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Transnational Research Group

Poverty and Education in India



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PREFACE

ANDREAS GESTRICH, DIRECTOR
GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE LONDON

This is the fourth Annual Report of the Transnational Research Group (TRG) “Poverty Reduction and Policy for the Poor between the State and Private Actors in India since the Nineteenth Century”. Again we can report from a very busy and successful year, where much progress has been made on various levels of our work.

In recent years cooperation with Indian colleagues in the field of the humanities and social sciences has enjoyed increasing public attention and support in Germany and the TRG is an important factor in this intensifying scholarly exchange. When India was chosen, for example, as the partner country of the bi-annual conference of the Association of German Historians (*Historikerverband*) which convened in Hamburg in September 2016, the TRG figured quite prominently. It was involved in several panels, and some of our PhD students were able to take part in a poster competition. Particularly good news in this context is that, in May 2016, the Board of Governors of the Max Weber Foundation decided to continue funding the costs for the office which the TRG has set up in Delhi for the Max Weber Foundation, for another three years and possibly longer, depending on a positive evaluation. Thus there is the basic structure in place for new projects. However, to be fully operational they will also need to find some additional third party funding for new research projects or other activities.

In the first years the research of the six doctoral and seven postdoctoral fellows funded by the TRG were at the centre of our activities. It is very gratifying to see that the doctoral fellows are more or less all ‘on track’. The first PhD thesis has already been submitted and defended successfully, others are about to follow shortly. Postdoctoral fellows,

who joined the group for up to two years, have produced interesting research, given papers at conferences and published consistently in journals or contributed to edited conference volumes. Some moved on to academic jobs or received other grants. Apart from its serious research outcomes, the TRG has also created opportunities for younger scholars and helped them to enter an academic career.

The development of the TRG followed a certain internal logic. As the full funding is limited to a five year period, it did not make sense to start funding new PhD projects. In the final year of the TRG, funding will therefore be largely used to support a collaborative project entitled “Key Moments of Education Policy towards the Poor in India”. It is primarily conducted by the Principal Investigators of the group and will bring many aspects of our work together. At the same time it endeavours to lay the foundation for new research by making important and underused source material available electronically via an open-access internet portal.

All this would not have been possible without the enormous commitment of all members of the TRG, PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, principal investigators and administrative staff. I would like to thank them all for their work as well as the Max Weber Foundation for its generous funding and support. I would, however, like to mention one person in particular here: Sue Evans, who has not only edited our Annual Reports over the past years, but has also been vital for keeping the TRG administration going at the London end of this project, will be leaving the German Historical Institute in the course of this year. I would like to express our deep gratitude for all her support and wish her all the best.

I GENERAL REPORT

INDRA SENGUPTA, ACADEMIC COORDINATOR

The Transnational Research Group (TRG) “Poverty Reduction and Policy for the Poor between the State and Private Actors: Education Policy in India since the Nineteenth century” at GHI London, which is funded by the Max Weber Stiftung, has been active since 1 January 2013. The TRG has an inter-disciplinary research agenda focusing on seven designated research areas, to be studied by senior scholars and junior researchers from the disciplines of history, education, and educational sociology: 1) Nineteenth and twentieth-century global educational reform movements and their impact on universal schooling in India; 2) The quest for universal elementary/school education, the private sector and edu-business; 3) Caste discrimination and education policy; 4) Industrial restructuring, informalization, and their consequences for access to elementary education; 5) Adult education and the popularisation of practical scientific knowledge; 6) Industrial and technical institutions and the resignification of manual labour; 7) The impact of schooling on life histories.

2016 saw several TRG fellows, who started their fellowships in 2013/14, complete their theses and leave the group. These include the postdoctoral fellows Debarati Bagchi (JNU) and Saikat Maitra (Göttingen) and

PhD scholars Preeti and Divya Kannan (both from JNU). The remaining PhD scholars are expected to complete their degree by the end of 2017. Final extensions of their respective grants were awarded to Divya Kannan, Alva Bonaker and Vidya K.S. to enable them to complete their respective PhDs. In August 2016, after a break, postdoctoral fellow Mili (Kings College London) returned to the TRG after parental leave of one year. In July 2016 Smita Gandotra (Kings College London) returned to the TRG to avail of the remaining six months of the postdoctoral fellowship awarded to her for two years. Sumeet Mhaskar (Göttingen), who left the TRG in August 2014 to avail of a fellowship of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, was awarded three months of funding left over from his fellowship to complete his project.

In view of the end of the present TRG at the end of 2017 it was decided to keep the scope of TRG fellowships awarded from 2016 onwards limited to short-term grants. Hence, in the report year three kinds of short-term grants were awarded: 1) two postdoctoral grants of six months each 2) three short-term travel grants for PhD students in India to do archival research in the UK and 3) two visiting fellowships, one each for senior and early-career scholars respec-

tively. Shahana Bhattacharya (Delhi University) and Prabodhan Aravind Pol (JNU) were awarded 6-month fellowships in Göttingen and Delhi respectively. Under the short-term PhD travel grant scheme, three PhD scholars from India Radhika Mishra (Delhi University), Soni Sharma and M.P. Dhaneesh (both JNU) were awarded grants of two months each, during which time they were attached to the German Historical Institute London. Along with Akash Bhattacharya (JNU), who was awarded the same grant in 2015 but opted to avail of it in 2016, the PhD scholars took part in the fellows' colloquium at the German Historical Institute London: their respective projects were very well-received and intensely discussed.

As part of the visiting fellowship programme, Principal Investigators Sarada Balagopalan (Rutgers University) Janaki Nair (JNU), and Neeladri Bhattacharya (JNU) spent a month to 6 weeks each at the German Historical Institute for their TRG research. Two further visiting fellowships were awarded; the senior fellowship was awarded to Nandini Manjrekar (Professor, TISS, Mumbai) and the junior fellowship was given to Manish Jain (Assistant Professor, Ambedkar University Delhi). These scholars, along with Pradip K Datta (Professor, JNU Delhi), who was awarded the senior

fellowship in 2015, spent two to three months each at the German Historical Institute London in the period April to August 2016. They took part in the colloquium (Manish Jain) and gave seminar lectures in the TRG Lecture Series at the German Historical Institute London (Pradip K Datta and Nandini Manjrekar). Professor Datta's lecture was on "A Labour of Love: The Theology of Work and Rabindranath Tagore's Sriniketan experiment" and Professor Manjrekar spoke on "Social Context and Educational 'Reform' in the Sanskarnagari: Baroda in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century".

One new funding scheme was introduced to enable postdoctoral fellows of the TRG to apply for a short-term grant to write a proposal for a long-term research grant. Under this scheme Saikat Maitra (Göttingen) was awarded a four-month grant.

In addition, the MWS Branch Office in Delhi hosted two Gerald D Feldman fellows of the Max Weber Stiftung: Julia Hauser (Junior Professor, Kassel) and Benjamin Möckel (University of Cologne) who spent a month in India in February and September-October 2016 respectively.

Of the other research projects of the TRG, field work and oral interviews of the pilot study of the oral history project *Documenting the lives of the urban poor with a specific reference to the links between poverty and education: a set of interviews* (Janaki Nair, JNU) was completed. With the help of a research assistant the collected material was organised and made ready for selective publication on the website. The data has been provisionally stored both electronically and physically at the TRG office in Delhi, pending final archiving. A set of three papers along with a detailed introduction by the Principal Investigator are under review with a view to publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Further TRG projects, such as *Schooling, Disadvantage and Privilege: Choices, strategies and practices of poor and middle class families* (Geetha Nambissan, JNU), are nearing completion and the project *Documenting Aakash – the android-based tablet computer project* (Jahn timer Phalkey, KCL) has been completed. An article on the findings was published in December 2015 and appeared in print in 2016 (Jahn timer Phalkey and Suman dro Chattapadhyay, "The Aakash Tablet and Technological Imaginaries of Mass Education in Contemporary India," *History and Technology*, Volume 31, Issue 4, 2015). A further project consisting of a documentary film on

"Industrial Training and the Human Life Cycle" was started by PI Jahn timer Phalkey.

The collaborative project *Key Moments of Education Policy towards the Poor*, a series of smaller projects spearheaded by several Principal Investigators of the TRG and coordinated by Jana Tschurenev, TRG postdoctoral fellow at CeMIS Göttingen, made considerable progress in the report year (see separate report). Each of the sub-themes of the project was provided with a research assistant (a total of four in India and one in Göttingen) in order to bring the sub-projects to a successful completion.

Since the report year saw many of the fellows and scholars completing their own research projects, the conference activities of the group were kept limited. Nevertheless, the TRG took an active part in the 51st German Congress of Historians (Historikertag) in Hamburg on 20-23 September 2016. Three PhD scholars (Arun Kumar, Divya Kannan and Preeti) presented their research projects in the poster session for PhD students. With the help of a graphic designer, they nevertheless conceptualised their own posters, which was a first for all of them.



In 2016 one TRG workshop took place at the Akademie Waldschlösschen near Göttingen on 1-3 June 2016. The ambience of the location and the facilities provided made for an intense programme of presentations and discussion. On 2 June TRG PIs Janaki Nair and Neeladri Bhattacharya took part in a Roundtable Discussion on “Student Uprisings and the Political University: Perspectives from India”, which took place at the University of Göttingen.

TRG at the workshop at Akademie Waldschlösschen near Göttingen, 1-3 June 2016

Photograph by courtesy of Alva Bonaker

II

PROJECT REPORTS

1

Stri Shiksha: Towards a Conceptual History

SMITA GANDOTRA, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The project focuses on a diverse body of instructional literature for women, which began to appear in the 1870s in Hindi. This corpus of didactic novels, advice books, conduct manuals, instructive tales, moral essays and journals, presents us with a rich archive from which to track the debate on women's education in colonial north India. The term *stri shiksha* (women's education) occurs fairly frequently as a title in this literature. My project is invested in understanding the contours the term *stri shiksha* takes between the years 1870 and 1930. The term came to be used first in response to, and later contradistinguished from, the colonial government's policy on female education, its establishment of girls' schools, and promotion of a culture of textbooks.

The colonial government's investment in female education for the period under consideration remained sporadic and uneven, and received severe setbacks in the 1880s, when they withdrew funds from female schools. Scholarly assessments of educational records have more often than not focussed on statistical returns. However, the 'Progress of Education' reports, filed by various Directors of Public Instruction pres-

ent a more complex picture of what was unfolding at the ground level. Many different kinds of people - colonial officials, the native intelligentsia and missionaries - were invested in female education, and these investments took multiple and fairly inventive forms. Textbooks for girls and women were written within this environment and published by both the Government Press and by smaller presses from Bareilly, Agra and Aligarh. Colonial records partially register how these textbooks were circulated, when and how they were used in schools, whether they may have circulated more widely, and the reasons why they may have been replaced as curricula changed and the meaning of 'education' shifted.

This project explores the complex processes by which the formal narrative on 'female education' is indigenized and localized in small centres of Hindi print across colonial north India. The most valuable insights to the discourse on female education emerge in situated and regionally specific studies. The project presents the agential and innovative engagement of voluntary associations, local elite groups and low-level government functionaries on the matter of female education. Therefore, the aim is to archive 'the small voice' on female education.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

During the period July to December, I have conducted archival research at the British Library, London. The principal archive constitutes the books printed from diverse centres. I also consult colonial government records on education, lists of publications, government book catalogues, reports by colonial officials and school inspectors.

My first case study of the Bareilly books (conducted during my tenure as TRG Fellow in 2015) presented an analytical model for further research. The Bareilly example shifts emphasis away from school statistics and dismal literacy figures. It suggests that we reconsider the social history of women's education with regard to print culture. I intend to replicate this model across other centres in the region that produced instructional books for women. My ongoing research involves multiple localized case studies (Benares, Agra and Lahore) to study the emergence of instructional print culture for women between the years 1870 and 1920.

Benares saw the earliest experiments in female schooling and education in the late colonial period. Upper class and upper caste women in Benares were instructed through zenana education programmes initiated by the Church Missionary Society. City

schools drew girls and women from the poorer classes and castes. There has been some analysis of the schools - Durga Charan School (est. 1918), Arya Mahila School (est. 1926) and Agarwal Samaj School (est. 1933). Scholarly accounts have focused on books published for women from the Gita Press, Gorakhpur, on the early reformist work of Bhartendu Harishchandra and on the publication of commercially successful genres from Benares.

Multiple narratives unfold simultaneously in Benares in the 1870s, for instance, the textbooks written for the Maharaja of Vizianagaram's schools, and the Church Missionary Society's investment in zenana education. Whether and how these initiatives define, propel or contradict one another remains to be explored. This prelude (1871-1878) to the 'key moment' of the Hunter Commission of 1882 is significant. After 1882, the consolidation of the Hindi movement in Benares dramatically shapes print culture coming out of the city.

PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

'What did Sundaria Read? Hindi Books from Bareilly, c. 1870', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 53, 2 (2016) pp. 159-181.

2

Child-Centred Approaches and Teachers' Work. Studying Contemporary Pedagogical Reforms in India

MILI, POST-DOCTORAL FELLOW

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

My study examines the guiding ideas of pedagogy in Indian policy texts that have been adopted by the central government as part of strategies to reform the provision of education for the poor. The child-centred approach characterizes these pedagogical reforms of the last two decades, and is manifested in terms including 'child centered education', 'child friendly', and 'activity based learning'. I study the influence of socio-scientific theories underpinning child-centred education on Indian policy texts, and in turn how they influence the conceptualisation of teachers' work. For this, I use documentary analysis to interpret documents including the National Curriculum Framework 2005 and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education from the perspective of teaching expertise.

mental growth'. I argue that in the way these concepts are used to prescribe teaching and learning they also risk foreclosing important discourses related to the role of teachers: in particular, their autonomy and the relationship between knowledge (theories of learning) and action (teaching). In this way, the analysis helps make explicit the limitations of child-centred ideas and troubles the unproblematic acceptance of the child-centred vision.

WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

Professionalism and Professional Learning, Centre for Public Policy and Research, School of Education, Communication and Society, King's College London, July 2016.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

I returned from maternity leave in August 2016. In the period since then, I have finished a draft of my working paper. In the paper, I suggest that it is useful to examine long-standing philosophical debates on the theoretical underpinnings of child-centred education, and the manner in which policy texts employ these ideas. Dominant concepts within the child-centred approach pertain to children's 'interest', 'experience' and 'stage based develop-

3

Gender, Education, and Inequality in Colonial India

JANA TSCHURENEV, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW AND COORDINATOR OF THE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT KEY MOMENTS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY TOWARDS THE POOR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

My postdoctoral project contributes to the TRG's collaborative research on "Key Moments of Educational Policy towards the Poor." It focuses on changing educational regimes in regard to gender relations, from the 1820s to the 1930s. The core issue is women's agency in education. How does the field of education change, when women emerge as educational activists, experts, and policy-makers? How does that affect processes and structures of educational decision-making? The other aspect of this is to look at women as teachers - from kindergarten to higher education. Changes in educational provision and control, the project assumes, are entangled with changes in the order of gender, sexuality, and reproduction.

Each chapter of the envisioned book monograph explores the emergence of a new constellation of educational ideas and institutions for girls and women, from the 1820s to the 1940s, on regional levels (Bengal, Maharashtra), as well as in the emerging domain of nationalist educational politics and policies. Five case studies have been selected for analysis:

(1) The debates about 'native female education' in the 1820s in Bengal, and the work of missionary women;

(2) Women's education and the low-caste movement in Maharashtra, 1850s-1880s;

(3) Competing projects of high-caste Hindu widows' education and their implications for the emergence of professional 'care-work' (1880s-1890s);

(4) Campaigns of national women's organisations for the inclusion of girls into compulsory primary education schemes, and the start of literacy campaigns for adult women (1920s-1930s);

(5) Developments in Early Childhood Care and Education, connected with women's organisations' 'welfare' work towards laboring and rural women (1930s-1940s).

The project looks at gender and education from an intersectionality perspective. It analyses the gender politics of educational projects and debates in relation to other power relations, along the lines of caste, class, and colonialism/imperialism. Moreover, it will take into account questions of changing notions of life-cycles, and debates about girlhood and widowhood as crucial to the development of 'female education'.

Looking at gender and education in this way can contribute to a better understanding of educational policy

towards the poor in a double sense: on the one hand, it relates poverty and deprivation to a complex matrix of difference and subordination in society and analyses the gendered nature of some policies towards 'the poor'. On the other hand, an intersectionality perspective on - in a broad sense - feminist politics of education would explore the effects of those for girls and women disadvantaged in terms of caste and class. Such an analysis could thus work as a critical contribution to social histories of education of 'the poor', as well as a corrective to history of women's education which disregards differences among women, and the potentially harmful effects of an elitist feminist politics.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

In the year 2016, I have started analysing the materials collected in 2015. A paper exploring the intersectionality perspective in the history of women's education in India has been submitted for publication. It will come out next year in a volume edited by Ulrike Lindner and Dörte Lerp on the basis of their conference in 2015 "Gender and Empire", in which I participated. Because of the wealth of serial sources collected and found

online, I have started looking into quantitative research methodologies. I laid the foundation for a comprehensive database on organisations, individual educators and reformers, and educational institutions which were involved in the development and reform of "female education" in colonial India. This will allow me to trace the growth of women's organisations from the 1880s to the 1930s and look at their interlinkages with administrative and political bodies with the help of social network analysis tools. I presented an outline of this database and the possibilities for network analysis at the TRG meeting in Göttingen (June 2016). Moreover, I wrote an overview on the involvement of women's organisations with the development of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services. The history of ECCE in India, I found, is a largely understudied field, though it is linked in many interesting ways to the history of poverty and public health, working girls' and women's lives, and middle class women's professionalism. This paper, which I presented to the History Research Group at CeMIS, will be developed into a full research article next year. Finally, I explored the problem of caste in the history and historiography of women's education in Western Indian in two conference presentations.

Together with Alva Bonaker, Arun Kumar, and Maria-Daniela Pomohaci, I co-organised the international and interdisciplinary workshop “Young South Asia Scholars Meet: Transformations of the Political”, Göttingen, 24-25 May 2016. A report of the event can be found at www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-6711.

PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

Publications

Review of Haan, Francisca de; Allen, Margaret; Purvis, June; Dasklova, Krassimira (Ed.) (2013): *Women's activism. Global perspectives from the 1890s to the present*, London: Routledge (Women's and gender history), in *Traverse 2*, 2016, pp. 165-168.

Conferences, workshops and talks

‘Koloniales Wissen, Schulreform und Sozialdisziplinierung im frühen 19. Jahrhundert in Indien und England. Forschungskolloquium zur Europäischen Geschichte und Globalgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhun-

derts’, Lehrstuhl für Europäische und Neueste Geschichte an der Universität Rostock, 19 January 2016.

‘Childhood Education, scientific pedagogy and social welfare (1930s-1950s)’, History Research Group, CeMIS, 31 May 2016.

‘Women, Education and Inequality in Colonial India’, project presentation. Sixth TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, Göttingen, 1-3 June 2016.

‘Conflicts over Caste and Education: Schools for “Mang-Mahars” in 19th Century Maharashtra’, ISCHE, Chicago, 17-20 August 2016.

‘Religion und Sozialreform im kolonialen Indien: Anti-Kasten-Bewegung, Feminismus und die Kritik des »Hinduismus«’, 51st German Congress of Historians (Historikertag), Hamburg, 20-23 September 2016.

4

More than Food for Schools? Local Perceptions in Defining and Shaping the Benefits of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Delhi

ALVA BONAHER, PHD SCHOLAR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

This PhD research focuses on the Indian Mid-Day Meal Scheme - the largest school feeding programme in the world. Under the official term 'National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education', the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), as it is commonly referred to, was launched in 1995 with the objectives to enhance enrolment, retention and attendance in schools while simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children and encouraging social change in classrooms and beyond. Since 2001 students of all Indian public and aided primary schools (later also upper primary schools) have to be provided with a hot-cooked meal.

In a qualitative case study based in Delhi, I am tracing the question "How do parents, teachers, students and local communities understand the MDMS, and to what extent do they exert control over its effects?" To approach this question I analyse what means are available for them to do this, and how their understandings of the scheme and definition of its benefits differ from those of policy makers and higher level officials. I aim to examine how this governmental welfare programme is seen by those

that are meant to benefit from it, how they define its benefits and to what extent they shape the scheme and its outcomes themselves. Furthermore, I am analysing in what role these people see themselves in relation to the scheme and what that reveals about their relation towards each other as well as about their notion of "the state" and how they relate to it.

The case study focuses on children from very poor migrant families (most of them being Pamariya Muslim families from Bihar and low caste Hindus from Rajasthan) who live in two adjacent slums, night shelter homes ('Ren Baseras'), under the fly-over or on the streets in South Delhi. I conduct participant observation and semi-structured interviews at their homes, at an education NGO and an NGO for child welfare which work with them, at the two MCD schools into which many of the children have been enrolled, as well as at the NGO which cooks the food for these schools.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

During the first half of the year (until the end of May) I continued my empirical fieldwork in Delhi. The main focus of this phase was on visiting families of children enrolled in the schools of my research area. I chose between one and five families from each of the six residential settings which I had identified. Depending on the situation, I visited many of them several times and talked to the parents (often the mother but in some cases also the father) about many aspects of their relation to the school with a focus on what they think about the MDMS and whether and how they make use of it. Beyond that, I asked them about their eating habits at home and often also observed cooking and eating times to which I was invited. This allowed me deep insights into the living conditions of my informants, their daily lives and the way these people – who are meant to benefit from the MDMS and other government provisions in school – position themselves in relation to the school, to the scheme and on the broader level to the state.

Alongside this, I continued visiting the education NGO and the NGO for child welfare in the Ren Basera which both offer informal education, support for enrolment in government

schools as well as food provision. In these spaces I talked to people employed in different positions as well as children and also observed the processes surrounding food provision and eating. On the most general level, this enabled me to compare three different approaches to fill the stomachs of children as an incentive to attend classes.

I also paid several visits to the NGO where the MDMS food for these schools is cooked. Here I observed the production and delivery processes and talked to the manager as well as to some employees with a focus on females. I especially looked at the composition of workers in the food production processes and the distribution of work and wages amongst them. Furthermore, I got to see a food grain godown of the Food Cooperation of India (FCI) from where the rice is used for MDMS food and a laboratory where food samples are being tested.

Back in Göttingen, I started analysing the material I gathered consisting mainly of recordings, field notes, photos and data from the school enrolment registers. For the latter, I familiarised myself with basic statistical programmes and methods that help me to create a larger profile of the school children.

During the winter semester, besides the colloquium I attend a course as well as several lectures and academic events on issues surrounding caste and inequality which help me to think through my own observations and analysis. Moreover, a course on English academic writing and a student organised group of PhD students and professors, in which we exchange our writings and meet for feedback sessions, give me the chance to engage with other students' topics and approaches and help me sharpening my own arguments while writing the first chapter.

Lunch time in the Ren Basera

Photograph by courtesy of Alva Bonaker



PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

'Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Delhi - Participation and Exclusion', Sixth TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, Göttingen, 1-3 June 2016.

'Politics at the Margins: A Case Study of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Delhi', International Graduate Conference of NORIA, Paris, 9 June 2016.

Co-organised workshop: Young South Asia Scholars Meet (Y-SASM): *Transformations of the Political*, CeMIS, Göttingen, 24-25 June 2016.



The researcher at a family's "home" under the flyover, photograph taken by a child

Photograph by courtesy of Alva Bonaker

5

What Inclusion Leaves Out: The "Life-Worlds" of Dalit Women in Educational Policy Making in Contemporary India

MALINI GHOSE, PHD SCHOLAR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

My research examines the creation of narratives and discourses around contemporary Indian educational policies and their subjects - primarily women and girls from marginalised communities. The objectives of the research are to examine the historical, political, and lived dynamics that shape - and complicate - the categories, imperatives and assumptions of policy-making. By embedding policy debates and practices in ethnographic life histories, I hope to illuminate the 'big picture data' generated by the Indian state. The research will interrogate the many binaries - for example included/excluded, powerful/powerless, and structure/agency - through which policies and lives are typically examined.

The point of departure for my research is the 1986 National Education Policy and the Mahila Samakhya (or Education for Women's Equality) programme that was initiated by the Government of India in 1989 to operationalize an important conceptual shift - from welfare to empowerment - in the formulation of the purposes of women's literacy and education. My research is located in Chitrakoot and Banda districts in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), which were amongst the first districts where the

Mahila Samakhya programme was launched and my primary methodological approach entails gathering oral life and family histories of Dalit women who were part of educational interventions launched by Mahila Samakhya in the early 1990s. My research also explores the other connected non-state institutions that have played significant roles in shaping women's life trajectories

My research examines the following three sets of questions:

1. The production of new subjects: What meanings do women assign to education and in what ways has education enabled new subjectivities to evolve? How do others in the community and in the family perceive educated Dalit women? What has education enabled or foreclosed in the terms of life choices and aspirations?
2. Relations to dominant discourses and institutions: In what ways do Dalit women's narratives relate to and diverge from the prevailing dominant discourses around education for marginalised and excluded communities? How do 'target populations' as both subjects and objects of policy, fashion discourses, policies and institutions in their own ways, by bringing with them

their own expectations, understandings and politics?

3. Intergenerational effects on children and families: What has educational access meant for the next generations in their families in terms of their educational opportunities and life-chances?

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

In 2016 I divided my time between India and Göttingen. While in India I completed my fieldwork in Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh. In addition I conducted interviews with key informants – policy makers and civil society representatives – in Delhi and Lucknow. I also worked on transcribing my interviews and systematising my field material.

At CeMIS I began my dissertation writing process by developing the chapterisation for my thesis, working on chapter outlines and subsequently draft chapters. I participated in and helped organise a writing group for PhD students convened by Professor. Rupa Viswanath, where I presented a draft of one of my chapters. I also attended courses that are relevant to my dissertation. In addition I have participated in the colloquiums organised by CeMIS and participated



1. Making History: Page from the first issue of broadsheet produced by newly literate women, 1992

2. Monsoon Reading: Page from literacy primer in Bundeli produced by women, 1994

3. Picturing Oppression: Page from literacy primer in Bundeli, 1994

Images by courtesy of Malini Ghose

in the wider University activities by attending lectures and public events.

PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

‘Towards a Thesis Outline: What Inclusion leaves out: The “Life-Worlds” of Educational Policy Making in Contemporary India’, Sixth TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, Göttingen, 1-3 June 2016

6

Marketisation, Managerialism and School Reforms: A Study of Public Private Partnerships in Elementary Education in Delhi

VIDYA K.S., PHD SCHOLAR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Discourses of New Public Management (NPM) that arose through the late 1970s in the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) led to a series of concerted reforms in education. This led to new forms of partnerships between the State and the private sector. Principles of public management emphasising performance and outcomes popular in the corporate industrial sector were imported as alleviatory measures into the public school system. These new modes of reform drawing from the private sector significantly altered structures of school management, school processes and most notably teachers' work as the school came to be imagined as an important unit in preparing students for labour markets in a competitive global economy.

Private actors have facilitated technical and managerial changes within schools through alternative certification programmes and use of technological aids in the classroom. They have also actively been pushing their reform agenda in national and global educational policy forums through the backing of important political and corporate financial networks. Increasingly, these typologies of reform

are being imported into later developing countries, including India, as effective measures of repairing an increasingly maligned public school system. The modes through which these discourses of reform are interfacing with educational reforms in the context of a postcolonial country such as India present a complex picture today.

The focus of this research study is to examine global discourses of public management reform advocated by a range of private actors and the complex nature of its interface with the heterogeneous government schooling system in India. The consequent changes that these reforms impose on the school will be examined through the lens of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) that are one of the key modes through which markets are entering elementary education in the country. Teacher training programmes are an emerging form of PPPs that are seen as central towards improving school outcomes. Apart from a survey of the range and nature of teacher training PPPs, the study will examine the 'Teach for India' (TFI) intervention, one significant PPP in teacher training that seeks to address educational inequity in teaching-learning transactions in the classroom.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

I completed my field work for my PhD research project by the end of September 2015. More than 40 in-depth interviews were recorded with TFI Fellows, TFI Program Managers, TFI Alumni and a few government school teachers.

I began transcribing these interviews and coding them along multiple themes keeping in mind the larger research objectives of my PhD study. Alongside this process of data organisation, I also started writing up my fieldwork based chapters. I completed a rough PhD draft comprising five chapters by July 2016 and applied for an extension to complete the final stages of writing and revision.

The extension was approved by the TRG group and the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University on 19 July 2016. I am at present involved in revising my PhD draft based on comments and suggestions received from faculty members.

PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

‘Modalities of ‘partnership’: Situating the ‘Teach for India’ intervention within one municipal school in Delhi’, Sixth TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, Göttingen, 1-3 June 2016.

‘New Networks of Educational Reform: Situating the ‘Teach for India’ programme’, Comparative Education Society of India (CESI) annual conference, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, 19-21 November 2016

‘Parallel Partnerships: Modalities of a private intervention within municipal schools in Delhi’, Education Research Group (ERG) meeting, RV Educational Consortium, Bangalore, 21 December 2016

7

Working Lives and Schooling in Late Colonial India (1880s-1940s)

ARUN KUMAR, PHD SCHOLAR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

My thesis examines the hitherto ignored relationship of the working classes with education in colonial India. It seeks to question the notion that workers were illiterate and stood outside the world of formal schooling in Colonial India. This ‘myth’ has been sustained in both historiographies related to labor and colonial education, and hence my thesis aims to contribute to both spheres of history writing. In six different chapters of my thesis, I demonstrate that a lot of workers from both rural agrarian and urban industrial background were neither illiterate nor passive.

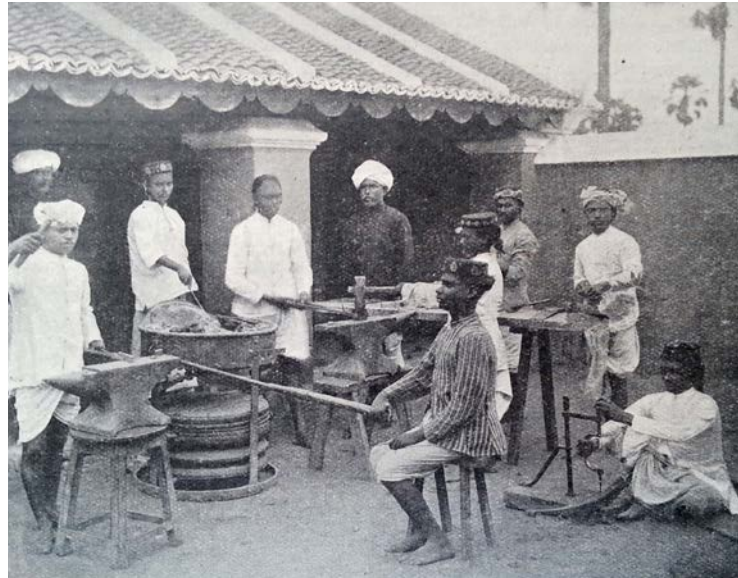
The thesis innovatively employs two analytic and methodological categories to study the educational histories of the working classes. Focusing on two temporal sites of working lives – childhood and night – one section studies workers’ lifecycle and the second examines the cycle of the daily life. In the course of the nineteenth century, workers of different classes were constantly struggling to give new meanings to childhood and night – periods of lives where they negotiated their need for wealth and necessity to work with their per-

sonnel desires, fantasy and wishes. Workers invested in the childhood of their children by sending them to schools instead of factories, workshops and fields. In the night, free from the control of employers’ clock and gaze, they pursued their emancipatory desires in worker-controlled night schools. They learnt to read the proscribed sacred and secular literature, wrote poems and prose, taught each other, and mastered skills for a non-manual labouring life. Once we shift our lens to these two sites, we get to see a nuanced labour history – a history of working lives where they were not just ‘working hands’, but concerned parents refiguring the childhood of their children and also self-serving adults who as readers and intellectuals pursued emancipatory politics. These arguments have emerged from the analysis of many untapped sources, including letters, diaries, poems and prose written by workers, school inspection reports, school registers, examination results, missionary reports, and private papers. These materials have helped me go deeper into the social realm of working lives – by exploring their childhood and leisure, their day and night cycles of work and life – in which education played an active role.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

I am in my fourth year of the D. Phil. Degree and currently in the writing stage. The last eleven months were divided between writing, archival work, and then rewriting. The archival work was conducted at the British Library (India Office Record Collection) for two months between 1 July and 30 August. The purpose of the visit was to relook at the material, that I had already looked, and see if the same archival material could be reread from different angles. I looked at the records of the Education Department, vernacular published work in Hindi and Urdu, proscribed literature, and private papers. The research trip was also useful from the perspective of developing a thesis argument. In terms of writing, there have been significant changes both in the thesis argument and chapterisation. The thesis now has five chapters. A draft of four chapters is ready. Currently I am working on my third chapter 'How Rural Education Refashions Rural Lives'.

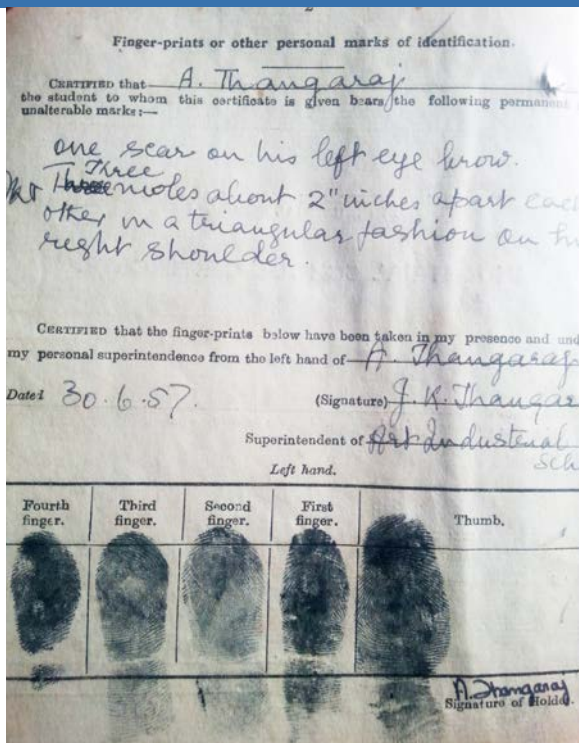
The year has been very productive in terms of research meetings with my supervisors. I met Professor Rupa on a monthly basis to discuss readings, my research progress, and discuss feedback on my written drafts of chapters. The style that we follow is that: I



first discuss the objectives and archival material of proposed chapters with her, then I devote time to writing the chapter, and following my writing, we meet to discuss the chapter. We last met on 10 November 2016 and discussed the draft of the fifth chapter. She gave detailed comments on the overall argument of the chapter, suggesting that I improve the structure of the chapter. She also suggested to me to read some new researches on the related topics. With Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya, I met with him four times in this year to discuss my work. I also had the opportunity to discuss my work with him over emails.

Blacksmiths of the Nazareth Industrial School, Tuticorin, Tamilnadu, c. 1890-1900
Source: United Theological College Library and Archive, Bangalore

Image by courtesy of Arun Kumar



PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

Publications

Book Review of *Conquest and Community: The Afterlife of Warrior Saint Ghazi Miyan* by Shahid Amin, *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 7, Issue 4, 2016.

'Rethinking Inequality and Education: Crime, Labour and the School Curriculum in Indian Reformatory Schools (1880s-1920s)' in Vikas Gupta et al, eds., *Modern Transformation and Challenges of Inequalities in India*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi (forthcoming).

Conferences Attended

'More than One Mode: Apprenticeship and the process of Learning Labour in Colonial India', International Work-

shop on Children, Apprentices and Slaves, College de France, Paris, 4-5 February 2016.

'More than One Mode: Apprenticeship in Colonial India', 11th International Conference on Labour History, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, India, 21-23 March 2016.

'Working Lives and Schooling in Late Colonial India (1880s-1940s)', Sixth TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, Göttingen, 1-3 June 2016.

'Introduction to the YSASM Workshop', Young South Asia Scholar's Meet, University of Göttingen, 24-25 June 2016.

'Working Lives and Schooling in Late Colonial India Poster Presentation', Doktorandenforum, 51st German Congress of Historians (Historikertag), Hamburg, 19-22 September 2016.

A carpenter trained at the Nazareth Industrial School, established during 1870s by the SPG Mission and his certificate of carpentry, 1957

Photographs by courtesy of Arun Kumar, 2013

III

SPECIAL PROJECT REPORTS

1

Key Moments of Education Policy towards the Poor

JANA TSCHURENEV, ACADEMIC COORDINATOR,
KEY MOMENTS OF EDUCATION POLICY TOWARDS THE POOR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Since 1 November 2014, the TRG has developed a collaborative research project which aims to shed new light on the development and transformation of educational policy towards ‘the poor’ in modern India. The scope of the project includes the history of mass education and literacy, as well as histories of education of particular marginalized groups.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To supplement individual case studies and facilitate exchange and collaboration within the TRG, and with other researchers, under a common topic; for this purpose, several workshops and an international conference are envisaged;
- To identify, in the process and as a result of the project, key moments of education policy directed at the ‘poor’ in the 19th and 20th centuries;
- To create an open electronic resource depository consisting of a multilingual collection of digitized documents on “Key Moments of Education Policy towards the Poor”, including (1) Official reports and publications from the central as well as provincial/state levels;

(2) reports and publications by social reform movements, non-state and private educational bodies; (3) Media coverage of key policy debates; (4) sources on curricula, students, and teachers, which shed light on the workings of particular educational institutions, and on life histories.

Histories of education in colonial and independent India are often structured around policies, which are linked to crucial shifts in the educational landscapes, such as educational expansion and the incorporation of the hitherto formally uneducated into existing institutions. While tendencies towards inclusion and democratization are part of the history which leads to the Right to Education Act of 2009, the “Key Moments” project starts from the assumption that every new educational constellation, or educational regime, may have quite contradictory effects on “the poor”, or in particular disprivileged groups. As many researchers in the fields of history and sociology of education have pointed out, modern education systems can be seen, on the one hand, as contributing to the reproduction of the existing social order, as a means of social disciplining and of keeping the poor “in their place”. On the other

hand, they can also function as important agencies of social change and transformation, and open up individual opportunities. Hence, we will look at each identified “key moment” of educational policy from different angles, and analyse its reproductive and transformative, disciplinary and emancipatory implications.

While we are taking established chronologies of education as a starting point, it will be part of the collaborative research process, of an interplay of empirical results and theoretical discussions in the group, to both identify and define “key moments”, from the perspective of the education of “the poor.”

At the moment, the sub-projects are:

- Indigenous and Rural Education (Neeladri Bhattacharya)
- Gender, Education, and Inequality (Jana Tschurennev)
- Caste and the Politics of Education Policy, Institutions and Practices: A Study of Dalits in India (Geetha B. Nambissan)
- Education and Labour (Ravi Ahuja)
- Compulsory Education (Sarada Balagopalan)
- Technical Solutions for the Education of the Masses (Jahnavi Phalkey)

SUB-PROJECTS

Several principal investigators of the group are participating in the collaborative venture with their own respective sub-project. These sub-projects are either organized around one structural category of inequality (caste, gender, labour), or they trace histories of ‘mass education’ and the limitations of these histories. Other topics, such as religion, will be part of the collective analysis.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

As in the first year, the work to identify, locate and collect relevant source materials in archives in India (Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai) and in the British Library has been continued. At the moment, the collections are being finalized. They form the basis of a series of 'exploratory essays', which the participating PIs will draft and present at the next TRG meeting in Delhi.

In the beginning of the collaborative 'Key Moments' project, Dr Bhaswati Bhattacharya conducted a short survey on source materials in online collections. In the research process, many more digitized materials have been identified. Moreover, digital collections in the field are rapidly expanding, including some historical ones which bear relevance to our project. With the help of scientific assistant M.A. Maria-Daniela Pomohaci we have built a temporary source repository of digitized materials for internal exchange, which several sub-projects contributed to. At the moment, we are cataloguing and analysing the extensive collection, in order to identify regional and temporal patterns and gaps in the digitized materials found online.

Against this background, we decided that the outcome of our project should have the character of an online portal, which serves more as an introduction and guide to sources in the history of poverty and education in India, than as an extensive repository. The portal will contain exploratory essays, which open up new perspectives on the history of mass education, or inequality and education, and point to relevant archival collections. Moreover, we will publish and introduce source samples on particularly relevant topics, which supplement the view which can be gained from other collections. The online portal will be completed by the end of 2017.

IV

FINAL REPORTS

1

A Script for the Masses? Pedagogic Practices and Didactic Traditions among the Sylhetis

DEBARATI BAGCHI, POST-DOCTORAL FELLOW

PROJECT REPORT

My postdoctoral research studies the idea of ‘education of the poor’ in the form of moral and ethical pedagogy outside the formalised education system. It explores the proliferation of printed texts in Sylheti-Bangla written in the Sylhet Nagri script commonly known to be popular among the ‘poor rural Muslims’, especially women, in colonial Sylhet-Cachar region. Before coming to print, circulation of the texts depended on copying and re-copying by hand among the readers. Once brought to print in 1870s, the alphabets were standardised. The claim was that this script was less complex than the standard Bengali script and phonetically closer to spoken Sylheti. Its entire pedagogic endeavour was to bridge the gap between the written (*lekhya bhasha*) and the spoken (*kathya bhasha*) and thereby meeting one of the preconditions of democratisation of education – the concern for reaching out to a larger mass. During the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, quite a good number of texts were published in the Sylhet Nagri characters. However, the script never got inserted in the curricula of any school, pathsala or madrasa. In a way, this project is thus an exploration of the idea of ‘mass literacy’ outside the already formalised colonial school based education system. The research addresses a few overarching questions: how the Sylhet Nagri script en-

abled a kind of ‘literacy of the poor’, how the texts led to the constitution of a plebeian communicative network by creating a moral ethical world and what kind of subject formation was facilitated by the moral teachings embedded in the texts.

The research primarily involves a nuanced reading of the texts (approximately 60 texts could be accessed) to understand what kind of ideas and knowledge were circulated and how the plebeian were ‘incorporated’ in these pedagogic practices outside institutional education. The reading of texts is aided by some contemporary articles (in periodicals like *Srihatta Sahitya Parisat Patrika*, *Al Islah and Nao Belal*) dealing with authors of Nagri texts and their social backgrounds, linguistic analysis of the texts and their content. The research also gathers recollections and memories about the rituals and practices of reading and efforts of preserving the texts. I travelled to the villages in Sylhet and Cachar and met some people who have preserved a few texts and a memory of a vibrant culture of reading and singing from Nagri texts among the peasants and fishermen.

Drawing from my archival and ethnographic research conducted during the previous two years, I have divided my work in four thematic chapters. In spite of the thematic divisions, the chapters obviously overlap in various

respects. While the readings of the texts are juxtaposed by ethnographic observations, the history of language politics keeps seeping into the narratives of memory and recollections.

I. POLITICS OF LANGUAGE-DIALECT-SCRIPT

The first chapter situates the Sylhet Nagri script in the discourses of what was to be recognised as ‘proper Bangla’. The spoken tongue of the district of Sylhet, although recognised as a dialect of Bengali, was identified in terms of its ‘deviation’ from the standard. Such deviations were only reinforced by the standardization and institutionalization of a single script for the chaste version of Bengali. Meanwhile a person named Abdul Karim prepared the font for the Sylhet Nagri script and started publishing the texts from around the 1870s. All contemporary accounts attributed the popularity of the script to its easy arrangement of the letters and the colloquial everyday language. The texts were mostly songs by Pirs and Fakirs, didactic texts of Islam, and, occasionally, chronicles of contemporary social events. Padmanatha Bhattacharyya, a staunch Hindu Sylheti nationalist who was the first to write about the Sylhet Nāgarī script in 1908, preferred to call it a ‘distorted version of Devanagari’. The script was chiefly attrib-

uted to the ‘illiterate masses of the Muslim population’ including peasants, fishermen, boatmen – people who were ‘not well versed in Bengali literature.’ Bhattacharyya was apprehensive about its potential of turning into a separate language. He cautioned that Sylhet Nāgarī, if recognized, might lend ‘Musalmāni Bāngālā’ a separate script. Sylhet Nāgarī had the dual possibilities of an alternative script and an everyday local dialect. However, the middle class Muslim literary sphere never endorsed it as a model for ‘Musalmāni Bāngālā’.

The zealous modernizers of the new ‘Muslim literary sphere’ of the 1930s-40s had been strongly critical about the exclusions implicit in the Calcutta-based model of ‘sanskritised Bengali’. While a move against the Hinduization of Bengali was adopted, the Muslim intellectuals gradually departed from their radical position and aimed to strike a convenient balance between the use of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit words. They were always cautious about not getting too distanced from the mainstream Calcutta sphere. Instead of countering the given hierarchies of language and dialect, the discourse of ‘Muslim Bengali’ rather diluted the possibilities of a dialect and relegated it to the domain of the speech practices. Such a position basically accepted and buttressed the already existing

hierarchy between the language and dialect and invisibilised the alienation of a dialect from a standardized script – the distance of the spoken word and the written alphabet. Based on the periodicals *Al-Islah*, *Srihatta Sahitya Parisat Patrika* and various autobiographies, this chapter discusses how the script became a part of the debate of Hinduani Bangla and Musalmani Bangla but remained relegated to the domain of the ‘folk’, the ‘rural’ and thus the ‘collectible’ for forums like *Sahitya Parisat* and antiquarians and folklorists like Dinesh Chandra Sen or Muhammad Ashraf Hussain. Predictably, under the persistent anxiety about accommodating Sylhet within the larger geography of ‘pure Bengali,’ Sylhet Nāgarī script, throughout its time of flourish and eventual decline, was either derided as letters of the illiterate or valorized as a treasure of rural folklore. Nevertheless, the very phenomenon of a flourishing market for a few decades help us rethink some of the common assumptions about access to education, and opens up new dimensions to the discourse of literacy.

II. PEDAGOGY FOR THE POOR

The second chapter carries out a detailed reading of the texts. By tentatively classifying the texts under a few overarching genres and closely

reading the content I try to form an idea about what kind of knowledge was circulated. Whether in the form of strict religious injunctions for everyday rituals, more informal commentaries on social practices or biographies of saints and Persian stories, I tease out how they initiated people in particular ways of living and being, educated them about what is proper and what is inappropriate behaviour. Popular stories like the biography of the prophet *Halatunnabi*, Yusuf Zuleikha’s love story *Mohabatnama* or stories of the battle of Karbala – printed as *Jangnama* – were a few among the most popular ones. There was a clear impact of late nineteenth century *nasihat namahs* (manual of religious instruction propagating Islamic reformist ideals of Tariqa, Wahabi and Faraidi movements) on some of the texts like *Oyajibul Amal*, *Ochhitunnabi*, *Ahkame Shara*. Some texts, like *Deshcharit* (the situation of the land) took recourse to satire in disseminating certain moral and ethical teachings in a more informal manner. These not only serve as a social commentary on the contemporary Sylheti society but also hint at the kinds of teaching that facilitated the making of a moral subject. And it was often about disciplining women. Some texts prescribe certain ways of performing *namaj* or *roja*, others lament the decline of purdah. *Charkar Fajilat* recommends the spin-

ning of *charka* as the most virtuous act for women. This illustrates that for the poor, the script not only allowed access to a literary sphere, Sylhet Nagri facilitated the formation of a domestic feminine reading public.

The reading of the content is complemented by a scrutiny of the title pages, advertisement pages, publishers' notes, list of publications, and certificates of authentication appended to the *puthis*. These give us some clues about networks of circulation, consumption and a sketchy idea of the market for these texts. One of the fundamental questions that this chapter tries to address is whether the claim of the need for dissemination of the script necessarily presupposed the imagination of a 'poor and illiterate' audience and an opposition to so-called 'formal education'. My research shows that although the peasants, fishermen and the figure of the uneducated woman constituted an important section of the consumer base, the readership was far more layered, not only in terms of class (it was read in *zamindari* households as well), but also because it cut across the so-called 'literate-illiterate', 'educated-uneducated' divide. This becomes further complex when we encounter the primer, published much later around 1929, that teaches the script with the help of Bangla corresponding letters. I think it will

not be very wrong to conjecture that when the texts came to print, it was not necessarily meant to capture an audience who are ignorant of other letters. Basically, there appears to be an overlap between the intention of tapping an already existing audience and the attempt to widen the readership. But more than that, the print and proliferation of the texts indicate that the world of Sylhet Nagri rather produced certain notions of the ignorant, the illiterate - illiteracy here implying a lack of knowledge of certain moral, ethical and social wisdom. A probe into what these particular letters came to capture, convey or maybe symbolise actually troubles the very idea of literacy vis-a-vis a peasant language.

III. PRACTICES OF READING

Given the dearth of contemporary commentaries on the texts, absence of publication records and untracability of the printing presses that published the texts, the research relies on ethnographies in the Sylhet-Cachar region with a twofold aim in mind: one, to find out traces, both remaining and new (readers, *puthis*, sites of reading, places for preserving) and second, to gather recollections and memories about rituals and practices of reading. The idea of knowing and learning the

letters get tangled with the much debated binary of orality and print when we enter the questions of reading, listening, performing. For both the men and women, the texts functioned as a medium for socialising in two different ways. While Fayzunnesa (Cachar) was the only woman in her family who went to school and could read and write these letters while her mother and aunt sat and listened and memorised; the maid in Sadiya Parag's household (Sylhet), actually carried these letters to the inner quarters of a zamindari household, only to be learnt and used as secret code of communication by a young girl of the family. While men mostly performed and sang during *asor* (informal gatherings) in the *kachari bari* (the office or outer domain of the house), women's experiences reveal more instances of solitary reading or reading together inside the house. Most of these readers were more adept in reading and singing from the printed *puthis* and could not write the letters. Elaborating on the field experiences, the research tries to argue that instead of being in opposition to or contradiction with orality, this particular script (in its printed form) actually facilitated a certain form of orality.

However, besides the printed, canonised, textual world, there also exist traces of certain resistant to print. Maktab Ali (Cachar) claimed to have

received these letters from *Allah* as a dream revelation and refused to accept the 'corrupting' influence of a printing press. Amirul Islam (Sonai) to the world of letters by his guru, a process which was spoken about with a certain garb of secrecy. These recollections seem to endorse the kind of Quranic tradition of knowledge transmission that Francis Robinson has observed: 'person to person transmission was at the heart of the transmission of Islamic knowledge'. The figure of the teacher was considered to be the living embodiment of such knowledge. The printed Nagri primer (1934) however, preaches the dispensability of the teacher to uphold the script as a 'simpler' alternative. Moreover, the primer is structured on the model of Bengali 'okkharshikkha' and uses Bengali alphabets to teach the letters. I would rather suggest that instead of reading this phenomenon as a departure from what Robinson traces back as the 'traditional mode of transmission of knowledge', it could be seen as re-configuring a particular oral tradition making use of standardized modes of secular curriculum based language education. The research suggests that the world of Sylhet Nagri has to be located within this fraught relation of convergence and departure between the traditional and the modern, literacies and illiteracies.

IV. QUESTIONS OF SURVIVAL AND REVIVAL

Chasing memories of reading practices does not only take us back to days when *Nnagri puthi path* (recitation of Nagri texts) was a vibrant practice, it also helps us follow the trail of which texts have survived, while others have ceased to exist. It is quite evident that *Halatunnabi* (The Life of the Prophet) and *Jangnama* (The Account of Karbala) have outlived others in the remote villages of Sylhet and Cachar. Maybe this can be explained by understanding how the idea of ‘sacred’ was associated with texts, and which were more inserted in the rituals of religious reading. Almost every person I have spoken to has some memory of reading or listening to Jangnama during occasions like Muharram gatherings or at regular everyday *puthi pather asor* (a public gathering for reading texts), essentially a male practice that has lived on. *Halatunnabi*, however, has survived more in the form of solitary reading. Some songs are still heard at the *maktabs* and *mokams*. However, what has strikingly perished is the tradition of *fufus* (aunts) and *ammis* (mothers) reading during their breaks from household tasks or *nanis* (grandmothers) singing from *Yusuf Zulekha* on solitary afternoons.

What is now being revived by the city-based educated Sylheti literati

leads us to an absolutely contrasting picture. This recent euphoria around the script exists under two banners: one of preservation and the other of revival. And it is at this point that the journey of the script has taken three different routes in three sites. In Sylhet and Cachar, the anxieties around the script has been shaped by the earlier turbulent history of the shaping of linguistic identities in the region, repeated shuffling between Assam and Bengal ending up in a scramble between Bangladesh and Assam and the postcolonial histories of language movement in these areas. Zealously adopting the category of the ‘endangered’, popularised by the archival logic of the British library, the intellectuals of Sylhet are now active in preserving the rich tradition of their region by collecting texts, building Nagri museum, making documentaries of a dying tradition. They are extremely cautious about not letting the discourse of Sylhet Nagri acquiring the claim of language and they strongly propagate its status of a ‘script for a dialect of Bangla’. While the Sylhetis embrace Bangla to remain part of the legacy of language movement in Bangladesh, the Barak Valley nationalists strongly subscribe to their version, only under different imperatives: to fight the state imposition of Assamese. In London, among the Sylheti diaspora, the script is now being revived. New primers are

being printed and circulated, classes are being held in the Brick Lane area, and new books are being written. The tradition of print, circulation and reading has thus undergone two crucial shifts. One, the script is somehow now dissociated from the textual tradition and new prose writings are being encouraged, and second, moving away from its earlier emphasis on adult literacy, primers for children are increasingly being popularised.

PUBLICATION, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

Publications

‘The “Endangered” Letters? The Politics of Remembering the Sylhet Nagri Script’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (in preparation).

Conferences and talks

‘A Script for the Masses? Pedagogic Practices and Didactic Traditions among Sylhetis’, Forum Transregionale Studien Winter Academy on *Inequality, Education and Social Power: Transregional Perspectives*, Humboldt University, Berlin, 16-25 November 2014.

‘“A Script that Needs no School”: The Many Worlds of Sylhet Nāgarī’, Fourth TRG *Poverty and Education in India Workshop*, New Delhi, 13 February 2015.

‘A ‘Simple Script’: Popular Pedagogic Practices in Colonial Sylhet’, 28th Annual Conference organized by Japanese Association for South Asian Studies (JASAS), University of Tokyo, 26-27 September 2015.

‘Letters of the Illiterate: The Idea of Literacy and the World of Sylhet Nagri’, Fifth TRG *Poverty and Education in India Workshop*, New Delhi, 25-28 November 2015.

‘An ‘Endangered’ Script? The Politics of Remembering and Revival’, Sixth TRG *Poverty and Education in India Workshop*, University of Göttingen, 1-3 June 2016.

2

Transforming Work: Training Programs and Retail Worker-Identity in Contemporary Kolkata

SAIKAT MAITRA, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

PROJECT REPORT

I joined the Transnational Research Group in September 2014. My project explored how Employee Training Programs (ETPs) for low-level jobs in the organized retail industry are utilized for the production and disciplining of an emergent urban worker subjectivity amongst under-privileged youth employees in Kolkata (India). The prescriptive ideals emphasized by the ETPs for this worker subjectivity has three fundamental tenets: 1) an ability to constantly negotiate social experiences of precariousness and flexible forms of labor characteristic of the organized retail economy; 2) a readiness to embody cosmopolitan standards of bodily deportment and social skills for interactions with upper-class customers that ‘hide’ the workers’ own marginalized class positions; 3) a willingness to exhibit self-reliance and self-motivation for succeeding in work environments where other forms of employment security and support i.e. from the state or labor unions, are no longer available.

This study developed out of my broader interests in exploring how a new post-industrial worker-subjectivity was being shaped in Kolkata under the neoliberal economic policies of the state and the changing modes

of urban capital formation. In particular, I focused on how labor was coming under a tremendous scrutiny to delineate an identity according to principles of flexibility, self-discipline and responsiveness to the needs of corporate capital. Consequently I explored how, with the city’s insertion into global flows of corporate capital, ETPs in the organized retail sector had become critical sites for regulating and controlling the workers’ speech, self-presentation and bodily appearances to fit the “ideal” neoliberal worker-subject.

ETPs that I attended during my post-doctoral fieldwork typically continued for three days in a class-room setting located in the back-offices of the main retail store. The number of participants fell between 20-30 workers, with 2 training managers who utilized a variety of instructional materials such as PowerPoint presentation slides, short motivational films, and interactive games simulating potential situations on the retail shop floor. The programs emphasized ideals of bodily deportment as well as communication skills between workers, customers and managers. This was followed by detailed information about products sold on the shop floor and finally a questionnaire-based test for the successful completion of the ETP. Entry-level workers called

Customer Service Attendants (CSAs) typically underwent training in soft-skills and human capital development such as verbal communication and team work building practices skills every six months from the start of their employment. As repeatedly emphasized in these on-job trainings, to achieve sales a retail worker had to perform a cosmopolitan self through bodily comportment, gestures, language use, and dress habits in order to arouse the consumers' emotional impulses towards consumption. As one training manager explained, the purpose of the ETP was to transform the very personality, social skills and character traits of the worker so that s/he would not feel uncomfortable within the opulent surroundings of organized retail spaces like large shopping malls.

In addition to the ethnographic focus on the crafting of neoliberal "enterprising subjects" through ETPs, I also undertook a policy-oriented research to understand how state and corporate institutions are jointly promoting an ideology of [neoliberal] self-making for marginalized urban youths, based on entrepreneurship and self-reliance. For this purpose, I extensively documented Human Resource training manuals of the corporate retail sector as well as the National Skill Development policies of the Government of India in the

context of receding state protection of labor under neoliberalism. The focus on the skill development agenda of corporate and governmental agencies helped me to map out the ways in which a globally circulating ideal of the flexible service worker-subjectivity is being discursively and materially generated in contemporary Kolkata.

The primary **research questions** for my project were: 1) How corporate and state policies on training/learning and skill development are geared towards a social and cultural transformation of the worker-subjects through assimilation of ideals of entrepreneurship, consumerism and self-reliance? 2) How effective are these transformative learning methods in impacting individual workers? 3) In what ways do workers accept or resist the normative standards of subjectivity in which they are trained during actual work regimes? 4) How do workers use and carry over the set of skills they learn during the ETPs to manage their social lives outside work processes and environments?

Research Concerns

The prominence of privatized training programs for young employees (such as those employed in organized retail industry) in Kolkata was

a consequence of the shift from socialist policies to market liberalization by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) - CPI(M) - led government which ruled Kolkata from 1977-2011. With the CPI(M) government's insistence on corporate privatization of Kolkata's growth from the early 2000s, funding for state sponsored Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), responsible for training economically marginalized workers entering the industrial sector, was drastically reduced. Private retail and service sector corporations, with their in-house ETPs, were gradually taking over the state's prerogative for training and developing underclass youth workers to fulfill their requirements for a cheap and flexible work force. The emerging ideal of the worker subjectivity in the organized retail sector was influenced by neoliberal, economic rationalities that visualized her/him as a self-motivated, enterprising individual who is able to take risks and survive under constantly fluctuating job demands (Bradley 2000; Foucault 2008). Instead of depending on state institutions for long-term social welfare or employment security, the worker was thus creative enough to seize whatever opportunities might arise, even under adverse socio-economic conditions.

In low-end service sector jobs, the preference for enterprising workers

able to survive under contingent, flexible work practices had been heightened in metropolitan Indian cities like Kolkata under the impact of economic restructuring from the 1990s. Increasingly, employers in the organized retail sector created flexible jobs which included removing perceived barriers to the "free market" along with the concomitant erosion of employment securities and workers' bargaining rights such as labor unionization. Within this neoliberal premise, self-reliance is paramount both globally as well as in India; as McElliott (2001) noted, this often translated into a market-driven approach to work-based training where workers had to remake themselves into competitive, enterprising subjects. For example, the Indian "National Policy on Skill Development" while emphasizing the urgency of training for the work force promoted corporate demand driven programs which were responsive to the changing labour market and ensured rise in productivity levels.

However, my research suggests that there are a number of inconsistencies and contradictions in the complex relationship between work-related learning and the formation of the neoliberal worker-subject in contemporary India. For example, while the retail sector training in Kolkata celebrated the "fast capitalist"

qualities of constantly shifting and flexible employees, they simultaneously demanded that workers to be deeply committed and loyal to their employers in order to prevent employee attrition.

The competing interests and concerns of the training managers and floor-level supervisors further accentuated the complexities of worker-training programs. The higher-level management personnel, concerned with enhancing the long-term value of their retail brands, insisted on a rigorous and comprehensive training regime for enhancing worker efficiency. However, lower level managers and supervisors who were under enormous pressures to fulfill sales figures were usually reluctant to release their floor workers for training programs rather than retaining them for the actual selling. Moreover, some of the supervisors expressed a concern that training workers to be too urbane or too proficient in their jobs would make them question the ability of the supervisors for managing the shop floor and eventually lead to a disruptive worker-manager relationship. Finally, with the high levels of employee attrition in Kolkata's organized retail industry, subjecting workers to elaborate training programs was often perceived as a wasteful squandering of the company's time and resources.

Thus how much training was really necessary in producing an ideal worker remained a vexed question for the corporations. My research suggests that the tension between the idealization and actualization of the worker subjectivity through ETPs was central to understanding neoliberal development in Kolkata presently, incorporating all the complexities of the city's (post) colonial modernity, labor market dynamics, class structures, and long historical trajectory of socialist governance. By concentrating on how training modules, surveillance techniques, and conduct manuals were crafting a flexible worker-subjectivity in retail spaces, I also inquired into possibilities of agency by young workers through strategies of assimilation, resistance, and slippages between institutional demands of training and subjective desires of the workers. I deployed the concept of agency to refer to multiple and situational practices of conformity and contestation that often blended into one another. Agency, when located between accommodation and subversion, foregrounds the fact that although neoliberal regulation and capitalist disciplining can be hard for workers to evade, they do not remain a collective of voiceless, passive victims completely vulnerable to market forces.

Research Design and Methodology

For the current project, I attended in-house training programs run by three large retail chains based in various shopping malls in Kolkata. I attended a total of twenty-five ETPs during my research in these three organizations. The primary respondents for this project were 45 retail workers currently working for, or with work experience in, Kolkata's various organized retail sites. My interviews with workers were based on a selection of themes affecting their work and social lives touched upon by the ETP sessions.

The research was divided into two major activities:

1 Analysis of policy documents

I collected policy documents, national and local newspapers and magazine articles on urban labour and employment training manuals available through various on-line databases, corporate houses, and reports on urban labor compiled by state and non-state agencies. I used content analysis for identifying common conceptions, public debates and intersections/deviancies between various standpoints related to contemporary youth training, skill education/training and the

centrality of retail sites as work places in Kolkata. Content analysis was utilized primarily to locate repetitions of key words, concepts, themes, and terms of debates. Results from the various forms of analysis was integrated to develop a grounded theory framework to examine how the retail industry affects workers' conceptualization of self-hood and identity vis-à-vis the theoretical underpinnings of this project. This grounded theory approach was useful in challenging existing structures of analysis to create new avenues of knowledge on how daily lived experiences of retail workers in contemporary urban India were influenced by the flows and circuits of transnational consumer capitalism.

2 Interviews

Two sets of interviews were conducted from March 2015 - May 2015. Separating the research design into two sets of respondents allowed for the emergence of two intersecting as well as conflicting perspectives on identity formation, corporate practices and management, and socio-economic implications of the retail industry. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with 45 workers (both men and women) in Kolkata. Second, interviews were held with Key Informants in Kolkata. I interviewed

6 management personnel, 8 training managers and 6 state government officials. All interviewees were provided with questionnaires focusing on how corporate institutions perceived the transformation of labor and worker-subjectivities under economic liberalization and the role of training in effecting this transformation. The information collected was coded as per date, context, topic and people involved and enumerated and detailed into appropriate data management software. Both the documentary and interview data were coded using NVivo, software specifically designed for dealing with voluminous qualitative data.

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Bradley, Harriet. *Myths at Work*. Cambridge: Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2000.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978-1979*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

McElliott, Greg. *Beyond Service: State Workers, Public Policy, and the Prospects for Democratic Administration*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

National Skill Development Policy: Retrieved on April 5th, 2015 <http://labour.nic.in/upload/upload-files/files/Policies/NationalSkillDevelopmentPolicyMar09.pdf>

PUBLICATIONS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

‘Valuing Immaterial Production: Contemporary Retail Work, Urban Youth, and the Re-signification of Inequality in Kolkata’ under review in *Cultural Anthropology*.

‘Uneasy Atmospheres: Work-place Training, Urbanity and the *New Woman Question* Revisited in Kolkata’ under review in *American Anthropologist*.

‘Tapping into the ‘Standing-Reserve’: A Comparative Analysis of Workers’ Training Programs in Kolkata and Toronto’. (Co-authored with Dr. Srabani Maitra) in *Studies in Continuing Education* 2015. DOI: 10.1080/0158037X.2015.1043988.

Edited Book Chapters

Maitra, Saikat. "The Labor of Self-Making: Youth Service Workers and Post-Socialist Urban Development in Kolkata" in *Media and Utopia: History, Imagination and Technology*. Ed. Anupama Rao & Arvind Rajagopal. Routledge, India, 2016.

Conference proceedings relevant to the project

During the fellowship period I attended various workshops and conferences and presented my research. In addition to the workshops organized by TRG at New Delhi and Göttingen, I presented papers related to my research in TRG in the following conferences:

'The New Woman Question in India Re-visited?' Presentation for the 24th European Conference on South Asian Studies, Warsaw, Poland - 27-30 July 2016.

'Uneasy Atmospheres: Urban Utopia and Subaltern Politics in New Town', paper presented at the International workshop on Rural-Urban Dynamics and Emergent Forms of Labor in India and China organized joint-

ly by the Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS) and the Centre for Modern East Asian Studies (CMEAS), Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 22-23 February 2016.

Co-organizer of a double panel *The Refrain of Crisis: Method, Space and Lives in Contemporary China and India* for the 114th Annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), Denver, 18-22 November 2015.

'The Landscapes of (Dis)Enchantment: Urbanization and the Spectral Play of Infrastructures in Rajarhat', 113th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), Washington DC, 3-7 December 2014.

'Transforming Work: Training Programs and Retail Worker-Identity in Contemporary Kolkata', Winter School in Berlin *Transregional Perspectives on Inequality, Education and Social Power* organized by the Forum Transregionale Studien and Max Weber Stiftung, Berlin, 16-21 November 2014.

Invited Lectures

‘The Magical World of Tutai Das: From Affective Labor to Affective Intimacy in Kolkata’, invited lecture presented at the Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS) at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 6 July 2016.

‘Spectral Infrastructures: Landscapes of Hope and Abandonment in New Town’, invited Lecture organized by the Department of Socio-Cultural Anthropology at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 4 February 2016.

3

Recasting the Self: Missionaries and the Education of the Poor in Kerala, 1854-1956

DIVYA KANNAN, PHD SCHOLAR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

This is my final year of the PhD fellowship. My doctoral research is intended at writing a history of education of the labouring poor in late nineteenth and twentieth century Kerala. It utilises the missionary archives of the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and the Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society (Basel Mission). It seeks to understand the various notions of labour and poverty that were sought to be imparted through education to the so-called lower and untouchable castes in the region. However, the study looks beyond the formal definition of schooling and takes into account the larger socio-political processes that went into the missionary education of the poor.

Mission writings provide varied details about the everyday lives of their labouring class converts. Linking this to questions of identity, community consciousness and emergent social reform, the study shall locate missionary education and its implications in the region's socio-political history. Poor children were disciplined according to a new time and work regime wherein schools became the loci of cultural socialisation. Their local practices and rituals were sought to be erased by European mor-

al norms and ideas of knowledge. The curriculum devised for them tended to perpetuate existing unequal labour relations. Primarily, children were instructed at Sunday schools, in night schools and in boarding institutions to become catechists, teachers and other mission staff. However, an avenue for female schooling also opened up during this period. But on the ground, missionary aims were constantly checkmated by the fissures of local society, particularly caste-based relations. Indigenous Christianity did not follow a European model, and often co-existed with remnants of a pre-Christian past.

Albeit influenced by caste, class and racial tensions under colonialism, mission schooling allowed new forms of individual and community expression to oppressed populations. They resisted, appropriated and accepted aspects of Christianity but also drew upon the resources it provided to fight for their civil rights such as access schools, roads and religious places during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

My work explores the nature of mission boarding schools for poor girl children, the discourses in school textbooks, and the interconnections between work and poverty in the educational provision of various missions. It also discusses the

debates in the popular assembly which came to recognise education as a social asset, both for fashioning individual and community identities by the mid-twentieth century. I look at the ways in which different lower castes waged struggles for the democratisation of education. The Ezhavas (currently listed as Other Backward Classes) unlike the Pulayas (former untouchable castes) have had a different trajectory vis-a-vis education. They have been involved in various social reform movements and educated sections have engaged in widespread public debates to influence provision of education. On the contrary, given the widespread existence of poverty and deprivation among the Pulayas, educational progress has been slow. They were not allowed access to government schools until the early decades of the twentieth century and state apathy combined with feudal forces have laid down far too many obstacles for them.

In the course of my TRG fellowship, extensive archival research was done at the United Theological College Archives, Bangalore, Kerala State Archives (Calicut and Trivandrum), Mangalore Theological Seminary Archives, and Centre for Development Studies (Trivandrum).

I spent six months in Göttingen, which also allowed me to work at the Mission 21 Archives, Basel. Later, I spent another five months in

London and Birmingham, studying archival material at the British Library, School of Oriental and African Studies, and the University of Birmingham Library. These visits also gave me an opportunity to discuss my work with a few professors and fellow researchers at these institutes.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEAR

This is my final PhD year and I am in the process of writing my dissertation.

PUBLICATIONS, CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

Attended two seminars in Delhi: Prof. Udaya Kumar on 'Petition as Historiography- Dr.Palpu and Kerala's Pasts' at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and Dr.Parimala Rao on 'Tilak and Mass education in Colonial India, 1882-1920' at ZHCES/JNU, 2013.

Attended the various seminars held by CeMIS as part of their weekly colloquium, September 2013 - February 2014.

Presented at the GHIL Weekly Colloquium, April 2014.

'Ora Et Labora: Education and the Basel Mission in the 19th and 20th Century Malabar', South Asia History Seminar Series, 20 May 2014.

'Ora Et Labora: The Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society in the 19th and 20th Century Malabar', Conference *Missionaries, Materials and Making of the Modern World*, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 15-17 September 2014.

'Ora Et Labora: The Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society in the 19th and 20th Century Malabar', Winter Academy and Conference *Inequality, Power and Education: Transregional Perspectives*, organised by the Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung, Berlin, 16-25 November 2014.

'Schools, Society and Slavery in Nineteenth Century South Travancore: The Female Boarding Schools of the London Missionary Society', as part of the TRG Panel *Growing up inside and outside of Classrooms: Schooling and the Poor Child in Colonial India*, 8th Biennial Conference of the Society for History of Childhood and Youth, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 24-26 June 2015.

'Education for the Untouchable Convert: Caste and Missionary Education in Kerala', in the panel on *Education in Colonial India: Regions, Actors, and Texts*, 7th Annual Conference of the Comparative Education Society of India, 19-21 November, S.V. University, Tirupati

Participated in the PhD Poster Competition, 51st German Congress of Historians (Historikertag), Hamburg, 19-22 September 2016.

Publications

'Educating Poor Girls: The London Missionary Society in Nineteenth-Century South India', *Global Humanities – Studies in Histories, Cultures, and Societies: Religion and Poverty*, Vol. 2, Neofelis-Verlag, Berlin, February 2015

Book Review. P. Sanal Mohan *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala*, "Memory, History, and Modernity", The Book Review, Vol XL, No.2, February 2016

"Model" Christians? The Basel Mission and Education of the Poor in Nineteenth Century Malabar in 19th Century Childhoods in Interdisciplinary and International Perspectives' (Volume 5 in the Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past Monograph Series) edited by Jane Eva Baxter and Meredith Ellis, Oxbow Press. (forthcoming)

Fellowships

Received the Georg Eckert Fellowship for one month at the Georg Eckert Institute, Braunschweig, Project Title: Mapping Dalit Identity: NCERT Social Science Textbooks in India, 3-30 September 2016.

4

Schooling Women: Debates on Education in the United Provinces (1854-1930)

PREETI, PHD SCHOLAR

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The study explored the relation between caste and gender in the sphere of education in colonial United Provinces as well as the politics of upper castes in keeping the untouchables and lower castes at the margins of social transformation. The colonial education system, instead of challenging or undoing caste-based inequalities and rural-urban binaries, was compelled to come to terms with the social hierarchies of caste and gender: often this resulted in the reinvention of patriarchy, and reassertion of caste. For all those engaged in the field of colonial education, whether they were agencies of the colonial government, social reformers, missionaries or elite women, the primary focus was on the education of upper class and caste Hindu women. Eventually, all of them argued, this would trickle down to the lower caste and untouchable women. These educators' agendas and ideologies were reflected in the kind of education they imparted. The thesis explored the relation between caste and gender in the sphere of education in colonial United Provinces as well as the politics of upper castes in keeping the untouchables and lower castes at the margins. The education system, instead of breaking caste based inequalities and rural-urban binaries, was used to reproduce the social

hierarchies of caste. Colonial United Provinces is a good example in this regard, where education for women has been the site of reinvented caste, patriarchy, religion, and race. Even when education was seen as a means of improving women's status, it was often designed by upper caste men to maintain and reinforce '*pativrata dharma*' values. However, education offered new and unexpected opportunities to women of all castes to challenge gender norms, participate in work outside their homes, and by the 20th century, participate in defining the content and form of educational programmes as well.

Women's education was a field in which colonial officials were least interested, but other actors played an important role; of course, all had their vested interests. The caste factor had been an important issue in the formation of knowledge and an equally vital factor in its efforts to impart it. For reformers, it was one of the instruments to control women's sexuality. The reforming class decided 'what to teach', 'how to teach' and 'when to teach.' This class consisted of members of the English-educated upper-castes and middle-classes. Although some of them were not very famous, many were connected to education and made efforts to reform the grass roots. On the other hand, there were the Christian missionar-

ies, who used education as a source of propagating their religion and imposing their culture over Indians. Missionaries used education to inculcate English culture among women and convert them and their families. Mission boarding schools taught Protestant morals, discipline, time management, dress (use of stockings, frocks, socks, towels, lack of jewellery, hygiene, etc.). They focused on such education which would make women 'modern' according to Victorian ideals, i.e., educated wives, and mothers of children, helpmate, but at the same time would maintain caste structures and traditional gender roles of society.

In the year 1854, girls' education was initiated in the United Provinces by the Government. Statements about the underdevelopment of women's education are frequently noticed about this area, United Provinces, despite being a hub of nationalist activities, reform movements and print culture. Lack of research on the education of United Provinces as compared to other parts of India was the principle reason for the choice of this region as the subject of the present thesis. Dynamics of caste, class and race shaped women's education in the United Provinces, which not only prevented low caste and untouchable women from access to education but also defined the nature of schooling

which was accessed by the low caste untouchable and rural women.

The history of rural and untouchable women is comparatively unexplored. In this work, I tried to identify the causes of this archival silence and evoke a debate thereof. This silence does not mean that there was no education among rural and untouchable women. Their education was different from the conventional schooling of colonial India. The thesis argued that this archival silence was due to the indifferent attitude of the people who took responsibility for educating women of the United Provinces. The colonial state, reformers and, later, elite women focused on and limited their efforts to educate middle-class and upper-caste women. Reformers were mostly from urban areas, middle-class and upper-caste people. This indigenous elite wrote for the immediate needs of their groups of people (group, caste, religion) rather than to think of rural and untouchable women's education. The colonial government treated women's education in a 'step motherly' fashion. It provided female schooling with financial aid only if such efforts were initiated by the natives.

In these discourses of women's education, caste played a very significant role in segregation and denial of access to education for the untouchable

women. Caste became the determining factor in policy making, morality, hygiene, or profession. The colonial state, reformers, missionaries and women themselves could not overcome caste stereotyping and were influenced by it. While upper caste middle-class centric women struggled to get elementary education, it was unimaginable for rural and untouchable women to get education. Likewise, it seems that socio-cultural conditions of the rural mass could not cultivate in them any interest for education. Firstly, the curriculum was not developed with the objective of satisfying their agricultural needs. On the contrary, the education that they were provided with was leading their immediate male descendants to quit their hereditary profession. Literary education hardly benefited them. Secondly, rural women of upper castes and classes were enclosed in the zenana and also they had no time for education. Nonetheless, zenana missions invested energy to educate poor rural and untouchable women. Reading, writing and singing became a boon to them, which gave them the experience of education. Similarly, Christian women converts could also draw benefits from conversion. Thus, it cannot be denied that to a degree conversion broadened the minds of women and led them to accept Western hygiene and medicine.

The above discussion prompts us to correlate schooling and education. The fact that schools are institutions to promote education makes it relevant to verify and examine their role in doing so. As the scope of education is broader than that of schooling, the inclusion and exclusion of different domains and mediums of education in schools was drawn under scrutiny. Consequently, this thesis also inquired these inclusions and exclusions. The ratio between population and literacy eclipsed the efficiency of schooling, and thus it encouraged the use of other mediums such as stage shows and plays with the aim to educate. Woman Indian Association's journal 'Stree Dharma' is an excellent example. Hence, while studying the role of schooling in education it becomes inevitably necessary to examine not only the presence of different domains and mediums therein but also their absence as well.

Whilst the discourse around education has remained limited to upper caste/class women as educators, the need for educating 'untouchable' and rural women was taken into account as early as 1920s. For all the educators, whether the colonial government, social reformers, missionaries or 'elite' women, the primary concern was to educate upper class and caste Hindu women.

Eventually, all of them argued, this would trickle down to the lower caste and untouchable women. The educators' agenda reflected their ideologies which could be seen in the kind of education they imparted. Women's education reflected the culture, norms, prejudices, and contemporary environment.

At first, the colonial state was hardly interested in women's education. While there were efforts of *Hulka-bundi* and *Tehsili* schools for boys in 1851 onwards, women's education was given attention only after the Charles Wood Dispatch of the 1854. But efforts were made to educate Indian women after 1854 were unsuccessful due to a lack of interest on the part of the parents. Due to social and cultural prejudices, upper class and elite parents preferred home instruction which was quite apparent in the number of evidence presented before the Indian Education Commission 1882. These efforts were unsuccessful due to the gap between government and people in terms of 'what women need to be taught'. The curriculum became the site around which the unwillingness of parents to send their girls to school was revealed. This was evident in the complaints they put forward about the 'unsuitability of curricula' in preparing women for the home and the society.

The colonial Government also had policies to establish schools where there were local people (*Zamindars*) or any other influential people to support the schools socially and financially. The government had the understanding that girls' schools flourished where local people supported the cause as they had good will among the local areas. On the other hand, the colonial government also produced the policy to support female schools on the grant-in-aid. It made it necessary to take support from local landowning classes who had been traditionally supporting the cause of education, and could provide one-third funds which were necessary for getting the grant-in-aid. This question was considered quite 'delicate', so the colonial government wanted to keep itself away from taking direct measures.

The need to educate women in the United Provinces was felt by groups of people, either those who were connected with the Education Department or the local elites. Local educational authorities invested their energies in encouraging women's education at personal and department levels. They could convince the parents to send their girls to schools established by them. These groups participated in women's schooling not only through writing extensively

on benefits of education for women but also by writing textbooks for girls' schools. We hardly get textbooks for women written by colonial officers, but most textbooks were written by these groups which have been used in the thesis. Interestingly, all these people belonged to upper caste and urban areas.

My thesis looked at colonial policies towards women's education, reformers' attitudes in decisions on appropriate curricula, the role of missionary women in teaching rural and untouchable women as well as elite women's efforts in this field. The thesis explored the politics of exclusion of lower caste men and women and privileges in providing education to upper caste and middle class women of the society. The relation of caste, class and gender was central to my work as it explored the question of morality, hygiene, vocational and professional training and policy making. Women's education became a way of improving the home through inculcating high morals and hygienic habits among them. But this goal helped unexpectedly in the emergence of some professions which were women-oriented, such as teaching, inspectorship and other skill-based occupations. The thesis revealed the development of schooling throughout the period under study and how women's education

could help women to become self-reliant, independent and raise their own voice to help women. Men from the upper castes and middle classes played crucial role in the production of knowledge although 1910s onwards elite women themselves participated in this process. Elite women could not represent the voices of lower-caste, untouchable and rural women and this kind of representation could only take place once untouchable and lower-caste men started to make efforts for women from their caste and class groups. The thesis has thus revealed the development but also the limitations of the politics of mass education between various educators such colonial state, missionaries, reformers and elite women in the period under scrutiny, by exploring the interlink between caste and gender.

WORK DONE IN REPORT YEARS

This work was result of the analysis of records of archives and libraries at different places in India and United Kingdom. Indian National Archives, New Delhi, United Province State Archive, Lucknow, United Province, Uttar Pradesh Regional Archive at Allahabad, Punjab State Archive at Chandigarh and Patiala, Nagari Pracharini Sabha at Benares, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Allahabad,

Vidya Jyoti Library, Central Secretariat library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and Central Library of Jawaharlal Nehru University at New Delhi. Besides these, British library at London, Archival records of SOAS, London, Cadbury Research Centre (Church Missionary Society Archive) at Birmingham provided useful colonial, vernacular and missionary records which shaped the research as it stands now. The process of collection of records and their re-organisation had been done in the years 2013 and 2014. The years 2015 and 2016 were invested in analysing and writing the thesis although writing was going on simultaneously during collection of data. In July 2016, I submitted my PhD thesis for evaluation. The results are expected soon hereafter. Right after the submission I had been teaching in Delhi University.

CONFERENCES ATTENDED, TALKS RELEVANT TO PROJECT

‘Moralizing Women: Education in the United Provinces (1854-1930)’, First TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, University of Göttingen, 3-4 June 2013.

‘Meeting Local needs: The Indigenous Education System of Punjab’ in the seminar on ‘The Making of

Modern Punjab: Education, Science and Social Change in Punjab c. 1850-c. 2000’, Panjab University, 24-26 October 2013.

‘Schooling Women: Some themes for Discussion from the United Provinces (1854-1930)’ Second TRG Poverty and Education in India Workshop, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 10-13 December 2013.

‘Moralizing’ Women: Education in the United Provinces (1854-1930)’, International Conference Comparative Education Society for India, organised by Calcutta University, 28-30 December 2013.

‘School as site of Discontentment: Education of Punjab in late Nineteenth Century’, 74th Session Indian History Congress, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, 30 December 2013.

‘What to know: Schooling women in the United Provinces (1854-1930)’, Third TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, London, 7-9 July 2014.

‘Schooling Women: Debates on Education in the United Provinces (1854-1930)’, German Historical Institute London colloquium, London, 2 September 2014.

‘Schooling Women: Debates on Education in United Provinces (1854-1930)’, at the Winter Academy *Inequality, Education and Social Power: Transregionale Perspectives*, Forum Transregionale Studien, Humboldt University, Berlin, 16- 25 November 2014.

‘Moralizing Women: School Education in the United Provinces (1854-1930)’, presented at the History Research Group, Centre for Modern Indian Studies, Göttingen, 9 December 2014.

‘Schooling Women: Education in Colonial India’, was presented in Panel Discussion on *Key Moments of Education Policy towards the Poor*, under theme of gender on the occasion of Inauguration of the Branch India, Delhi, 13-14 February 2015.

‘Educating Rural Girls of United Provinces in the late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries’, TRG panel, Eighth Biennial Conference of the Society for the History of Children and Youth, British Columbia University, Vancouver, Canada, 24-26 June 2015.

‘Educating Sanitation and Hygiene: Women in the United Provinces (1880-1930)’, Graduate Seminar, Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 15-16 September 2015.

‘Policy Making on Women’s Education in the United Provinces’ Fifth TRG *Poverty and Education in India* Workshop, India International Centre, New Delhi, 25-28 November 2015.

PUBLICATION

‘Transformation of Schooling in the colonial Punjab (1850-1900)’, in Parimala Rao (ed.) *New Perspectives in the History of Indian Education*, Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013.

V EVENTS

1

TRG Workshops and Conferences

WEDNESDAY, 1 JUNE 2016

FIFTH TRG POVERTY AND EDUCATION IN INDIA WORKSHOP, AKADEMIE WALDSCHLÖSSCHEN / CENTRE FOR MODERN INDIAN STUDIES, GÖTTINGEN

PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Divya Kannan: Recasting the Self: Missionaries and the Education of the Poor in Kerala, 1854-1956

Arun Kumar: Primed to Labour. 'Education' in Industrial and Artisan Schools of Colonial India (1860s-1940s)

Debarati Bagchi: "A Script that Needs no School": the Many Worlds of Sylhet Nāgarī

Prabodhan Aravind Pol: Dalits and Education in Western India. Examining Dalit Political Activism and Its Contribution in Development of Educational Institutions in Western India, 1920s to 1950s

Malini Ghose: What Exclusion Leaves Out. The "Life-Worlds" of Educational Policy Making in Contemporary India

Alva Bonaker: More than Food for Schools? Local Perceptions Defining and Shaping the Benefits of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Delhi

Vidya KS: Marketisation, Managerialism and School Reforms: A Study of Public-Private Partnerships in Elementary Education in Delhi

Saikat Maitra: Transforming Work: Training Programs and Retail Worker-Identity in Contemporary Kolkata

THURSDAY, 2 JUNE 2016

KEY MOMENTS PROJECT

Neeladri Bhattacharya, Jana Tschurenev, Geetha Nambissan, Ravi Ahuja, Sarada Balagopalan, Jahnvi Phalkey

Contributions of TRG Doctoral Students and Fellows

General state of the project and further proceedings

Roundtable Discussion hosted by CeMIS, Göttingen: Student Uprisings and the Political University: Perspectives from India



In Göttingen, 1-2 June 2016

Photograph by courtesy of Geetha B. Nambissan

FRIDAY, 3 JUNE 2016

Q & A and General Discussion on TRG matters: for all

Business session for Principal Investigators

Project discussion PhD and Postdoctoral fellows



It's not all work
Akademie Waldschlösschen

Photograph by courtesy of Malini Ghose

2

TRG Lectures

WEDNESDAY, 23 JUNE 2016**SEMINAR LECTURE**

Pradip K Datta (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi)

A Labour of Love: The Theology of Work and Rabindranath Tagore's Sriniketan experiment

This presentation situates Rabindranath Tagore's commitment to work, especially physical labour, in some of the discourses of work in nineteenth century Indian thinkers. Proceeding from here, it explores Tagore's conception of work in terms of his theology of love which is really a conception of human existence as relational. This is a theology that begins from metaphysical premises and ends with theologizing the human. The theology frames his practical experiments in rural self-dependence or *atmashakti*. Tagore began some startling experiments in reorganizing labour techniques and the institutional conditions of work in his zamindari estates. While referring to these, the main focus is on an exploration of the experiments that were conducted in the rural wing of Viswabharati, his global university. Beginning with an evaluation of the way in which Sriniketan was conceived as an attempt to reformulate the relationship between the mainly bhadrak dominated Santiniketan and its surrounding villages, the speaker looks at the interpen-

etration of the practices of work, leisure and intersubjective relationships and then goes on to examine the ethics and modalities of redistribution of value produced by labour especially through co-operatives and finally looks at the problematic ambition of situation Sriniketan in a relationship of both autonomy and interdependence in relationship to the market and the state.

Venue: German Historical Institute London

THURSDAY, 19 JULY 2016

SEMINAR LECTURE

Nandini Manjrekar (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Social Context and Educational 'Reform' in the *Sanskarnagari*: Baroda in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century



Lecture by Nandini Manjrekar, TISS Mumbai, at the German Historical Institute London, 19 July 2016

Education was central to the imagination of Baroda as an 'ideal progressive' princely state in the reign of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III (1875-1939). By the late nineteenth century, Baroda had a range of institutions of higher and technical education, including courses for the modernisation of artisanal crafts, public libraries and museums, institutions for teach-

er training, a music college, and an acclaimed Oriental Series. Free and compulsory school education for all children formed a key feature of the larger imagination of public education as a signifier of progress in Baroda. The 'Baroda experiment' as it came to be called, was widely debated in its time and also had a productive postcolonial afterlife, finding mention as a key historical referent in the debates on making education a fundamental right for all children in India. This paper explores education in the city of Baroda, often referred to by the epithet '*Sanskarnagari*', or city of culture. In the extant discourse on Baroda's educational 'achievements', we find the intertwining imaginations of education as a public good, a transformative experience that should be available to all persons across social hierarchies of class, caste, gender, region, and religion. This paper argues that education formed a key focus of the evolution of Baroda as a *Sanskarnagari*. However, larger questions of education of the city's public remained mired within the contradictions between a liberal ideology of equal educational opportunity and a deeply unequal social structure. The paper examines these contestations in its own time, principally focusing on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Baroda, where the wider social imagination of its enlightened ruler Sayajirao Gaekwad and the reformist policies he attempted to put into place were set against the social structures of his times.

Venue: German Historical Institute London

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Other events

28 JUNE 2016

STUDENT COLLOQUIA

Akash Bhattacharya (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi): Classrooms and the Pedagogic Process: Remaking the Social in Nineteenth Century Bengal

Manish Jain (Ambedkar University Delhi): Margins of Colonial Modernity: Rural Citizens, Poverty and Civic(s) Education

Soni Sharma (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi): Child 'Rescue Missions': The Case of Orphans in Colonial North India; 1860-1947

Venue: German Historical Institute London

26 JULY 2016

STUDENT COLLOQUIA

Radhika Mishra (Delhi University): Schooling the Poor: Aspects of Educational Practice and Social Policy towards Working People in British India ca. 1880-1940

M P Dhaneesh (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi): A New Cultural Artefact: The Book in Colonial Keralam (1829-1950)

Venue: German Historical Institute London

VI

PUBLICATIONS

Gandotra, Smita, 'What did Sundaria Read? Hindi Books from Bareilly, c. 1870', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 53, 2 (2016), 159-181.

Kannan, Divya, Book Review. P. Sanal Mohan *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala*, "Memory, History, and Modernity", *The Book Review*, Vol XL, No.2, February (2016).

Kannan, Divya, "'Model' Christians? The Basel Mission and Education of the Poor in Nineteenth Century Malabar in 19th Century Childhoods in Interdisciplinary and International Perspectives', in: ed. Jane Eva Baxter and Meredith Ellis, Volume 5, *Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past Monograph Series*, Oxbow Press. (forthcoming).

Kumar, Arun. Book Review of *Conquest and Community: The Afterlife of Warrior Saint Ghazi Miyan* by Shahid Amin, *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 7, Issue 4 (2016).

Kumar, Arun (forthcoming). 'Rethinking Inequality and Education: Crime, Labour and the School Curriculum in Indian Reformatory Schools (1880s-1920s)' in Vikas Gupta et al, eds., *Modern Transformation and Challenges of Inequalities in India*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi.

Maitra, Saikat. 'Valuing Immaterial Production: Contemporary Retail Work, Urban Youth, and the Re-signification of Inequality in Kolkata' under review in *Cultural Anthropology*.

Maitra, Saikat. 'Uneasy Atmospheres: Work-place Training, Urbanity and the *New Woman Question* Revisited in Kolkata' under review in *American Anthropologist*.

Tschurennev, Jana, Review of Haan, Francisca de; Allen, Margaret; Purvis, June; Dasklova, Krassimira (Ed.) (2013): *Women's activism. Global perspectives from the 1890s to the present*, London: Routledge (Women's and gender history), in *Traverse* 2, 2016, 165-168.

VII

PEOPLE

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

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Jana Tschurenev	CeMIS, University of Göttingen
Rupa Viswanath	CeMIS, University of Göttingen

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS

Debarati Bagchi	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi (until November 2016)
Smita Gandotra	King's India Institute, Kings College London
Saikat Maitra	CeMIS, University of Göttingen (until August 2016)
Mili	King's India Institute, Kings College London

PHD RESEARCH FELLOWS

Alva Bonaker	CeMIS, University of Göttingen
Malini Ghose	CeMIS, University of Göttingen
Divya Kannan	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi
Arun Kumar	CeMIS, University of Göttingen
Preeti	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi (until July 2016)
Vidya K.S.	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

ASSOCIATE FELLOWS

Debarati Bagchi	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi (from November 2016)
Sunandan K.N.	Azim Premji University, Bengaluru
Saikat Maitra	CeMIS, University of Göttingen (from September 2016)
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Cover photo: Students at Pardada Pardadi Education Society in Anupshahr, Rajasthan, use the Aakash tablet in class as part of a pilot project, introducing the low-cost computer into rural schools. Photograph by courtesy of Sonali Campion, 9 April 2013.

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