavas and Tiyyas across regions to admit their children into existing government schools. These efforts among lower caste communities was a characteristic feature of the history of struggles for education in colonial Kerala, which involved the laboring classes rallying behind their prominent leadership. Although there prevailed a distance in the initial decades of its existence between the SNDP's handful of

[72] Speakers of the Yogam', *Vivekodayam 1905*, as cited in *Kumaranasante Gadhyalekhanangal* Volume 3, (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 50-53

[73] Ibid.

[74] The SNDP, as part of its second and fourth annual conferences, held Industrial exhibitions at Quilon and Kannur respectively. See Kumaran Asan, 'Our Agricultural and Industrial Exhibitions', *Vivekodayam* 1907, *Kumaranasante Gadyalekhanamgal* Vol.3 (Selected Essays of Kumaran Asan*),* (Trivandrum: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 57-58

high fee-paying members, and the vast lay supporters, by the end of the first World War, the organization became a frontal mouthpiece for community rights.

The fight did not end with gaining the right to school entry. The SNDP was desirous that the provision of education should remain a sustained community endeavor, and with every passing year, efforts were made to increase enrolment and provide monetary help to aspiring pupils. In 1917, Asan urged supporters to improve the facilities accorded to Ezhava pupils to encourage higher education.[75] He cautioned that there were limits to government support, and the onus of supporting children lay on the shoulders of the community itself. He encouraged the establishment of numerous primary schools, and especially student hostels, to help improve those seeking higher education in the major towns.[76] On the occasion of Narayana Guru's sixtieth birthday which was celebrated with much ado, donations for completing the students' hostel at Kaithamukku in Trivandrum was sought.[77] On an occasion commemorating the Alappuzha Vidyarthi Sadanam established by the S.N.V Samajam, an advocate K.M. Krishnan wrote in the *Vivekodayam* about the inevitability of moving with changing times. He sharply points to the practical necessity of acquiring the same skills as the upper castes if the Ezhavas wanted to improve their conditions. A combination of traditional skills and new resources was pertinent to the refashioning of a modern Ezhava self.

It is the community's responsibility to provide for the education of its children. Without the inculcation of religious belief ad character formation, neither a plain instruction in English,

[75] Address by Kumaran Asan at the Ezhava Half-Yearly Convention, Ernakulam, December 30, 1917, as cited in *Kumaranasante Gadhyalekhanangal* Volume 3, (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 91

[76] Ibid.

[77] " An Appeal", Mitavadi, 1917 July, Vol. 5, No. 7 as cited in *Kumaranasante Gadhyalekhanangal* Volume 3, (Thonakkal: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, 1982), 93-94

nor Sanskrit was useless to our children. What we need is a harmonious union of the two. As Hindus, we cannot afford to not know a bit of Sanskrit, and without a knowledge of English, it is difficult to survive. [78]

Pulaya Assertions in the SMPA

While the Ezhavas intensified their campaigns, both inside and outside the Assembly, the struggles for equality were bloody and violent for the Pulayas and other erstwhile slave castes. Their emergence out of slavery was clamped down upon by an orthodox society and administration at every step. Landlessness and widespread poverty made it doubly difficult to make quick strides. Their children remained outside the ambit of government education in large numbers till the late 1930s and continued to depend on mission-run schools for basic instruction.

The attempts to acquire formal learning of any sorts was frequently thwarted by the upper castes who found a powerful ally in the state. When the Ezhavas began to forge associations to address their concerns in the political realm and emphasized on their tax-paying capacities to impress the administration, there were stirrings in the depressed communities as well. A representative of the numerically prominent Pulayas was chosen to participate in SMPA in 1912, and was gradually joined by members of other depressed communities in voicing demands. This was Aiyankali, a significant figure, who had already garnered attention for his militant resistance against caste prohibitions during the late 1890s. He openly challenged untouchability in south Travancore by riding a decorated bullock cart

[78] ' Alappuzha Vidyarthi Samajam', *Vivekodayam* Book No. 11, July 1915, 36

on a main road in 1893, both of which were denied to his people. By 1907, Aiyankali, in the wake of a larger social churning in Travancore, established the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (henceforth, SJPS), and organised protest action.[79] Prompted by the advances made by the SNDP, he also raised the pertinent demand for equal rights to schools and job opportunities. Aiyan Kali did not consider himself to be the leader of the Pulayas alone. Yet, the nature of the SMPA was such that it reduced political leaders and campaigners to their communities alone.

Though semi-literate, Aiyankali was acutely convinced of the importance of schooling in reclaiming a sense of self-respect for his Pulaya community. This notion was to be the foundation of their protracted struggle for rights to access to public spaces, including schools. Hence, when Aiyankali founded the SJPS in 1907, he beckoned his fellow men and women, to come out and defy long-held caste customs which treated the untouchables as lesser human beings. It was not a mere coincidence that some of the most violent clashes between Pulayas and other castes, particularly the Nairs in southern Travancore, was on the question of education.[80] Along with C.Solomon from SJPS, Kandan Kumaran from the Paraya community, and later Poykayil Yohannan from the PRDS, amongst others who were also nominated to the SMPA, he repeatedly made attempts to gain entry for Pulaya children into government schools and held the state responsible for the impunity with which caste school teachers and educational authorities violated regulations.

[79]T.H.P.*Chentharasherry, Aiyankali: Oru Jeevacharithram (Biography),* (Prabhath Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1979) Also see M. Nisar and Meena Kandasamy, *Aiyankali: Dalit Leader of Organic Protest* (Other Books, 2007)

[80] Alex George, *The Militant Phase of Pulaya Movement of South Travancore, 1884-1914* (Amsterdam: CASA, 1990)

Even as scores of Pulayas converted to Christianity in the preceding decades, Aiyankali disagreed with conversion as a solution to their grievances of discrimination. Influenced by spiritual figures such as Sadananda Swami and Narayana Guru, he was vehemently opposed to seeking conversion as it took away the Pulayas from the fold of Hinduism.[81] Yet, Protestant missionary activities among the Christian Pulayas, and the small gains made in schooling, impacted upon non-Christians desirous of similar opportunities.This emphatic demand for schooling is of immense historical importance as Pulayas and erstwhile slave castes sought to reclaim their lives as modern individuals, despite conditions of backwardness. Outraged by their bonded labourers making these claims, many Nair and Syrian Christian landlords, alongside sections of the Ezhavas, responded with great violence. The burning and looting of Pulaya homesteads and individuals in the clashes of 1914-15 revealed the extreme opposition of subordinate government officials, landlords, and other community members to allowing the depressed classes from becoming 'visible' in the realm of subject-citizenship.

The Travancore government instituted a few measures to improve primary education among the depressed classes. Under Dr. Mitchell, the educational secretary in 1895, the revised grant-in-aid code declared certain castes as 'backward' and offered special grants for schools opened for such groups. But soon after, Pulaya Christian converts were removed from the list in 1901, which was vehemently challenged by the CMS missionaries who ran

[81] According to the missionaries, Aiyankali was extremely opposed to conversion, and encouraged his followers to unite against evangelical attempts. See Harold T.Wills, Trivandrum City, CWM/LMS/Travancore/Report/ Box 9/ 1914 However, the LMS continued to win converts following the clashes in 1914-15, as many Pulayas fled upper caste violence, and sought missionary help. By the end of 1915, 1,895 new converts joined the churches in Attingal and Quilon, with hundreds more joining other churches. See Annual Report of the Quilon and Attingal Districts, 1915. CWM/LMS/Travancore/Reports/Quilon/1915

schools for them.[82] Some of the missionary proposals to improve the conditions of schools for Christians were agreed upon, and by August 1904, fresh orders were issued. In 1905, twenty schools for backward classes were established by the government, one of the first steps to wean non-Christians away from evangelical societies. But these measures were far from sufficient as the policy of separate schooling continued, with far fewer facilities for poor children, given the indifference of the bureaucracy.

As Ezhava nominees in the SMPA succeeded in getting their concerns addressed, the problems of the depressed classes were treated with far less urgency. Most of the Dewans presiding over the Assembly proceedings tended to label the injustices meted out to depressed castes as a 'social' problem which required a change in customs and shifts in attitudes. As Rupa Viswanath argues in the context of Panchama demands for house sites in the Madras Presidency, the problems of erstwhile slaves in Travancore were also relegated to the 'social' domain.[83] By doing so, the state attempted to divorce its political obligations from the social sphere which was conceptualized as mainly comprising family and religion that required non-intervention. Contrary to its own epithet of being a 'model' state, questions of injustice was justified as 'religiously sensitive' issues. The upper caste representatives in the SMPA argued about the problems of the Pulayas more as a threat to the so-called Hindu social order than one of civic rights. It perturbed the Assembly that if the issues of the depressed communities were not resolved to an extent, there was also the possibility of greater numbers choosing to convert**.**

[82] Letter, J. Caley to Madhava Rao, Tiruwella, May 11, 1904, CMS Archives, University of Birmingham

[83] Rupa Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India*, (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2014), 217-239.

In 1907, Madhavan Thampi appealed for the establishment of more schools for Pulayas, noting that most of the full salary grants offered were benefiting the LMS schools in south Travancore.[84] He said prohibitions forced the Pulayas to sacrifice their religion for an education. In the Assembly, discussions about the condition of the depressed classes were framed around the question of religion. It was argued that the unsympathetic attitude of the Hindu polity was resulting in conversions. Holding the state directly responsible for these social changes, members of dominant castes demanded the provision of certain concessions to lower castes. Most representatives chose to depict the Pulayas as 'Hindus' "by tradition, custom and temperament....conversion cannot be traced to any 'inherent defect' in the Hindu religion."[85] The upper-caste criticisms of official apathy helped to skirt the pressing issue of discrimination and violence underlying the system. Instead, caste-related problems were projected as a political problem that could be remedied through administrative measures. It was, as if, time held the key to such long-standing problems, and all the untouchable poor was required to do was show some patience![86] But patience was fast running out and in the period between 1910 and 1915 and open confrontation between upper castes and Pulayas threatened powers-to-be.

In 1910, Aiyankali led a historic agricultural workers' strike, by calling for a labour boycott of landlords until Pulaya children were admitted into government schools. This strike is of great importance in the social memory of Dalits in Kerala because for the first time, the untouchable castes fought back with the strongest weapon they possessed: their

[84] Madhavan Thampi's Speech at the Proceedings of the Fourth Session of the SMPA 1907, 84.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Rupa Viswanathan makes a similar argument in the context of Panchama struggles for house-sites in the Madras Presidency. Rupa Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India,* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2014), 217-239.

labour power. Most significantly, the struggle was based on the plank for equal rights to education. By denying Nair *jenmis* their service agricultural workers, Aiyankali and his supporters managed to unsettle caste arrogance.

Though the SJPS was increasingly cast as a Pulaya organisation, much to Aiyankali's chagrin, his participation in the Assembly provided a voice to depressed communities. He noted that the administration favoured Muslims and Christians, much more than the untouchables by offering full fee-concessions and scholarships.[87]This was a sore point, as he repeatedly recorded his disappointment and discontent at the state failing to keep its word to improve their conditions. Aiyankali's insistence on increasing the number of nominated members from the depressed classes, and his appeals to the monarchical administration to implement its own laws properly, signified the desire of depressed groups to participate in the dominant public sphere, as equal members. Their notion of subject-citizenship and public in Travancore presupposed the treatment of monarchical subjects as equal and free, both in the political and social arenas. The fragmented and varied nature of state action and response towards the Ezhavas and erstwhile slave castes also revealed the internal fissures of the state-legitimised notion of 'public' founded on caste identity. Having managed to secure far more educational rights, job opportunities and gradual land ownership, sections of the Ezhavas were also antagonistic towards the depressed classes. Despite attempts by the SNDP to improve the conditions of Pulaya children, the Ezhava social imaginary, one could argue, was by and large not in tune with that of the extreme poor and oppressed. The utter subjugation of the Pulayas in local caste society made their position more precarious in Travancore.

[87] Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session of the SMPA 1912, 83.

Aiyankali, in his first address to the SMPA in 1912 acknowledged the sympathy expressed by the government to the cause of the Pulayas but reminded the gathering that it was insufficient.[88] He regretted that despite the 1910 declaration lower level officials posed the chief obstacletos the entry of Pulaya children into government schools. It was argued that the frivolous reasons raised against equal entry should be squashed. But unlike Ezhava representatives such as Kumaran Asan, who garnered widespread support for his appeals, the Pulayas were unable to do the same. Though there prevailed a general sympathy with their suffering in the Assembly, especially with regard to preventing their conversion to Christianity, the administration was not readily responsive to the issue of equal school entry. If children of these downtrodden castes were admitted, the fear of a rural cultivating class shifting away from agriculture was also causing considerable anxiety to upper castes. As long as they were restricted within the Hindu order, the Assembly attempted to portray the image of a benevolent public working in the interest of the poor, but these were attempts to sideline the fundamental issue of caste inequality that caused immense suffering to the Pulayas.

The concerns of the Pulayas were not met with the same seriousness as that of the Ezhavas, a reminder of the weak bargaining power of communities with no share in land and tax-yielding resources. The state, well-aware of the long-standing injustice meted out to erstwhile slave castes, did not hesitate to tie them down in a similar position in the new economic milieu. Unsurprisingly, given the lack of landed property, proper housing and literacy, these communities continued to work for low wages in the plantations in pitiable conditions or on the fields of their former landlords who continued to exploit them in a persisting system of feudal patronage. An absence of legal recognition, redistributive

[88] Proceedings of the Ninth Session of the SMPA, 1912, 83. Aiyankali mentioned that only 7 schools were open to the Pulayas in Travancore.

measures and fair judicial action also erected numerous hurdles which were compounded by illiteracy. Suitable land was frequently denied to the Pulayas, Parayas, Sambavars and Kuravers for settlement and establishment of schools.

The movement among the Pulayas, led by Aiyankali and colleagues, were watched with much attention in Travancore. A.Parker, LMS missionary reported on the violence that was unleashed on non-Christian Pulayas in Travancore,

> There has been an unfortunate recrudescence of the ill feeling between the outcastes and those who not long ago were their lords and masters, and who very unwillingly see their former slaves rising in the world, and claiming their fair share of opportunity, in fact "a place in the sun." there have been unseemly riots. Houses were burnt down, and in some cases the little sheds used for chapels and school houses were destroyed. But the government intervened and offences were allowed to go unpunished, though it was very difficult in many cases to lay the offenders by the heels. [89]

Another missionary, Sydney Cave, from Parachaley remarked that the Pulayas were treated as a 'contaminating class' and after the abolition of slavery, they are a little more than slaves.[90] He finds that the conflicts between Pulayas and their landlords provided ample opportunities in the mission-field, and to train them in Christian scriptures in the schools. Referring to Sinclair's report of the unrest among the Pulayas, he stated further that 'long years of oppression have made them quick to resent injustice and over eager to assert their rights...'[91]

[89]A.Parker, Letter to the Foreign Secretary of the LMS, 1915 Box 9/FILE 187/ Travancore

[90] Sydney Cave, 'Report Of The Parachaley District', 1915, 1

[91] Ibid., 2.

Their actions were viewed as a social awakening from a life of destitution. An observer in commented that the Pulayas were emerging from darkness into light, and realising the importance of becoming better human beings. This language, strongly resembling missionary tropes, placed Pulaya agitations for equality as a bid to becoming civilised. Yet, they were accused of suffering from addictions such as drinking, which caused them much suffering and prevented them from oppression.

> Pathetic is the condition of the Pulayas. They befriend destitution. They hug over-work and ill-treatment. Yet are they human beings, mother India's own children, the brothers of those who throttle them with the iron bud of prejudice. But happily even the-· Pulayas are waking up. A Pulaya sits, as the representative of his class, in the Popular Assembly. The Angel of Change has waved a torch across the land and the sparks_ that have fallen from it will soon collect into a conflagration and many a worn thing of old must perish, in the flames. So the Pulayas too will be purified and will take their place by the side of their so-called superiors. They have already begun to bold conferences· and ask for their rights. This is a happy augury and from it will arise a new amelioration for the tribe.[92]

The author continues to assert that the backward condition of the Pulayas was mostly of their own doing. In particular, due to the 'besetting sin' of drink, and accused even Pulaya women of being often boozy.[93] His representations of the Pulaya as submerged in subserverience remained prominent during this period and informed public perceptions about their lives. Yet, he stated that the betterment of the Pulaya community lay in the hands of their women, who was quick to fight injustice, and bold in the face of violence. 'They are the harbingers of a new age', he remarked, in what was perhaps an allusion to ongoing

[92] N.K.Venkateswaran, *Glimpses of Travancore* (S. Gnanaskanda Iyer: Trivandrum, 1926), 110

[93]Ibid.,106

protests against caste dictums by Pulaya women.[94] In 1914-15, Aiyankali exhorted Pulaya women to abandon the stone beaded necklaces which wore heavily upon their necks as a reminder of their menial status. A bonfire of these necklaces were lit by Pulaya women who followed Aiyankali's clarion call, and vowed never to wear them again. Caste rules did not alter through these protests for substantive freedoms. A large number of poor, labouring children attended vernacular schools and often could not complete their primary schooling. While the acquisition of literacy was perceived as a historical leap in their conditions, the education system opened up further challenges and created new hierarchies. In other words, as Bourdieu illustrates, these classes did not benefit from a new form of cultural capital[95]. This was most visible in the demands for unemployment. Aiyankali appealed for Pulaya boys graduating from primary school to be recruited as peons, gardeners, and guards in government offices, until better graduates could be raised. He also demanded fee-concessions and scholarships to encourage more Pulaya children to complete their schooling.[96] He also insisted that subjects such as crafts and agriculture be taught to Pulaya pupils in schools to enable them to improve upon their traditional skills, and become better workers.[97] These demands reveal that Aiyankali was aware of the obstacles confronted by his community, and desired gradual change concomitant with their level of schooling. In the following year, he requested that Pulaya boys be selected into the Agriculture and Industries

[94] N.K.Venkateswaran, *Glimpses of Travancore* (S. Gnanaskanda Iyer:Trivandrum, 1926),110 ' It is a sight for sore eyes when a forward-looking, courageous Pulaya woman comes face to face with a hide-bound caste-Hindu stickler for prerogatives. Then issues a fierce combat. 'The woman argues, the man curses. The woman marshalls cold logic, the man spews forth emotional imprecations. In the combat the caste-Hindu appears as a slave to superstition and the other the mistress of commonsense.'

[95] Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," in R.Brown ed. *Knowledge,Education and Cultural Change* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1973) 71-84

[96] Proceedings of the Fifteenth Session of the SMPA, 1919, 74

[97] Proceedings of the Sixteenth Session of the SMPA, 1920, 22.

Departments.[98] By the end of 1921, the number of Pulaya children enrolled in schools rose by 11.5 percent and Parayas by 16.6 percent, and Mahomedans- 12.8 percent, declared the Dewan. Additionally, 174 out of 356 Pulaya pupils passed Class 4 or primary schoolsls and 136 were prosecuting their higher studies.[99]

Travancore rulers extended their support referring to the need to develop the region's rich mineral and agricultural resources. But the few industrial schools that survived trained an inadequate number of pupils and were fraught with problems. The government primarily aimed at providing instruction in carpentry, weaving and smithery. However, there were very few takers. The reasons for the unpopularity of vocational education was not only one of demand and supply, as the Travancore administration tended to argue. The need for expanding vocational instruction was not guided by worries of unemployment alone. Upper-caste members of the SMPA echoed a long-standing bias against what they thought was the over-ambition of children from agrarian castes who were partaking of a literary curriculum. Aiyankali requested, given the abysmally low number of matriculates from his community, that the administration recruit the few available as peons, gardeners, forest service helpers and other lower subordinate workers. Agronomy was also supported by the depressed classes who wanted the state to use their knowledge of the soil and crops effectively.[100]

Proposals for introducing commercial and industrial subjects arose from all quarters, for different reasons. 1919, N.G. Parameswaran Pillai, member of the Town Improvement Committee, Mavelikara remarked that although it was good to have depressed class children

[98] Proceedings of the Seventeenth Session of the SMPA, 1921, 116.

[99] Proceedings of the Eighteenth Session of the SMPA, 1922, 14.

[100] K.T. Rammohan,"Caste, Public action and the Kerala Model" in K.Ravi Raman ed. Development, Democracy and the State: Critiquing the Kerala Model of Development (London: Routledge, 2010), 33.

attend schools, 'they had begun to abandon their traditional livelihood and think it inferior to follow them.'[101] By 1924, the state was still formulating schemes on manual training in vernacular schools and making necessary arrangements. It was widely acknowledged that technical education was making little progress in the state due to the government's inability to employ graduates. The problem of unemployment for graduates was bogging down the government, as depressed communities also raised equal demands. Remarking upon the progress made by Travancore in promoting education but faced with dissatisfied pupils, the Dewan in 1928 declared,

> …the people of TVC are not content with that. There is a code rule that pupils shall be neatly clad and the cult of the shirt is an inexorable bar to manual labour. ; and some parents are ready to sacrifice all, thus to equip their sons for Government employment. And so we have an army of graduates and certified youth besieging the Government for appointment. Hence the cry of unemployment.[102]

The Dewan also admitted that the condition of the depressed classes had not improved considerably. The policy of registry and allocation of puduval and poramboke lands to the Pulayas, Parayas and Sambavars had proceeded at a painstaking pace. It was argued that the prejudices of the subordinate officers in the Land Revenue Department had denied the land promised to the depressed groups. The government in the same year, appointed the Registrar of Cooperative Societies as the Protector of the depressed classes. Following an outcry and numerous representations by members, the administration found the measures inadequate. Instead, the government encouraged these groups to actively take up establishing cooperatives, emphasizing their need to help themselves. This fit in with the

[101]N.G. Parameswaran Pillai, Proceeedings of the Fifteenth Annual Session of the SMPA, 1919, 6

[102] Dewan's address, Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the SMPA, 1928, 7.

state's larger rhetoric of self-improvement, placing the burden of poverty reduction onto depressed communities.

Travancore could not effectively counter the criticism of an excessively literary curriculum with the establishment of industrial and technical schools. Representatives including Aiyankali requested the government to start manual training and industrial schools for the depressed classes where, it was argued, they could make best use of their existing repertoire of skills.[103] Discussions in the Assembly abound on the 'positive evil' caused by a literary education for all.[104] Certain members alleged that children of the depressed classes were no longer interested in pursuing their hereditary agricultural occupations. This was echoed continuously by various others, particularly from dominant caste groups, attributing the mad scramble for government employment to the changing aspirations of the poor.

The monarchical administration extended their support to such ventures referring to the need to develop the region's rich mineral and agricultural resources. But the few industrial schools that survived trained an inadequate number of pupils and were fraught with problems. The government primarily aimed at providing instruction in carpentry, weaving and smithery. However, there were very few takers. The reasons for the unpopularity of vocational education was not only one of demand and supply, as the Travancore administration tended to argue. Proposals for introducing commercial and industrial subjects arose from all quarters, for different reasons. 1919, N.G. Parameswaran Pillai, member of the Town Improvement Committee, Mavelikara remarked that although it was good to have depressed class children attend schools, 'he argued,“ they had begun to

[103] Aiyankali’s Address, Proceeedings of the Fifteenth Annual Session of the SMPA, 1919 74.

[104] N.G. Parameswaran Pillai, Proceeedings of the Fifteenth Annual Session of the SMPA, 1919, 69

abandon their traditional livelihood and think it inferior to follow them.[105] By 1924, the state was still formulating schemes on manual training in vernacular schools and making necessary arrangements. It was widely acknowledged that technical education was making little progress in the state due to the government's inability to employ graduates.

There was a widespread disaffection with industrial schools amongst the poor. First, the state did not have a coherent policy on industrial schools and many experiments were half-hearted. Second, there was a constant shortage of trained staff and learning resources. Third, the lack of well-developed industries in the region added to the unpopularity of such schools creating an uncertainty of future employment. But most importantly, the curriculum of technical and industrial schools were not at par with general schools. English was not taught adding to the larger public disdain and only certain skills such as weaving, carpentry and smithery were sought to be imparted, something which caste-specific knowledge was already providing to children from these communities . Lower caste children attempted to keep away from vocational schools because it did not free them from the lack of dignity accorded to manual labour.

It is significant that the Pulaya struggle for recognition and civil rights entailed demands for land and education simultaneously. Both were fundamental to their movement for self-respect in Travancore. The promise of education would have been rendered futile in the face of homelessness, and dependency on landlords. The demand for house-sites, akin to one in the Madras Presidency, pointed towards the efforts made by Pulayas to reorient their identities in the changing scenario. The acquisition of education and adequate employment was held as lasting solutions towards addressing their backwardness. Increasingly, education became an asset for deprived populations, imparting a set of

[105]Ibid.

resources to refashion their selves and widen their participation in public discourses. By denying them these basic freedoms, the Travancore government was unwilling to undo feudal relations, and wanted them to remain at the bottom rungs of society. Their varying responses to the Ezhava community that was gaining socio-economic mobility vis-à-vis the landless Pulayas exposed the fractured nature of the emergent 'public'.

Conclusion

The Ezhavas and Pulayas raised similar demands regarding the right to government school entry and jobs. Despite the humanism of Narayan Guru and the SNDP's growing political clout, there was no far-reaching solidarity with the depressed communities that they sought to forge. Very often, the campaigns for civil rights focused predominantly on the Ezhavas who were beginning to utilize their education to enter various white-collar jobs, and expand their base in businesses such as coir, cashew nuts, abkari etc. There prevailed a widespread sympathy with the conditions of the depressed communities, but did not necessarily translate into an active mobilization for the same.

But the state responded differently, and gradually allowed the Ezhavas to exert a greater social presence than the extremely marginalized Pulayas. In the absence of any property assets, the Pulayas were unable to compel the administration and for decades, waited for concessions to be provided. However, the politics of self-assertion, led by leaders such as Aiyankali enabled them to shake the state's complacency. The Travancore government could no longer turn a blind eye to the grievances of the depressed communities if it required their labour to modernize. In the competition for scarce resources, education came to be moulded as an indispensable asset, coveted by all communities. But the nature

of its provision was determined by both status in local society and the opportunities that lay before them after leaving school. Education was tied closely with the idea of self-respect and the Pulayas were unwilling to succumb to state pressures unless they were treated as equal beings. The Ezhavas, with skillful campaigning, and bringing together disparate groups influenced Pulaya actions by proving that organized movements could challenge the caste order. Under Narayana Guru, Kumaran Asan and Aiyankali's leadership, both within and outside the corridors of state power, lower caste communities were able to instill a sense of dignity to their followers. This was couched in a language of self-help which went a long way in building community consciousness.

Conclusion

During the course of this study, I often encountered this question, ‘‘Kerala is so literate. Why bother studying its history of education?” Numerous discussions followed which forcefully brought home the realisation that literacy is viewed synonymously as education, and there was an overall consensus that European missionaries had done the most for introducing formal schools in the region. As a beneficiary of a Christian school, and infused with a particular notion of morality with rewards such as the Good News Bible, it occurred to me that much of Kerala’s present-day views on literacy achievement and role of Christian missionaries is taken for granted. However, the continued existence of mission schools, spread across the state, and the dynamic debates on schools and children in public discourse is a reminder of a far more detailed history of education which I intended to study.

Historically, Protestant Christian missionaries of the LMS, CMS, and BM, laid the foundation of a system of mass schooling in the region. Though guided by an ardent evangelical zeal to convert Hindus, Muslims, old Christian communities of Catholics and Syrian Christians in the south- western coast, the missionary societies adapted to local conditions and were influenced by them in return. As they sought to establish schools for various castes to win supporters though children, they were confronted with internal fissures governed largely by caste. While upper caste elites waged relentless battles to drive away the missionaries, a larger number from the untouchable communities, including females, responded favourably to gospel preaching. Prompted by the desire to escape conditions of misery and exploitation, and to partake of the resources offered by the princely and colonial states, the untouchable castes reached out for missionary help, in spiritual and material terms. If education in Kerala today is regarded as an indispensable part of character-

formation and community status, it is because of these various historical interactions with Protestant missions.

From the 1850s onwards, the influx of converts from untouchable communities such as Pulayas, Parayas, Cherumars, Ezhavas, Tiyyars, and hill-tribes, in the form of what is often called 'mass movements' gave an impetus to the missionary educational enterprise.[1] Demands for schools grew as missions pressed local communities to listen to gospel preaching and participate in Sunday-classes for catechistical instruction. Contrary to commonly held assumptions that the colonised were passive recipients in colonial Kerala, it was a two-way process, in which missionaries were as much dependent on labouring populations as they were for mission schools. Missionaries did not voluntarily begin schools to better the conditions of the poor without considerable pressure exerted upon them. But I do not make an argument that untouchable groups demanded education only for temporal benefits. Apart from the cursory protection offered by their association with European missionaries, this study shows that the struggles to attain literacy was marked by immense conflicts, loss, and sacrifices on the part of untouchable communities. The ability to read and write was central to regaining their sense of self and make themselves visible in the public sphere. I argue that much of what was imparted by missionaries were also dictated by pre-existing social norms, and reflected in their everyday functioning. Poor children, Christian and non-Christian, were subject to a disciplinary and subject-learning routine that tended to limit their possibilities of breaking free from traditional roles. Mission educators called for an end to caste violence, slavery, and by empowering poor children to read, speak, and dress in ways considered 'respectable', posed challenges to caste superiors. What emerges from this account is that these aspirations were also undercut by limitations of the

[1] W.S. Hunt, *India's Outcastes*: *A New Era* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1924)

missionary project. They wished for poor children to become role models of Protestant piety and committed to manual or agricultural labour. There were stirrings of opposition to these aims as lower caste populations wanted to partake of the state's modernisation agenda, and acquire the status of equal subjects as other communities.

As we hail missionary activity in colonial Kerala has bringing about positive change, their writings show evidence that missionary men and women succumbed to dominant caste and racial biases. This is evident in the manner in which children from untouchable castes were treated with ambivalence regarding what they could achieve or not. The education of the poor, controlled and supervised by the missionaries because of the former's lack of resources, resulted in lop-sided educational attainment. But if one moves beyond examination results, we find that Protestant missionary activity in Kerala echoes in the processes by which local society has constructed norms of discipline and schooling for children. Instilled with a strong sense of civic and religious piety, the lingering influence of mission education is in the way schools are arranged and function. The introduction of daily prayer, teaching of subjects such as moral/value-education, and the constructions of boyhood and girlhood in modern day schooling across institutions, have historical precedents in missionary experiences.

The provision of education is one of those spheres of activity that captures the nuanced relationship between European Protestant missionaries and indigenous populations in the colonies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is particularly true of the region of Kerala, in southwest India, which achieved significant levels of educational achievement during the concerned period. The educational work laid down by Protestant missionaries continue to resonate even today in Kerala where education is a public good with rising competition between the State and private players over its provision. It was on this plank that a relationship of cooperation and conflict ensued between missionaries and

the state, local dominant groups and indigenous people. There has been increasingly a call to move away from a simplistic and dichotomous understanding of the relationship of missionaries with indigenous populations as merely impact/response based. It is no longer possible to relegate the role of missionaries to that of 'allies of white imperialism' or as the 'saviours' of colonized groups. A renewed understanding is required to assess the role played by them and the complex relations which emerged in their interactions with these various groups in the colonies. This complexity can be grasped only if we acknowledge that there was a range of relationships, marked by differences in class, caste, race and gender.

When mission schools suffered fluctuating funds and greater state control with the expansion of government schools, their relationship with the labouring poor also began to shift. The predominant intention of instilling a religious education was undermined the introduction of government-prescribed curricula, regulations regarding infrastructure and teachers, and a outflow of potential converts to government institutions. In this scenario, many missionaries spent a considerable amount of time and energy as educational administrators and managers, and their schools were run more as community assets than as spaces for conversion alone. Though targeted as a threat to the caste structure, the presence of mission schools became a matter of social pride by the latter decades of the nineteenth century. We see various communities, including the upper castes, competing with one another to start schools for their children, with government sanctions. The number of graduates in each community seems to directly affect their social power, and towards these ends, schools embodied new aspirations

Another area of research which this study leads to is the history of education. Hitherto, children as historical actors have not garnered much attention in Indian historiography. By examining related histories of education and caste, it is hoped that connections can be drawn with histories of childhood complicated by colonialism and

indigenous traditions. Karen Vallgarda's work on the Danish missionaries in the Tranquebar mission sets the tone for such integrated research, as it squarely places children as active agents in the making of their own selves.[2] School pedagogies also point towards this direction as it provides a sneak-peek into the emotional worlds of colonised children who were the subject of much debate during the period under consideration. Their acquisition of literacy was determined by groups of adults with varying power, and dictated by the physical institutional spaces in which they found themselves.

Any discussion of Kerala's strides in literacy must be placed in this chequered history of everyday pedagogical engagements by missionaries. Schools were considered a direct threat to incumbent traditional authority who did not want the children of the slaves to improve their conditions. Most children, unable to pay fees, and dependent on mission charity and government aids, looked towards these vernacular schools to acquire primary schooling. Their enrolment rate was painstakingly slow and in 1933, the Travancore Education Reforms Committee reported that out of a total number of depressed classes, classified as such for educational purposes, which was approximately, 6,70,000, the number of depressed class pupils of school-age, was approximately, 1 ,00,000. Of the total depressed class population, around 32, 132 or about five percent was across various stages of instruction in government, aided, and unaided schools.[3] The report also pointedly noted that seventy percent remained outside the ambit of decent education, and a majority of those enrolled were in the first two primary classes.[4] These statistics revealed that even after a

[2] Karen Vallgarda, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

[3] *Report of the Travancore Education Reforms Committee* 1933 (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1934), 285-286.

[4] Ibid.

hundred years of Protestant missionary work among the outcaste population, the latter's progress was slow, owing to the backlash from caste-forces. These figures are strongly evident of the uphill struggles faced by the Pulayas, Parayas, Kuravars, and hill-tribes, and other sub-castes, in accessing schooling opportunities well into the 1930s and beyond. As the report pointed out, caste prejudices continued to dominate and an informal segregation of schools existed. In spite of all government schools, barring twelve, which were open to these castes in 1933, they were confined to smaller, aided and unaided schools with inadequately trained teachers, low level infrastructure, and among their own communities. Such a separation marked the educational hierarchy as the state was claiming to make great strides in overall literacy rates. This report, though appreciative of the well-intentioned policies of mission managed schools, was also strongly critical of their widespread number of schools with less than four classes, and incomplete facilities. This network of ill-quality schools, instead of a few well-developed ones, hampered the educational growth of the depressed classes.

The Protestant missionary enterprise in education had many objectives. They primarily believed that, in order to raise the Indian from an intellectual and moral decay, it was pertinent to reform his/her 'character'. This project of 'emancipation' was however embedded within a framework of 'making useful subjects' out of converts. Imparting the basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic and other subjects alongside the teaching of Christian scriptures meant that the children had to constantly negotiate between the demands of a 'Christian' and 'secular' education. These negotiations were also based on the social inequalities they faced across colonial Kerala. To understand the influence of protestant missionaries in changing the lives of lower caste communities, one has to also explore the ways in which the missionaries tried to introduce modernity in traditional societies through institutional spaces such as schools; an enterprise laden with anxiety, uncertainty and power.

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