

Journal of Scientific Temper
Vol.1(3&4), July 2013, pp. 143-197

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Negotiating Secular School Textbooks in Colonial Madras Presidency

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ABSTRACT

The common sense assumption would inform that the textbooks produced and distributed during the colonial period 'ought to be', if not directly, at the least alluding to the religion of the masters. Further, post colonial studies of education often focus on the colonial purpose of the spread of education and bring to light the ideology ingrained in the content, pedagogy and structure of the school education. While it would be naïve to think of the spread of education during the British Raj as a benevolent act, albeit unintended, it would also be wrong to assume that the natives who were being governed had no say or hand in shaping it. The modern education was the contour by which social mobility was attained and it was an important instrument that engendered the nationalist movement. In recent times, Nehruvian vision is often derided in particular for its economic ideology — 'licence-quota raj'¹ — along with it even concerns such as liberalism, secularism and scientific temper are questioned. Secularism is chided as 'gift of Christianity' having no roots or applicability in the Indian cultural milieu. This paper looks at the emergence of 'secular' textbooks during the turn of the nineteenth century in colonial Madras, and shows the active agency of the 'natives' in shaping the same.

Introduction

Often modern secular education in India is seen as nothing but Macaulay's colonialist project of producing 'Indians in colour,

¹ A term used often derogatorily to describe the regulations of the private sector in India between 1947 and the early 1990s, as part of the 'mixed economy' and planning model followed by the Indian State.

European in sprite'² to man their offices as writers and clerks. Riding roughshod over traditional Indian learning and imposing English as the 'master language' of the Empire, Indian education is seen as essentially an external imposition (Phillipson, 2003:111). It was through the imposition of English by the alien rulers, many contend, that the Indian languages, as well as the growth of indigenous educational institutions were stifled³. Finally it is posited that the colonialist fiat had corroded the 'cultural values' and had inhibited the progress and prospects of India. Such narratives assume agency only to Colonialist and their alleged partners in crime, the missionaries. Such presentations make out the natives as hapless passive victims. The relation between the missionaries and Colonial administration was not always one of collaboration but is littered with acrimony and opposition⁴. Secondly, natives were not just docile or gullible, but engaged themselves actively on the question of education (Frykenberg, 1988).

While it would be naïve to think of the spread of education during the Raj as a benevolent act, albeit unintended, it would be also wrong to assume that the 'natives'⁵ who were being governed had no say or hand in shaping it. As modern education was the contour by which social mobility was attained and it was

² 'A class of person Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect', Macaulay, Minute on Education, 1835, in (Sharp, 1920:116).

³ See (Pal, 1983), for an uncritical exalted documentation of the indigenous schools surviving from earlier period to that of the early Raj.

⁴ A nineteenth century author Richter writing on the Christian missions surmised that 'Company gave no helping hand to missionary work' and rued that when it did provide support it was done only in 'unwilling and reluctant manner' (Richter, 1908: 128).

⁵ I am aware of the problematic nature of the term 'native', and the confusion it can cause in the contemporary scholarship. Further, the 'natives' were not undifferentiated mass; among others they were divided into religious sects, caste groups, social groups and hence did not have the same or similar aspirations and positions. Until the advent of the left politics and social movements, most of the dominant responses to the Colonial government in the field of education came from the educated, socially upward and mostly belonging to dominant caste groups. Henceforth, I would use the term 'elites' or 'native elites' to refer to this social group.

an important instrument that engendered the nationalist movement, ideology surrounding the colonial education could not just have been based on the whims of the colonial masters or a Christian conspiracy but a dense interplay of the State, missionaries, educated native elites and local demands⁶. This paper explores how the 'policy of neutrality' of the Company Raj evolved into more nuanced secular principles in the domain of education in the Madras Presidency.

Even before the advent of the British there were institutions known as '*Tinnai palli*' (Veranda schools) extensively spread in the villages and towns, largely catering to the dominant caste groups of the native society. To meet the educational needs of its European servants, the Company had established modern schools⁷. The Missionaries who were active, in particular in Tinnaveli and Thanjavor regions, by the mid-eighteenth century, had commenced 'mission' schools (largely in the image of the *tinnai palli*) to reach out to the native Christians and to spread the word of the Gospel.

The Charter Act of 1813 became such an important turning point in the history of development of modern education in India⁸ that it impelled both the missionaries and the colonial government to pay more attention to the spread of modern education. Though initially *tinnai* schools were not much affected by the policies of the Colonial government, in due course, as a consequence of the colonial policies and social changes, they too were assimilated under the Colonial educational department. The decision of the Colonial Government, made in the 1840s, of employing only those who were educated in modern schools to the subordinate government service impacted heavily on the content and purpose of the education in the coming decades. This had a singular impact in shaping the secular character of all the three types of schools.

⁶ See (Basu, 1974) and (Viswanathan, 1989) for an overview on education during the colonial period in India.

⁷ One of the earliest schools by the Company was in 1678; see (Gover, 1872: 45).

⁸ See (Keay, 1993) (Dutt, 1916) for a broad history of the Company Raj and education.

This paper looks at how these three streams or types of educational institutions negotiated the meaning of secular education (both in content and character) under the colonial context and changed themselves at the same time influencing the others.

Most explorations barring a few studies focus on English education as a centrality of the Colonial educational effort, but it is in the space of vernacular school education that missionaries, native elites and colonial state constructed their discourses as to what it means to be 'modern', and what needs to be done for 'mental and moral improvement' of the native society. Unlike English, where one has to contend with materials imported from England, with regard to vernacular they had to create *sui-generis*, and thus provided latitude for production and reproduction of knowledge. Thus, the native elite, as an expert in the language, had as much opportunity as that of a missionary or a colonial educationalist in shaping the content of textbooks in vernacular schools.

How did the Colonial administration attempt to accomplish its colonial goal of 'mental and moral' improvement of the natives without taking recourse to Christianity? What made the missionaries mellow from the strident position to reconcile and adopt a more sympathetic view of the native society? How did the native elites encounter the onslaught of criticism of 'decadent native culture' with reform and resistance?

In the first three sections we describe how the institutions under the three actors — Government, Mission and native indigenous schools — were impacted by the Colonial Government's decision on insisting modern education as a prerequisite for Government employment. The fourth section discusses how the missionary pedagogy was assimilated and secularized. The fifth section describes how the secularization of the textbooks was negotiated and shaped by the three actors. The penultimate section describes how the religious hostilities of the early decades of the nineteenth century gave way to religious sympathy and emergence of a particular kind of secular view.

Educational effort under the Government

Despite the East India Company becoming the de-facto ruler with more and more territories coming under its dominance, the apathy shown by the Colonial administration towards reform and improvement of the 'natives' came under heavy criticism. Clergymen and reformers in England aghast at the blind profit-seeking behaviour of the East India Company, including the famous Clapham Evangelicals (Phillip, 2007), of whom Charles Grant is well known, argued that rulers have a duty to their subjects and if no attention is paid to the promotion of the mental and moral development of the natives then the British rule is 'robbed of all its justification' (Viswanathan, 2005:157). Impelled by this argument, the Charter Act of 1813 made it lawful but not obligatory on the part of the East India Company to set aside funds for the 'revival and improvement of literature and encouragement of the learned natives of India' and for the 'promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India' (Sharp, 1920:22).

Although the Charter Act also contained provision for the Missionaries to come to India to spread education, the officials of the Company argued that it is not prudent to 'leave all the work to the missionaries, but to help them supplement the latter by schools which all Hindus could attend and in which the instruction was to be purely secular' (Gover, 1871:65) so that the educated natives become 'breakwater against the threatened deluge of missionary enterprise' (Mathew, 1988:22). Thomas Munro, then the Governor of Madras Presidency, commissioned district officials to gather information regarding the spread, reach, content and structure of education prevailing at that time in various districts of the Madras Presidency. Arguing that the 'people should be left to manage their schools in their own way' (Arbuthnot, 1881:329), Munro sought expansion of schools to reach beyond the traditional elites and dominant caste groups. It was generally assumed that the western-educated native would be honest and upright, one of the compelling reasons for the Company Raj to promote education.

In 1826, the Committee for Public Instruction established and an ambitious scheme was proposed. Propounded by Munro, it envisaged establishment of schools at various Collectorate,

Zilla and *Talook* towns. Around forty collectorate and three hundred tehsildari⁹ schools were planned (Minute March 10, 1826 copy reproduced in Arbuthnot, 1855b). The untimely death of Munro, in 1827, was a setback, the work progressed in a slow phase and in around 1835, there were only '14 Collectorate and 81 *Talook* schools, with a school at Madras for training teachers. The school in Madras developed into a High school' (Arbuthnot, 1855b: 2), (which ultimately evolved into the Presidency College at Madras).

This scheme was aborted in the midway with the 'filtration' theory of education, cogently advocated by Macaulay in his famous 1835 minutes. Premised on the supposition that the vernacular languages of India were inadequately developed to convey the ideas and thoughts of European literature and science, the Macaulayan minute assiduously advocated 'English education' to the 'superior classes of people' as the object of the Company. Further, Macaulay's minutes suggested that mass education is not a feasible proposition and hence desired 'to place within the reach of higher class of natives the highest instruction in the English languages and in European literature and science, so as not only to improve the intellectual and moral condition of the people, but also to train a body of natives qualified by their habits and acquirements to take a large share and occupy higher situations in the civil administration of the country' (Sathianandan, 1894). Following Macaulay, Lord Bentinck, Governor General held that 'His Lordship in council is of the opinion that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed in English education alone' (Sharp, 1920).

Consequently, the Madras Government's vernacular education programme received a jolt. In 1835, the Committee for Public Instruction was reorganized into the Committee for Native Education, and this committee proposed to limit the Madras Government's efforts to the establishment of four

⁹ The Provinces was divided for administrative purpose into District and further into *Talook* (or *Tehsil*).

provincial schools and one 'normal school' (to train teachers). Lord Elphinstone, who was the Governor in 1839, once again revived the interest for the spread of education; nonetheless, focus was on the provision of 'higher' education to 'higher class of people' and the 'advocates of state wanted more aid devoted to higher (English) education in order to preserve elite dominance' (Frykenberg, 1988:62). The new Macaulayan policy had indeed definitely impeded the spread of vernacular education in British Indian territories; nevertheless, in the Madras Presidency it was not completely arrested (Ghosh, 1995). Consequently the two systems of modern schools viz., the mission schools with their insistence of teaching the Bible and the exclusively secular schools conducted by the Company, grew up independently of each other between 1813 and 1853.

There were two impulses that guided the Government's effort to spread modern education. The first was ideological; viewing the native society as steeped in superstition and prejudices, the role of the British state was viewed as one of 'paternal' governance (Fischer-Tine and Mann, 2004). Seen in this light, education was 'not to teach, but to unteach.. not to rivet the shackles which have for ages bound down the minds of (natives), but to allow them to drop off by the lapse of time and the progress of events' (Trevelyan, 1838:85) and that the colonial government must 'endeavour to raise their character...'. (Arbuthnot, 1855b:323).

The second impulse was to nurture natives for subordinate office work as writers, accountants, etc. in the expanding colonial bureaucracy. Making a case that 'the men who had gone through a training' in modern education were 'superior morally to others who had had no such training' (Sathianandhan, 1894:35) colonial administrators argued for more practical and utilitarian course of study. Kerr surveying the educational development in Bengal during the mid-nineteenth century observed that 'at our colleges and schools, the natives acquire to some extent the habit of truthfulness. English principles are engrafted in their hearts. They acquire also a taste for what is true and beautiful in speculation which, so far as it goes, is favourable to upright and honourable conduct' and that the

educated are often more 'trustworthy than uneducated classes' (Kerr, 1852:195).

Both the social engineering project of 'character building' and nurturing 'honest' and 'truthful' native subordinate clerks begged the question of how they were to be accomplished. Inevitably the place of religious education, in particular prescribing Bible as a mandatory study in government schools, became one of the dominant discourse the colonial officials vigorously engaged on and off until the mid-nineteenth century.

Bible was seen as an essential ingredient that would cure the natives of all the alleged ills of native society. Tweeddale, Governor of Madras advocated the introduction of the Bible in 1846 as a textbook in the Government schools on the ground that 'it is the only means I know of giving to the Natives a practical knowledge of the sources from whence arise all those high qualities which they admire so much in the character of those whom Providence has placed to rule over them' (Morrison, 1859). Few decades later, J.F. Thomas, Chief Secretary to the Madras Government wrote, 'Education without moral culture is probably as often injurious as beneficial to society.... the people are *willing to receive any measure of moral instruction* if combined with intellectual knowledge. I see no reason, therefore, why they should not receive it direct from *the only source of morals, the Scriptures*' (Morrison, 1859:16).

It was easy to pine for introduction of Scriptures in the government schools, but there were a number of pragmatic limitations, including the fact that 'very large portions of the teachers in the Government institutions are natives, very respectable and well educated natives, but still Hindoos, who do not consider Christianity to be a divine revelation' and consequently it was clear that there would be no advantage in the inculcation of Christian truth by those who did not appreciate its importance'. Hence, many argued that 'it would be better altogether to avoid any attempt to disseminate Christian truth in the institutions of the government' (House of Commons, 1853:27). What's more, there were even British teachers in the Government educational institutions who were indifferent to the Bible and did not consider it to be a literal truth.

Such occasional surge of pious adrenaline was often met with resistance from the native elites¹⁰, who were becoming more influential, and the Court of Directors. It was clearly against the advocated policy of ‘religious neutrality’. The ever practical Court of Directors in London, in whose memory the Vellore mutiny¹¹ was not so distant, disallowed such a proposal, declaring ‘we cannot consider it either expedient or prudent to introduce any branch of study which can in any way interfere with the religious feelings and opinion of the people’ (Court Public Despatch 1847) and directed that the government and its officers were to stay aloof from all religious activity, neither promoting nor opposing it. Further, it even objected to use of terms such as ‘heathen’ to signify the people of India. It said that

‘as applied to Hindoos, or to Hindoos and Mohomedans conjointly, it cannot but be felt as an opprobrious epithet. We consider it to be repugnant to that regard for the feelings of the people which forms an essential part of genuine toleration. We should, therefore, have expected that the phrase ‘heathen’ would have been censured by Government... and we have observed with equal surprise and disapprobation that the phrase is adopted in the proceedings of the Government itself’ (Frykenberg, 1986:64).

It also said that it was ‘neither expedient nor prudent’ to put the Bible into ‘national schools’ (Frykenberg, 1986:64).

In the end, during the Company Raj, the schools under the Government remained avowedly ‘non-religious’, and at the least out of fear did not want to appear ‘Christian’ in character. Yet, having donned the cap of legitimised authority and regulator of

¹⁰ For example, see the (Hindoo Memorial, 1847) for a protest memorial signed by more than 12500 inhabitants of Madras against the scheme of studies for examination alleging it promotes Christian allusion and discriminates natives and favours missionary educational institutions.

¹¹ On 10 May 1806, resenting native troops consisting of Hindu soldiers who were not permitted to wear the religions marks on their head and Muslim soldiers who were forced to shave off their beard, broke into the fort at Vellore, a town in Tamil Nadu and killed more than 200 British troops. The ‘rebellion’ was quelled in one day and about 100 native soldiers were summarily executed. This incident became a symbolic incident during the Company Raj against meddling with native religious practices.

social change the Company Raj had to find a way out for implementing its social engineering project. One was to harness English literature, Shakespeare, Bacon and all (Kerr, 1852:64); the other was to harp on teaching of ‘moral philosophy’. Allusion to scriptures was promoted in the readers and ‘moral’ lessons were introduced in schools. A confident bureaucrat giving evidence before the House of Commons could hence assent ‘although Christianity is entirely excluded from the Government institutions yet the instruction which is given in them has had the effect of raising the natives infinitely above their own creed... there are few of those who have received a complete education at the government institutions who do not hold the doctrines and principles of Hindooism in the most thorough contempt’ (House of Commons, 1853:28).

Assimilation of indigenous schools

The native educational institutions ‘tinnai palli’¹² (Babu, 2007) typically had a single school teacher, were numerous and fairly widespread, and until mid-nineteenth century, though declining, were independent of the colonial influence. A survey conducted by Thomas Munro shows that there were 12,498 schools and 188,000 students in a population of 12,850,941 — roughly 1 school per 1000 persons and 1 student per 67 persons in the year 1823-25. Commenting on the status of education Munro said, ‘The state of education here, low as it is compared with that of our own country, is higher than it was in most European countries at a not very distant period’ (Gleig, 1830:409).

Tinnai school teachers included *panchangis* (Brahmins who knew the almanac and determined the auspicious time), *pantarams* (non-brahmin priest), *kanakan* (puranic reciters); later scribes and accountants who could not get Government jobs started schools. The *tinnai* pedagogy privileged calculations; riddles and palindromes abound in early arithmetic works and in lexicons, suggesting that computational techniques lay at the heart of its goal. Texts like *nigandu* were used to expose the students to the names of deities, different musical instruments,

¹² Schools conducted by village schoolmasters in their veranda.

division of time, the earth, towns, plants, animals and so on. Further, the learners were to memorise the sixty names of the years, the days of the week, the planets, the stars, the months, the important festivals, remarkable days and so on¹³. Learning in the *tinnai* school was essentially by way of habit formation – repetition recitation and apprenticeship. ‘*Tinnai* schooling was part of a continuum of devotionally inclined textual practice (this practice extended beyond schools to even those who were essentially barred from it, say) young girls for example ...(Non school going young girls) cultivated their memories without entering *tinnai* schools but through disciplined work regimes’ (Bhavani, 2012:116). They memorised texts as acts of devotion when they heard it being recited by the professionals.

The knowledge transaction in these schools was essentially religious and denominational. A. D. Campbell, one of the Colonial officials from Bellary who took the work of the Educational survey seriously, personally examined the *tinnai* schools (Campbell, 1834). He reported that what was taught to each student depended upon his caste and social standing. For example, if the ‘manufacturing castes’ studied books that were ‘peculiar to their own religious tenets’ while those who worship ‘lingam’ studied texts that ‘all considered sacred’.

The differentiated and caste based education was apparent; ‘The instruction given in all classes of Hindu indigenous schools is so far practical that the Brahmans and other high or literary castes are taught the subjects which will qualify them either for the service of their religion or for their future civil position. The lower classes obtain such an instruction in elementary subjects of practical utility as is designed to qualify them for their several occupations in life, and serves also to protect them against unfair dealing’ (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:57). The Hunter Commission in 1882 observed that ‘The distinctive principle of Hindu social life-caste has stamped its impress on all Hindu educational institutions. The higher schools are practically

¹³ See (Bhavani, 2010) for a analytical view on the *tinnai* school pedagogy and (Seth, 2007) for a discussion on the epistemic struggle between schooling deemed traditional (rote learning) and modern (real learning).

closed against all but Brahmans, and the Brahman scholars are treated as the children of their master’.

There was no standardized curriculum and each school master devised a scheme for his school based on the students he had at hand. The villagers would pay a certain agreed amount to the teacher and the schoolmaster would impart basics of literacy, numeracy and train children in various useful arts. They lacked ordered syllabus, orderly timings and prescribed textbooks and were discriminatory towards girls and lower caste population. Thus, it was anything but secular.

The content and character of the *tinnai* schools changed with the introduction of a ‘grant-in-aid’ policy by the Madras government from 1854. The unrealistic policy of exclusive English education, advocated by Macaulay, was swept away by Governor General Lord Auckland who in his minutes of 1839 advocated vernacular mass education in place of English education, making a case that vernacular education would be economical, ‘than thorough English, which requires the employment of an English master on a salary at least two or three times as high as would be adequate for a native master who had received an English education and at the same time perfectly conversant in his own tongue’ (Sharp, 1920:162).

The Educational Despatch of 1854 (popularly known as Woods Despatch) which argued that the ‘object (extending European knowledge) must be effected by means of the English language in the higher branches of instruction and by that of the vernacular language of India to the great mass of the people’ [Arbuthnot, 1855b: (Annexure 26)] replaced the filtration policy (education to superior class of natives) and gave further impetus to the vernacular education. The Despatch further argued that ‘vernacular language must be employed to teach for larger class who are ignorant or imperfectly acquainted with English’ [Arbuthnot, 1855b: (Annexure 4)], and mandated that Government should create and maintain a well articulated system of education from primary to university stage (Gupta, 1999:34). As the government felt that it would not be able to provide mass education on its own, it recommended grants-in-aid to ‘various agencies for the spread of education among the natives of India’ (Manickam, 1988:82). Implementing the Woods dispatch of

1854, the Madras Government constituted Director of Public Instruction to 'control and inspect over the whole educational system' (Richey, 1922) and a grant-in-aid scheme to support private educational initiatives if they offered 'secular education' (Sathianandan, 1894:50).

The grant-in-aid system became a cardinal policy in shaping the further course of the history of education in the Madras Presidency. One of the major benefactors of this scheme were the indigenous *tinnai* schools, as they were roped in 'whether high or low', if they 'serve any purpose of secular education whatsoever' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:78). While the high class institutions catering to the Vedic or religious studies remained 'for the most part outside the influence of the educational system, the elementary have been largely utilized in building up the departmental system of primary education' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:57). With a view to 'provide a powerful agency for visiting all the indigenous schools, for furnishing the people and the teachers with advice, assistance, and encouragement, and for rewarding those schoolmasters who may be found the most deserving' (Kaye, 1853:613) the Government established in each district or tehsil a model school.

The Government of Madras 'induced the indigenous schoolmasters to accept inspection on condition of receiving grants on the result system, or on the combined system of salary and result-grants' and was able to stimulate 'steady improvement ... in their method and subjects of instruction. Reading books were freely introduced; exclusive reliance upon memory yielded to a more sensible system of explanation and learning with intelligence; mental arithmetic and the elaborate multiplication tables were not superseded, but were supplemented by the method of working out arithmetical sums on the slate; even history and geography were gradually accepted as part of the school course (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:66)'. The school inspectors were advised 'to conduct themselves with the greatest courtesy both to the people at large and to the village teachers' and to 'persuade, encourage, assist, and reward' (Kaye, 1853:613) village school masters. The *tinnai* school masters responded positively to the result-based grant-in-aid system and

the grants that they could garner helped them augment the falling Dakshina (ritual fees)¹⁴.

Tinnai education was suffused with piety discipline and ethical action as well as practical things like calculation. However, by the mid-nineteenth century its learning was clearly being understood as impractical by the native elites (Bhavani, 2012:119). Subba Rao, a native who became the secretary for the Madras School Book Society, notes that desire for instruction in English became so great that almost anyone with pretensions, however fraudulent, could set up a 'school.' He estimated that some five hundred 'school' signboards could be found along Mount Road alone, each claiming to offer the 'best' training in English. The potential to obtain government job if the wards acquire modern education and pass the examinations conducted by the Department of Education was one of impulse that shaped the path of the indigenous schools. The indigenous schoolmaster of the old hereditary type in Madras was 'reported to be fast losing his influence through competition with the trained and certificate teachers' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:72). Even the missionaries were forced to commence English schools to attract upper-caste schoolboys.

Increasingly, the elites and those who had means opted out of the tradition bound *tinnai* schools and placed their wards in the modern schools under government inspection with an eye on the prospective employment in the expanding government services. Well-to-do families were no longer patronizing the *tinnai* schools; they were even willing to place their wards in the mission schools. Late nineteenth-century renowned Tamil writer A. Madhaviah in his English novel *Thillai Govindan* (1903) renounces the *tinnai* schools for the practice of encouraging unreflective rote memorization of *kurals* without engaging the critical thinking skills of the young (mostly male) students (Kristen, 2013). The *tinnai* schools had only two options; change and get assimilated into modern school or get obliterated. Naturally the school masters chose the first path, and as Keay notes (Keay, 1918), the *tinnai palli* schools were gradually

See (Manickam, 1988) for a discussion on the grant-in-aid fees and the missionary approach towards it.

incorporated into the mainstream modern school system by way of the Grant-in-Aid system.

By the policy of Grant-in-Aid, the Madras government was able to bring in more than 8500 indigenous schools by 1882 and an estimated 2828 schools, which still lay outside the circle of State supervision, were expected in due course of time to become qualified for Grant-in-Aid (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:67). Thus, by the late nineteenth century ‘great increase in the number of schools connected with the Department of education has been due mainly to the gradual absorption of such indigenous schools; and there are probably few except the very elderly among the masters who have not come forward to examination for result grants and there thereby gradually modify their teaching to meet the requirement of the code...’ (Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, 1884:71).

When the Government modified the Grant-in-Aid rules in 1865 (Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency, 1866:102) to say that the grants would be released on the basis of the ‘results’ produced, obtaining ‘results’ in the examinations held by the government became the paramount object of education in the schools receiving Grant-in-Aid. Till about 1870, all schools other than under direct government management had autonomy to choose the textbook and also prepare their own scheme of studies. However, with the introduction of government exams, adoption of inspection, schools receiving Grant-in-Aid, inclusive of many missionary schools, had to recourse to use of textbooks approved by the government. Meanwhile, Hunter Commission (1882) advocated that only books approved and prescribed by the government be used in the schools receiving state aid. The Textbook Review Committee in its report also directed each province to set-up a textbook committee to ‘approve suitable textbooks’ for use in school receiving government aid. In practice, in many a case it meant that, it was only the textbooks produced by the government or prescribed by it that were used, thus ending the devotional scheme of studies of the *tinnai* schools.

The esoteric paradigm of education in *tinnai* schools depended on the prevailing personal relationship between a teacher and a student. In contrast, in the modern schools

Often studied Missionary educationists such as Grant, Anderson favoured English education and at times class education, however, most of the missionaries working at the hinterland preferred vernacular education. Education became more public, set in formally organised schools, furthered by the new availability of printed books and was imparted in an impersonal style of education, as it was mandatory that all 'aided indigenous schools, not registered... (are) open to all classes and castes of the community, special aid being, if necessary, assignable on account of low-caste pupils' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:78). Texts once taught only in religious settings and accessible for only a select few were now available in the street corner. People once prohibited by birth from education now had access to what had been only studied by the elite. If in the earlier time the discrimination was seen as a norm, now in the changed context bigotry and inequity was seen as a deviation.

Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century except for purely religious training such as Vedic *padasalas*, almost all the *tinnai* schools were assimilated into the grand modern educational scheme with purely secular textbooks, prescribed course of study, structured time frame of schooling and open to all 'class' of people.

Missionary schools

If the policy of neutrality and the result-based Grant-in-Aid were the secularising agency of the government and the indigenous schools respectively, the government examination was the vital agency that secularized the mission schools.

European missionaries had established modern educational institutions in Madras Presidency as early as 1567. The first one was by the Portuguese missionaries who established a Tamil school at Punnakayal, a coastal town in southern Tamil Nadu (Jayaseela, 1998). While the Company was mired in controversies like Vernacular education versus English education and mass education versus class education, most of the European missionaries¹⁵ were committed to mass education in the vernaculars, arguing that 'mother tongues are the moulding

instruments of all communities' (Long, 1859:lxix). Thus, for most part of the nineteenth century, vernacular modern education was spread through the efforts of missionaries. More so in Madras Presidency they held the dominant position until the middle of the nineteenth century. Alexander John Arbuthnot, Director of Public Instruction wrote in 1854 'in the department of elementary instruction the operations of some of the missionary societies are on a very considerable scale. The SPG supports no less than 186 schools...' and said that '...Christian missionary society was conducting 1185 schools...'. The missionaries were maintaining this elaborate educational network at their own costs (Arbuthnot, 1855a). 'Evangelical belief in the transformation of human character through education and the conviction that conversion to Christianity required some amount of learning' (Niranjana, 1992) prompted the missionaries to engage in the educational sphere. As Jayaraman notes '... in the period prior to 1833, the missionaries mainly concentrated on establishing elementary school teaching through the medium of modern Indian languages...' (Jayaraman, 1986:62).

German missions opened Tamil schools like the traditional *tinnai* schools in the Tanjavour region. In the Tirunelveli region Hough with the help of SPCK and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) opened one English school and fifteen Tamil schools. These schools offered classes in English grammar, composition, and arithmetic. However, when he approached the Madras Government for financial support, his request was turned down because he used 'Christian Scriptures' as text. C. T. E. Rhenius is another notable educationist who set up a number of Tamil schools. He recruited gifted teachers, both Christians and non-Christians; he exploited the growing clamour for education that provided a new market for employment. From 1820 to 1835, he established 107 small schools (with a combined enrolment of 2,882 pupils, 159 of whom were female), 2 secondary schools, and a training college for 40 scholars (Robert, 1881). By 1858, the year in which the Company rule ended, efforts by fourteen missionary societies had brought the total enrolment at some 500 schools in South India to 38,607 students (Frykenberg, 1986:51). As early as 1712, Zeigenbalg wrote that the mission schools were fruitful seed plots of the Church that would prepare

Another elite caste that was nobility, aristocracy of the ancient Tamil order were largely agricultural landlords in Tamil Nadu and Kerala states in India and in neighbouring Sri Lanka. ¹⁵ scholars to serve the mission as ‘writers, clerks and accountants, schoolmasters and catechists’ (Jayaraj, 2005:24).

Murdoch and missionaries let no chance to denounce the learning in the indigenous schools, yet learn from it. Murdoch notes ‘Hindus value education chiefly as it fits their children for business. Arithmetic is perhaps held in greater estimation than any other branch. They wish it, however, to be taught in a way which will be practically useful. In some schools under European management, the children are only exercised in working sums on slates, involving millions. An intelligent Hindu parent knows that his child, unless employed in some government office, will perhaps never in his life require to solve such questions; but that he may sustain loss every day if not familiar with the modes of calculation used in the bazaar’ (Murdoch, 1870:424) and advises in the mission schools ‘not to exclude either system, but to teach both.’ The mission schools organised by the German missions in Tamil region based the local *tinnai* school as their exemplar, and stressed memorisation and computation. Instead of the traditional texts used in the *tinnai* school they substituted it with Christian liturgy composed in the traditional musical scale for easy replacement in the village schools. However, in one respect they differed widely from the traditional schools. They offered schooling for the poor, a mingling of the high-born with the low, equal opportunity for each deserving student of whatever means, caste or creed.

Further, they also emphasised on practical sciences and skilled trades such as paper making in their school curriculum. Shifting away from the practice of use of *cadjan* leaves as texts for reading in schools, the missionaries produced school text books from the Tamil press they had established in Tranquebar. The training that students received, especially in English, in these mission schools were found handy by the Government. Students from these schools could aspire and hope to get a job in the expanding Colonial officialdom. Brahmins and Vellaars¹⁶ and not just Christians flocked the missionary schools in the

hope that the new learning offered there would find them a place in the rapidly expanding company *cutcherry*¹⁷. Would teaching of Bible and scriptures cause apprehension in the minds of the non-Christian parents who sent their wards to mission schools? Conversion of school boys (at rare times girls) did cause uproar and the mission school emptied out, only to be filled to the brim a little later. While indeed the parents would be wary of conversion, they were not so worried about the instruction on Bible or scriptures given in the mission schools. In vernacular schools, where the pupil would not be mature enough to ‘show a desire for baptism’, the parents ‘scarcely give a thought to the religious lessons — the missionary may teach as much Christianity as he pleases’ (Murdoch, 1870:424).

For the missionaries, the meaning of education was beyond the mundane; they sought to impart and engage in Godly knowledge; and this was to make their schools distinct from the Government schools. Under the ‘education as a mission work’ perspective, schools were seen as centres of spiritual and religious dialogue. During the course of the half of century of the later nineteenth century missionaries tried various strategies to achieve their higher goals. In the initial years a direct volley of religious texts was deployed on the students. If not the Bible, portions of scriptures, catechisms, and Christian parables were prescribed as textbooks and the students were expected to master it. The direct teaching of Bible did not yield the desired result. Thus, around 1870, both the purpose and role of Christian education were modified from direct proselytism to diffusion of Christian values and ideas and made to play a preparatory evangelic role.

The educational objective was that the missionaries had a close relationship with their spiritual mission of spreading the word of Gospel which was closely linked to the mundane colonial project of ‘civilizing the natives’. John Murdoch remarks ‘... the aims of education are 1) to promote the temporal well-being of the people of India 2) to elevate them intellectually 3) to raise their moral character...’ (Murdoch, 1873:7). Treating ‘literature, philosophy and science as aspects

of the one morally informed source of authentic knowledge' was a strategy of the missionaries 'to ground morality and social behaviour in an analytical appreciation of institution, obligation and law'. At the same time it was also an effort to establish a 'connection made by reason, between Christian truths and empirical knowledge' (Gerald, 1998).

The Protestant missionaries characterised the religious beliefs and practices of the natives as 'heathen' and derided the 'idolatry' of Hinduism and 'bigotry' of Islam. The then rising evangelist fervour in Britain, influenced partly by the Scottish enlightenment movement, contributed to the blurring of the distinctions between 'moral improvement', civilisation and Christianity. Thus, for the missionaries of that period 'mental moral improvement of natives' was a rhetoric for proselytising. Western cultural norms and modern scientific knowledge was seen to be aligned with the truths of Christianity and thus were seen as an ally in the 'crusade' against the natives. Hence it was posited that by providing modern education in western (English) literature and science, gullible natives can be made to see the light and turned towards 'true religion'.

For example, the missionary Murdoch wrote to his family at Glasgow, '...You ask about the telescope that you sent me. It answers the purpose tolerably. I may mention that it had considerable effect on the minds of the youth in causing them to disbelieve Buddhism, as it showed the mountains of the moon and the satellites of Jupiter. This may, perhaps, surprise you. I have however only room to mention that the religion of the people is quite opposed to European geography and astronomy, and, consequently, if the latter are true, the former is false....'¹⁸, in a naïve belief that some errors in native geography or cosmography could weaken Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam. In fact the opposite occurred; western educated youth could use the very same modern science to question the dogmas of Christianity. Anyone who is familiar with what happened to Galileo when he saw the universe through his telescope in the hands of the Vatican, is hardly going to be convinced just by looking at the telescope.

Letter of 8th June 1847, reproduced in Morris, 1906:20).

The educational missionaries such as Murdoch and Duff hoped to use education to bring about a change of heart amongst the Natives. While the early missions used Bible or scriptures directly as a text in the schools as an instrument to show the natives of their follies, it was clear that this pedagogic strategy was not yielding result. It is in this background that the idea of education as itself a missionary work emerged. Reverend Miller, principal of Madras Christian College, for example, declared, the purpose of missionary educational work as ‘a change of thought and feeling, a modification of character and formation of principles tending in a Christian direction... to leaven the whole lump of Hinduism’ (Mathew, 1988:56), aiming ‘not directly to save souls, but to make the work of saving them more speedy and more certain than it would be without it’. Contending that ‘probably no question connected with Missions has been more discussed than the place which education should occupy’ (Murdoch, 1870:413), Murdoch appreciatively cites a missionary in North India who says ‘...education is the grand means which god has placed in our hands for bringing this people (natives) to knowledge of his will’ and reminds the young missionary that the London Missionary Society did not have a ‘narrow interpretation of preaching the Gospel’ and advocates ‘variety of methods (including and among others) adult schools, family visitation, conversation with individuals, the composition of Christian books, the circulation of the translated Scriptures...’ (Murdoch, 1870:414).

Education, even a secular one, it was premised would shake the foundations of the native religious cosmos, provided it was about ‘English literature and European Science’. It was posited that ‘reading any science, or the history of the world, or the Bible, must exercise upon their minds a powerful influence, and tend to dispel their puerile, pernicious and God-dishonouring notions, derived from their traditions on the creation of the world, of angels, of Muhammed, & c., and to instil in their hearts a sense of sin and justice, and of the fear and holiness of God. Their faith becomes sapped, and the Christian religion must command itself to their minds’ (Murdoch, 1870:416).

Some missionaries banked on English education to do the trick; while the natives learnt the new language, and the terms in

it, they will be forced to reflect upon the new reality domains that these new terms signify. Thus, there will be a self awakening and the English educated natives would see the light. That was the plan. Not all believed in English education as the means to reach the heart of the natives. Murdoch firmly held that the Vernaculars were the key to reach large masses of the people.

Having carved out a dominant position in the field of education, the mission desired that the competition of the company must be put an end to. Therefore, from the beginning of the 1850s they began to clamour (Mathew, 1988:24) that they were the custodians of spiritual principles of a Christian power and hence they had the moral right to conduct the education of Indians. It was in this context that when the Grant-in-Aid scheme was announced it was much celebrated amongst the missionaries in Madras. They thought they could augment their resources with the grants and expand their educational missions. However, under this scheme, students were to be subjected to periodic examination by the school inspectors of the Government. Based on the 'achievement' the school would be provided with 'grant-in-aid'. The students also stood to gain by the examinations by the government inspectors, for it is the standing that they obtained in these exams that determined their prospects for employment in the expanding Government service. As the policy of the Government was 'religious neutrality', obviously the examination did not include scriptures or religious curriculum. Only the prescribed and laid down curriculum mattered for the 'results'. This had two simultaneous impacts. The students who wanted, at the end of the day, to pass and get good score so that they could become employable in Government and other modern job market were uninterested in religious studies (under whatever name it was prescribed). Students and parents saw it as a 'waste of time'. The school teachers, perhaps other than missionaries with conviction, gave perfunctory emphasis to the religious texts. They had a stake in getting more and more of their students to pass the test conducted by the school inspectors. More the result more the Grant-in-Aid, better their financial situation. Thus, the religious studies naturally took a back seat.

During the course of the nineteenth century the Grant-in-Aid code was changed again and again. Each change made the

schools under the inspection and control of the Government more and more secular. While the Grant-in-Aid rules did not prohibit any denominational school from teaching their religion, it made many regulations on it. At times the Government ordered that ‘all religious instruction (are) optional, and only to be given out of ordinary school hours’ (Richter, 1908:314) and at another time it directed that all the grant receiving schools must teach only ‘the subjects that are under Government inspection ... during the first five hours of every day, whilst religious teaching must, if at all, be taken during a sixth hour, when all the strength and power of attention on the part of the children is exhausted’ (Richter, 1908:314).

Murdoch noted with alarm the influence government examinations had on the expectations from the parents. He said ‘in 1857, universities were established in three Presidencies. Examinations for degrees were held and the results gained by the different colleges and schools were published all over the country. The obtaining of a degree became the great object of ambition on the part of Hindu youth. It was considered a certain passport to honour, wealth, and office. Education was valued simply as a means of obtaining that end. The number of passed candidates from each school and college was carefully scrutinised, and so far as circumstances permitted, students resorted to the colleges which were most successful at the examinations. Formerly it did not matter much to the students in missionary institutions which subject they studied: now the grand question was, what is the value of this in obtaining a degree? As Christian theology was not included in the University examinations, the study of the Bible came to be regarded in a different light’ (Murdoch, 1870:443). The Rev. Dr Orgilvie, a missionary from Calcutta, concurred: ‘The fact that at all the examinations of the university no marks are given for religious knowledge, causes the students to regard this subject as utterly valueless for the only purpose they have in view — that is, the gaining of university honours. It is for this purpose alone that they attend our colleges, and now pay what may be considered high fees. The time devoted to the study of the Bible they regard as simply wasted. With such a variety of subjects to master, they consider their college hours too precious for any of them to be

thrown anyway in getting up a subject that yields not the slightest return' (Murdoch, 1870:443).

The missionaries anticipated a sort of self doubt, leading to self reflection through exposure to the European literature and sciences. The natives hardly showed any sign of change of heart even after three-four decades of missionary educational activity. One after another the educational critics during the late nineteenth century observed that the education was being seen as an instrument for material progress. Kaye observes '... The children of India were, perhaps, the most impressionable — the most teachable children in the world. But, left to itself, the impression was soon effaced; the teaching soon became profitless. The mere mechanical power of reading and writing remained. The native students became expert penmen, and remained expert penmen to the last. Much of the copying work in the government offices had long been done by them. But it was impossible to read any number of documents so copied without the conviction that the copyist had brought the smallest possible amount of intelligence to bear upon his work. The eye seemed to communicate directly with the hand; there was no intervention of the brain. The process was merely that of the machine' (Kaye, 1853:601).

The growing number of government schools and the increasing trend of the private indigenous schools being brought under the government supervision and examination caused an alarm amongst the missionaries. If this trend continued they were certain that their privileged position would be compromised. Murdoch said 'in the early days of missions, in many cases no schools of any description existed. Their establishment supplied a great want. Now, through means of the educational cess, fair elementary schools are springing up over the whole country. It is true that they are defective in not teaching Christianity; but in general instruction is good as far as it goes, and the pupils at least are taught to read. To maintain a footing, mission schools must be of a higher character than formerly, and therefore more expensive' (Murdoch, 1872:13). As they had to compete with other schools they could not be unmindful of the 'results' and ultimately even the mission schools had to succumb to the examination pressure.

In Madras Presidency, examination by the visiting inspectors had to be taken on an average every second school-year. Examination became the most important thing for the authorities, for it was the only means by which they could control the school. Examination became most important of all to the scholars, for they were the gates of entry to every position under the Government. The very same examination became paramount for the teacher, for his earnings depended on it. Thus, in the end, undue weight was attached to preparation for examination in all types of schools including the mission schools. Murdoch perceived this trend and commented ‘...before the establishment of the Universities (university examination), Government and missionary institutions all over each presidency were not pitted against each other. Missionaries might select the studies they pleased as well as all of the time to be devoted to each. It did not much matter to the students which subjects were prescribed. The university examination produced a great change. The obtaining a degree became the great object of ambition on the part of Hindu youth. Subjects studied were estimated according to their value’ (Murdoch, 1870) it had for examination. Examination being central, Christian knowledge, which had no place in the Government scheme of things, was relegated. These trends, in the end, practically made a mission school no different from ‘god-less’ government schools.

The scheme initially seen with much enthusiasm and expectation by the missionaries became a sour grape in the hands of the bureaucratic government. Exasperated the missionaries exclaimed, ‘As the yearly grants — the hinge on which the new system turned — depended on the result of the annual visitations and examinations conducted by these gentlemen, it came about that mission schools, for instance, were often in a state of very undesirable dependence on the goodwill or the good temper of officials who were antagonistic to missions. How much caprice and party spirit it was possible to exercise in the conducting of examinations, the inspection of school buildings, and the criticism of the school staff! How much vexation and worry were thereby set in motion!’ (Richter, 1908:308).

When the mission schools expanded in numbers they had to take recourse to employing non-Christian teachers, and this

further exacerbated the secularising trend in the mission schools. Combined with a rigid examination system and the imposition of a fixed syllabus of secular studies, the demands of school examinations pushed the purely Christian objectives into the background. Consequently, the entire teaching was geared towards the preparation of secular subjects for examinations, leaving no time for scholars or the missionaries for religious education.

In the end, by the 1870s, all the three major streams of educational efforts — Government, indigenous, and missionary — in the Madras Presidency had to re-invented and refashioned. The indigenous educational institutions slowly came under the local boards and municipalities and hence the native elites who came to administer the local bodies and municipalities could effectively exercise control over them. The Governmental institutions were also increasingly influenced by the native elites; as they were appointed in the management committees and boards. Further, as officials in the Government departments the elites could also to an extent exercise influence. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the missionary efforts needed a fresh vision.

From preaching to awakening

The missionaries had a setback, but were not beaten. As the direct study of religious lessons in the school, secularized indirectly by the rules and regulations, was becoming untenable, missionaries sought to bring in Christian ethos, values and scripture through an indirect way. If the readers, lessons and manuals could be infused with Christian fervour then the missionary work of awakening the mind could be achieved. By taking recourse to the recent European educational innovations in the pedagogy they sought to influence the content of the school textbooks. The Trojan horse that they found was the idea of ‘object lessons’.

The pedagogic technique called ‘object lessons’ was based on a learning theory that by observation, description, naming and classification of everyday familiar objects, one would be able to go beyond the apparent and reach the essence. It postulated that

once the kernel is reached higher thinking could be developed. Object theory, as articulated by Pestalozzi, postulated that the best means to instil higher thinking in children was through the observation, description, naming and classification of objects. By prodding the children to ask questions the theory claimed that the child's mental development could be nurtured and the child made to think not of the object but the abstract ideas in the object. The theory developed by the educator Johann Pestalozzi abhorred rote learning and memorisation and was averse to strict discipline. He urged that the learning in young children should commence from the concrete objects and advised that plants and mineral specimens should be used in teaching natural sciences.

This theory became popular in the educational circles — both missionaries and the government sector. The missionaries re-interpreted the postulates of the theory to the colonial situation. Object lessons were considered to be a good antidote for the alleged defective epistemologies of the natives that fetishes the objects and fail to see the ideas and essence behind it. The relationship between 'words' and 'things' (objects) was not only a means of teaching abstraction and reason but a way of understanding Christianity itself. Only through a systematic process of instructing children in how to observe could they be later taught how to understand the critical concept that 'words (were) representative symbols or signs of the things themselves' (Calkins, 1861:17). John Murdoch the educational missionary argued that 'Hindus as a rule are deficient in habits of observation' (Murdoch, 1881:48) and hence lessons on 'plants and animals around them would be valuable in several respects' as would be on 'astronomy and physical geography'. Making a particular interpretation of the Hindu and Muslim beliefs, the missionaries argued that the non-Christian population behaved much like children and attributed purpose and intention to the objects. The central-place idols and fetishes in their worship were taken to be a clear indication of how the natives were anthropomorphising the world just like children. In contrast, the natural science tells us that the objects obey (god?) natural laws. Just as a child is guided by mere impressions gained through senses to abstract 'true knowledge', in like manner, the missionary project was to goad a native (Hindu/Muslim) from

idolatrous ideas of God to the abstract idea of one true God through 'object lessons'. Thus, for the missionary the 'object lessons were meant to wean Hindu children from their fetishistic and idolatrous practices, rehearsing the shift away from heathenism (the worship of objects) to the truth (and abstraction) of Protestant Christianity' (Sengupta, 2003).

Through indirect 'object lessons' and so forth, missionaries hoped to make the 'natives' see the folly in their 'Purans' and 'myths'. Supplemented with texts such as Pally's 'Evidences of Christianity' they hoped that the spirit of inquiry would be awakened amongst the natives, which would lead them to the 'true religion'. Soon the optimism turned sour. The Allahabad missionary conference held in 1872 clearly showed to them that the earlier optimism for educational missionary work had not paid rich dividends, in fact despite increased outlay of missionary resources, the visible results were in decline. 'True that handful of conversions followed... equally true that the educated Hindus began losing faith in Hinduism and caste, ... however (they did not) went over to Christianity automatically... they stopped at 'Half way house' like Brahma Samaj... absorption of the atheist or the agnostic trends...' (Mathew, 1988:45).

Natives were not passive recipients, but worked from within to shape the educational domain. If the missionaries saw 'evidences' of His creation all around with science providing corroboration, natives were not disturbed. The very same arguments of missionaries could be garnered and an argument of deism could be marshalled to blunt the missionary criticism of the native beliefs. Even a casual list of textbooks published during the later part of the nineteenth century Madras Presidency will show that 'Object lessons' was a craze. Even the native educators saw the merit of the pedagogical argument; however, instead of revelation of the Christian faith as the ultimate step of the object lesson in the secularised Government schools and non mission schools the final target of the cultivation of senses and the object study training became 'scientific thinking', not Christianity.

During 1880, the Grant-in-Aid code was revised, and a new scheme of studies was announced. In this new scheme of studies

from infant¹⁹ to 6th grade a subject of study titled ‘object lessons or elementary science’ (Maclean, 1885:590) was introduced. The textbooks prepared with large participation of ‘native’ authors, were styled as ‘nature readers’ consisting of ‘object lessons’, and were in the paradigm of ‘Scientific Naturalism’. Drawing upon the ideas of Huxley and Tyndall, these works eschew anthropomorphism, anthropocentrism, and teleological views of nature. These books emphasized empiricism and scientific rationality. Slowly, the textbooks prepared or authorised by the Government became dominant that even mission schools did not use the ones that were produced by mission agency such as Christian Vernacular Educational Society (Murdoch, 1872:29). The following are representative titles published²⁰ at the turn of the century that utilised the object lesson strategy for teaching natural sciences²¹.

The very same tools and pedagogy that the missionaries advocated were appropriated by the native elites who deployed it to disseminate new form of religion and gender sensibilities in keeping with new definition of modern Hinduism and Islam. In the eyes of the missionaries these developments were leading to ‘godless’ education, further corrupting the ‘heathen Hindu and Muslim natives’ (Mathew, 1988:24). A noted missionary observed ‘... As the convincing truths of science and the claims of human reason have driven educated Hindus step by step from their pride and faith in their ancient traditions, they have been pained to find among the quagmire of their religious books, relics of theistic beliefs which they might rebuild with their new ideas into the semblance of a rational religion, round which they may make a fight for Hinduism as they think it once was and

¹⁹ First year of schooling was then called as infant grade.

²⁰ See the following catalogues for a full list of textbooks produced and used

during the late nineteenth century: ‘Madras State Bibliography of books 1867-

1900’, Tamil Development and Research Council, Volumes published in 1961,

63 and 64; ‘Madras State Bibliography of books for these years 1867-

1900 published respectively in the years 1974/77 and 1978; Classified

catalogue of the Public Reference Library 1867-89, 1890-1900, 1901-10, 1911-

1916-20, 1921-25 published respectively in the years 1894, 1961, 1964,

54, 1965, 1971.

²¹ See (Venkateswaran, 2004) for a discussion of how object lessons were

used by the native elites and the Christian pedagogues.

may again be...Hinduism has been simultaneously assailed by western education and by Christianity; but most educated Hindus seem to have made an endeavour to patch up an alliance between their old faith and their new culture in order to have a more tenable position from which they may defend their religion against the attack of Christianity....' (Wann, 1888:161).

Battle of books

The nineteenth century educational debates presupposed that education was not simply about the transmission of knowledge but also about shaping of character. The elementary education provided for the poorer classes for which the English state undertook responsibility in 1870 and was intended to inculcate the virtues of industry, thrift and self discipline in the lower classes, while among the upper classes the public school was thought to instil manly independence and leadership among its 'boys' (Seth, 2007:47). The public debate on the moral decadence of educated native youth raised a pertinent question. Woods's despatch of 1854 had rejected oriental learning and had upheld promotion of 'western literature and science'. Thus, if the youth who underwent a course in 'western literature and science' were in general undisciplined and disloyal then should the modern educational system be blamed? It was posited that that there was nothing wrong in the modern education *per se*, but it is the imperfect and unbalanced modern education provided in the 'secular' educational institutions of the government that were the menace.

While the state worried about raising nationalism was interested in emphasising 'gratitude' and 'discipline'; for the missionaries the absence of 'spiritual awakening' amongst the educated natives was the sign of decadence. As the education is divorced from religion, in particular of the 'true religion', for missionaries, Indian students have imperfectly assimilated 'western literature and science' and have become decadent in the government colleges and schools. The native elite did not agree with this diagnosis, but had their own axe to grind, lack of respect for the 'ancient institution' was seen as sign of the abasement that needs to be set right. Thus, many actors deployed

the rhetoric of the need for building moral and character through education, they implied different notions.

Murdoch opined that the result of the Government education and missionary education on moral development differed considerably. According to him, in 'schools of a low grade the pupils remain Hindus, though with less superstition and higher ideas of God and morality than the people generally'. But in 'Government colleges the advanced students lose all faith in Hinduism from its false geography, false astronomy, and many other absurdities' (Murdoch, 1870:241). The discovery of the truths of science leads the pupil to doubt everything. As with the little reason he has learnt he was able to realize that many things hitherto held by him as sacred and true to be false, he is afraid to believe that anything is true. 'He passes by a not unnatural process, from the extreme of credulity to the extreme of scepticism.' Another missionary opined that 'some have argued that the Indians, receiving an education which undermines their superstition are being prepared for the reception of Christianity. We think the contrary. We believe that they are being prepared for occupying a position extremely antagonistic to it' (Murdoch, 1870:242). A native newspaper sympathetic to the Missionaries remarked 'But it should, however, be borne in mind that the system of education now pursued in several of our educational establishments cannot be held to be altogether blameless is sending annually hundreds of young men, without fixed notions of faith and religion' (Murdoch, 1870:243). The missionaries were worried about the agnostic moment from Europe, especially from England having an influence on the educated natives. Missionaries anguished that 'many educated Hindus eagerly watch for any attacks upon Christianity in Europe. The writings of Colenso excited much noise. At present the positive philosophy of Comte is popular in Bengal' (Murdoch, 1870:243).

Having perceived education in India essentially as improving the mental and moral standards of the natives, the missionaries were at loss with the secular education in the Government schools. Adulating a poet who said, 'give me, says one, the songs of a country, and I will let anyone else make its laws.' 'Give me' says another, 'the school-books of a country and I will

let anyone else make both its songs and its laws', Murdoch took the school textbooks very seriously. The central place textbook came to assume in the Indian educational scenario was hard to miss. In a normal Indian school 'book is everything, for the master cannot supply what it fails to give' (Murdoch, 1873:4). Hence, what is contained in it and what is absent from it becomes important. Even while acknowledging that the Bible cannot be a prescribed text and Scriptures should not be forced on the pupils in Government schools, the missionaries advocated lacing the textbooks with allusion to Christianity. As more and more natives became members of the civil service, Christian allusion was vehemently opposed and textbooks were purged of Christian references. However, as the Government was to be neutral, it was not just the Christian but there was no direct preaching of Hindu or Muhammadan faith in the schools.

It is in this context that English literature was seen as a convenient replacement for direct religious instruction for building moral and shaping the character of 'natives' (Viswanathan, 1989:93). However, as teaching English literature on a mass scale was not seen as practical, translation moved to the fore along with the adoption of select portions from vernacular literature. In Tamil region, Tamil classics such as *Kondraiveyntan*, *Atticuti* (Avviyar) and *Nannul* were part and parcel of the traditional *tinnai* schools. Native elites in Tamil region found in these traditional literary texts (Bhavani, 2010:44) a set of moral instructions of exemplary conduct in personal and social life, thus they were transported from the *tinnai* schools to modern vernacular schools. Further, episodes from classics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and stories such as *Panchatantra* were culled to compose texts that would teach the young virtue and ethical behaviour. Increasingly, during the late nineteenth century school textbooks abounded with folk tales, Tamil classics and aphorisms culled from Tamil literature.

The school texts were not just traditional Tamil poetry or prose composed using folk tales and epics, they were supplemented by English literature and science texts translated into the Vernaculars. Translation provided a scope for the native elites to domesticate the English texts to the native cosmos. For example, a lesson on 'Angels and Demons' in an English school

textbook was translated by expunging the purely Christian allusion but Hindu attributes were sneaked in. The reference to angels, specifically with Christian allusion in the source text, was equated to 'whom the Hindus call Devatas'. In the same text 'the Christian Veda say so' in the source text was rendered as 'so wise people think' (Report of the committee, 1875:100).

Some of these classics were held in high esteem by the natives but some of the missionaries saw it as a 'vile trash'. While in earlier days Murdoch contended that 'on religious and moral grounds, it would probably be better for India if its entire indigenous literature shared the reputed fate of the Alexandrian library' (Murdoch, 1865:lxvii), subsequently he had to grudgingly acknowledge that while 'it is true that there is perhaps not one classic which does not contain very objectionable passages, but, in addition, there is often much homely wisdom, interspersed with some noble sentiments'. Given its popularity and high esteem, certain that 'as a rule, heathen children will read native classics, whether the missionary allows it or not', hence Murdoch suggests that 'care should be taken to use expurgated editions of Native classics. If this is neglected, idolatry, pantheism, fatalism and immorality will be taught in many cases' (Murdoch, 1870).

The Government education that is not only secular but also when pruned of all references to Christianity, Murdoch argued, results in self-conceit, rudeness, disloyalty, scepticism, immorality amongst Indians (Murdoch, 1881). Arguing that the mental and moral lessons prescribed promote scepticism thereby lead the Hindu to question his belief. However, as the secular education has no reference to the true religion, that is Christianity, hence, the missionaries alleged that the educated Hindus often became atheist or agnostic. Murdoch rued 'it will appear strange to some that there are Missionaries in India who use books from which the name of the great Master has been carefully expunged. How can a blessing be expected to attend school where Christ is thus, to some extent, shut out' (Murdoch, 1870:430) and worried that 'Christian school books are supplanted by those on the 'neutrality' principle or prepared by orthodox Hindus, Vedantists, Brahmists and men of no fixed religious views'. Arguing that 'deism threatens to prove a far

more formidable opponent than idolatry', he was in favour of inculcating Christian allusions into the school textbooks.

After careful scrutiny of the number of textbooks used in various presidencies, Murdoch made a catalogue of what he considered immoral, indecent and idolatrous references in school textbooks. For example, he said that 'some Madras Government School Books taught the boys to pray to Ganesa, the Hindu god of wisdom, for success in their studies; to serve Vishnu; to meditate on the name of Siva', thereby promoting idolatry. Further, 'both Madras and Punjab Government School Books praised Muhammad as 'the Prince of the universe, the Glory of creatures, the Mediator of both worlds' and another Punjab textbook 'declared that Muhammad, before casting out Lat and Uzza, idol worshipped by the Arabs, abrogated the Old and New Testaments' (Murdoch, 1881:38-39). In addition to these allusions, there were filthy stories and indecent reference to women in the school texts. Some of the parables such as *Panchatantra*, according to him, promoted lying, deceit and dishonesty, while some of the lessons promoted pantheism and fatalism. Further, showing how certain allusion to Christianity in the English poetry was purged on the grounds of 'neutrality', in the Tamil minor poets anthology classics in Tamil that advocated idol worship and promoted fatalism. Irrate at the 'purge of Christianity from the school textbooks' Murdoch published a pamphlet 'On the idolatrous and immoral teaching of some Government and University text books' (Murdoch, 1872b), which was mainly targeted at the Madras Government textbooks.

In the first part of the pamphlet he made a case that 'while all Christian allusion is purged idolatry has been retained' in the Madras textbooks. In the second part he laboured that in some of the texts in the compendium of morals published by the Madras Educational Department, 'lying is taught to be lawful under certain circumstances' and that there is a 'whole chapter of a Government school book grossly indecent'. For example, *Nitineri Villakkam*, a Tamil classic, has a poem that implies 'Without interruption to business; without ruining learning; without preventing charity; and without depriving us of youthful vigour; the enjoyment of the charms of those whose waist is as tender and narrow as the beautiful young stem of a flower, may

be considered good.’ The very idea of seeking earthly pleasure was seen as sinful and the poem was condemned as immoral. The pamphlet alleged that one of the stories in the anthology of stories, *Kathamajeri*, preached ‘successful trickery, spiced with indecency’ and Dr Murdoch observes that it is ‘most disgraceful that the British Government should print books and teach them in its schools, showing how to overcome by deceit.’ According to him, the main ‘aim was to get inculcations of idolatry struck out of school books published by the Director. The argument was as follows: If Christian allusions were excluded from English poetry published by the department ‘perfect religious neutrality’ demanded that reference to Hinduism should be similarly eliminated from Tamil poetry printed under exactly the same circumstances’.

It was in this background that the Government of Madras constituted a committee to review the English, Tamil and Telugu textbooks used in Madras Presidency (Report of the committee, 1875). The committee scrutinised the textbooks in use in Madras Presidency and found many instances of Christian allusion. These were carefully weeded out of the textbooks.

For example, in the *Manual of Geography*, produced by the Christian Vernacular Education society the committee found ‘full of allusions — we may almost say offensive allusion — to Christianity.’ For instance on page 9 of the book it said that ‘Christianity is the only true religion; Mohammedanism, Buddhism and Hinduism are the principal form of religious error’ and further at page 103 the pupil were told that ‘the people of India ought to embrace Christianity themselves and endeavour to spread it among others’. The Morris’ *History of India*, a popular history textbook, the committee found was not history of India but just ‘mainly a history of British conquest of India and is full of animated descriptions of battles and siege’ (Morris, 1906). Further, the committee took objection to the passage in the textbook (Hindus)’most common failings are timidity, untruthfulness, indolence and litigiousness — they do not however appear to live according to any fixed standard of goodness — to act in a word from principle’. Taking objection to the lessons on ‘the soul, heaven, and hell,’ and for ‘expounding the Biblical doctrine about spirit’, in the *First Book of Lessons*

the committee argued that they be expunged. Further, it also stated that ‘the lessons on Astronomy seem suitable enough, except that it is not correct to attribute the popular superstition about eclipses to Hindu astronomical science.’

Murdoch had harped on the Tamil classics and its propensity to provide titillating description of women or close link with pantheism. Other Committee members did not concur with him. They recorded that ‘any meddling with Tamil classical authors, simply because they contain, in common with every classical literature in the world, passages descriptive of female beauty or passing allusions to predestination, to transmigration or mythology and religion’ would be ludicrous’. In conclusion, the committee observed that ‘for every allusion in Government school books to the deities and doctrines of Hinduism, there are probably ten allusions to the history and tenets of Christianity, and that, if there are some incidental references to idolatry in some of the textbooks, there are also most violent denunciations of it in others’. Writing a dissenting note to the Committee, Murdoch wrote ‘the report shows that the ‘battle of the Books’ has been attended with frightful slaughter. Most of the combatants have been left dead upon the field; the survivors, with few exceptions have been so ‘mutilated’ as to be scarcely recognizable.’

The battle of books had one effect; the *laissez-faire* attitude of the government towards the school textbooks came to an end. The Government decided that (Report of the Committee, 1877:14) ‘a Standing Committee of reference be appointed in each province to choose or, if necessary, prepare appropriate vernacular textbooks. The Committee so constituted should draw up a list of suitable books divided into two classes — the first class comprising those books that may be used in Government and aided schools, the second comprising those books that may be used in aided schools only. No book not included in one or other of these lists, unless it be a book such as the Bible or the Koran, used in purely denominational schools for purposes of religious instruction, should be read in any school supported or subsidised by Government.’ After this even whatever little space the missionary textbooks had in the educational area came to an end in the grant-receiving institutions. Further, it was decided

Nālaṭiyār is a classical literature dated to Sangam period in Tamil literary history (~100CE) which employs similes and every day examples to teach the moral codes.

that ‘every series of vernacular readers for primary instruction should contain lessons on the following subjects: Reverence for god, parents, teachers, rulers, and the aged; A simple sketch of the duties of a good citizen, and universally admitted principles of morality and prudence; Cleanliness of habits, politeness of speech, kindness of conduct to other human beings and the brute creation; Dignity and usefulness of labour, and the importance of agriculture, commerce, the various trades, professions and handicrafts; The advantages of bodily exercise’ etc. (Report of the Committee, 1877:14). The morals were secularised and no longer tied down to religion.

The native elites too joined the battle of books and advocated inclusion of Tamil classical texts such as *Kural* and *Naaladiyar*²². These traditional classical poetry certainly contained cultural codes of the Jains who had composed it; but were devoid of any direct reference to Hindu or Jain gods. This was a surprise to the missionaries who had assumed moral and ethical codes have to have reference to God. On the other hand, they could not raise much objection to these texts as they could point no ‘vile’ or ‘decadent’ concepts. Thus, when the pruning of religious allusions in the government textbooks was undertaken by the late nineteenth century, the Christian allusions were the most hit.

Further, the native elites vehemently differed with the prognosis of the missionaries. In a memorial submitted to the Madras government, the Madras Graduates Association stated ‘... The council begs respectfully to dissent from the view of the government of India that ‘the general extension in India of education has in some measure resulted in the growth or tendencies unfavourable to discipline’. The charge of irreverence too cannot in the opinion of the council be laid at the doors of the present or the rising generations in the presidency. It is a fact well known and admitted by all who are entitled to speak with authority on the subject that the tone of morality among government servants has improved considerations within the past

ten years on a condition of the admission of a larger number or educated natives in the public service. It is also clear that increasing interest is being taken by educated natives in questions of social and religious reform and that growing reverence is shown in the ancient institutions' (Papers Relating to Discipline, 1890).

The high-pitched criticism of falling standards of morals of the natives educated in 'godless' government schools had to be met. Commenting upon the secular education in the Government schools, an eminent missionary said, 'The government are nourishing vipers in their bosom, ...and *if they should one day be stung by the them*, they must not be surprised' (Morrison, 1859:16). The rising nationalist fervour was ascribed to 'godless' education in the government schools and colleges. Relentlessly battered, the government had to head to the vocal and influential missionary lobby. Its policy of religious neutrality in government schools prohibited it from embracing the missionary idea of teaching Christian values and ethics. Nor was it willing to give the whole space of education to missionaries. It is in this background a corrective was proposed in the Hunter Commission of 1883. It took the form of advocating the introduction of special 'moral textbooks' and exhorting the teachers to exercise a moral influence over their students.

The Hunter Commission observed 'against the strict principle of excluding religious instruction from the school-course, various objections were raised and discussed in the Commission. It was urged that in some parts of India no difficulty would arise, because the Government school is attended by children all of whom belong to one religious sect; that part of the policy of transferring the management of primary schools to local committees was to permit of wider and readier adaptation to local wants, which might possibly include a desire for religious teaching; and that, finally these boards might be trusted not to do violence to religious prejudices or local feelings, or at least that the reservation of a right of appeal from a dissenting minority would secure justice to all' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:129). The commission did not see this argument favourably, and noted that 'majority of us considered that religious feeling was so inflammable in India,

and sectarianism so prevalent, that it was not safe to depart from a policy which had worked well in the past' and resolved that 'Government institutions were founded for the benefit of the whole population of India, and that it was therefore indispensable that the education conveyed in them should be exclusively secular.' While 'the value of religious education was admitted on all sides' the Commission 'hoped that home-instruction and the increase of aided schools in which religious instruction may be freely given, would to a large extent minimise the recognised evil of banishing religion from government primary schools.' The end result of the 'battle of books' were not victors and vanquished, but a change in perception about religion and social life; henceforth religion was not seen as an essential constituent of politics, economics, language, literature and the sciences (and to an extent morality) and these subjects were 'secularized' in the educational domain.

From hostility to sympathy

There appears to be a close link between the widespread growth of secularism in the second half of the nineteenth century and the often hostile attitudes of many government education officials in India towards the missions. Many school inspectors, even of European origin, who in many cases were 'either agnostics or 'Broad Churchman' became hostile or at the best aggressive towards Missionaries' (Whitehead, 2004). Duncan, principal of the Presidency College Madras said 'an opinion is abroad that facilities for moral training exist in aided, and especially in Mission, schools which do not exist in Government schools....To the epithet 'godless,' so freely and indiscriminately applied to Government institutions, many people add as a necessary corollary the epithet 'immoral.' ... pure and undefiled religion is in a healthier condition in the former than in the latter' (Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, 1884:41). H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction of Madras Presidency wrote, 'I hold that compulsorily teaching a religion in the greater number of public colleges is a great drawback' and that, 'to introduce a young man to submit to dogmatic instruction in a religion which he does not believe, through his desire to receive instruction in other branches of knowledge taught in the institution... must be

demoralizing and ... is the chief reason why mission colleges have hitherto had probably little, if any, effect on the moral regeneration of the people than institutions worked on purely secular lines' (Papers Relating to Discipline, 1890).

The religious neutrality principle was used at times very stringently. Mr Howard, Director of Public Instruction, Bombay, for example went to the extent of prohibiting examination of scripture lessons even in Mission schools run for Christian students if they received Grant-in-Aid. He undertook to compile a series of textbooks from which every Christian allusion had been deliberately 'weeded-out' (Bourdillon, 1859). 'Connection with the government educational department', Murdoch realised, 'will have necessarily a strong secularising tendency' (Murdoch, 1870:448). The extent to which secular trend had penetrated even in mission school was a total surprise to him. When a mission college was asked by him if the 'evidences of Christianity formed one of the subjects of the study' he was replied 'No, we have no time for it.' He rued 'Formerly the bible was generally taught an hour a day. In some cases the time was reduced to half an hour, or religious instruction was given only twice or thrice a week, or even less frequently.' Religious lessons were seeing their way out even from the Mission schools.

While there may have been eclecticism in the early part of the nineteenth century regarding the textbooks used in schools, the Resolution of 1900 on textbooks put the matter to rest. In the early part, while the Government was careful to chose the textbooks used in Government schools, it did not exercise direct control over the textbooks used in the aided schools or mission (and other denominational) private schools. With the promulgation of the Grant-in-Aid code, there was a subtle pressure on the schools to use the government books, as passing and attaining 'good marks' in the exams became an important factor. However, still many aided and private schools used textbooks of their choice.

The textbook review committee formed in 1873 examined the textbooks from the point of view of excluding all allusion to religion. Thus, not just alleged Hindu or Islamic percepts, every allusion to Christianity was examined with critical eye. Review

of the textbooks from then on became a periodic affair. During 1880, once again the textbooks were 'reviewed' for content and suitability for Indian schools. Once again the motive was the alleged lack of morals in the Government education averred by the missionaries. The Madras government undertook review of textbooks in February 1881 [GO (ed) 3rd Feb 33 (17) 1881]. The MSB & VLS, headed by Krishnamachariyar submitted a letter to this committee putting forth their view [GO (Edn) 1st June 1-4 (219) 1881]. The Government textbooks examined by the Education Commission of 1882 came out unscathed, while the ones in use in mission schools came under heavy disapproval. The Commission said 'of the books in use in Government schools no great or general complaint', but the school books used in the mission schools, the commission observed' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:342) were too difficult both in matter and in language, that they were distasteful to certain sections of the community, too European in their character, and sometimes not impartial in regard to religious questions'.

On the vexed question of textbooks in use in Government, the Hunter Commission opted for stronger government control. The textbook committees were recommended and that these committees '(1)...include qualified persons of different sections of the community not connected with the Department, and that these committees should be submitted all textbooks, both English and Vernacular, that it is proposed to introduce into schools, and all textbooks now in use that may seem to need revision; and (2) that the textbook Committees of the several Provinces act as far as possible in concert; and that they communicate to each other lists of English textbooks, and (in the case of those Provinces which have any common language) of vernacular textbooks, which are satisfactory, and lists of books which they consider to be wanting or inadequate' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:347).

The committee was to have majority members who were experts. Thus, many educated natives and some missionaries were part of the textbook committees and the selection of the textbooks was a contested terrain. The resolution passed by the Government of India in February 1900 made it mandatory that only the approved textbooks could be used for scheme of studies

in both Government and aided schools (Home Department Resolution no 64-74, dated 8th February 1900). Henceforth textbooks used in all Indian schools were to be prescribed by the Local Governments on the advice of provincial textbook committees.

The Colonial government was embarrassed when Mr Pugh, the lawyer representing the nationalist Tilak, in a sedition case, during 1897 argued in the Court that the very same sentiments that were construed as sedition by the Colonial Government were expressed in specifically three vernacular textbooks freely available in the Bombay Presidency. The government woke up and stepped up systems to scrutinise the textbooks used in various schools. The Government of India opined that 'that many of vernacular books patronised (in indigenous schools) contained lessons capable of being seen as apology for disloyalty' and further suggested that 'it is possible that the counsel for the defence of Tilak may have overstated the facts for the benefit of his client; and however that may be, the matter may be adequately dealt with by a school books committee. The occasion may also be opportune for a wider enquiry, whether the selection of books on which the students of your schools and colleges are trained is judicious' (Philips, 1962:129) and the despatch argued for careful scrutiny of textbooks on history and politics with more care and vigilance. The Education Commission of 1882 too laid strict guidelines and stipulated that 'no book not included in one or other of these lists, unless it be a book such as the Bible or the Koran, used in purely denominational schools for purposes of religious instruction, should be read in any school supported or subsidised by the Government' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:339).

To assuage the feelings of missionaries and colonialists who viewed the rising nationalist protests across the country during the last two decades of the nineteenth century as 'indiscipline', 'disloyalty', 'lack of respect for elders/authority' and 'moral decadence', the Education Commission recommended that 'an attempt (must be) made to prepare moral textbook based upon the fundamental principles of natural religion such as may be taught in all Government and non-government colleges' (Indian Education Commission Report, 1883:30). Following this the

Government seriously contemplated to prepare such a moral textbook. Moral textbooks contained chapters on duties to God, parents and elevating stories drawn from Indian sources and biographies of great men. However, Lord Rippon's Government rejected the idea chiefly because a moral textbook that would be acceptable to people belonging to different faiths in India seemed an impossibility. Curzon tersely observed, 'It was *of* no use to adopt a general primer *of* ethics, as had been suggested, for the pupils would *cram* the ethics as they now *cram Euclid*' (The Spectator, 1902:302). The idea surfaced periodically but was always for one reason or another shelved.

Not all were willing to link Christianity with morals, whatever be their view on alleged growing indiscipline and moral decadence of educated Indian youths. As we saw earlier the native elites excavated classical literature from Tamil antiquity which could be used as moral texts. Even many European officials were not convinced of the twining of Christianity and morality. Dr D. Duncan, Principal, Presidency College Madras, in his submission to the Director of Public Instruction, Madras on the question of teaching religion in government educational institutions opined that 'To say that because a teacher does not instruct his pupils in Chemistry, he is at a disadvantage in instructing them in mathematics would be as near the truth as to say that because he does not inculcate some theological creed, he is at a disadvantage in training them in right conduct' (Papers Relating to Discipline, 1890:39) and contended that 'though religion implies a body of dogmas and morality a code of rules, we must not attempt to refer the rules of the moral code to the dogmas of the religious creed as their foundation. Even where it is in harmony with the moral rule, the theological dogma is not the ground of the rule, but merely the religious expression of it' (Papers Relating to Discipline, 1890:38). The Madras Graduate Association in its memorial emphatically asserted that it begs 'respectfully to dissent from the view of the Government of India that 'the general extension in India of education has in some measure resulted in the growth of tendencies unfavourable to discipline and favourable to irreverence in the rising generation' (Papers Relating to Discipline, 1890:69)'.

Kenneth Ballhatchet referring to Christian missionary writings mainly on Hinduism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries argues that two attitudes towards non-Christian religions can be distinguished in India; one of hostility and one of sympathy (Ballhatchet, 1961). The former he contends is predominant during the greater part of the nineteenth century; the latter thereafter. As more and more missionaries emerged with the Indian experience there was a change of perception resulting in the sympathetic attitude of late nineteenth century. The certainty of Christianity was eroded with the emergence of Darwinian science and its spirited defence by scientists like T.H. Huxley. In this new environment it was not easy to assume that the Bible was absolutely trustworthy in all it says.

As more and more Europeans lived with people in Asia, Africa and other places, the extensive contacts with impressive cultures of the 'native' civilizations made the prejudices about non-Europeans as savages became not easy to sustain. During the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century, the number of missionaries in India was less and they were there for a short visit. However as more and more missionaries began to stay put in India for longer durations, more extensive interaction with natives resulted. Old prejudices gave way to a certain respect and understanding of the 'native' cultures. Missions including protestants became more open minded about the 'native' cultures.

All these had an impact on the Christian theological percepts. F.D. Maurice in *The Religions of the World and Their Relations to Christianity* (1847) argued for the presence of God among other religions be they Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam. John Farquhar, a missionary who had a long stint in India, in his influential book *The Crown of Hinduism 1913* contended that Hinduism was not so much wrong as it was not yet fulfilled. He opined that '...it could not be doubted that of all people, the Hindus had 'approached nearer the true idea than any other people unblemished with the light of Revelation' though they have lapsed into a system of 'degraded polytheism and idolatry'.

The emerging theology of 'fulfilment' saw in the non-Christian religion a natural religious desires of human kind. In

this perspective the old creed of the missions 'Extra ecclesiam nulla salus: no salvation outside the church' was replaced by a more inclusive and tolerant attitude to native religions. Since Christianity is considered to be the highest religion, other religion's search for truth and salvation can find fulfilment in Christ and Christian religion, but in this paradigm Christ were to be seen as active (albeit in a hidden way) even within other religions such as Hinduism. Hence, Hinduism is not merely a human quest, but contains however imperfectly a response prompted by God. God's saving presence is everywhere active, as the God's plan is progressively realized in history before all things are unified and fulfilled in Him and the Church is certainly not the only form or instrument of this fulfilment (Oddie, 2003), other religions are not to be detested and abhorred but goaded to reform and evolve.

Thus, the missionaries constructed a dichotomy between natural as against revealed religion (Christianity). While the natural religion contained aspects of the innate and natural religious desires of humankind, it is deficient in the sense of not being fulfilled. However, Christianity, being a revealed religion, was not only then the best and true religion but also the best guide as to what religion itself was all about. This dichotomy of 'natural' and 'revealed' enabled the missionaries to simultaneously appreciate aspects of Hinduism and Islam and at the same time quarantine those aspects of Indian religious practices and percepts which they disliked and demonised as attributes of 'the Hindu system'.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was greater recognition that aspects of religious life and thought previously associated with natural religion were part and parcel of Hinduism (Chatterjee, 1994). Education, in particular textbooks, became one important arena that helped shape this 'positive fellowship' of religions moving away from the 'negative hostility'. In due course, proselytising Christianity, as a distinguishing characteristic of mission school, became untenable, the discourse changed into comparative religion.

Murdoch was also affected by the rising tide of the new turn in the Missionary perception on India and native religions. Christianity was condescendingly read into Hinduism and

connections between the two were imagined (Hayden, 2007). Arguing that the Queen's proclamation, nothing shall be taught which will give reasonable ground of offence to Christian, Muhammadan or Hindu, should be the guiding principle and not promotion of irreligion, the real meaning of 'neutrality' policy of the government, Murdoch advocates teaching of 'great truths of natural religion'. Approvingly quoting the German scholar Max Mueller, that the 'fatherhood of God' was held by the old Aryans, he advocated adopting the policy of 'inculcation of the hesitance of a Supreme Being who reveals his power and goodness in the works of creation' as a guiding principle in designing moral lessons in school textbooks. Thus, the religious principles that he wanted to be included in the Government schools were 'God's omnipresence, a future state of existence, God's providence and the duty of adoration'.

Quoting a native colonial official of repute, Sir Madhava Rao, who served as Diwan of Travancore, in his book *Principles of Morality* that the 'law of God is the standard by which the judgments of moral faculty are guided' (Murdoch, 1881:79), Murdoch argued that a common ground between Hindus, Muslims and Christians could be found. The idea of a God's wisdom and goodness was to be communicated to the children by way of illustrating Camel and how it is provided for surviving in the hot desert (Madras series, Fourth reader, p. 7). As an exemplar ideal textbook, he cites approvingly the Third reader of the Madras Presidency where in one lesson it is stated that 'God grant a long life to Sultan Mahmud', while another quotes proverbs from Christian Scriptures and uses illustrations from Mahabharata. The book also has some texts from the New Testament. Further he said that the Madras Tamil Series, First reader's lesson on 'What children are pleasing to God?' which went on to say 'God created us. He alone is our Father. He loves every being...' as an example of teaching the Fatherhood of God'. For him 'there (was) still a great gulf between the above teaching and what he considers necessary. The synthetic and non-denominational view of religion as above for him does not show 'how god can be 'just' when He forgives us our sins. Nor is the gracious invitation given 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden' and 'I will give you rest'.

The 'fulfilment' theory that gained ground during the later nineteenth century did not see hostility with Hinduism. In this new context Murdoch explored the meaning of 'secular education'. He opined that 'In Government institutions the instruction is and must continue to be exclusively secular' (Murdoch, 1999). The question then hinges on the meaning of 'secular'. It was clear that secular demands that the distinctive doctrines of any religion are not to be taught exclusively. On the other hand, 'fundamental principles of natural religion' are acceptable to all and hence Government without violating its principle of religious neutrality could advocate it. Murdoch by 1890 is reconciled to abandoning the call for including Scriptures and other Christian religious texts in the school curriculum and accepting teaching of 'fundamental principles of natural religion' which include among others concepts like existence of God, great good and wise; that we should love and obey him; that it is His wish that we should be just and kind to one another; and that the more like Him we are the happier we shall be, and the less like Him the more unhappy.' He declared that the 'point may be regarded as settled' (Papers Relating to Discipline, 1890:68).

In fact, not just Christian missions but even the Hindu philosopher (and politician) Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan argued in similar vein that 'different religions (are) not as incompatible, but (are) complementaries and (are) indispensable to each other for realization of the common end' (Radhakrishnan, 1954). Further he says, 'Hinduism recognizes that each religion is inextricably bound up with its culture and can grow organically. While it is aware that all religions have not attained the same level of truth and goodness, it insists that they all have a right to express themselves. Religions reform themselves by interpretations and adjustments to one another. The Hindu attitude is one of positive fellowship not negative tolerance' (Radhakrishnan, 1959:335).

Parna Sengupta, in her brilliant work *Pedagogy for Religion* (Sengupta, 2011) presents a fresh approach to the study of religion and empire, challenging that usual assumption that modernity (the Western rule) has had a secularizing effect in India. She shows that the school and textbooks were domains in

which the ideas of everyday definitions of what it meant to be a Christian, Hindu, or Muslim were being constructed. If the position of 'neutrality' was just a policy of prudence and born out of fear, the battle of books negotiated a different meaning for 'neutrality', to one that positioned the Government equidistant from all relations, privileging or proscribing none. It is pertinent to note that when the native elites commenced writing textbooks in the colonial context, they used this rhetoric of equidistant rather than separation of State and the religions.

Conclusions

In a naïve rendering of secularism, it is seen as mere separation of the Church and the State. Presented in this fashion, secularisation is seen as a peculiar process particular to history of the western civilisation. If this is the case then secularism is an exclusively western idea and, hence, in all other cultures its place is questionable. If secularism is seen as a struggle to make the state relatively independent of deeply conflicting religious groups, then it becomes crucial for a multi-religious state like India. In this sense, secularism is an integral part of a minimally decent society.

Further, separation of state and the religion need not necessarily imply 'exclusion' (of religion altogether). The separation could also imply distance or boundaries (and not total exclusion). In fact, the relation between religion and politics requires neither fusion nor complete disengagement but what can be called principled distance. This would require that the world of worship and congregation, of prayer and conscience must not be intruded upon by the State. Likewise, religious percepts cannot be authorised by the State and imposed on the citizens. In this perception, a secular state would indeed intervene in matters of religion such as making polygamy illegal, introducing the right to divorce, abolishing child marriage, legally recognizing caste marriages, regulating the activities of criminals masquerading as holy men, introducing temple entry rights for dalits and reforming temple administration. Intent and outcome of such interventions are to protect the ordinary but dignified life of its citizens and not an agenda of religious persecution of one sect by another powerful sect. Hence, mere

instances of State intervening in matters of religion and ritual does not make it un-secular.

Missionaries and natives sought actively introduction of science teaching in the scheme of studies. While for missionaries the enthusiasm for science may have been in the naive belief that truths of science will show the follies of Hindu religion, for the natives it was their desire for economic progress. Whatever be the motivation, in the ultimate analysis, 'instruction in science also became a means to instruct the Indian child, whether Christian, Hindu or Muslim about the primacy of reason and rationality over superstition' (Sengupta, 2011:2). The debates on the allusions to this or that religion, place of religion in the scheme of studies, its relation with morals or absence of it taught the Indians what it meant to be a modern religious subject that combined their explicit religious beliefs with a set of implicit secular social normative practices. As modern schools were not segregated along caste or religions lines in the Madras Presidency, and had pupils from diverse backgrounds, the trials and tribulations of placing religion in such a multi-religious context was educative equally to the natives, missionaries and the State. Schools and textbooks became fertile grounds to explore the unresolved questions about the place of religion within the world of modern politics and how to articulate what it meant to be a modern religious subject.

The initial encounter of the Missionaries with Indian classical literature and dominant social groups led them to construct a concept of Hinduism as 'pagan or heathen settled into the dominant paradigm of Hinduism as a unitary, brahman-controlled `system`, ridden with idolatry, ritualism, superstition and sexual licence' (Oddie, 1994). However, as the missionaries were rooted in the Indian social milieu, the increasing acquaintance with Hinduism not only prompted a more sympathetic approach, but also a revision of the unitary model. Some even spoke of 'the many Hindu religions' (Oddie, 2003:81). On the other hand, the dominant social groups, such as Brahmins, took to the idea of being Hindu and of Hinduism as one system had taken hold as an antidote to the sectarian wars of the pre-modern India (such as between left hand and right hand caste; *Saiva* and *Vaishanava*, etc. in South India).

If we construct the meaning of secularism not essentially as a separation of religion from state, but as how the state will treat all religions evenly and keep them equidistant, then 'religion' making by the colonial educational space is not a surprise, but to be anticipated as part of the secularizing project. Obviously, educational reform, whether in the hands of missionaries or local Hindu groups, would provide an impetus for the creation of new religious strategies and identities in the Colonial society. The question then was, were these new identities hostile or sympathetic to one another. At least in the Madras Presidency one can say the dominant trend was one of sympathy rather than violent hostility.

During the complex course of history, the 'neutrality' principle initially seen as mere political prudence of the Company Raj, emerged into genuine religious tolerance, plurality and, to a degree, secularism by the end of the nineteenth century. The dialogues and negotiations between missionaries and educated natives on the objective and goals of education resulted in much more richer and religiously-plural humanistic moralities. This also engendered a tradition of theism and religiously-popular pluralism in the society. Thus, when a political party that avowed 'agnosticism' and 'self-respect' came to power in Tamilnadu during the 1960s, C.N. Annadurai the Chief Minister declared 'One Humanity (race/caste), One God' as their creed.

The native society in south India has been evolving this secular discourse from the time of the middle ages for 'morals' and 'conduct' in civil life. It is pertinent to note here that the native elites turned to 'this-worldly' (*laukika*) or 'secular' *niti* texts when they had to compose 'moral' textbooks during the early nineteenth century and not to *dharmashastra* — oriented vision of social ordering and political imagination. These *niti* texts were essentially guides to practical wisdom and strategies of success largely unconcerned with religion. Indeed when the *Panchatantra*, the book of statecraft, taught by means of animal fables was projected as a 'Book of Morals', the missionaries were bewildered by the absence of religion. They found fault with it, to the puzzlement of the natives. Perhaps, the study of the history of the struggle between the *niti* conceptions and the

dharma conception of political and social arrangements in 'pre-colonial India might shed light on the deeper roots and more profound purchase that 'Indian secularism' has, than that of a mere transplant from distant climes' (Rao and Subrahmanyam, 2009).

Thus, the evolution of Indian secularism is not, as T.N. Madan and others would have us believe, a culturally specific gift of Christianity with no great relevance to India. In this sense of principled distance between all religions and non-believers, modern secularism arose because the resources of tolerance within traditional religions had exhausted their possibilities.

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