

Learning to Dream: Education, Aspiration, and Working Lives in Colonial India

(1880s-1940s)

Thesis

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Thesis Summary

This thesis studies the relationship of the labouring poor with education and schooling in colonial India (1880s-1940s). It places this relationship in a complicated web of desires, intentions, and aspirations held by workers and their employers. Those who performed labour (artisans, agrarian labourers, factory-workers) and those who extracted labour (elites including factory employers, feudal elites, and colonial officials) had different expectations from the education system. The thesis centrally explores workers' dreams of not wanting to be workers and not behaving as "workers" (the prescribed and expected identity of the labouring castes). I argue that these desires and dreams unfolded, became concrete, and were realized at the site of education, and took the form of aspirations for a non-labouring career. The educational site, however, due to its control by elites, was designed to retain workers as manual labour, while training, disciplining, and educating them to serve under various old and new regimes of labour (railway workshops, factories, missionary industries, artisanal workshops, agrarian farms). I have explored the successes, failures, and transformations of these contradictory desires and visions of workers and of elites, and have shown that various actors such as teachers, elite workers, female workers, the middle classes, and colonial officials often mediated and restructured these desires and visions at various levels.

Childhood and the night, I argue, becomes the specific moments of working lives through which ideas and elements of these contradictory desires and visions were concretized. They become a site of contestation, with workers asserting their control over these times in order to realise their aspirations, and elites seeking to control these moments with the intention of producing a certain type of worker subjectivity that fit well with the logics of commodity production and labour extraction. Chapter 1 discusses the multiple desires and aspirations of Lucknow artisans, changes in their notions of childhood and night, and their relationship with the Lucknow Industrial School which sought to produce a trained and disciplined labour force

for railway workshops and other modern industries. Chapter 2 narrates the experiences of Dalit agrarian labourers' demand for education from missionaries, and their struggles to move out of a certain type of labouring regime. It also discusses the politics of Christian missionaries, Arya Samajis, and the Harijan Sevak Sangh, who all sought to keep "untouchables" tied to a labouring life. Chapter 3 describes the changing notions of childhood among factory workers and employers with regard to worker-children. I explore the histories of factory schools and workers' demand for education as their "political right". Chapter 4 unfolds the moment of the night as a site for workers to subvert the normative image of the worker. I study their attendance at night schools, night-time reading rooms and libraries, and their employers' struggles to colonise workers' nights and other leisure time.

The thesis hopes to contribute to the history of labour, education, childhood, life-cycle, caste and class, Christian missions, poverty, leisure, and the reproduction of capitalist and conservative socio-economic order. It also opens up the field of proletarian childhood, working class literary culture, and the night as topics of research in the South Asian history.

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Glossary

Ad-Dharmi:	An anti-caste social and religious movement of Dalits in Punjab; now a Dalit scheduled caste
Ahirs:	A peasant caste traditionally associated with cow-herding and agriculture
Baids:	The caste of medical practitioners
Banias:	The caste of shopkeepers and merchants
Barahis:	The caste of carpenters
Baqidar:	Debtor
Banyan:	A loose flannel undergarment worn in India
Begar:	Forced labour
Bhajan:	Religious hymns
Bhats:	A sub-caste of Brahmans
Brahmans:	The highest caste in the Hindu social hierarchy (Varna Ahsrama Dharma)
Chamar:	An “untouchable” caste, traditionally associated with leather works
Chandala:	The lowest “untouchable” caste, traditionally indulged in the disposal of corpses
Chawl:	One-room working class house settlements
Chikan:	Embroidery work
Chhipis:	Calico-printers
Dalit:	A term used to refer “untouchable castes”
Dhanaks:	A scheduled caste
Dhimars:	A sub-caste of boatmens

Dhobi:	The caste of washer wo/men
Fakir:	A wandering ascetic
Gota weaving:	Embroidery of gold/silver lace
Hatas:	Working class settlements (Kanpur)
Kachis:	A backward caste, traditionally associated with selling vegetables
Kahars:	A backward caste, traditionally associated with carrying water
Kaithi:	A script of merchants, traders, money-lenders, and cultivators
Kaliyuga:	Fourth and the last stage of the world according to Hindu cosmology
Kamdani:	An embroidery art
Karkhanadar:	Workshop-owner/master-artisan
Kayasths:	The caste of scribes
Khatris:	An upper caste
Kori:	The caste of weavers
Kshatriya:	An upper caste, traditionally considered to be the warrior class
Lal Begis:	A scheduled caste; An anti-caste social and religious movement of sweepers and scavengers
Lodhs:	A peasant caste
Lohars:	The caste of blacksmiths
Mahajan:	The caste of money lenders
Mali:	The caste of gardeners
Mallahs:	The caste of boatmen and fishers
Mohallas:	Neighbourhoods
Muharrirs:	Clerks
Mukhtars:	Headman/ village headman
Muqadams:	Village headman

Nat:	The caste of acrobats
Pandit:	A sub-caste of Brahmans/ an upper caste
Rajputs:	An upper caste, traditionally the caste of warriors
Sharif:	Gentleman
Sonar:	The caste of goldsmiths
Tamboli:	The caste of betel leaf sellers
Teli:	The caste of oil-pressers/sellers
Tolas:	Wards
Topi:	Cap
Vakil:	Lawyers
Zardozi:	Embroidery
Zila:	District
Zamindar:	Landlord/landed elite

List of Abbreviations

BEM:	Basel Evangelical Mission
BL:	British Library
BMHG:	Basel Mission Handlungs Gesellschaft
CMS:	Church Missionary Society
CQP:	Cawnpore Quarterly Paper
EDP:	Education Department Proceedings
EWSDS:	Annual Report on the Educational Work of the All India Shradhanand Dalitodhar Sabha
FC:	Factory Commission
GIPE:	Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics
HSC:	Harijan Survey Committee

HSS:	Harijan Sevak Sangh
ITJ:	Indian Textile Journal
IOR:	India Office Records
KHU:	Kamgar Hitwardhak Union
RFDIC:	Report of the Fourth Decennial Indian Missionary Conference
SPG:	Society for the Propagation of Gospels
MCC:	Meerut Conspiracy Case
MEC:	American Methodist Episcopal Church
NAI:	National Archives of India
NWP:	North Western Provinces
NWPO:	North Western Provinces and Oudh
PWD:	Public Works Department
RISC:	Report of the Industrial Schools Committee
RPI:	Reports of the Public Instruction
RTIE:	Report on Technical and Industrial Education in the United Provinces
SPGFP:	Annual Report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
SSL:	Social Service League
SVN:	Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers
SSQ:	Social Service Quarterly
TDMC:	Report of the Third Decennial Missionary Conference
TOI:	The Times of India
UPAO:	United Provinces of Agra and Oudh
VNR:	Vernacular Newspaper Reports
WCNs:	Working class neighbourhoods

WPP:	Worker's and Peasant's Party
YMCA:	Young Men's Christian Association
YOM-MEC:	Yearbook and Official Minutes of the North-West India Conference

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Zusammenfassung

Der Selbstmord der Dalit Studenten, die aus der Arbeiterklasse stammen und an den Hochschulen Indiens studieren, zwingt uns, die Beziehung zwischen den Arbeiterkasten und Bildung zu überdenken.¹ Einerseits erzählen ihre Lebensgeschichten Erlebnisse von dem Wunsch nach und dem Kampf für Bildung, andererseits enträtselt ihr erzwungener Tod die Hohlheit des indischen Bildungssystems. Ihre Einbindung in Bildungseinrichtungen ist ohne finanziellen Hintergrund. Obwohl sie von einer Rechtsstruktur unterstützt werden, die den gleichberechtigten Zugang zur Bildung fördert, sind sie von Anfang an nicht für höhere Bildungsinstitute vorbereitet. Lernmöglichkeiten, die für Kindern der mittleren und der oberen sozialen Klassen Standard sind, werden ihnen seit ihrer Kindheit verweigert. Wenn die arbeitenden Kasten in das Schulsystem eintreten, kämpfen sie nicht für den gleichen Zugang, sondern für Chancen und Kenntnisse, die denen der Schüler der Oberklasse ähnlich sind. Diese pädagogische Krise wird ständig durch die zunehmende Privatisierung und Liberalisierung des Bildungssektors hervorgerufen. Diese produzieren ihre eigene Ungleichheit, indem die Mehrheit der privaten Grundschulbildung für die Kinder der reichen oberen Kasten und Mittelklasse ist, und die ineffizient geführten staatliche Schulen für die Armen und die unteren Kasten ist. Hier möchte ich anführen, dass es eine Vorgeschichte zu der jetzigen Situation gibt. In der Vergangenheit kämpften die Arbeiterkasten und -Klassen nicht nur für einen gleichberechtigten Zugang zur Bildung, sondern sie kämpften zunehmend darum, identische Chancen zu erhalten - ein Anspruch auf literarische, wissenschaftliche und hohe technische Kenntnisse. Diese Bemühungen sind irgendwie aus unserem nationalen Gedächtnis und den gelehrten Schriften gelöscht worden. Dieser Wunsch nach identischem Wissen und Bildung war eng mit ihren Träumen verbunden, etwas mehr zu sein als das, was ihre Väter waren. Diese These behauptet, dass die Weigerung der Arbeiter, manuelle Arbeit zu leisten und sich konventionell zu verhalten, eine starke stille Rebellion gegen den Status quo und die Ordnung der Kapitalisten war. Es war der Sturz des jahrhundertealten Unterdrückungssystems durch die

Arbeiterkasten, mit ihrer Forderung nach Wissen, dem Sprengen der Normen, und der Rebellion gegen das Klassen- und Kastensystem. Ihr stilles Aufgeben von Feldern und Werkzeugen stellte eine Bedrohung und ein Aufstand dar, die gebrochen werden mussten. Die oberen Kasten nutzten die Ängste der unteren Kasten und bedrohten sie, um eine gleichberechtigte und identische Ausbildung zu verweigern.

Der Wunsch der Arbeiter, kein Arbeiter zu sein, und der Wunsch der Arbeitgeber, bessere Arbeitskräfte zu haben und zu schulen, trafen sich im Bildungsbereich. Bildung war sowohl die Ursache als auch das Mittel für den Anspruch und die Eingrenzung der Arbeiterklasse. Die hier aufgedeckte Geschichte hat eine doppelte Perspektive: die Perspektive der Arbeiterklasse und die Perspektive der Kapitalisten und der Oberschicht. Der Kolonialstaat und die privaten Akteure wie die Fabrikbesitzer, die SSL, die Arya Samaj, die Theistischen Verbände, der Harijan Sevak Sangh, die YMCA und die christlichen Missionare brachten die Komplexität des Sozialen in ein Bildungssystem. Während sie oft den am meisten marginalisierten Gruppen der Arbeiterklasse Gelegenheiten boten, haben diese vielfältigen Akteure in der Regel die Ursache des Kapitals durch die Herstellung verschiedener Arten von Arbeitsorganisationen verteidigt.

In dieser Arbeit wird Bildung als Ort präsentiert, an dem nicht nur die bestehenden sozioökonomischen Konflikte (z.B. Klasse, Geschlecht, Kaste, Ethnizität, Religion und Arbeit), sondern auch neue sozioökonomische Konflikte (z. B. der Wunsch, kein Arbeiter zu sein, die Fähigkeit der Arbeiterklasse literarische Fähigkeiten zu erwerben, der Wunsch, nicht mehr den oberen Kasten untergeordnet zu werden, und die Infragestellung der vorhandenen Wissenshierarchien) ausgetragen wurden. Die Historisierung des Wunsches nach Bildung und ihr Einschluss in den Arbeitsregimen durch die Bildung hilft uns, die sozioökonomische Dynamik, die im späten 19. Jahrhundert entstand, und den Fortbestand der Macht über die Art

des Bildungssystems, die Karrierechancen der Arbeiterklasse, und der Begriff der sozioökonomischen Gerechtigkeit im postkolonialen Indien, zu verstehen.

Auf der einen Seite war Bildung zum ersten Mal ein mächtiges Mittel für die marginalisierten Gruppen, um die Identitäten, ökonomischen Zwangslagen und die Präsenz im soziokulturellen Raum neu zu gestalten. Der vielfältige Druck durch die Forderung der Arbeiterklasse nach Bildung, der Bedarf an ausgebildeten Arbeitern für neu gegründete Industrien, die liberale und Wohlfahrtsfassade des Kolonialstaates, die nationalistische Politik und die Umwandlung der sozialen Beziehungen (Christianisierung) machten es möglich, dass die bis dahin vernachlässigten und ausgeschlossen Arbeiterkasten ein Anteil an Bildung erhielten. Den bisher vernachlässigten, unterdrückten und ausgebeuteten Gemeinden wurden Bücher, Klassenräume und Lehrer großzügig zur Verfügung gestellt. Zum ersten Mal konnten Söhne von Chamar-Agrararbeitern und Töchter von Ölpressem die Schule besuchen. Unwissenheit und mangelnder Zugang zu Bildung, glaubten die Arbeiter, war eine der Ursachen ihrer Unterordnung und ihres unterdrückten Lebens. Der Zugang zur Bildung würde sie befreien. Die arbeitenden Eltern träumten von verschiedenen Karrieren für ihre gebildeten Kinder. Sie wollten, dass ihre Kinder das werden, was sie sich in der Vergangenheit nicht einmal vorstellen konnten, und was die Kinder des benachbarten Mittelstandes wurden—Lehrer, Ärzte, Krankenschwestern, Vorgesetzte, Polizisten, Briefträger usw.

Ich vermute, dass Modelle von Bestrebungen von historischen Faktoren und der Zeit abhängig waren. Sie hingen von dem Zugang zur Bildung, der Armut der Arbeiter, den Vorstellungen über Bildung in der Gemeinde, der Verfügbarkeit von Freizeit und der Notwendigkeit Lohn zu erhalten, ab. Es erscheint, dass bestimmte Arbeitsklassen mehr in Bildung investierten als andere. Keineswegs war der Wunsch nach Bildung demokratisch und linear. Neben den Handwerkern dominierten Eisenbahn- und Regierungswerkstattarbeitern die Bildungseinrichtungen. Neben den Mühlenarbeitern waren es Weber, Muqaddame und andere

bessere Schichten von Mühlenarbeitern, und unter den Dalits waren es die Chamars. Die Zirkularität der Bildung und der Wunsch, nicht ein Arbeiter zu sein, wurde oft aufgrund der Schulerfahrung oder der Armut gebrochen. Nicht jeder gebildete Arbeiter wurde mehr als ein Arbeiter, und nicht jeder ausgebildete Arbeiter wollte über den Arbeiterstatus hinausgehen.

Auf der anderen Seite war Bildung auch ein mächtiges Werkzeug geworden, um eine effiziente und geschulte Arbeiterklasse für kapitalistische Unternehmen zu schaffen. Wo immer den Arbeiterkasten Bildung gewährt wurde, wurde die Art von Bildung überwiegend als praktisch, technisch, mechanisch und industriell konzipiert, um sie zu produktiven Arbeitern zu machen und ihre hohen Bestrebungen zu kontrollieren. Bereiche, in denen es nicht praktikabel war oder die sogar eine schmale Leiter für einen Aufstieg boten, wurden allmählich umgestaltet, um den geplanten Karrieren der Arbeiter gerecht zu werden. Solche Bildungsmöglichkeiten der Arbeiterklasse waren global, da ihre Strukturen von Kapitalisten wie Missionaren, Fabrikbesitzern und Beamten, die globale Verbindungen hatten, erschaffen wurden. Es war kein Zufall, dass in den Arbeitsgruppen einige Arbeitnehmer mehr Aufmerksamkeit als andere in Bezug auf Bildung erhielten. Zum Beispiel gab es Bemühungen, Arbeiter von Eisenbahnwerkstätten, Mühlen, Druckmaschinen und Missionsunternehmen zu bilden und zu schulen. Die Masse der ungelerten Arbeitskräfte, die mit Fahrdiensten, häuslichem Dienst, in den Fabriken und anderen Industrien beschäftigt waren, wurde ausgelassen.

Ob es sich um den Kolonialstaat oder um Arbeitgeber und soziale Reformer, die die Bildung an die Armen verteilten, handelte, sie wurden alle von einer ökonomischen Logik getrieben, die weiterentwickelte, etablierte, fleißige, loyale und qualifizierte Arbeitskräfte schaffen sollte. Angespornt durch konservative Ideen, die Kasten in ihrer sozialen und ökonomischen Welt zu halten, basierten die im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert entwickelten Bildungsstrukturen auf einer Behauptung sozialer und wirtschaftlicher Ungleichheit. Indem sie den Arbeiterklassen eine

kontrollierte Bildung anboten, wurden nicht nur deren Wunsch nach Bildung in Dispositionen, die für Arbeitsförderung geeignet waren, gebracht, sondern auch die Bedingungen der kapitalistischen Produktion an der Stelle der Bildung selbst produziert.

Zwischen diesen beiden widersprüchlichen und entgegengesetzten Wünschen war der alltägliche Nutzen der Bildung für beide Parteien entscheidend. Die arbeitenden Klassen schätzten die Bildung nicht nur, weil sie das Arbeitsleben aufgeben wollten, sondern auch, weil sie merkten, dass Bildung in ihrem Leben nützlich war. Die Vorteile von Alphabetisierung und Bildung wurden sofort deutlich. Gebildet konnte der Wanderarbeiter Briefe lesen und schreiben, die „Papierwelt“ der Fabriken und Werkstätten navigieren, Urlaub beantragen, Flugblätter über Streiks lesen, und Lohnzettel und die Zinsen der Geldverleiher berechnen. Arbeiter nutzten Bildung, um heilige Texte zu lesen und zu verstehen. Der ehrgeizige Arbeiter nutzte seine Bildung, um in der Lohnhierarchie nach oben zu steigen. Einer der bedeutendsten alltäglichen Verwendungen von Bildung ist in der Arbeiterbewegung zu sehen, die die lesende Arbeiterklasse integrierte und auch eine neue Generation politisch bewusster Arbeiter (Kap. 3 & 4) förderte. Gebildete Jugendliche aus den Arbeiter-Kasten blieben oft in ihren Gemeinden, arbeiteten für deren Verbesserung, kämpften um deren Platz des Daseins und gaben ihre Bildung an andere Mitglieder ihrer Gemeinschaft weiter. Der Arbeiter-Flüchtling entkam den manuellen Arbeitsplätzen, ohne die Beziehungen zu seiner Gemeinde, den Menschen und dem Ort zu beenden (Kap. 2 & 4). Die Schulbehörden, der Kolonialstaat, die Missionare und die Fabrikbesitzer befanden auch industrielle und praktische Ausbildung für die Arbeiter als nützlich. Es half nicht nur, die unabhängigen Bestrebungen und Wünsche der Arbeiter zu kontrollieren, sondern auch ihre Fähigkeiten bei der Produktion von Waren einzusetzen. Gelehrte Fertigkeiten, geübte Gewohnheiten und Werte, die in diesen Schulen vermittelt wurden, halfen den Arbeitgebern, eine etablierte, disziplinierte und effiziente Arbeitskraft zu

erhalten. Außerdem machten die Waren, die mit Hilfe der Arbeit von Schülern produziert wurden, die Schulen nicht nur selbsttragend, sondern auch rentabel.

Die Kindheit und die Nacht der Arbeiterklassen sind sowohl analytische als auch methodische Werkzeuge meiner Forschung, wo Wünsche und Ängste der arbeitenden Armen und der Oberschicht ausgespielt wurden. Die Kontrolle über Kindheit und Nacht war absolut zentral für die Agenda beider Parteien. Diese Momente passten sehr gut in den Lebenszyklus von Tag-Nacht und dem Generationenwechsel. Ich möchte hier verdeutlichen, dass die Arbeiter nicht immer Kindheit und Nacht als Erweiterung der Arbeitskultur sahen. Aber die Arbeitgeber, der Kolonialstaat, die Missionare und die Organe der Sozialreform sahen die Nacht und die Kindheit in der Kontinuität vom Tag und der Arbeitsbedürfnisse. Deshalb, als Fabrikarbeitgeber Fabrikschulen für die Kinder der Arbeiter eröffneten, sahen sie die Kinder nicht als Schüler, sondern als zukünftige Arbeiter.

Arbeiter-Eltern in dieser Zeit entwickelten verschiedene Empfindungen gegenüber der Kindheit ihrer Kinder. Sie hatten neue Gedanken über die Kindheit ihrer Kinder. Schulbildung wurde gegenüber der Kinderarbeit bevorzugt. Sie sahen, dass Bildung eine zentrale Rolle bei der Erreichung von neuen sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Möglichkeiten spielte. Es half ihren Kindern neue Karrieremöglichkeiten, die ihnen selbst nicht zur Verfügung standen (Kap. 1, 2, 3, & 4), zu sichern. Sie verglichen die Kindheit ihrer Kinder im Lichte ihrer eigenen ausbeuterischen Kindheit und Lebenserfahrungen. Vom Arbeiter in der Werkstatt des Handwerkers zum Dalit landwirtschaftlichen Arbeiter und vom Fabrikarbeiter bis zum Hausdiener hatten Arbeiter gelernt, die Arbeit ihrer Kinder und deren Schulbildung zu verhandeln. Viele Arbeiter sagten nein zur Arbeit ihrer Kinder und viele andere vereinigten Arbeit und Bildung für ihre Kinder. Dies war eine der größten Veränderungen, die in den Arbeiterfamilien aufgetreten waren. Natürlich basierten solche Veränderungen in den neueren Vorstellungen der Kindheit auf dem Unterschied von Geschlecht, Region, Kaste und Klasse,

aber es gab Fälle, die solche Unterscheidungen verschleierten. Zum Beispiel war den männlichen Fabrikarbeiter die Ausbildung ihrer Tochter (Kap. 4) wichtig. Allerdings waren individuelle Ausnahmen innerhalb der größeren Verhaltensmuster. Die Arbeiter der Fabriken in Bombay waren im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert mehr an der Bildung ihrer Kinder interessiert, als ihre Kollegen in Cawnpore. Im Vergleich zu vielen Klassen von Handwerkern in Lucknow, betrachteten die Eisenbahnhandwerker, sowohl Muslime als auch Hindus, die industrielle und technische Ausbildung als Weg nach oben für ihre Kinder (Kap. 1). Durch Bildung oder Planung der Bildung ihrer Kinder, schufen die Arbeiter eine neue Bedeutung der Kindheit im Proletariat. Die Kontrolle über die Kindheit war entscheidend, um die Verbindungen von Bondage und Agrar-Sklaverei zu brechen. Wenn also Dalit Arbeiter von Missionaren hörten, liefen sie zu ihnen, um sie zu fragen, ob sie Schulen für ihre Kinder gründen würden (Kap. 2). Der Antrieb zur Bildung von Kindern kam nicht immer von den Eltern, stattdessen manchmal von Organen der sozialen Reform, gebildeten Arbeitern und Freundeskreisen der Arbeiter (Kap. 4). Arbeiter-Visionen über Kindheit wurden oft von dem Mangel an Informationen über Karriere-Optionen oder Armut beeinträchtigt. Für Anregungen zu Karriereplänen hingen sie von Missionaren, gebildeten Mitgliedern ihrer Gemeinde, Schullehrern oder kenntnisreichen Personen am Arbeitsplatz ab. Ideen über die Erziehung von Kindern und das Denken von verschiedenen Karrieremöglichkeiten für Kinder waren Ergebnisse der Interaktion zwischen den unteren und mittleren Klassen. Andere Ansichten der Eltern/Erwachsenen hätten die Kinder auch eingeschränkt. Nicht alle Kinder taten, was ihre Eltern oder Vormund wollten und viele Kinder rebellierten gegen ihre eigenen Eltern, um die Ausbildung zu verlangen oder zu verlängern. Quellen sind hierzu zu begrenzt für detaillierte Interpretationen.

Wie in die Kindheit investierten Arbeiter auch in ihre Energien für die Kontrolle über die Nächte. Die Nacht, besonders für Handwerker, Fabrikarbeiter, Hafendarbeiter und

Hausangestellte, wurde zu einem entscheidenden Symbol, um das Bild des Analphabeten und Unwissenden zu untergraben. Für sie stand die Nacht als Gegenteil zum Tag. Während der Tag die Arbeit, die Entfremdung der menschlichen Gefühle und die Unterordnung symbolisierte, wurde für die Arbeiter die Nacht zu einem Zeichen, die Freiheit von der Arbeit und dem disziplinierten Körper zu symbolisieren, die Freiheit, Dinge zu tun, die für Arbeiter ungewöhnlich waren, und eine Chance, Zeit mit der Familie zu verbringen. Der Kampf der Arbeiter, die Kontrolle über die Nacht vom Arbeitgeber nach der Elektrifizierung der Mühlen zu übernehmen, war ein Teil ihrer Bemühungen, die Nächte für sich zu beanspruchen.

In den Nächten besuchten die Arbeiter Abendschulen, lasen Bücher, die sie von den zirkulierenden- und Nachtbibliotheken ausliehen, organisierten sich gewerkschaftlich, tranken Alkohol, schrieben Gedichte und spielten Theater. Die große Anzahl des städtischen Proletariats, das in dem späten neunzehnten und frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert Abendschulen besuchte, war ein faszinierendes Phänomen. Die in der Nacht gewonnene Bildung wurde oft für persönliche Wünsche wie das Lesen von Büchern und Schreiben von Briefen sowie für das Ausprobieren von neuen Jobs, die Schreiben und Lesen erforderten, (Kap. 1 & 4) verwendet. Die Nacht war wie die Kindheit geschlechtsspezifisch. Die Nachterfahrung des Mannes unterschied sich von der der Frau. Obwohl Beispiele für den Besuch der Abendschule von Frauen nicht fehlen, (Kap. 2), waren sie in der Regel nicht in den Abendschulen. Soziale Normen und Belästigungen von Männern entmutigten sie, in der Nacht auszugehen, und die Hausarbeit beschäftigte sie in den frühen Morgenstunden (Kap. 3 & 4). In der Tat war in vielen Fällen die Nacht ein weiteres Symbol der Unterordnung für Frauen. Dies hielt sie aber nicht davon ab, Bücher auszuleihen und Schulen zu besuchen, die morgens oder spät am Nachmittag (Kap. 4 & 2) geöffnet waren. Nächte waren nicht gerade freie Zeit für männliche Arbeiter. Die Nachtzeit wurde zunehmend durch körperliche Müdigkeit, die

Notwendigkeit zu schlafen und durch das Bedürfnis einen Wohnraum zu haben, eingeschränkt. Viele Arbeiter in Bombay verbrachten ihre Nächte unter freiem Himmel.

Vieles hat sich seit dem späten neunzehnten Jahrhundert und heute verändert. Die Tradition der Abendschulen, Nacht-Lesesälen und zirkulierenden Bibliotheken ist gestorben. Die Bedeutung der Nacht hat sich verändert. Heutzutage lernen aufstrebende Studenten aus der Arbeiterschicht tagsüber und arbeiten in der Nacht. Von der Anpassung an das BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) von Call Center Jobs in der Nacht, haben die armen Studenten gelernt, ihre Freizeit-, Arbeits-, und Studienzeit zu verwalten.

Während die Nacht und die Kindheit für die Arbeiter bezüglich der Erkenntnis Ihrer Bemühungen über die Arbeitsstationen hinauszugehen, fundamental waren, wurden diese beiden Kriterien auch für die Reproduktion der Bedingungen des Kapitalismus und der ungleichen sozioökonomischen Ordnung entscheidend. Die beiden Kriterien des Arbeitslebens erlaubten es dem Kapital, seine Kontrolle über die industrielle Arbeit und die Konservativen zu behaupten, um die sozioökonomische Ordnung zu wahren. Das Kapital und der Kolonialstaat sahen zunehmend die Nacht und die Kindheit als Phasen der Kontinuität, Reife und Progression aus der Perspektive der Gewinnung von Arbeitern. So wurden in der Kindheit die künftigen Arbeiter in industriellen Fähigkeiten, Moral und Kenntnissen der Arbeit geschult. Durch die Abendschulen und Arbeiterinstitute erhielten die Arbeiter Erholung und praktische Ausbildung—Indoor Sport, Abendschulen, Cafeterien, Kino und Theater—Dinge, die der Langeweile des müden Arbeiters entgegenwirkten und ihn für die Arbeit am Folgetag produktiv machten.

Alle vier Kapitel fordern gewisse fundamentale Annahmen und Hypothesen der Arbeit und der Bildungsstudien heraus. Bildung und die Arbeiterklassen in der Kolonialzeit sind Anomalien in akademischen Schriften. Sie sehen, dass Arbeiter Analphabeten waren und die Bildung wird als Privileg der mittleren und oberen Klassen ständig angeführt. Im Gegensatz

dazu zeige ich auf, dass Arbeiter weder Analphabeten waren noch über ihre Ansprüche auf Bildung geschwiegen haben.

Die Forderungen und Anstrengungen der Arbeiter, gebildete erzwungene Eliten zu sein, um Bildungsstrukturen zu schaffen, die ihre sozioökonomische Dominanz und die Unterordnung der Arbeiter aufrechterhielten, weit davon entfernt. Um die Arbeiterklassen nicht vom Projekt der modernen Bildung auszuschließen, hatte ein Gruppe der Oberklasse verschiedene Formen der Nicht-Elite-Schulung eröffnet, die nur von den Kindern der Armen besucht wurden. Das Thema für die Autoritätspersonen—Beamte des Kolonialstaats, Missionare und die indische Oberklasse—war nicht so sehr der Zugang zur Bildung, sondern es ging um die Form und den Inhalt der Bildung.

Das schöpferische Leben der Arbeiter, mehr zu sein als Arbeiter, fordern die trockene Prosa der Arbeitsgeschichte heraus, die die Geschichte der Arbeiterklassen bezüglich ihrer Arbeitsidentität sowohl aufwertet als auch einschränkt. Letzteres verweigert ihnen eine Geschichte der Zukunft, eine Geschichte der Familienplanung und eine Geschichte der Bestrebungen. Es erzählt auch nicht eine Geschichte des Kapitalismus, die von den Bestrebungen und Herausforderungen der Arbeiter getrieben wird. Der Kapitalismus als globales System der Warenproduktion war in der Lage, solche Bestrebungen und Bedrohungen der Arbeiter zu nutzen, indem er den Arbeitern Bildung, Erholung, Wohnraum und andere wohltätigen Dinge anbot. Daneben führten spezifische Zwänge wie die Weltkriege, der Mangel an qualifizierten Arbeitskräften, die nationalistische Politik, die Christianisierung und die Proteste der Arbeiterkasten zur Errichtung neuer Karrieremöglichkeiten und neuer Arten von Bildung für die Arbeiterklasse. Doch durch gerade diese Bemühungen wurden die Arbeitgeber auch den Produktionsprozessen, die sowohl hochgebildete als auch qualifizierte und auch ungebildete Arbeitskräfte erforderte, gerecht. Es nutzte den aufstrebenden Arbeitern in der Management- und Dienstleistungsklasse und ließ andere warten oder verweigerte ihnen eine

qualitativ hochwertige Ausbildung. Der Kapitalismus schuf die Fassade der Meritokratie unter den Arbeitern. Tatsächlich ruhte er sich auf der Täuschung aus, dass Verdienst erreichbar war. Die Studenten der Arbeiterklassen erhielten durch das System der Prüfungen, Auszeichnungen und Schulinfrastruktur (Kap. 3 & 4) eine Illusion von Fairness.

Ein solches Verständnis fordert die dominierenden Ansichten, die in der Soziologie der Bildung verbreitet sind, heraus – der angeborene Glaube, dass die Chancen auf Bildung ursprünglich gleich gewesen waren und irgendwann korrumpiert wurden. Sie stellen die Ungleichheit des Bildungssystems als eine gelehrte Entdeckung dar. Im Gegensatz dazu verdeutliche ich, dass der moderne Begriff der Pädagogik und Bildung, das von Natur aus ein modernes Projekt ist, ungleich war und auch so geblieben ist. Die arbeitenden Armen erkannten diese Ungleichheit und kämpften dagegen an. Ungleichheit ist nicht ein unsichtbares Merkmal des modernen Bildungsprojektes, sondern es ist der lauteste Anspruch seit seiner Anfänge. Die Erschaffung der modernen Schulbildung basiert auf einem ungleichen System. Das ist der moderne Staat, die politische Ökonomie und die Gesellschaft, die neue Formen der Ungleichheit mit einem starken fortschreitenden Begriff der "Verbesserung" erzeugen. Das moderne Bildungssystem wurde als Werkzeug in den Händen der auserwählten Oberklasse, zur Unterwerfung von Massen erfunden, wobei die Massen mitschuldig, jedoch auch mächtig genug waren, um seinen Inhalt zu verändern (Kap. 1). Gleichheit war weder der Anfang noch der Endpunkt moderner Bildung. Sein Merkmal der Gleichstellung und der mystischen Mächte der Emanzipation waren oft die Ergebnisse der Massenproteste, die Erwartungen an Bildung hatten, die die Pädagogen als grenzüberschreitend empfanden. Innerhalb der rechtsbasierten Diskussionspolitik entwickelte sich die Diskussion über Bildung als ein Recht der Arbeitergruppen von unten und wurde nicht von oben auferlegt (Kap. 4). Arbeiter kämpften für Bildung und Wissen, weil es seit Jahrhunderten die Ursache ihrer Unterdrückung und Beherrschung durch andere war. Sie forderten einen gleichberechtigten Zugang zu

Informations- und Bildungsinfrastrukturen. Sobald jedoch Bildung die Arbeitergruppen erreichte, kamen neue Konflikte in Form neuerer Hierarchien zwischen dem gebildeten Arbeiter und dem Analphabeten auf (Kap. 4 & 1).

Kapitel Organisation

Die These gliedert sich in vier Kapitel—jedes Kapitel erforscht die Erwartung und die Erfahrungsschichten von Wünschen und Ängsten durch die Analytik der Kindheit oder Nacht. Sie zeigen jeweils die Seite der Arbeiter und der Arbeitgeber auf.

Das erste Kapitel entwirrt die Geschichte der Wünsche der Handwerker in der kleinen Stadt Lucknow. Die Geschichte dreht sich um die Erfahrungen der Lucknow Industrial School von den 1880er bis 1920er Jahren. Sie beginnt mit der Diskussion über die verschiedenen Arten von handwerklichen Gemeinschaften in Lucknow: Handwerker in vererbten Betrieben, enteignete Handwerker, Eisenbahnhandwerker und andere Fabrikhandwerker. Während die Kinder von Handwerkern an allgemeinen Schulen unterrichtet wurden, ermöglichte den Handwerkern die Einrichtung der Lucknow Industrial School in ihrer Nachbarschaft, ihre Söhne für die Hochschule ausbilden zu lassen. Neben vielen Industriefächern bot die Schule auch Englisch und Unterricht im Zeichnen an. Die Industrieschule wurde als Eisenbahnschule gesehen, die benötigte geschulte Arbeiter für die örtliche Eisenbahnwerkstatt liefern würde. Es gab den Versuch, die Kinder der Handwerker zu verbessern, zu disziplinieren, zu trainieren und zu bilden. Handwerkliche Studenten hatten ihre eigene Agenda, die die industrielle Schulausbildung nutzten, um Lehrer, Angestellte, Schriftsetzer und Manager zu werden. Indem ich in die Lebensgeschichten der Schüler, ihrer Wahl von Unterricht und ihrer Lektüre des kolonialen Curriculums schaue, zeige ich, dass die Motivation der Handwerker und ihrer Kinder nicht war ein Handwerker zu werden, denn das waren sie schon. Was sie wollten, war etwas anderes und etwas anderes war die Kenntnis der englischen Sprache und zeichnen zu können. Wie die privilegierten Studenten behaupteten sie ihr Recht, Lehrer, Schreiber oder ein

anderer Regierungsbeamter zu werden. Arbeiter-Studenten brachen nach dem Verlassen der Institutionen um Meister des Zeichnens zu werden aus alten Hierarchien aus, indem sie das Wissen der Schule für völlig widersprüchliche Zwecke nutzten. Ihre Eltern forderten Abendschulen, in denen sie für sich selbst lernen konnten. Was vom Staat gewünscht wurde, wurde auch von Lehrern und dem Schulleiter kaum erreicht. Als Teil der lokalen Gesellschaft, arbeiteten diese Agenten nicht immer als gute koloniale Mitarbeiter. Stattdessen entfalteten sie ihre eigene Politik der Vorurteile und der geistigen und manuellen Arbeitshierarchie bei der Zulassung, Lehre und Neugestaltung von Kursen. Da die Institution eine Chance für staatliche Arbeitsplätze bot, begannen die Kinder der mittleren und oberen Kasten, sie für ihre eigenen Zwecke zum Erlangen von nicht-manuellen staatlichen Arbeitsplätzen zu nutzen. Der Wunsch unter den Schülern, kein Arbeiter zu sein, war so stark, dass die Lucknow Industrial School 1902-1903 geschlossen wurde. Die Schüler wollten selbst bestimmen welche Bildung sie erhielten und das war nicht nur die, die die Schule anbieten wollte. Ihr Kampf war im Wesentlichen gegen eine Differentialpädagogik, die entworfen wurde, um sie in der Arbeiterklasse zu halten. Allerdings erzählen die Industrieschulen auch die Geschichten der Nichtbeachtung der arbeitenden Armen aus solchen Institutionen, da mehr und mehr die sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Oberklassen ihre Rechte über die neuen, nicht-manuellen Arbeitsplätze der kolonialen politischen Ökonomie behaupteten. Die Kinder aus den Arbeitklassen wurden weiterhin in die manuellen Arbeitsjobs durch die Verleugnung ihrer höheren technischen Ausbildung geschoben, zusätzlich zu der Behauptung, dass den Ober- und Mittelschichten würdige Arbeitsplätze wie Führungskräfte, Vorgesetzte, Zeichner und Schulmeister zustanden.

Das zweite Kapitel analysiert die pädagogischen Wünsche von Dalit (ex-Unberührbare) Agrararbeitern in Bezug auf die Präsenz der christlichen Missionare seit den 1860er Jahren in den nordwestlichen Provinzen (NWP). Ich erforsche, wie Dalits die missionarische Präsenz in

ihren Gebieten nutzten, um den bedrückenden Regimes der Arbeit zu entkommen, anstelle ihre Kinder auf die Felder der Landbesitzer zu schicken. Dalits sahen die Umwandlung als Angebot für Bildung, alternative Karriereoptionen als Lehrer, Pastoren, Katecheten, Missionsarbeitern und als Emanzipation aus der gebundenen Arbeit. Vor der Umwandlung erkundigten sie sich nach den positiven Aussichten der Umwandlung. Ich zeige, dass die missionarische Erziehung, obwohl sie für Dalits zugänglich war, nicht befreite. Sie schob die Dalits von einem Arbeitsregime zum nächsten, nämlich von der gebundenen Arbeit zur Lohnarbeit. Die Arbeitsgewohnheiten und Identitäten wurden nicht nur bewahrt, sondern auch durch die Versendung der Kinder der armen Konvertiten in die industriellen Schulen der Missionen, die ihnen Fähigkeiten des Handwerks, die Vermittlung von fleißigem Leben, das durch die christliche Ethik geregelt wurde, und die Disziplin eines Arbeitslebens beibrachten, nutzbar gemacht. Die Geschichte hier dreht sich um die Cawnpore Mission Industrial School. Fortfahrend wird gezeigt, wie die Missionare die Subjektivität der armen Mädchen regulierten, die entweder für Missionsgebundene Fabriken oder Hausarbeit ausgebildet wurden.

Missionarische Apostel entwarfen große Theorien der Liebe zur Arbeit. Sie schätzten Fleiß für Bekehrte, indem sie ihnen Bilder von Jesus als Zimmermann zeigten. Arbeit, predigten sie, war sowohl erlösend als auch eine göttliche Tat. Allerdings waren die Anstrengungen der Konvertierten kein Arbeiter mehr zu sein im Konflikt mit den eigenen Industrieunternehmen der Missionare, die Arbeiter dafür benötigten. Durch die Erforschung dieser Fragen bringt das Kapitel eine nuancierte Perspektive auf die christlichen Missionare, die ich nicht nur als religiöse Befürworter sehe, sondern auch als Industrielle, die in Industrien in Kolonien investierten und die Arbeit von konvertierten und kolonisierten Arbeitern forderten. Weiterhin zeige ich, dass es eine Kontinuität zwischen Missionaren und den nationalistischen Sozialreformern wie dem Arya Samaj und Gandhis Harijan Sevak Sangh gab, um Dalits als Arbeiter zu halten. Bildung wurde Dalits nicht mit der Idee zur Verteilung für

wirtschaftliche Rollen und Ressourcen angeboten, sondern um soziale Reform zu verursachen - Dalits eine begrenzte Bildung anzubieten und die Unberührbarkeit zu beenden. Das Soziale wurde über die wirtschaftlichen Aspekte von Dalits gestellt.

Kapitel drei bringt die Leser in die ambitionierte Welt des geschäftigen Fabrikproletariats. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf Arbeitern, die in den Textilfabriken von Bombay und Cawnpore arbeiteten. Migranten aus nahe gelegenen und entfernten Dörfern ließen sich in den ärmsten Vierteln der Städte nieder, um Geld von ihren Löhnen zu sparen. Während ihre Migration in die Städte die Bildung, die sie und ihre Kinder erhalten hatten, unterbrach, erforderte die Zeit, die sie an den Maschinen der Fabriken verbrachten, die Unterordnung ihrer eigenen Wahrnehmung als Mensch. Ich analysiere, wie Arbeiter, die sich aus verschiedenen Regionen mit verschiedenen Sprachen in Bombay niedergelassen hatten, für ihre Kinder Bildung forderten. Sie begannen zwischen der Kindheit in der Fabrik und der Kindheit in der Schule zu vergleichen. Einige von ihnen setzten ihr Recht auf Bildung ihrer Kinder durch, diskutierten die Rolle der Arbeitgeber und des Staates bei der Bereitstellung von Bildungseinrichtungen und sagten zu Gunsten der Bildung bei verschiedenen Fabrikkommissionen aus. In diesem Kapitel wird durch den Nachweis der Aussagen von Fabrikkindern, Arbeiter-Eltern und Arbeitgeber gezeigt, welche radikale Veränderungen es in der Vorstellung über berufliche Kindheit gab. Eltern sahen die Kindheit ihrer Kinder im Lichte ihrer eigenen schlechten Kindheitserfahrungen. Eltern, vor allem Mütter, legten eine große Entschlossenheit, ihre Söhne und Töchter nicht an die Mühlen zu schicken, von denen sie glaubten, dass sie die menschlichen Aspekte der Menschen subsumierten, dar. Mütter wollten nicht, dass ihre Töchter die sexuelle Belästigung und die Schinderei erlebten, die sie selbst in ihrer Kindheit erlebt hatten. Dieser Wunsch, Kinder in die Schulen zu schicken, stand jedoch bald der Realität der Armut und der Notwendigkeit einen weiteren Lohnverdienenden zu haben gegenüber, der zeigt, wie die gleichen Kinder, deren Zukunft anders geplant war, von

denselben Eltern an die Mühlen geschickt wurden. Während die Eltern ab den 1920er Jahren Bildung für ihre Kinder als Recht sahen, sahen die Arbeitgeber die Kindheit als wichtige Zeit, um zukünftige Arbeiter heranzuziehen. Kinder waren für die Kapitalisten künftige Arbeiter. Um die Arbeit der folgenden Generationen von Arbeitern zu sichern, wurden Wohlfahrtsinstitutionen gegründet, Wohnungsbaukolonien wurden an Arbeiter vergeben, Schulen wurden für ihre Kinder geöffnet, in denen ihnen die instrumentellen Kenntnisse vermittelt wurden, die sie in der Arbeiterklasse benötigten. Die Angst, dass Arbeiter aufhören würden zu arbeiten, war größer als die Angst vor Arbeitern, die höhere Löhne forderten. Die Geschichte in diesem Kapitel dreht sich um verschiedene Fabrikschulen, die von den Fabrikbesitzern zur Nutzung von Kinderarbeit und dem Erlernen nützlicher Fähigkeiten für das spätere Arbeitsleben gegründet wurden.

Um ihre Kontrolle über die Kindheit und die Nacht ausüben zu können, gingen die Fabrikkapitalisten eine Allianz mit anderen konservativen Kräften, Elite-Sozialreformern, ein, die mit der Verbesserung der Lebensbedingungen durch die Bereitstellung von Gesundheits-, Bildungs- und Erholungsvorteilen die Arbeiter zufriedenstellten und somit in ihrer Arbeiterklasse hielten. Dies ist das Thema des vierten Kapitels. Es diskutiert die Versuche der Abendschulbildung der Arbeiter und die Sozialreformkörper wie die Social Service Ligen, die Y.M.C.A., die Theistische Vereinigung und die Depressed Mission Society. Die Nacht ist nicht als neutraler zeitlicher Raum dargestellt, sondern als Potenzial der emanzipatorischen Politik und der Expansion der Kapitalisten. Ich analysiere Arbeiterproteste, Memorandums und Beweise, um ihre Ansprüche über die Nacht als ihre persönliche Zeit zu verstehen. Im Gegensatz zu Rancières Ausführungen über die Nacht als freie Zeit der Arbeiter, zeige ich, dass die Nacht für indische Fabrikarbeiter ein umstrittenes Thema war, dem die Uhr des Kapitals ständig im Nacken saß. Arbeiter sollten ihre Körper für die Arbeit am nächsten Tag ausruhen. Ferner wurde die Nachtzeit durch den Mangel an Hütten für Arbeiter, die

Notwendigkeit von Schlaf und die Schwächung des Körpers eingeschränkt. Die Installation von Elektrizität in den Baumwollmühlen im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert bedeutete die Erweiterung der Nachtarbeit und die Möglichkeit, zusätzlichen Lohn zu verdienen. Gegenüber diesen Einschränkungen zeigten die Arbeiter eine besondere Vorliebe zum Lernen und Lesen in der Nacht auf Kosten des dringend benötigten Schlafes. Bei der Untersuchung der Aufzeichnungen über den Besuch von Abendschulen und dem Ausleihverhalten bei den Arbeitsstudienbibliotheken erforsche ich, was es für die Arbeiter bedeutete, den Wunsch nach Bildung zu pflegen und mehr als eine nur funktionierende Identität zu haben. Hier lernten sie literarische Fähigkeiten und machten sich mit Maschinen und der Wissenschaft vertraut. Ein solches Wissen wurde ihnen von den Arbeitgebern in den Fabriken verweigert. Die Freizeit wurde für die Arbeiter zu einer produktiven Zeit, jedoch auf Kosten ihres dringend benötigten Schlafes. Doch in den frühen Jahren des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts wurde die Nacht zu einer Zeit, die durch das Kapital kontrolliert wurde. Das Kapital fürchtete die freien Nächte der Arbeiter. Man sah in einer freien Nacht die Möglichkeit, dass ein normaler Arbeiter sich zu einem Anführer der Arbeiter weiterentwickeln konnte oder zu einem unzufriedenen Arbeiter wurde, der einen nicht-manuellen Arbeitsplatz anstrebte. Das Kapital kolonisierte die Arbeiternacht durch die Eröffnung eigener Abendschulen, Lesesäle und Arbeiterinstitute und durch die Beeinflussung des Curriculums der Abendschulen der Sozialreformorgane. Die Nacht war dafür da, die Freizeit der Arbeiter zu disziplinieren, den Mann zu einem "guten Ehemann" und die Frau zu einer "gehorsame Frau" und zu unpolitischen Subjekten und geschulten Facharbeitern zu machen.

Ausgangsmaterialien für diese These sind aus der Analyse von vielen ungenutzten Quellen, darunter Briefe, Tagebücher, Gedichte und Prosa, die von Arbeitern geschrieben wurden und Informationen, die von Schulinspektionsberichten, Schulregistern, Prüfungsergebnissen, Missionsberichten und Privatpapieren erhalten wurden, hervorgegangen. Diese Materialien

haben mir geholfen, tiefer in das soziale Reich des Arbeitslebens zu gehen - durch die Erforschung ihrer Kindheit und Freizeit, ihrer Tag- und Nachtzyklen von Arbeit und Leben - in denen Bildung und die Politik der Emanzipation eine aktive Rolle spielten.

Introduction

Thus, I purchased books myself and started reading. The habit is so ingrained now that I can't sleep if I don't read for four hours daily after work.¹

This is a statement made by Munawar Shakeel, a poet, newspaper vendor, and cobbler, who sits in a crowded street of Rodala (a suburban town in Faisalabad, Pakistan) with his trade tools and copies of five published poetries. His father's death during his childhood and limited resources forced Munawar to abandon his desire for education. He educated himself. As a cobbler, he earns about 300 Pakistani Rupees (about 2.49 Euros per day), and keeps Rs. 10 (about 8 cents) every day to publish his poetry. The cobbler-poet feels that elites have oppressed lower classes for centuries, and they hardly wrote about this in their writings. 'I want to speak for the lower classes through my poetry, and those things which cannot be said directly, I want to say them through verse,' says Munawar. This attempt of workers to pose themselves as intellectuals is also reflected in other workers' lives. Asif Hussai Shah, a cab driver in Rawalpindi, penciled in many of his conversations with passengers and then got it published into a book titled, *For Hire*.² Shah says that while writing the book he had to negotiate with the lack of time and concentration and the weakening of body (*jism ká tootaná*). While both, the poet and the writer, are proud of their occupations, they are not content with their working identity. To be discontent with the labouring life is not equivalent to the absence of pride in work. The monotony of work both inspires and suppresses their creativity. They assert that their lives are not just about work.

For many workers, part of being a worker is to constantly dream of not being a worker. And part of it is to discard the imposition of a working identity. It could mean both a transgression

¹ Safdar, 'Munawar Shakeel'. I would like to thank Razak Khan for drawing my attention to Munawar Shakeel's poetries.

² Rahatooo, Asif Hussain Shah, *Book For Hire*, Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TgdZjdafT8>.

of the typical working identity and a departure from the fold of labour. Workers' aspirations, intimately tied to their experience of an oppressive life and a desire to have a better life experience, inevitably unsettle or disturb the status quo. The working lives of those who refused an imposed pre-destined labouring identity are at the centre of this thesis. This is not to establish that workers, especially skilled hereditary artisans, do not feel proud of skills that they possess and the products that they make.³ Often, artisans are protective about their skills, have rituals to initiate the younger artisans into the world of skills, and establish their own hierarchies of glorious and non-glorious work.⁴ To desire a non-labouring position in life, workers were not required to feel embarrassed about work. Work for many workers is empowering.⁵ The feeling of not wanting to be a worker arose from the oppressive working conditions, low wages, social humiliation, a predestined imposed labouring life, and continued exclusion from new opportunities that "others" (socially and economically well-off people) had access to. It also arose when workers entered or had a chance to enter into "modern" economy (railway workshops, factory space).

The social and cultural world of the labouring poor, their experiences, dreams, fantasies, agency, resistance, feelings, desires, notions, languages, and social relations have been dominant questions in the writings of historians, sociologists, and anthropologists.⁶ In tracing the everyday life of workers, scholars have mined new sources: workers' poetry, judicial

³ There has been an interesting debate in the pages of the *International Labor and Working Class History* journal over the question of the presence and absence of 'pride in skills' among artisans and its supposed link with workers' militancy and the French labour movement. The debate emerged in response to a powerful critique by Jacques Rancière of the myth of the proud 'skilled and militant' artisans. See, Rancière, "The Myth of the Artisan"; Sewell, "Response to J. Rancière"; Papayanis, "Response to J. Rancière"; Newman, "Response to J. Rancière"; Johnson, "Response to J. Rancière".

⁴ I discuss these issues in a forthcoming essay on the artisanal apprenticeship in colonial India.

⁵ Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*.

⁶ See, Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*; Rancière, *The Nights of Labor*, 1989; Lüdtke, 'Cash, Coffee-breaks, Horseplay'; Lüdtke, "The Appeal of Exterminating 'Others'"; Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*; Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*; Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*; Jones, *Languages of Class*; Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America*; Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*; Steedman, *An Everyday Life of the English Working Class Work, Self and Sociability in the Early Nineteenth Century*; Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*; Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*; Joshi, *Lost Worlds*; Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History*; Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India the Bengal Jute Industry*; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

records, oral narratives, folklores, records of workers' associations, etc. This innovative blend of new sources and new research frames have enabled us to go deeper into the realms of working lives. However, certain desires, aspirations, anxieties, and hopes, such as a worker not wanting to be a manual labourer and workers wanting to be an educated being, have not been raised and analysed systematically. Workers' desires to not be workers and to not behave as 'workers' is the point of departure for this thesis. I will historicise many such forms of working class desires which emerged in nineteenth and twentieth century India, especially in the context of Lucknow, Cawnpore, and Bombay. Desires of workers produced new anxieties, fear, and conservatism among elites (upper and middle castes, merchant-artisans, industrialists, missionaries, and the colonial state officials). These desires, I show, never operated in an isolated framework. They accompanied anxieties and concerns of elites. Histories of these anxieties, fear, and conservatism occupy as much space as workers' dreams.

So what are these desires of workers? How are they produced? What are their characteristics? Do they differ among various categories of labour? If yes, then in what ways and in what conditions? I will try to answer these questions throughout the thesis, but here I wish to briefly introduce them. I place the desire of not wanting to be a worker within the larger structure of workers' multiple feelings. The thesis shows that among workers there was an increasing desire to disassociate themselves from hard manual labouring jobs whether these were allotted due to workers' caste position or poverty. Such a move was tied with a desire to get secure, respectable, and non-manual labouring jobs. Education became a crucial means in achieving these desires since the late nineteenth century. Railway-employed artisans and hereditary craftsmen sending their children to colonial schools, Dalit agrarian labourers persuading Christian missionaries to establish schools, and factory workers articulating education as their political right were different aspects of workers' desires of not wanting to be a worker.

Workers employed in different capacities in different labouring regimes developed distinct desires. Desires, I suggest, were deeply motivated by the caste and class position of workers, the availability of new jobs, arrival of new machinery and technology, and access to educational institutions and new economy. The majority of manual labourers, about whom I talk, were from Dalit castes (the “untouchable”, “acchut”, “outcaste”) and “lower castes” (“nich quam” or “nanhi jat”).⁷ Nevertheless, they also included many impoverished middle and upper castes.⁸ Workers’ different positioning in the caste and economic hierarchy gave them different access to education, the job market, and patronage networks. Involved in different types of labour relations and work conditions across time and space, manual labourers produced desires of a varied nature: workers content with their labouring status but wanting their children to move out of the labouring fold; workers learning new skills to get decent jobs; Dalits and other lower caste labourers struggling against their social and economic subordination by claiming new jobs; the poorer sections of upper and middle castes working hard to secure their socio-economic positions; economically alleviated workers, who suffered humiliation due to their social status, looks, accent, ethnicity, etc. (their lack of cultural capital), looking for a rise in social status; working fathers wanting a government job for their male children; working mothers desiring to get their daughters married instead of sending them to mills; and children desiring for playmates, sweets, schools, clothes, and a non-labouring childhood.

Desires were not always successfully met; they often lived in the form of discontent. Discontent, I argue, was a fundamental feature of the working life. To desire was one thing; the fulfilment of those desires was another thing. In between these and post-fulfilment histories,

⁷ Throughout the thesis, I use the term “untouchable” and “lower castes” for Dalits and Other Backward Castes respectively. My only intention is to remind readers about the historical reality. These terms have been vehemently rejected by the people on whom they have been imposed. I, including my thesis, also do not endorse these cruel terms.

⁸ Bhattacharya, *Labouring Histories*.

there lived discontented workers aspiring for non-labouring jobs, workers who combined working lives with non-labouring professions such as money lending, shop-keeping, and trading; and workers who were happy with their work and existing positions but desired different positions for their children. Workers not satisfied with their jobs, wages, work, employment status, and benefits continued to give their labour power due to the lack of alternative jobs.⁹ The politics of not wanting to be a worker also involved those who had stopped discarding their labouring identity as the primary identity but continued to associate themselves with labour. For them, manual labour was not disgusting but it were the work conditions and their fixed positioning into manual labouring stations due to their caste which was humiliating. Denial of access to education, to the literary and cultural sphere, and to a creative and artistic life was the hallmark of their subjugation. Karl Marx would identify the problem as the ‘alienation of wage labourers’ in the capitalist system which rests upon on the hierarchy of mental and manual labour.¹⁰ Marx sees no possibility of overturning this relationship of mental and manual labour in the capitalist system. Such hierarchies could only be abolished in a proletariat dictatorship. Workers then will both produce and command commodity production, including management. However, as Jacques Rancière has remarked, workers in Marx’s schema are given the task of carrying out the job of a revolution and not of thinking and conceptualising the revolution. He thus accuses Marx himself of retaining the hierarchies and binaries of the thinker and the doer, the intellectual and the worker.¹¹ This thesis

⁹ When industrial sociologists visited Bangladeshi factory workers in the 1950s and 60s, workers expressed discontent against their present jobs and helplessness to get new jobs. See, Siddiq, “The Labour Commitment Theory and the Industrial Workers of Bangladesh”. Siddiq writes, ‘although the majority workers might not like factory employment because of the non-availability of jobs or alternative sources of employment. The above assumption is strengthened by the findings of [M.] Ahmad’s [1978] study where he found that, although almost all of the workers were found to be unsatisfied with their present wages, none could identify a job which would give them better earnings than the present one.’

¹⁰ By the alienation of labour, Marx meant the status of wage labour in the capitalist system. Since workers have no control of what they produce, and the worker just sells the labour power (time and energy) to capitalists in return of wages, their labour is not expression of their creative desires but in fact is a forced labour. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

¹¹ Rancière et al., *The Philosopher and His Poor*.

will discuss the lives of many workers who blurred the lines between the educated and the uneducated, the thinker and the doer, the literate and the illiterate, the ignorant and the knowledgeable, and the mental and the manual worker both by remaining in the capitalist system and by attempting to withdraw from it. The manual labourer protested in many forms that s/he was not just 'labour power'.

To no longer be a worker, both in an economic and social sense, is a specific type of mobility which in many cases had serious implications for the social order, the emergence of working classes, and the existence of prevailing labouring regimes. The worker wanting to be a supervisor, technician, manager, headman, school teacher, railway ticket collector, writer, poet, novelist, politician, and a member of the middle class might have operated within the capitalist system but their "uncontrolled" desires and aspirations did undermine a system that required subordination and the social reproduction of the labour power. Elites' anxieties were precisely about these. Various labouring regimes, such as merchant artisans' workshops, railway workshops, missionary industries, factories, and the fields of landed elites required that workers continued to provide unhindered labour supply. For this, the employers of labour created theories and institutions that aimed to keep labourers in their position or produce mobilities which were controlled by their needs for labour.

To imagine these desires as an ideological movement would be a fallacy, except in a few cases of Dalit castes who mobilised themselves as groups to seek education and alternative careers. Otherwise, these efforts of workers remained individualistic. But I suggest that transgressive desires among workers emerged as a pattern in this period, and their new relations to education were powerful means of expressing this. The late nineteenth century was the first time when these patterns of aspirations and discontent were visible on a large scale and were registered in the archive in varieties of ways. Even though education was an unknown entity for the majority of the labouring community, there was an increasing desire for education

among workers, and their access to limited education further created new realms of aspirations and blockage.

To not be a worker or to stop behaving as a ‘worker’ was a radical step on the part of working class that needs proper historical attention. To understand these desires in the common framework of upward mobility, which historians and sociologists have talked about in great detail, would be misleading. The poor, the marginalised, the lower castes, and the workers wanting middle class things; aspiring to a different social position; appropriating middle class cultures of dressing, eating, behaving, and drinking, and acquiring the marks, names, rituals, customs, and symbolic capital (sanskritisation) of social elites has been common frameworks in which studies have interpreted the desires of the labouring castes.¹² I will engage with some of these studies in the literature review, but here I want to explain how what I am doing is different from the existing interventions. A few of these studies often operate under a notion that separates economy/material from social/culture. Thus, for example, M. N. Srinivas’s model of Sanskritisation asserts a parallel between sanskritisation and westernisation. It argues that while lower castes aspiring for upper social mobility appropriate the customs, rituals, and social behaviours of the upper/middle castes (sanskritisation), the upper castes who considers these imitations as inauthentic, choose westernisation (modern education, service class jobs, migration to urban centres) in order to retain their dominance.¹³ While this model keeps the economic out of the social, it also suggests that the labouring castes do not generally travel the path of modernisation directly. To frame workers’ desires as they wanting to become like middle class/upper castes reduces the radial nature of the labouring castes’ desires which have not just a formidable impact on the nature of political economy but also a powerful socio-cultural repercussion.

¹² On this read, Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries*; Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*; Bourdieu, Nice, and Bennett, *Distinction*; Srinivas, “A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization”.

¹³ Srinivas, “A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization”; Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*; Gould, “Sanskritization and Westernization-A Dynamic View”; Gupta, *Caste in Question*.

The worker wanting to inhabit a different social and economic world has been the underlining assumption of socialist movements since the end of the nineteenth century. Communists from Valdimir Lenin to Antonio Gramsci considered workers' councils/ workers' committees as a necessary step of socialism to transcend the labour-capital relationship. Workers' councils, controlling management and production in factories, were the epitome of the proletarian's dictatorship, of the self-government of masses, and of a workers' state. In the workers' state, the worker ceases to be a commodity of capital; the division between order-givers and order-takers collapses; and the worker does not sell his/her labour power, but produces for his/her own artistic satisfaction under his/her own control and towards a greater good and social needs. S/he is no longer an alienated and exploited force, but one able to enjoy the fruits of his/her labour. Workers' control over production, management, and technicians symbolised the bridging of the gap between mental and manual labour, with communism abolishing any hierarchies left in its final stage.¹⁴ However, what was envisioned was never fulfilled, and what was intended took new shapes, often contradictory, in real socialist states. Critical analyses of Statlin's state socialism, by Cornelius Castoriadis, a Trotskyist, and the members of the *Situationist International*, demolished the myth of the 'workers' state', suggesting that workers were neither free in the Soviet bureaucracy, and nor did they produce under free conditions.¹⁵ Instead of abolishing hierarchies, new hierarchies governed working lives with a new ruling class of socialists sitting on the top. Workers were led and disciplined by the 'militant bureaucrats' of the party, the most conscious and loyal workers who ceased to be workers to become politicians. Workers' resistance was described as counter-revolution. We see that whether in the capitalist state or in the revolutionary workers' state, there was a

¹⁴ Gramsci, "Workers' Democracy by Antonio Gramsci 1919"; Lenin, "All Power to the Soviets (Lenin and Workers' Control) by Toni Cliff"; Cliff, *Marxist Theory after Trotsky*, 1–38.

¹⁵ Glykosymoritis, "Cornelius Castoriadis – on the Content of Socialism (Part 1) - Anarkismo"; Jan D. Matthews, "An Introduction to the Situationists", the Anarchist Library. The Situationist International (1957-72) was a Paris based social revolutionary movement which played a crucial role in the May 1968 movement of students and workers in France.

continuity in terms of a mass of workers performing hard manual labour. This, however, was in contrast with the desires of those workers who wanted to leave the fold of labour.

I show that childhood and night were crucial moments in the formation and realisation of workers' personal desires, fantasies, and wishes. In these moments, they attended day and night schools, read books, and learned new skills. By asserting their control over these moments, workers unfolded their politics of being a non-worker. Worker-parents and working children invested in these moments to claim new roles in life for themselves.

Instead of sending their children to factories, workshops, and fields or keeping them at home, the labouring castes for the first time began to think about education for themselves and their children, to send their children to schools in large numbers, and to combine labour with schooling. A major shift was occurring in the conception of childhood among workers that needs proper historical attention.¹⁶ Many childhood historians stress on the concept of 'useful child' among the working class families of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in which the acceptance of child labour was not only a norm but took new meanings with the expansion of industrial economy.¹⁷ Working class families registered their protest against the schemes of mass education which sometime disturbed the extraction of child labour.¹⁸ While this is true that child labour was valued in the working class families and its volume and intensity increased with industrialisation, we should also be attentive to capture the rapidly changing notions of childhood among workers. There is a widespread evidence in India suggesting that workers began to appreciate the education of their children, sometime combining it with their employment. Even though the education of children meant loss of full or partial wages, loss of

¹⁶ On the cultural construction of childhood, See, Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*; Mause, *The History of Childhood*. On the role of colonialism and modernity in shaping the practices and imagination of childhood in India, see, Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*; Balagopalan, *Inhabiting 'Childhood'*; Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission*.

¹⁷ Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*; Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*. On child labour in industrial and artisanal settings in Colonial India see, Roy, "Apprenticeship and Industrialization in India, 1600-1930" in Epstein, Prak, and Zanden, *Technology, Skills and the Pre-Modern Economy in the East and the West*; Benjamin, 'Child Labour in History'.

¹⁸ Kuznesof, "The Puzzling Contradictions of Child Labour".

the child's labour, and an increased financial burden on the family budget, workers told that they were ready to bear the cost. In their writings (community histories), oral testimonies, and memoranda to the government, they demanded education for their children. We will see that between their low wages and large expenditures, workers created a space for education. Instead of focussing on how the necessities of labour prevented workers from going to schools, I study how workers made schooling part of their lives and how poverty and exclusions from the education system constrained their desires. How and why did they negotiate their poverty so as to be able to pursue education? To what extent were their desires for education gendered? Was the progress of these desires linear and did it result in what workers dreamed of? By exploring the views and life histories of workers, I will answer these questions.

Night, like childhood, was another site to achieve the impossible. Workers did not consider learning restricted to childhood; they pursued education at all stages of their life and at work stations, familial sites, neighbourhoods, and markets. Adult workers especially carved out the night as a temporal space to meet their desires. Instead of spending the night time to get much needed sleep after a day's hard labour, workers attended night schools and visited library reading rooms. The night became the site for illiterate workers to learn literary skills, to know about the scientific working of machines, and to master new skills such as typing, book-keeping, and accounting. Night was also the time when they pursued their intellectual desires of reading sacred and secular literature, writing poems and prose, and imparting education to their brethren.

Dreams of transgressing class and leaving destitution behind did not always result in the actual transcendence from the position of marginality. Though some students did reach to college and became teachers, clerks, low grade officials and supervisors in their lives.¹⁹ The

¹⁹ In 1882, there were a few students from the low castes such as Lohar, Barhai, Sonar, and Ahir in the Canning College, Lucknow which was mainly attended by the middle class and the sons of landed elites (Taluqdars). See, *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, 459.

problem of poverty, the lack of access to schooling, discrimination in classrooms, the need for a wage, and the need for unwaged labour within the family not only suggests that many could not send their children to schools, but that if they did, many were forced to suspend the school without completing their educations. Childhood was constrained by the practices of employing children for labour—both paid and unpaid—among the working classes. Extreme poverty and family debt was another constraint that forced labouring parents to send their small children to factories and to workshops. For schools, children required clothes, slates, books, pen, and a nominal fee. As children of the labouring poor socialised in particular ways due to their poverty and the caste norms imposed by dominant groups. Their entry into schools required breaking of these structures, which was not always possible. Often Dalit students had to sit separately from the other students and harassed for their caste status. Likewise, the night was constrained by the necessity of work, the lack of housing, and the weakening of body. It was the only time for workers to perform usual house activities, to visit friends and relatives, and to take a long recess.

I show that workers had to empty these life moments from the burdens and constraints to use them for realising their dreams. And it became possible because workers had relatively greater control over these moments and they were less disciplined by the control of employers' clock and gaze. However, once a recognised site of emancipatory politics, these moments came under the scrutiny and control of the state and employers. The control of leisure time and childhood emerged as a broad arena of conflict in the twentieth century. They became means for the state and employers to create a disciplined, trained, industrious, loyal, and settled work force. Both childhood and the night emerged as sites to socialise workers and would-be workers into working class habits, trade skills, and labouring attitudes. By introducing night shifts and establishing industrial, factory, night, and technical schools, working men's institutes, and night-time libraries for workers, employers sought to produce certain kind of working body.

And when workers struggled to control and make claims over the childhood of their children, and over the night, employers increasingly created new strategies to colonise these two moments by imposing new rules and altering the curricula of the working class schools.

When we shift our lens to these two sites, we get a nuanced labour history—a history of working lives where they were not just ‘working hands’, but concerned parents refiguring the childhood of their children and adult readers and intellectuals who pursued emancipatory politics through the acts of reading, writing, and imagining new careers. The two moments also give us a consolidated perspective on working lives. While the first moment locates working lives in a generational cycle, the second allows us to study the everyday cycle of day and night. The two moments provide an opportunity to enter into the intimate world of working class life in a way that is hitherto unexplored. In the following section, I will elaborate the nature of workers’ desires and the anxieties of various elites with regard to the mobility of the labouring poor. The attempt is to contextualise the research questions that this thesis answers.

The Archive of Desires and Anxieties

For centuries the labouring castes in India have been subjected to immobility and poverty. Low wages, debt, late wage payment, lack of land ownership, unequal access to education, and caste ideologies kept lower and “untouchable” castes as servants of the upper and middle castes. “Gagrí Dáná, Súd Utáná” (As soon as a Sudra has a goblet full of corn he becomes proud, that is to say, he must be constantly kept to live from hand to mouth [lest he might go on strike.]) was one of the common proverbs of the elites (unch ját) in north India.²⁰ The mobility of the labouring castes outside the set geographical and socio-economic boundaries was discouraged and perceived as insubordination. Their movements were controlled, disciplined, loosened, tightened, and transformed at the will of those who controlled their labour—planters, factory

²⁰ Enclosure 2, Rai Sahab Babu Rama Charana’s Dissent Note; Indian Franchise Committee, 1932, IOR/Q/IFC/73, *BL* (hereafter *British Library*).

owners, missionaries, the colonial state officials, upper and middle castes—the elites. Whenever possible the powerful moved the labouring poor from one regime of immobility to another. From fields to factories. From the fringes of villages to the slums of cities. From agrarian bondage to indentured labour. From pit looms to machine looms. From pasture fields to cultivable lands. From the formal economy to the informal economy. From the tyranny of the landed elites to the gentle settlement of missionaries. From producing for themselves to producing for capitalists. And from one nation to another nation. The labouring poor were forced to move from their homes either due to the crisis of one labouring regime or by the lure of new labouring regimes.²¹ Uncontrolled mobility of the labouring poor across the border of class and region constantly worried those in the power and those in the control of their labour.²² Labour and economic history has mapped these regimes of labour movement and labour control very well. It is the migration of the labouring poor across the class and caste privileges through education and the counter education defence wall that the dominants created to control that passage has been neglected. To unravel the issue of anxiety and desire, I will begin with two related but very contrasting socio-economic conflicts that began to unfold remarkably at the site of education since the late nineteenth century. The roots of these conflicts are both ancient and modern.

1. First is the idea of status quo. A son of a doctor should be a doctor, a daughter of maid should be a maid, and a son of labourer should be a labourer. Lives are prescribed. Humans are to be content in their given compartments and accept the roles that elites distribute. Plato argued that humans should have chance to develop their mind and body to serve their natural callings. Any deep-rooted change in the social status quo was

²¹ Bhattacharya, “Predicaments of Mobility: Peddlers and Itinerants in Nineteenth-century North-Western India”; Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem*.

²² The present large scale refugee migration from east to west has produced fierce anxieties about the collapse of the socio-economic order, leading to the rise of right-wing political sentiments and politics in the West and elsewhere.

feared from Plato to the Puráanas, from early modern aristocrats to Gandhi, and from feudalism to capitalism.²³ Within this prescription, identities have been attached with certain innate qualities that define one's representative self which are decided by one's location in class, ethnicity, family, region, gender, community, and caste. Constitution of these innate qualities differ from time to time and region to region. Thus to read about workers in the nineteenth and twentieth century official documents is to see them as ignorant and illiterate subjects, as someone not interested in the project of education. And such an understanding of the labouring castes was often mediated through the emerging official knowledge of caste.²⁴ To read about Dalit women in the upper-middle caste popular literature of this time is to visualise them as vamps, overtly sexual, and victims.²⁵ To talk of Indian factory workers was to discuss their inefficiency in comparison to European factory workers. These social images helped to build a discourse that justified marginalisation.

2. Second is the issue of people discarding their given identities. Those who are born as workers do not always live and die as workers. A Chamar peasant's children in our times rarely want to be a Chamar peasant. The same can be said about agrarian landless labourers, artisans, and factory workers.²⁶ People have not been sticking to their place. Such unwanted movements from the assigned place have produced images of social chaos in the past. In the Puranic texts of the third and the fourth century, the

²³ On caste in ancient and medieval India see, Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India; Some Economic Aspects of the Caste System in Ancient India*; *Early Medieval Indian Society*; Smith, *Classifying the Universe*; Ambedkar, *Who Were the Shudras?*; Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*; Thapar, *Clan, Caste and Origin Myths in Early India*; Jaiswal, 'Caste'.

²⁴ On the construction of colonial sociological knowledge see, Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*; Dirks, *Castes of Mind*; Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination", 314–39. Kaviraj, S., "The Imaginary Institution of India" in Chatterjee and Pandey, *Subaltern Studies VII*, 1–39; Sundar, "Caste as Census Category".

²⁵ Gupta, *The Gender of Caste*.

²⁶ See the story of the Super 30 Ramanujan School of Mathematics, 'super30.org/Index.html'. Contemporary India is full of inspirational stories: rickshaw puller's son becoming engineers, maid's daughter turning into bureaucrats, and cultivator's son becoming doctors.

intermingling of castes through marriages or occupations, the refusal of Sudras (lower classes) to perform hereditary labour, and the lower castes worshipping gods and reading sacred books had not only invoked the notion of a whole new epoch—Kaliyuga (a new age of darkness in the Hindu cosmology) but also resulted in the birth of ‘horrible castes’ such as Chandala.²⁷ What caste is and how it operated over centuries has been changing and so has been the nature of resistance to caste ideology. From the Bhakti traditions to a celebration of poverty, from the refusal to perform the tasks of Sudrahood to claiming a Kshatriya status, there has been continuous change in resistance over centuries. However, as Kesavan Veluthat shows that epochs of disorder produced and legitimised new calls for re-establishing the old order.²⁸ Question is when, why, and how desires constituting transgression of the norms emerge as a pattern? This thesis suggests that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was one such crucial moment when transgressive desires took birth on a large scale among various labouring groups. It was the time when a class of mobile wage workers was produced by the colonial economy; rural peasants and artisans were uprooted from their fields and workshops; and labouring groups were in search of new careers.²⁹ The labouring poor increasingly used schooling as a way to get out. In return, elites also evolved newer strategies to control and regulate them such as through controlled education, welfare activities, and housing schemes along with using pre-capitalist strategies—caste ideology, violence, and community regulations.

²⁷ Sharma, *Early Medieval Indian Society*, 18–20.

²⁸ For a long historical view on caste see, Veluthat, “Making the Best of a Bad Bargain”; Guha, *Beyond Caste*.

²⁹ An interesting debate among scholars took place over the increase and stability of the agrarian labouring population in the nineteenth century. See, Patel, *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan*; Krishnamurty, “The Growth of Agricultural Labour in India—a Note”; Kumar, *Land and Caste in South India*. Neeladri Bhattacharya in his essay problematized sources and analytical frameworks of these studies by unpacking the bias of census numbers. He suggested that there was an increase in the number of pauperised peasants who were both landless and marginal land-owning peasants, Dalits and non-Dalits. See, Bhattacharya, *Labouring Histories*.

Education galvanised the two opposing discourses and realities in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The two discourses were entangled. As in ancient and medieval India, the unfolding of the second discourse in colonial India produced a new crisis in the first discourse.

The desire to be educated, to be called literate, and to be more than a worker got registered in workers' actions who wrote about it in their community history books, poetry, and letters and pronounced it to the colonial government during commissions and enquiries. Mukta Salve, a literate "untouchable" female student of Savitribai and Jotibha Phule, wrote in one of her essays (the earliest published text by any Dalit girl) in 1855, 'Only the medicine of knowledge will cure and heal you [Dalits]. It will take you away from beliefs and superstitions. You will become righteous and moral. It will stop exploitation. People who treat you like animals, will not dare to treat like that anymore. So please work hard and study. Get educated and become good human beings.'³⁰ Salve was writing in a context when the schools in her region were opened for the first time to Dalits with the help of a few benevolent Brahmins, supported by the British government. Otherwise in the past if the ruling elites would come to know of the education of Dalits, they vehemently protested it, 'How dare they get educated? Do these untouchables expect the Brahmins to hand over their official duties to them and move around with their shaving kits, shaving the heads of widows? With such remarks he [Baji Rao Peshwa] would punish them.'³¹ Dalit agrarian labourers since the 1880s will put forward a strong demand for education and non-labouring positions for their children, which as we will see, by the 1930s will take the shape as a political demand of basic 'civic rights'.

Elites' writings are constantly disturbed by the voices of the marginalised groups. A worker despising manual work or aspiring higher in the life was a universal complaint in the writings of colonial officials, employers, and Indian elites. Insubordination was one of their favourite

³⁰ Salve, "Mang Maharachya Dukhvisayi (About the Grief of the Mangs and the Mahars)". The essay was first published in *Dnyanodaya*, 15.02.1855 & 01.03.1855 in two parts. I am thankful to Jana Tschurennev for this reference.

³¹ Ibid.

topics. It is in these anxieties, fears, and complaints of the elites that an archive of the poor's desires can be unravelled.

Missionaries were one set of people who wrote about such 'lofty' desires of the labouring castes, especially of Dalits who converted to Christianity. For instance, a missionary wrote in one of the prominent missionary journal, the *Harvest Field*:

born into the traditional state of the "outcaste", taking their allotted place in a social ladder made up of all classes reaching from those who furnish the labour (without any assistance in that labour from "education") at the bottom, to those at the top whose two chief distinctions are that they are "educated" and that they do not labour, it is no wonder that Indian Christians, even more than American Negro, have come to feel that "education" will emancipate the uneducated from labour.³²

Dalits' strong belief that education would emancipate them from the social humiliation and the regimes of bonded agrarian labour is dealt extensively in the second chapter. Like missionaries, the upper caste and middle class Indians presented the labouring castes' desires for education and non-labouring careers as producing a new social and economic crisis. Their expressions are best noted in the vernacular media. Vernacular newspapers frequently carried news of labouring castes abandoning their divinely ordained hereditary positions. An excerpt from the *Cawnpore Gazette* dated 23 August 1897 read:

the country is exposed to a number of misfortunes such as poverty, famine, plague, cholera, earthquake, and c., and there is no knowing what new calamities are still in store for it. Famine, earthquake and plague are natural calamities and must be due to causes known to God. But the question is what has led to the poverty, increase of religious prejudice and crime, and so on? The writer is of opinion that these evils are due to the spread of education among the lower classes of people who have abandoned their hereditary professions, look

³² *The Harvest Field*, April, 1915, 173.

to Government service as the only means of gaining livelihood, and are misbehaving themselves, their moral character not having been improved by education. Government has lost confidence in the respectable as well as the lower classes of the community. General education is thus the root of all the evil. The writer does not mean that the lower classes should be excluded from schools. Both the higher and the lower classes should be allowed to receive education, but only the former should be eligible for appointment to posts under Government; the latter being compelled to stick to their hereditary professions after completing their education. If such policy were adopted, the country would soon rise in prosperity [*sic*].³³

Education of the labouring castes was closely linked to their desire for abandoning hereditary manual occupations. It was cited as a reason for increasing poverty, religious prejudice, and crime in the country. According to elites, the solution to the problem ranged from exclusion of the labouring groups from schools to forced immobility. An Urdu weekly, the *Anjuman-i-Hind* (Lucknow), wrote on 26th February, 1898:

as Government had opened its schools and colleges to all sections of the community, the sons of oilmen, distillers, shoe-makers and other such low classes of people have received education and obtained posts under Government. But it is very disagreeable to persons of high castes to appear as suitors or vakils before a low caste Judge, or to place their sons under the tuition of a low caste school master. Government should regard the feelings of the people and exclude the lower classes from schools and the public service.³⁴

Indian elites feared that educated Dalits and lower castes would take their place. For them it was not just an economic humiliation but was also a social humiliation. To be an upper caste

³³ Selection from the Vernacular Newspapers published in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh (variously titled), (hereafter *SVN*) August, 1897, 588.

³⁴ *SVN*, No. 9, 1898, 122.

was to have a right to subordinate the lower castes. A pleader at the Aligarh High Court, Babu Totaram, told the Education Commission, 1882:

The influential classes do not approve of the diffusion of learning amongst the masses of the people; on the contrary, they are positively against it. First of all, they do not like the idea that persons belonging to the lower classes should receive education. *Most of them feel it an insult that dhobis and chamars residing in their villages should be educated.* The lower classes living in villages owned by Thakurs enjoy little or no liberty in these respects but their position in cities and towns are not so bad as in the villages, and they scarcely meet with any repulse or discouragement. The unfavourable attitude of the influential people towards the lower classes is also due to their groundless fear that education, extended to all without any distinction; will directly weaken and interfere with their rank and position in society.³⁵

Seeing a few educated Dalits in the colonial offices, a section of elites behaved as if they had been humiliated publically and the moral order of the society had collapsed. The fear that in specific settings the social world was being turned upside down was constantly invoked to generate an upper caste solidarity against the education of the labouring castes. Opinions ranged from excluding the lower classes from schools to giving a controlled education in order to maintain the status quo. Babu Doorga Parshad, an Honorary Magistrate of Gorakhpur, told the Education Commission clearly that:

The higher class of people are in favour of the education of all higher caste people. They would tolerate the education of the lower order of the middle classes, but they consider it useless and sometimes mischievous. They are, however, decidedly averse to all education among the very low caste people.³⁶

³⁵ *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, 333. Emphasis Added.

³⁶ *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, 181.

On 17th November, 1893, the *Azád*, published:

The editor is not opposed to popular education; but he must assert this much, that the ignorance of the lower classes of men cannot be the cause of the disturbances. The result of the indiscriminate manner in which education is being now imparted has been to wean (most of the people) from the avocations and callings of their ancestors. If the uneducated masses are incited to commit disturbances at the instigation of the educated, they are likely to follow suit with the latter still more readily when they have themselves received education. But no; the absence of education in the low people is not the cause of the disturbances; the latter are the necessary outcome of the English mode of education and administration of justice. If the low people are to be educated, they should be instructed in the principles of agriculture and manufacture, and special schools opened for the purpose, so that they might usefully apply their newly acquired knowledge to their ancestral occupations.³⁷

The elite discourse was not a simple discourse of elites opposing the education of the poor, blocking the mobility of the marginalised, and excluding the labouring castes from schools. There was a multiplicity within the discourse of elites. Internal divisions within elites produced a complex web of contradictory voices. While a few were hostile and apathetic to the idea of educating the labouring castes, others, including some philanthropists and landed elites, were spending large sums of money on establishing schools for the masses or distributing a more controlled education for Dalits and lower castes.³⁸ Visions to educate the masses and anxieties about the education of the labouring castes were present simultaneously, and this defined the ambivalence of elite discourse. We need to situate these desires among landed elites, employers, and industrialists for spreading education to the masses as part of the effort to forge

³⁷ *SVN*, 1893, 514.

³⁸ *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, See the oral evidence of Munshi Durga Prashad, Inspector of Schools, Oudh, 187; on elites desiring the education of low and high castes, see the oral evidence of Babu Harish Chandra, 196; on landed elites spending large sums of money on the education of the masses, see the oral evidence of Raja Siva Prashad, 315.

a new relationship with the poor, and anxieties of middle class elites as part of a competing environment where children of them also fighting for a space in the colonial educational system and the emerging job market. Their competition was not just limited to the labouring castes but extended to many upper castes such as Rajputs, sections of Muslims, Europeans, Eurasians, and Christians.³⁹

What a section of elites (Brahmans, Banias, and Kayasths) wanted was an obstruction to the passage of mobility for the labouring poor. They blamed the colonial government for opening schools and indiscriminately distributing education to the lower classes.⁴⁰ These elites conveyed to the government that the education of the labouring castes not only resulted in the crumbling of indigenous socio-economic order but also in their humiliation. Education, various upper and middle castes asserted, was their privilege. While highlighting this, they were suggesting that education was not just an individual experience in India but was tied to the honour of caste community. Education and alleviation of one Dalit was equal to the humiliation of the whole upper caste community. Likewise, among Dalit communities, as Manuela Ciotti's anthropological work on the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh shows that education of a community member symbolised the education of the whole community.⁴¹ Education was a marker of class and caste difference, and by claiming education lower orders were silently rebelling against traditional hierarchies, the sacred division of mental and manual labour, and centuries old subjugation and humiliation.

Feeling insulted over the education of dhobis, chamars, and the like, socially conservative elites used the opportunity of the Education Commission to communicate their concerns to the colonial masters sitting in England. They told the commission that the labouring castes were unsuitable for education and education was unsuitable for their natural callings. They narrated

³⁹ *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, 17.

⁴⁰ Chaturvedi, *The History of Rural Education*.

⁴¹ Ciotti, "In the Past We Were a bit "Chamar"".

how uninterested the lower classes were in the colonial project of education, how they lacked cultural values of appreciating schooling and education, and how difficult it was for the labouring castes to attend schools. Maulvi Zain-ul-Abdin, the Sub-Judge of Mirzapur, framed multiple concerns in the following manner:

The agriculturists cannot but consider it a great misfortune to divert the young ones from this branch of labour. If the workman in the same way turn their children from their own calling to education alone, these will in time forget their art, and the country will eventually suffer. These are the considerations which make the parents keep their sons from school. But in some villages, where the landholders are in such a prosperous state that they can dispense with the services of their children by sending them to school, but they, however, do not derive benefit from these institutions. The great difficulty, however, is that the above named class of people does not value education. They cannot understand how education can be of use to them in practical life, coolies as they are. Under these circumstances, I cannot understand the necessity of establishing schools in places where they are not needed. In this class those persons who are little better off than coolies, but follow a regular calling, such as carpenters who construct village carts, wheels, and other implements of husbandry, may see the advantage of sending their sons to Government indigenous schools. But a workman who goes from house to house to earn his livelihood can never think of educating his children.⁴²

Colonial officials were sympathetic to the concerns of the Indian elites of both types. Wherever possible, the colonial government relied on 'native' elites for funding mass education. Besides, what was happening in India was not specific to India. Their own country was recently witnessing similar rebellions from the lower orders and contradictory voices in the elite discourse. The political and industrial necessity to educate the lower orders always came with

⁴² *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, 459.

fears and anxieties. In pronouncing fears over the Parochial Schools Bill debate in the British Parliament in 1807, the concerns of the Tory MP, Davies Gilbert were similar to the concerns of Indian elites. Only the word ‘caste’ was replaced by the word ‘class’.

However specious the project might be of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would, in effect, be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them the virtue of subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as is evident in the manufacturing counties; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors; and, in a few years, the result would be that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power towards them and to furnish the executive magistrates with more vigorous powers than are now in force. Besides, if this Bill were to pass into law, it would go to burthen the country with a most enormous and incalculable expense . . .⁴³

Gilbert strongly argued that education of the poor classes would result in four things among workers: abandoning of the manual labouring positions, insubordination, rise of rebellious and factious nature, and disloyalty. Fear of worker-children lying idle, getting trained into ‘vices’, and wasting their labour in streets was another angle of the debate.⁴⁴ To avoid such situations, education given to the labouring orders required tight control. As a result, practical and industrial education was designed, and was offered in industrial, workshop, parish, rugged, and other working class schools. “It was a maxim of the governing classes . . . workers of any grade must be educated to be efficient in that grade, and to remain in it. A narrow ladder leading out

⁴³ Corcoran, “Industrial Education”, 268.

⁴⁴ Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor in England*.

of that area may be tolerated: a broad highway would mean a social revolution”, wrote one Irish professor, T. Corcoran.⁴⁵

The fears of modern societies were pervasive. As much as education was wanted to reform and produce an ideal working class, it was simultaneously feared that it would collapse the socio-economic order.

Though attentive to the complaints of the elites, the colonial government had to maintain its liberal and progressive posture. It distinguished itself from the earlier indigenous regimes which were unjust, despotic, and conservative. Unlike the indigenous schools, the colonial government asserted that its schools were open for all castes and classes.⁴⁶ It believed that the poor and the labouring castes could not be left out. They had to be made complicit in the colonial project through pedagogy.

However, the colonial government’s attitude towards the implementation of its liberal education policies was ambivalent. The result was that either the children of the labouring castes were excluded from the school or their parents had to fight violent and legal battles against local elites.⁴⁷ B. H. Badley, an American Methodist Missionary residing in Lucknow testified to the Education Commission that ‘lower castes, chamars, sweepers, and others, are practically excluded from all [except missionary] schools . . . A pandit in a village would throw up his place rather than admit the son of a chamar, however promising the boy might be.’⁴⁸

At another level, the colonial state was facing a wider educational crisis. The colonial officials found that along with Dalits and the lower castes, the lower rungs of the middle and upper castes also used education to escape the regimes of manual labour. Nesfield wrote, “Even the sons of banyas, if they attend our school (which is not often), frequently despise the paternal trade, and consider that the education which they have received is too good to be

⁴⁵ Corcoran, “Industrial Education”.

⁴⁶ Nesfield, “Results of Primary Education”.

⁴⁷ Constable, “Sitting on the School Verandah”.

⁴⁸ *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, Evidence of Rev. B. H. Badley, 150.

thrown away on keeping a shop-book in ban Kaithi penmanship.”⁴⁹ Nesfield, though an advocate of the education of the poor, strongly believed that education among ‘natives’ should not lead to the abandoning of hereditary trades. Within himself, Nesfield contained visions of liberalism and conservatism together. He strongly asserted that colonial education had reached to the lower classes, if not to “untouchables”. At the same time, he also asserted that colonial education should not lead to a subversion of the traditional social structures, values, and norms.⁵⁰

Colonial officials began to see such effects as a direct result of their educational policy which was too literary. The Home Secretary, A. P. MacDonnell, while writing the first memorandum on technical education in 1885, described the situation as ‘the great educational problem of the day.’⁵¹ He wrote, “Our schools and colleges are yearly adding to the crowd of young men whom our system of education has rendered discontented with the sphere of life to education which they were born without fitting them for another.”⁵² Presence of such a class was considered ‘a mischief and danger’.⁵³ MacDonnell’s memorandum would mark the beginning of an official industrial and technical education policy in India. He was writing in a context where other colonial officials were also solving the complex riddle of caste, education, and notions of manual labour and service class jobs. E. C. Buck, a Bengal civil servant, passionately collected petitions of the poor educated youths who would only settle for a non-labouring job. In their petitions, government jobs had acquired the status of a symbolic cultural capital. One of the petitioner wrote to the telegraph office,

Sir,

⁴⁹ *Education Commission Evidence*, NWPO, 253.

⁵⁰ Nesfield, “Results of Primary Education”.

⁵¹ MacDonnell’s Note on Technical Education in India in Bhargava, *Selection from Education Records*, 12.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Letter no. C15 EI, dated 15th Jan, 1888 from Colonel J. G. Forbes to the Secretary to the Govt., NWPO, File No. 90, The Technical Education Committee, Educational Department, 1893, United Provinces, *Uttar Pradesh State Archives (UPSA)*.

I pray please to give me some action for I am very poor boy I have no one to help me even so father for it so it seemed in thy good sight, you give the Telegraph Office, and another work what us your wish I am very poor boy, this understand what is your wish my father I am your son this understand what is your wish.

Your Sirvent. [sic]⁵⁴

On the other hand, elite Indians interpreted the educational crisis in their own ways. One of the saying went:

पढ़े फ़ारसी बेचें तेल, यह देखो कुदरत का खेल⁵⁵

(Behold the vagaries of fate, he is educated in Persian and still sells oil.)

This disgrace for industries and arts among Indians forced the colonial state to diversify its educational system. MacDonnell in his memorandum calculated that out of 3,095,000 students under public institutions of which 2,665,000 students were receiving primary education, only 430,000 were attending any professional or technical education in early 1880s.⁵⁶ By the 1880s, a dual educational system was evolved centring on industrial, practical, and technical education on the one hand, and on literary education on the other hand. There was an attempt to shift the attention of people towards industries and arts which needed a class of industrial leaders, experts, and managers and a class of workers. Besides, the colonial state's own increasing infrastructure of the colonial economy—railways, telegraph, workshops—needed educated and trained labour of different orders.

The two processes—education of the labouring and middle castes into industrial occupations and the need for a trained and educated labour for existing industrial

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21-22.

⁵⁵ Chaturvedi, *The History of Rural Education*, 27 Persian was court language till 1835. .

⁵⁶ *Selection from Education Records*, 17.

enterprises—resulted in the setting up of varied types of industrial courses and training institutes catering to different classes and castes. Roughly, for the educated middle and elite classes, a few higher technical institutes such as technical schools, engineering colleges, and vocational institutes were established and for the labouring castes such as artisans and factory workers, also considered to be illiterate classes, more practical and industrial labour inclined institutes were opened such as industrial, railway, and craft schools. However, the limited financial budget of the colonial state and the on-site industrial training of the recruits limited the scope of such institutions which left the field of educating labouring castes into the hands of benevolent Indian elites (factory employers, social reformers, nationalists, and local officials) and other European private actors such as the Christian missionaries. From these different traditions, a variety of educational institutions had emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for the poor.



Types of schooling for the labouring poor.

In my thesis, I will discuss the nature of these different institutions that emerged to educate the labouring poor in the colonial period. What was common and different in these institutions? How did they help in maintaining or unsettling the regime of colonial and indigenous capital? How did the desires of the labouring classes and of the employers of labour unfold at these sites? I argue that throughout these institutions, there was a continuity in terms of curriculum and syllabus which, though being shaped by the demands of the establishment, shared the element of containing the labouring classes within the fold of labour. Even a narrow ladder for the labouring poor was not tolerated. Wherever opportunities emerged for them to claim higher posts (for example, through government industrial and technical schools), often these positions were easily grabbed by the middle classes who were assisted by the upper and middle caste networks (Chap. 1). The issues of labour mobility came to the fore. Modern education for the

labouring castes in India, as we will see, was designed to kill the desires for mobility and to make the poorer classes suitable for production.

Education as a site in colonial India was as much a site of workers' incorporation, subordination, and socialisation into the fold of labour as much it was of workers' desires of not wanting to be a worker. Educational institutions did open a new world of possibilities for workers but they also often closed the opportunity doors for them. Ability of the labouring caste students to weave a new future for themselves often depended on individual trajectories and their capacity to negotiate contrary processes and the constraints of working lives. The logic of subordination was never so easy to counter for the labouring castes, even though working classes were full of transgressive desires, dreams, and aspirations. The story of labour-capital disintegration and integration was entangled, producing newer socio-economic conflicts through the site of education.

Themes and Historiography

The figure of the educated labouring poor or a worker desiring education is absent in South Asian educational and labour historiography. Educational historians have predominantly focussed on the educational experiences of the middle and elite classes. Although scholars working on caste have highlighted the issue of Dalit education, they have framed it mainly through the lens of Dalits' struggle for social equality. Labour historians have neglected the question of education, schooling, and reading cultures among workers. In a way, both the sub-disciplines constantly reinforce a long held view of elites and official writings that the labouring poor were illiterate and distant from the world of education—a conclusion that my thesis will challenge in four different chapters. In the following two sections, I will chart out specific issues of the education and labour historiography that I will respond to and build upon.

I Labour and Labour History

Within Indian labour historiography, workers are devoid of any aspiration, future planning, and desire that take them beyond the regime of manual labour. In the general narrative, the worker remains in his or her working identity either performing labour or struggling for better wages, work conditions, and protective legislation. A worker lives and dies as a worker. They never overcome their working identity. They travel in between multiple identities—caste, religion, class, region, and neighbourhood, but never leave the fold of labour.⁵⁷ In contrast, by focussing on the life histories of a few workers, I show that workers lived a creative life—a life in which they were constantly struggling to receive better terms and conditions for them and their children. This had implications on labour relations, self-perception, and their relationships with work.

By the 1980s concerns within the labour historiography had shifted from explaining the failure of modernisation and industrialisation in India to explain the failure of subjectivity transformation among workers. Dipesh Chakrabarty argued that workers and worker-leaders were embedded in primordial identities such as of caste and religion and in semi-feudal hierarchical relationships which occluded the development of class consciousness, in the strict Marxian sense. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar offering a more seductive explanation argued that workers' subjectivities, including community consciousness, were very much produced and shaped by the uncertainties and the oppressive conditions of the labour market, workers' resistance, and working-class neighbourhoods.⁵⁸ Caste was no longer viewed as a premodern remnant, but was historically constituted and central to the mobilisation of labour. However, the political manifestation of class unity was either fragmented by primordial pre-capitalist identities or was presented as a conjectural and momentary phenomenon. Chitra Joshi has

⁵⁷ Joshi, *Lost Worlds*.

⁵⁸ Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*.

argued that in both the accounts, one purely cultural and the other purely economic and political deterministic, the everyday of labour politics and the worker's agency was lost. Moving beyond these binaries through her lucid narratives of working lives in Kanpur, Joshi historicised multiple identities of workers and their fluidity. She presented an image of workers who straddled city and village, the formal and informal economy, and employment and unemployment.⁵⁹ While workers moved from one occupation to the other, they never crossed their traditional boundary of manual labour.

Such studies have presented and discussed the binary of caste and class as the binary of culture and economy. On the one hand, they present a very culture-centric understanding of caste⁶⁰ and on the other hand, caste is presented as an identity which either withered away in the industrial space or took new shapes.⁶¹ Class and caste, as Rupa Viswanath suggests, are not two different entities that can be 'correlated' but are 'ontologically inseparable'.⁶² To be a Dalit was also to be a labourer of some sorts. An "untouchable" was both an impure and a servant. The worker, I suggest, fought the battle against their fixed positioning in caste and class together.

Besides, most narratives of workers' struggle against capital have been typically framed through the lens of either collective labour militancy and protests or individual resistance at the workshop floor.⁶³ The particular social category of worker is analysed in its positivity—workers wanting to be a worker or remaining as a worker. Workers not wanting to be a worker, this thesis suggests, resulted in a powerful indirect critique of capitalism as a

⁵⁹ Joshi, *Lost Worlds*.

⁶⁰ Viswanath, "Rethinking Caste and Class"; "Spiritual Slavery, Material Malaise: "untouchables" and Religious Neutrality in Colonial South India"; See also, Natrajan, *The Culturalization of Caste in India*.

⁶¹ Much of the labour historiography has been battling about the primacy and the role of caste and class or culturism and economism among industrial workers. See, Mohapatra, *Situating the Renewal*; Joshi, "Histories of Indian Labour".

⁶² Viswanath, "Rethinking Caste and Class", 35–36.

⁶³ For a review of historiography see, Joshi, *Lost Worlds*; Hanagan and Stephenson, *Confrontation, Class Consciousness, and the Labor Process*; Lüdtke, "Cash, Coffee-breaks, Horseplay"; Ahuja, *Working Lives & Worker Militancy*.

system that was interested in keeping workers in the labouring fold and re-skilling them for its own diverse labour needs. The desire subverted the elites' attempt to a neat distribution of power and socio-economic roles and modern states' policies of maintaining differentiated curriculum for labouring classes.

Scholars studying the educational behaviours of American workers have explained the working class educational demand through the "people's demand theory", passion for education among workers, and parents desiring to enhance the economic welfare of their children in a wage labour system.⁶⁴ Michael Katz interpreted the expansion of public education system within the rapidly industrialising America not as a result of popular support for education but as an imposition of dominant's ideological hegemony which intended to legitimise the industrial social order.⁶⁵ I suggest that such explanations tend to ignore the politics behind workers' aspirations and desires. The larger ontological questions that working classes were struggling with, or battles that they fought over differentiated contents of educational curriculum need proper analysis. Workers' appropriation of education could not be merely seen as their accommodation into capitalist system, it was also part of their political struggles to withdraw themselves from the manual labouring life which questioned the very existence of the state-protected capital-labour nexus. It was not always a direct confrontation, but one which had power to unsettle the rational of the capitalist commodity production and the reproduction of social relations.

It was not so much actions of workers per se but the desires of workers that forced labour employers to take precautions. This struggle which was both tangible and intangible has been systematically erased from the pages of history, both of capital and the labour. Karl Marx writing about capital and its exploitation of the proletariat failed to comment on the

⁶⁴ Hogan, "Education and the Making of the Chicago Working Class, 1880-1930."

⁶⁵ Katz, "The Origins of Public Education"; Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform*.

revolutionary repercussions of workers' potentialities of not wanting to be workers. He theorised the particular social category of worker in its positivity, of it wanting to become a revolutionary working class. Workers' desires were far more radical in terms of repercussions but unlike the socialist visions, it was not aimed at directly displacing the capitalist system. Such desires had a strange relationship with capitalism as often to not be a worker was the result of openings of education, opportunities, and jobs produced by the capitalist system. However, such desires were independent enough to undermine the capitalist system. Enemies of such desires were not just capitalists but also wealthy upper and middle castes. Workers' battles were not restricted to issues emanating in the present but included issues that had happened in the distant past (centuries of exclusion, confinement to certain degrading manual jobs) and issues that belonged to future (career opportunities and place in the knowledge economy). Working class desires forced the capitalist system to loosen itself by initiating welfare programme (education, housing, health benefits, etc.).

Reading the artisanal poetry and prose of French workers of the 1830s and 60s, Jacques Rancière (1981) put forward a powerful narrative of workers' emancipation that radically differed from the hitherto conventional Marxist and left's understanding of class struggle. Against the classic picture of a unified, collective, and 'work-loving' working class, Rancière found that workers were bored of work. They struggled against the capitalist theft of their time and took to nights after their day's labour to express their socialist utopian dreams of a 'bourgeois civilisation without exploiters, a chivalry without lords, a mastery without masters or servants.'⁶⁶ What worried workers was not so much poverty, unfair wages, hunger, or the skill status, but capital's control over their time and 'the indefinite maintenance of the forces both of servitude and of domination'.⁶⁷ In other words, what workers dreamed of was a

⁶⁶ Rancière, *The Nights of Labor*, 48

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

withdrawal from the life of insubordination. Rancière refuted a reductionist labour history interpretation that reduced working lives to their work day, and their struggles into a single unitary struggle led by intellectual activists. In contrast, he talked of the handful of deserters who took to night, the period of recess to suspend the old hierarchies, order of things, and the divide between those who labour and who think. As Rancière has criticised Marx, Althusser, Jean-Paul Sartre and others for being elitist, treating the poor as intellectual objects, and reinforcing the societal separation between worker and thinker, Nick Hewlett criticised Rancière for doing the same. He accuses Rancière for selecting and excluding the subject of study at his will to suit his narrative.⁶⁸

While the desire of becoming something other than workers and the desire to not behave as workers remains central in Rancière's work, the desire of workers not wanting to be a manual labourer remains undertheorized. One does not get a sense if workers completely left the fold of labour. One also does not get a sense of the following questions. Why were such desires allowed to be bred by the capitalist state? How were the contradictory desires of workers controlled, brought to check, and transformed for capitalist benefit?

Some of the answers to these questions have been offered by the sociological work of Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb on the twentieth century American workers. They show that working class identity did not rest only on the calculations of material interests. They challenged the dictum that class struggles were "equal to calculations of material interests." According to the dictum, material hardships caused by the capitalist system made workers rebel and material rewards made them defend it. Looking at the internal dilemmas of Boston blue-collar workers, Sennett and Cobb found that workers were engaged in new social conflicts in which workers competed for dignity, self-respect, and freedom—values which they believed middle and the professional class possessed. What motivated workers to seek non-labouring

⁶⁸ Hewlett, *Badiou, Balibar, Ranciere*, 104–5.

careers was not dollars and cents (the material interests) but the desire to be respected, to have self-control (freedom), and to be recognised as a dignified human which had been denied to them from their schooling to work life and by branding them as “average” and with labels such as “Ricca the janitor”. Sennett and Cobb also unravel the middle class world of ex-workers who experience another self-respect crisis as they feel that their new jobs behind desks are “unreal”. We will see that the labouring groups in India were plagued by similar ideas of respectability, self-control, and dignity. However, the ambivalent middle class world in which the escapee workers lived is not so much the focus of this thesis.

The unitary image of a revolutionary class conscious worker got further destabilised in Carolyn Steedman’s wonderful biographical work, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986), from a gendered perspective which was silent in Rancière’s work. Through the personal history of her working mother and her own childhood, Steedman tells us that what her mother wanted in her life were real things and ‘real entities’—money, glamour, a prince, and most importantly a New Look dress—things that her mother had been denied. Steedman questioned the gender and childhood blind Marxist cultural explanations of the class where the ‘granite like plot’ between exploiter and exploited, wage-labour and capital shaped the consciousness of workers. In contrast to a unified and homogenised picture of working class marching for a better future which has no space for personal histories, she presented a picture of class consciousness that was not only acquired through the experiences of labour market and class-struggle but also through the “subterranean culture of longing”, the feeling of “terrible unfairness of things”, and the emotion of “envy” at all the stages of life including childhood which, in her case and that of her mother, was marked by “exclusion and difference.”⁶⁹

The above three writings have been a source of inspiration for this thesis and helped me to develop my own conceptual thinking. However, these writings present a contrast between

⁶⁹ Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, 6–15.

workers as militant, material, and unified on the one hand and as individuals struggling for social prestige, control over self, and accumulating middle class things on the other hand. The contradictions of working lives are being limited by taking one particular type of theoretical stand. I show that the most militant trade-union workers, such as Alve or Biwaji Nare who preached for working class unity, waged battles for better wages, and practiced militancy, also lived and advocated for an escapee politics (Chap. 4). Struggles to desert the class of workers were accompanied with struggles to improve the conditions of workers. They were not separate; the two complimented each other.

II Pedagogy for the Worker and the Reproduction of Capitalist Conditions

Since the 1960s, scholars interrogating the relationship between institutionalised education and workers in industrialised societies have questioned the liberal and functionalist readings of education as a neutral space, as doing its job of socialisation, and skilling masses. They questioned the quotidian belief in education as an equalising force. Instead, they showed that education in the capitalist system was/is a tool of social control and a means of reproducing social relations conducive to the sustenance and growth of capitalism and hierarchical social order.

Marxist scholars argued that schools were structured by the logic of capital and were embedded in the capitalist power relations. Louis Althusser, the French Marxist, while reconceptualising the role of the modern state within the Marxian framework and developing his thesis of *Ideological State Apparatuses* in the 1960s, argued that education was the dominant ideological apparatus of the bourgeoisie outside the workspace to produce conditions conducive for the production process. Schools, he found, not only trained workers in skills (reproduction of the skilled labour power) but also indoctrinated them to accept their submissive roles (conditions of production) in society.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, 133–54.

The Althusserian view was further elaborated in the researches of American scholars in the 1970s: Bowles and Gintis, Walter Feinberg, James Anderson, Henry Rosemont, Paul Violas, and Joel Spring among others.⁷¹ They explored how liberal education prepared working classes to take their natural place in society by training them in skills, habits, cultural norms, and attitudes of the corporate society. Bowles and Gintis asserted that changes in the school structure corresponded to changes in the social relations of production. The education system prepared the lower classes for labour markets and professional classes for the management. Schools replicated workplace conditions and socialised students in values, behavioural traits, skills, and dispositions necessary for the hierarchical structure of the labour market.⁷² Knowledge was distributed according to the social location of students, designed to place them in predetermined roles. One's future position was fixed by their class position and not by school achievements. Education just created the illusion of meritocracy.

Shifting the attention from the socio-economic reproductive powers of the education system to socio-cultural reproduction, French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron revolutionised the whole field of educational sociology in the 1970s. They argued that far from producing an equal and just society, schools have been invested in producing an unequal society. Institutions have hidden agendas in which actors and subjects participate in their reproduction because of their ignorance. Education reproduces class hierarchies in disguise in the name of merit, talent, and examination system. Educational institutions (universities) in capitalist societies (France) represent 'cultural capital' of dominants as 'natural', as criteria for examination which students from lower classes, who also make to the university, lack. This lack or difference is articulated in educational attainments through the logic of individual

⁷¹ For an overview of historiography, see, Altenbaugh, "Our Children Are Being Trained like Dogs and Ponies".

⁷² Bowles and Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*.

meritocracy and credentials, making the difference appear as “natural inequalities” and difficult to be grasped by students.⁷³ Inequality is invisible.

The existing reproduction approach had submerged the agency of students making them appear as passive, as having no culture of their own. The cultural production of the dominated was overlooked. This passivity got challenged in the ethnographies of Paul Willis who showed how working class ‘lads’ (in Hammertown, England) were active appropriators of ideology, reproduced their own conditions, and prepared for their own giving of manual labour by formulating an oppositional and counter-school culture against the authority of the school, teachers, and other youths. In Willis’ account, working class youth were sexist, racist, and masculine. They glorified manual labour, considered book learning as ‘feminine’, and ridiculed the authority of the school. Dispositions that boys developed in schools prepared them for shop floor. The school appeared as a site implicated in the cultural production and reproduction of both the dominant and the dominated where the culture of the former was not just imposed on the latter but was contested, struggled, and responded by the latter.⁷⁴

Critically looking and appreciating the work of the reproduction and production theories, Giroux and Apple shifted the attention to curriculum, textbooks, and classroom practices developing a critical sociology of curriculum. They highlighted both the reproductive and transformative powers of education, the power of human agency and human as the object of power. Michael Apple’s work showed that inequality is hidden in the school curriculum.⁷⁵ In their analysis, students actively interpret such texts, behaviours, and practices and produce new meanings and transformations. Giroux claims that reproduction is also the site of contestation, conflicts, and transformation.⁷⁶ For a powerful transformation, what is needed is a radical

⁷³ Bourdieu and Boltanski, *The Education System*, 142-143; Bourdieu et al., *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*.

⁷⁴ Willis, *Learning to Labour*, 175.

⁷⁵ Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*.

⁷⁶ Giroux, *Ideology, Culture, and the Process of Schooling*.

pedagogy where alternative public sphere, oppositional cultures, and critical pedagogy could be developed.

While the critical sociology of education has been severely criticised and rethought over the years from within, Jacques Rancière's critique of Bourdieu has recently received much attention among educationists.⁷⁷ Rancière critiqued the myth of explication which Bourdieu the sociologist, like Marx the philosopher, as emancipator uses to build their own authority by claims to enlighten and emancipate the oppressed, stupid, the unintelligent, the incapable, the ignorant, and the immature. Equality, he claims in Bourdieu's writings, is a thing to be achieved in the future while inequality (in the distribution of roles) remains the basis for the whole premises of pedagogic reforms and its sociological explanation. Rancière passionately argues for a pedagogy in which the equality of intelligence, all having an equal intelligence and capacities, is the beginning supposition.⁷⁸ Through the story of an exiled French university (Louvain) teacher Joseph Jactot in the early nineteenth century who believing in the equality of intelligence attempted to teach a language which he himself did not know to a group of student, Rancière problematizes the relationship between teacher and student. Jactot's method was to give a textbook to students and learn with them. He believed in the equality of intelligence and explication as an unnecessary practice which reinforced the inequality of intelligence. While I agree to Rancière's critique of Bourdieu as proposing equality as the end point which also unsettles the myth of progression, I disagree with his critique of the Bourdieun notion of 'misrecognition'. We know that often people do not have or are denied correct information systematically which perpetuates their subordination. It is for this reasons that many marginalised groups such as Ambedkarites, feminists, and tribal send their children to school not just to learn skills but to gain new knowledge, acquire information, and familiarize

⁷⁷ Biesta, "A New Logic of Emancipation"; Hattam and Smyth, "Thinking Past Educational Disadvantage, and Theories of Reproduction"; Lambert, "Redistributing the Sensory".

⁷⁸ Rancière and Ross, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

themselves with the larger world. The framework of teachers and educational institutions operating on the supposition of equality of intelligence is limiting in other ways as well. It pays little attention to the larger unequal structure of education where inequality is not just a result of supposition of inequality of intelligence in speech and differential experience in classrooms but also as a result of structural process of deliberate exclusion and denial of a more advanced knowledge and better educational infrastructure to certain groups.

Indian educationists have been pointing out that one of the causes of inequality in India has been unequal access to education, inadequate educational infrastructure, and exclusions of marginalised groups. Dalits, lower castes, the poor Muslims, tribes, women, daily wage workers, and landless agrarian labourers have been systematically and historically denied education. Historians have stressed on the exclusionary nature of colonial education whose ambivalent attitudes towards the education of marginalised groups helped to consolidate the powers of the dominant castes.⁷⁹ While this is true, in such writings, educational inequalities have generally been framed through the analytic of exclusion, and through the binaries and difference between the colony and the metropole, the colonial and the indigenous schooling, the schooling for the lower and upper castes.⁸⁰ Very little attention is paid to curriculums, textbooks, syllabus, and hierarchies of the education system which simultaneously produced inequalities, denied identical knowledge, and subordinated lower classes within the education system after granting access to them. Contemporary studies have attempted to probe the role of curriculum, textbooks, and syllabus in perpetuating inequalities.⁸¹

As education became a strategy for capitalist agents to reproduce its conditions, education also emerged as one of the rallying points to organise labour movements and discipline the

⁷⁹ Bhattacharya, *Education and the Disprivileged* (See the essays by Eleanor Zelliott, A. Satyanarayan, Joseph Bara); Constable, "Sitting on the School Verandah".

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Majumdar and Mooij, *Education and Inequality in India*.

political views of workers.⁸² Scholars have studied the role of education in the labour movements—both of the reformist and the communist nature.⁸³ Education was central in producing a literate, knowledgeable, and active worker citizen in a democracy and in creating a politically conscious workforce, necessary for a socialist transition. Trade Unions established their own evening and day schools, libraries, clubs, and meeting groups to educate and socialise workers in a left politics and to produce worker leaders.⁸⁴ Within the New Left politics of the 1960s and 70s, education became a crucial vehicle to educate workers in certain type of left politics.⁸⁵ Whatever were the ideological orientations of these working class education, there was a rapid increase in the number of educated workers who later worked for the welfare of their own community.⁸⁶ The focus of these studies have been on analysing the emergence of a politically conscious worker constituting and demanding a democratic space, often leaving out the personal desires of workers from the analytical lens. In India too, labour movements of varying nature placed a significant emphasis on educating workers (Chap. 3 & 4) since the 1900s, however, they remained ineffective, except for the reformist labour movement to some extent and in certain regions such as Ahmedabad, in establishing a robust network of institutionalised education for workers.

We see that within the larger debates over education, the social control thesis does not take into account the workers' desire to not be a worker. While highlighting the questions of agency, Paul Willis remained within the larger framework of cultural and social reproduction—how labouring classes ultimately remained workers and valorised manual labour. The working class

⁸² A number of essays in a special issue (vol. 90, Fall 2016) of the *International Labour and Working-Class History* analysed this issue.

⁸³ Jansson, "Class Formation in Sweden and Britain"; Gougoulakis, "Popular Adult and Labour Education Movement in Sweden";

⁸⁴ Leelsland, "The Norwegian Workers' Education Association"; Marsh and Danny Roberts, "Labor Education in the Carribean".

⁸⁵ Scodeller, "Political Training and Social Change in the 1960s and 1970s"; Grayson, "Developing the Politics of the Trade Union Movement."

⁸⁶ Lampropoulou, "Working Youths and Education in Postwar Greece."

students who broke the cycle of circularity were looked at as an exception requiring little explanation. Workers' actions and desires constantly disturbed the plan of educational distributors. In various enquiries, it was found that workers were using education offered to them as a tool to acquire non-labouring jobs as teachers, ticket collectors, managers, supervisors, assistants, and clerks. Workers' appropriation of education for different ends forced school authorities constantly to make the curriculum more practical or close down the school. And school authorities' newer ways of implementing this curriculum required that workers devised new means to achieve their desires. Through the microhistory of a few schools, I will study workers' education in a more dynamic way where workers were not just passive recipients of school education and workers' desires did not operate in isolation.

Secondly, I will make a forceful argument about the nature of controlled education offered to the labouring castes. Historians in India, as I have pointed out, have privileged the question of access and discrimination arising out of caste practices in the educational institutions. It is as if once the access to schools is guaranteed, issues of inequality were seemed to be resolved. Through my chapters I will show that more than the issue of access, it was the nature of education imparted to the poor which was a concern to many elites and the labouring castes. Elites debated and designed differential education according to caste, gender, region, and class differences. The differences of not just race and religion, but also of caste, class, and gender were heavily stamped on the general curriculum and on the curriculum of industrial and technical education. Throughout modern societies, education to workers was not offered as a tool of mobility but as a tool to improve them, make them productive, prepare them for a civic order, and integrate them into various regimes of labour (factory, artisanal-workshop, missionary industries, colonial state workshops, landed elite's fields, etc.).

Thirdly, I argue that inequality was not a hidden project of the modern education. The liberal and progressive notions of education, though asked for a democratisation of the

educational system, were premised on the difference of class, caste, race, and gender. Access was not synonymous with identical opportunities. Liberal notions legitimised inequality through a differentiated curriculum, textbook, teaching method, course-design, teacher employment, fee, and infrastructure for the working and the middle class. I argue that what we need to do is not to merely explore the unequal (hidden) nature of liberal education but to explain how it came to represent itself as an 'equal' system at the first place. Education may have been imagined as an equalising and modernising force for the elite and middle class children; for workers it had a different curriculum since the inception of modern education for workers. Even now, a differential education system of private and public schooling caters to different classes in India. In this project of inequality, it was not only the upper and middle castes and the state but also progressive politicians, social reformers, and pedagogues who were complicit. The foundations of the modern schooling were laid on differences and on an unequal system to produce new forms of inequality with a strong progressive notion of 'improvement'. Education has been invented as a tool in the hands of the selected elites to produce the subjection of the poor masses in which the poor were also complicit in a way that transformed the unequal nature of education. The labouring groups struggled to bring equality and democracy within the educational system. The feature of equality and the mystique of emancipation associated with education has been burdened on it by aspiring masses who placed different values on education not because they believed in progressive enlightenment ideals but because it had been denied to them for centuries and was the supposed cause of their suppression and others' dominance. The rise of democratic values, pressures from below for inclusion and representation, and the necessity of employers and dominant social relations for its own survival forced this highly unequal system to loosen its rigidity and represent equality.

Chapter Organisation

The thesis is divided into four chapters—each chapter exploring the expectation and the

experiential layers of desires and anxieties through the analytic of childhood or night. They unfold varied imaginations of workers and employers together.

The first chapter unravels the histories of artisanal desires in a small “rurban” city, Lucknow. The story revolves around the experiences of the Lucknow Industrial School from the 1880s to the 1920s. It begins by discussing the presence of various types of artisanal communities in Lucknow: hereditary artisans, dispossessed artisans, railway artisans, and other factory artisans. While artisans had been sending their children to general schools, the establishment of the Lucknow Industrial School in their neighbourhood gave them an opportunity to provide higher education for their sons. Among many industrial subjects, the school also offered English and drawing lessons. The Industrial School was envisioned as a railway school which would supply the need of trained artisanal labour for the local railway workshop. There was an attempt to improve, discipline, train, and educate the would-be worker children of artisans. However, it emerged that artisanal students had their own agendas, using industrial school education to become drawing teachers, clerks, compositors, and managers. By looking into the life-histories of students, their choice of subjects, and their reading of the colonial curriculum, I show that artisans and their children were not content with the schools’ idea of becoming a labour force. They were already artisans. What they wanted was something else and that something else was the knowledge of English language and drawing, necessary to get jobs in colonial offices and schools. Like the privileged students, they asserted their right to become teachers, clerks, or some other government servant. Worker-students suspended ancient hierarchies when they left institutions to become drawing school masters, using the knowledge of the school for totally contradictory purposes. Artisan-parents demanded night schools for themselves where they unfolded their own politics of emancipation from the drudgery of working life and limited knowledge. What was desired by the state was hardly accomplished by teachers and headmasters. Being part of the local society, these agents did not always

operate as good colonial collaborators. Instead, they unfolded their own politics of prejudice and mental and manual labour hierarchy in admissions, teaching, and re-designing courses. As the institution provided a chance for government jobs, children of middle and upper castes began to use it for their own purpose of getting non-labouring government jobs. The desire to not be a worker among students was so profound that it forced the Lucknow Industrial school to be stopped in 1902-03. Students struggled for what they wanted to be taught and not so much for what the school aimed to impart. Their struggle was essentially against a differential pedagogy that was designed to keep them in the chains of labour. However, industrial schools also narrate the stories of oblivion of the labouring poor from such institutions where social and economic elites gradually took hold and asserted their rights over the new non-labouring jobs created by the colonial political economy. Arrival of new machines, technology, and science (motor cars) replaced the older notions of pride and prejudice attached with labour and produced a new class of middle and upper caste workers. Children from the labouring classes were further pushed into manual labouring jobs both by the denial of the higher technical education and assertion of the upper and the middle castes over dignified jobs such as of managers, supervisors, draftsmen, and school-masters.

The second chapter analyses the educational desires of Dalit agrarian labourers in relation to the presence of the Christian missionaries since the 1860s in the North-Western Provinces (NWP). I explore how instead of sending their children to the fields of landed masters, Dalits used the missionary presence in their areas to escape the oppressive regimes of labour. Dalits saw conversion as offering them education, and alternative career options such as those of teachers, pastors, catechists, or mission workers, all of which promised emancipation from the bonded labour. Before converting, they enquired about the prospects of conversion. I show that missionary education, though accessible to Dalits, was not liberating. It pushed Dalits from one regime of labour to another—namely from bonded labour to wage labour. Labouring habits

and identities were not only preserved but harnessed by sending the children of poor converts to mission industrial schools which imparted to them the skills of producing crafts, the dispositions of industrious life regulated by Christian ethics, and the discipline of a working life. The story here revolves around the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School. It then moves on to show how missionaries regulated the subjectivities of the poor girls who were trained either for mission associated factories or domestic work.

Missionary apostles designed grand theories of love for work. They valorised industriousness by showing converts images of Jesus as the carpenter. Labour, they preached, was both redemptive and a godly act. However, converts struggle to not be workers came in conflict with missionary's own industrial enterprises which needed labour. By exploring these issues, the chapter brings a nuanced perspective to the history of Christian missionaries in the light of their religious and industrial activities which required a significant amount of labour from converted and colonised bodies. Further, I show that there was a continuity in terms of keeping Dalits in the labouring fold between missionaries and the nationalist social reformers such as the Arya Samaj and Gandhi's Harijan Sevak Sangh. Education was not offered to Dalits with an idea to redistribute economic roles and resources but to cause social reform—to offer Dalits a limited access to education and control untouchability. The social was prioritised over the political economy of caste.

Chapter three takes readers into the aspirational world of the busy factory proletariat. The focus is on workers who worked in the textile mills of Bombay and Cawnpore. Migrants from nearby and distant villages, they settled down in the cities' poorest neighbourhoods to save money from their wages. While their migration to cities had suspended whatever education they and their children were receiving, the time required on machines subordinated their notion of themselves as humans. I analyse how workers from different regions speaking different languages who settled in Bombay city began to demand education for their children. They

began to compare factory childhood and schooled childhood. A few of them asserted their right to educate their children, debated the role of employers and the state in offering educational facilities, and gave evidence in the favour of education to various factory commissions. Exploring the evidence of factory children, worker-parents and employers, this chapter shows how there were radical changes in the notions of working childhood. Parents saw the childhood of their children in the light of their own bad experiences of childhood. Parents, especially mothers, showed a great determination to not send their sons and daughters to mills which they believed subsumed the human aspects of human beings. Mothers did not want their daughters to experience the sexual harassment and drudgery that they had experienced in their childhood. This desire to send children to schools, however, was soon contradicted by the reality of poverty and the need for a wage-earning labouring body that shows how the same children whose futures had been imagined differently were being sent to mills by the same parents. While parents increasingly asked for education for their children as a right by the 1920s, employers saw childhood as an important moment to prepare the future workforce. In children, capitalists saw future workers. To secure the labour of successive generations of workers, welfare institutions were established, housing colonies were given to workers, schools were opened for their children where they were taught instrumentalist knowledge necessary to keep them in their labouring station. The fear that worker would stop working was greater than the fear that workers would demand extra wages. The story in this chapter revolves around various factory schools, established by factory owners both to extract labour from children and to provide training for future roles.

To exercise their control over childhood and night, factory capitalists made an alliance with other conservative forces—elite social reformers—who while improving the living conditions of workers by providing health, education, and recreational benefits kept workers content and in the labouring fold. This is the theme of the fourth chapter. It discusses the

experiments of night schooling by workers and the social reform bodies such as the Social Service League, the Y.M.C.A., the Theistic Association, and the Depressed Mission Society.

Night is not presented as a neutral temporal space but one charged with the potentialities of emancipatory politics and capitalists' expansion. I analyse workers' protests, memorandums, and evidence to understand their claims over night as their personal time. In contrast to Rancière's reading of the night as a free time of workers, I show that the night for Indian factory workers was a contested moment on which the clock of capital constantly gazed. Workers were supposed to rest their bodies to prepare for the next day's labour. The night time was constrained by workers' lack of housing, the necessity of sleep, and a weakening body. Installation of electricity in the 1900s in the cotton mills meant the extension of work into the night and possibility of earning extra wages. Against these constraints, workers show a particular love for learning and reading at night at the expense of much needed sleep. Examining the records of attendance of night schools and the borrowing patterns of labour mohalla libraries, I explore what it meant for workers to have desires for education and for having more than a working identity. Here they learned literary skills and familiarised themselves with machines and science. Such knowledge was denied to them by employers on the shop floor. Leisure time is turned into a productive time by workers at the cost of their much needed sleep. However, by the early years of the twentieth century the night becomes the site to control by the capitalist system. Industrialists feared the leisure moment of nights. In it, they saw the possibilities of a worker turning into a labour leader or becoming a discontented worker aspiring non-labouring jobs. Industrialists made attempt to colonise workers' night by opening their own night schools, reading rooms, and workmen's institute and by influencing the curriculum of the night schools of the social reform bodies. The night becomes a site to discipline workers' free time in order to make them "good husbands", "obedient wives", apolitical subjects, and trained skilled workers.

Source material for this thesis has emerged from the analysis of many untapped sources, including letters, diaries, poems and prose written by workers, school inspection reports, school registers, examination results, missionary reports, and private papers. These materials have helped me go deeper into the social realm of labouring lives – by exploring their childhood and leisure, their day and night cycles of work and life – in which education and the politics of emancipation played an active role.

Chapter 1

Imagining New Lives and Work

Life Inside and Outside the Lucknow Industrial School

In this chapter, I will discuss Lucknow artisans' appropriation of modern education and their struggles to carve out a socio-economic space and a new identity for themselves. The chapter begins with a discussion on the late nineteenth century socio-economic world of Lucknow artisans: classes in which artisans were divided into, engagements that they had with the old and new industries, relations that they had with poverty and wage, and opportunities of mobility that their children had. Shifting the historiographical focus from a picture of decline, stagnation, and survival and adaption of artisanal industries to artisanal lives, this chapter suggests that artisanal lives were marked by fluidity of occupations, status, and opportunities. Colonial educational institutions further harnessed and produced new elements of fluidity. Placing the artisanal desire for education in the centre, the chapter is further divided into five episodes narrating various facets of artisanal life and artisanal education in colonial Lucknow.

The first episode charts out a specific moment of the Lucknow Industrial School where the conflicts between artisan students and the school authorities over the nature of curriculum—literary or industrial—resulted in the closing down of the school in 1902. When the colonial government imposed a new model of practical training over students by redesigning the Lucknow Industrial School according to the Italian Naples Industrial School, almost all the students abandoned the school. While the state pushed for more manual and practical education in order to ensure that students from the school were fixed to the manual labouring jobs, artisanal and the middle-class students used the school education to gain non-labouring employments such as of teachers, clerks, supervisors, type-writers, and compositors. Artisans subverted the programmes of education that wanted to keep them as labour. Moving

from here, the second episode details this history of conflicts since the inception of the school in 1892. It narrates how artisanal-parents were rethinking the childhood of their children. Instead of seeing their children as workers, a section of artisans began to see education crucial to their children's careers. I also recount how the emphasis on the visions and objectives of the industrial school to produce a trained labour force changed over the period of time. These changes, I propose, were linked to the transformations in industries, technology, colonial industrial policy, and artisanal visions of life.

In the third episode, I discuss life histories of artisan students to show that workers constantly looked for non-labouring jobs. Industrial Schools were a halt in their search. I explore the relations of these desires for non-labouring professions with their notions of respect, social honour, wage, and life. The fourth episode is about the reopening of the school and its gradual transformation into a technical school which aimed to produce mechanics, motor-drivers, low-grade engineers, electricians, and a few skilled artisans. Arrival of new technology and machines also created new notions of work and pride among the labouring poor. I illustrate how the technical school, by raising the educational entry qualification, excluded poor artisanal children and catered to the aspirations of the middle and upper class who wanted to secure and advance their economic and social position in the new economy. The final episode connects the moments of childhood to the night, histories of artisanal children to artisan-father, and the day school to the night school. I investigate the notion of the night among artisans and narrate how a section of artisans used night to gain literary skills, scientific knowledge, and new trades such as typing, account-keeping, book-binding, etc. I suggest that the night became another moment for artisans to realise their aspirations.

The Artisanal World

Lucknow in 1881 was a city with population of 261,303 contained in a 30 square mile area. Bankers, money-lenders, merchants, shop-keepers, unskilled labourers, railway employees,

domestic servants, transport workers, and government employees inhabited the city along with artisans and other industrial workers. About 40 per cent of its population was engaged in industries in 1901.⁸⁷ A substantial part of its working population was female. Recurring famines in the 1870s and 90s, rising housing and food prices, new taxes, and static wages had pushed a large number of wives, mothers, and daughters to take up chikan work (embroidery with cotton and silk thread)—an industry which was not popular during the Nawabi rule but had become an important source of income for the poor. By the 1930s, there were about 80,000 chikan workers in the city.⁸⁸

The free trade policy of the British government and the import of mill-made cloth destroyed the weaving industry of the city and the surrounding countryside, forcing weavers especially silk-weavers to abandon their trade tools and homes. Colonial capitalism had thus produced one of its characteristic effects, making wage seekers available who could migrate to the industrial towns of Bombay, Kanpur, and Kolkata, and to offshore plantation colonies. The process of producing a wage-seeking proletariat class was a powerful feature of capitalism and was evident elsewhere. In England, artisans and peasants in the eighteenth century were uprooted from their fields and feudal relations, workshops and trade guilds to work as ‘free’ wage labourers of capitalism.⁸⁹ American labour historians in the 1970s and 80s discovered that a similar process of uprooting of craftsmen, mechanists, and apprentices from workshops underwent in the eighteenth and nineteenth century America.⁹⁰ In such a perspective, the shift from the small scale craft industries to the big industrial factories was tied to a linear perspective of the industrial revolution, the formation of the working class culture and consciousness, and the loss of artisanal autonomy, radicalism, and workshop harmony.⁹¹ It was

⁸⁷ Nevill, “Lucknow,” 62, 80.

⁸⁸ *Report of the United Provinces Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-30* (hereafter *PBEC*), Vol. II, 397; Hoey, *A Monograph on Trade and Manufactures in Northern India* (hereafter *A Monograph on Trade*), 88.

⁸⁹ Marx, *Capital. V.I. A Critique of Political Economy*.

⁹⁰ Kornblith, “The Artisanal Response to Capitalist Transformation”; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*.

⁹¹ Schultz, *The Republic of Labor*; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*.

also linked with other linear shifts such as from skilling to deskilling. Research in the 1990s problematized such simplistic understandings of industrialisation. It showed that instead of an absolute decline of artisanal enterprises and the collapse of workshop culture, small and medium scale industries not only survived during the industrial revolution but also fuelled it. While certain industries did decline, the decline was uneven. A few trades such as plumbing, cabinet-making, tailoring, and printing among others survived and flourished.⁹²

India's economic fate was intimately tied to the industrial development in England. Nationalist scholars argued that the colonial state flooded Indian market with the English factory manufactured goods which resulted in the decline of self-sufficient indigenous industries, the displacement of artisans, and an increase in agrarian labourers. A lot of arguments about the decline were centred around the use of the census data to map figures of industrial employment and the data of manufacturing output.⁹³ Amiya Bagchi's work on Bihar using the survey of Francis Buchanan Hamilton and the 1901 census further reconfirmed the deindustrialisation hypothesis.⁹⁴ In contrast, Daniel and Alice Thorner and J. Krishnamurty using the same census data presented a picture of stagnation in terms of occupational employment between the period of 1880 and 1950.⁹⁵ Research since the mid-1980s further complicated the conceptual apparatuses of the debate. Against a uniform picture of decline or stagnation, the new work of Sumit Guha (Central Provinces) and Krishnamurty (Bihar) suggested that the decline in artisanal crafts was specific to some industries, regions, and time periods.⁹⁶

⁹² Stott, "Artisans and Capitalist Development"; Berg and Hudson, "Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution."

⁹³ Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age, 234-290*; Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*; Patel, *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan*; Simmons, "'De-Industrialization', Industrialization and the Indian Economy, C. 1850-1947"; Harnetty, "'Deindustrialization' Revisited."

⁹⁴ Bagchi, "De-Industrialization in India in the Nineteenth Century."

⁹⁵ Thorner, Thorner, and Bhattacharya, *Land and Labour in India*; Krishnamurthy, J., Occupational structure in Dharma Kumar and Desai, *The Cambridge Economic History of India. Vol. 2.*

⁹⁶ Krishnamurty, "Deindustrialisation in Gangetic Bihar during the Nineteenth Century"; Guha, "The Handloom Industry of Central India."

Within the *longue durée* trajectories of displacement and decline, the histories of survival and expansions began to be recovered. Tirthankar Roy's work focussing on the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century handloom, carpet-making, gold-thread, brass-works, and leather-works industries suggested that the picture was not one of decline but was of expansion. Roy argued that the above crafts got commercialised through long-distance trade, and the organisation of the production and the labour process was restructured (a shift from custom to contract and the use of wage labour, the concentration of crafts in certain regions, and the application of technology).⁹⁷ This picture of survival, adaption, and expansion of crafts was further explored by Douglas Haynes who focussed on the rise of crafts in urban centres such as the jari (gold thread) industry in Surat. He showed how artisanal family firms shifted to newer technologies (electricity) and re-signified their bonds with labourers and merchants in a competitive atmosphere. Instead of calling craft industries as traditional and archaic, Haynes termed them as highly developed capitalist enterprises. And his focus on the lives of 'artisanal labourers' in relation to the 'weaver-capitalists' (Roy's focus) allowed him to offer nuanced perspective where artisan-workers were not absent bodies. He suggested that throughout the story of survival and expansion, the life of the poor artisan labour was constantly marked by poverty and low living conditions.⁹⁸

In Lucknow too, the displacement of artisans and the decline of indigenous industries was not absolute. The weaving of the coarsest and the finest (muslin) clothes had survived in certain pockets of the Lucknow district, including in the neighbourhoods of Hasanganj in the Lucknow city.⁹⁹ But it was no longer a profitable trade for apprentices. Similarly, once flourishing Chhipis (calico-printers) now faced competition from the mill prints and the cheap Tanda (a

⁹⁷ Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*.

⁹⁸ Haynes, *Small Town Capitalism in Western India*; Haynes, "The Dynamics of Continuity in Indian Domestic Industry."

⁹⁹ Nevill, "Lucknow," 39.

town in U. P.) calico-prints.¹⁰⁰ Among industries which did not face the massive onslaught of the cheap European goods, a few were stagnant while others flourished due to the increased demand.¹⁰¹ They included the embroidery sector (kamdani, chikan, zardozi, gota weaving), calico-printing, brass and copper ware, metal utensil making, gold and silver wires, carpentry, tailoring, smithery, tanning, shoe-making, pottery, and carpet-weaving.¹⁰²

However, the deindustrialisation debate has offered us either stories of displacement and stagnation, or of expansion. In the stories of survivals, the process of proletarianization of worker-artisans within the modernising crafts remains largely unexplored. Issues of artisans who came to work in modern mechanised industries as skilled artisans and mechanics have also been largely neglected. Besides, these narratives lend too much power to capital and the market, and too little to artisans. In contrast, I wish to move away from the aggregate picture to individual lives and through artisanal life histories, I want to talk about fluidity, aspirations, desires, and struggles in artisanal lives. In doing so, the chapter suggests that artisanal life was constrained by the larger local and imperial political economic structure.

Densely populated Lucknow, bustling with artisanal shops and crowded streets, was full of different grades of workmen: master-artisans, apprentices, journeymen, and “coolies”. Among them, there were landless agrarian labourers, dispossessed irregular artisans wandering from one occupation to the other, craftsmen working in indigenous industries, mechanic-artisans of the technical and mechanical firms, male and female artisans, child and adult artisans, and artisans specialising in arts and crafts working on their own or in arts and crafts schools. Crafts were dominated by two types of workers: hereditary artisanal castes and non-artisanal castes. For example, the trade of carpentry was not only limited to the Barahi (carpenter) caste but was

¹⁰⁰ Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries of the United Provinces* (hereafter *Notes on the Industries*), 69.

¹⁰¹ On the survival and growth of certain indigenous crafts see, Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*.

¹⁰² Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries*; Hoey, *A Monograph on Trade*, PBEC, vol. II, 391-411”

also significantly practised by other castes such as Kurmis, Kayasths, and Dhimars.¹⁰³ There was relative mobility in terms of occupation among artisans. Thus it was not surprising for a carpenter to become a smith and a weaver to become a construction worker. This occupational mobility was often generated due to the occupational crisis and exploitative working conditions or career openings in newly organised industries such as railways, printing press, and factories.

Crafts in the late nineteenth century Lucknow were highly hierarchized. With extensive commercialisation of crafts in long-distance trade, merchant capitalists were on the top of the production hierarchy. Between artisans and consumers was a series of middlemen. This list varied from trade to trade. Capitalists by varied names and of different ranks i.e., mahajans and kothidars (the residents of “big mansion”) financed the raw material for artisanal workshops, dealt with customers, and controlled the production. Master-artisans or shopkeepers (karkhanadars) maintained workshops where workers, apprentices, and journeymen came and worked.¹⁰⁴ Then in some trades, for example in the chikan work, there were middlemen who supplied material (cloths and thread) from karkhanadars to female home-workers. A major portion of the profit was usurped by capitalists, karkhanadars, and middlemen, leaving very little for the wages of artisanal workers.

Within the labouring world, while artisans moved among trades, there was very little mobility of ranks from the low to high status in the worker-capitalist hierarchy. Apprentices and journeymen did become master-artisans if they possessed capital, skills, and contacts. Worker-artisans rarely became capitalists. Instead, we see a process in which independent artisans were being reduced to wage labourers, and master-artisans kept workers as apprentices for six years or more on lower wages. The immobility of artisan-workers to a status of master-artisans and merchant capitalists would have been a feature of industrial relations since the pre-

¹⁰³ Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries*, 139.

¹⁰⁴ *PBEC*, vol. II, 1930, 391–411.

1856 days. Colonial intervention and global trade had further reduced the economic position of artisans and strengthened the hold of a few merchant capitalists over artisanal trades.

Ardhendu Bhattacharya who surveyed the embroidery and other indigenous industries of Lucknow in the mid-1930s discovered that capitalists and middlemen practically controlled all the major aspects of artisanal trades, from buying raw materials to bringing orders and selling finished products. Himself a postgraduate student of the Lucknow University, Ardhendu was interested in understanding how labour relations and the production process in these industries were governed. He suggested that the emerging power relations had pushed small artisans to the status of wage-labourers. For example, in the trade of gota-weavers (weaving of gilt or silver wires into ribbons to be used as borders on female clothing), controlled by gotawal mahajans, wages had not increased in the last 30 years.¹⁰⁵ A. C. Chatterjee, another industrial surveyor, noted in 1907 that gota weavers were reduced to the status of journeymen. Detailing the nature of the ‘sweated industry’, Ardhendu was of course providing one-sided picture where he gave too much power to capital and the market.¹⁰⁶ He did not highlight how artisans were coping with stress and their decline. Did all artisans turned into wage labourers?

There was no doubt that a feature of the Lucknow’s artisan’s life was indebtedness of master-artisans to moneylenders and of artisanal-workers to money-lenders and master-artisans. Once a worker took a loan from the karkhanadar, he became a ‘baqidar’ (debtor), who had to repay the loan by a regular deduction from his wages. While a karkhanadar repaid the loan to a mahajan at the end of the business year, the average worker baqidar was so indebted that he could hardly pay the amount in his own lifetime. Unless the worker paid his dues to karkhanadars, other karkhanadars would not employ him, practically blocking his mobility to other workshops. A fresh karkhanadar could get workmen by settling the dues with the

¹⁰⁵ Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ Surveys by Radhakamal Mukerjee and Ardhendu in *PBEC*, vol. II, 117, 391-411.

workmen's existing or former employers. Later, he deducted the advance paid from the workmen's wages.

Debt became a means to tie workmen with artisanal labour and master artisans. And yet these structures of immobility were not powerful enough to hold artisan-labourers. Workers frequently changed their jobs, migrated to other cities, and abandoned work altogether. Indebted artisans often fled from the city. A zardozi karkhanadar lost Rs. 2500 because many of his clients ran away.¹⁰⁷ Kamdani embroiders refused to allow their children to become apprentices.¹⁰⁸ Ardhendu complained that artisans in the embroidery sector did not show any love for work and being illiterate, they did not care for innovations in trade.¹⁰⁹ Competitive industries such as coachbuilding did not employ local workmen because they believed that local workmen, compared to a Punjabi worker, showed 'no pride in their work' and did not display 'any aptitude to learn new methods'.¹¹⁰ This stereotypical image of local workers was a standard practice among different types of employers (from plantation owners to builders) who emphasised employing labour from outside for better control over labour. Outside labour was seen cheap, easy to control, industrious, and less involved in labour politics.

This decline in the status of artisanal workers associated with indigenous industries was accompanied by the emergence of new industries which required both a skilled and unskilled labour force. New job openings in the mechanised factories resulted in the proliferation of occupational choices for artisans and non-artisans. Associated with colonial capital and infrastructure, such industries included railways, printing presses, transport, pumping stations, foundry workshops, and cotton, oil, and paper mills. At the skilled and semi-skilled level, these industries demanded a new type of labourer who was literate, intelligent, and trained to work at machines. Mechanists, motorists, compositors, book-binders, typists, electricians,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 394–97.

¹⁰⁸ *PBEC*, vol. II, 393.

¹⁰⁹ *PBEC*, vol. II, 402.

¹¹⁰ Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries*, 138.

watchmakers, fitters, carpenters, smiths, welders, turners, painter, mistries, drivers, firemen, engine cleaners, locomotive shunters, signallers, keymen, signallers, and moulders were required in large numbers. According to one estimate, there were 125,000 persons who held technical, managerial, and supervisory posts throughout India in 1935. About 10000 such vacancies per year were being generated.¹¹¹ Three railway workshops in the Lucknow city alone employed 4,791 hands in 1907, a number greater than the total number of weavers in the whole district (4,059 in 1901).¹¹² The sugar factories of the United Provinces employed 500 chemists, 500 engineers, lakhs of skilled workmen and a thousand clerks in the 1930s.

For artisans, like other occupational groups, these industries generated chances of a new type mobility. To stimulate this occupational mobility, the state and employers created new educational and training institutions. The process of mobility which started in the late nineteenth century was accelerated in the twentieth century with more openings. Here artisans had more chances of climbing the occupational hierarchy based on experience, education, and skills than in indigenous industries. For example, a skilled artisan employed in the mechanical and the engineering workshop had a chance to reach supervisory grades (mistry, sub-inspector, chargemen) if he learned to read, write, and calculate. An illiterate low-grade staff member had a greater chance of acquiring higher posts if he learned English. 'Illiteracy is a disadvantage and the literate mistry has more chance of promotion than the illiterate, other qualifications being equal', wrote the authorities of the East India Railways.¹¹³

Artisanal lives are required to be looked in the light of the centuries old caste exclusions, economic exploitation, and new employment opportunities emerging with new machines and technology. Doing so will allow us to understand the fluidity of their lives. For many wage-seeking lives, artisanal labour was just a stop or a beginning in the search of an ideal job/future

¹¹¹ Saprn, *Report of the Unemployment Committee, United Provinces*, 139.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 38; Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries*, 123.

¹¹³ *Memorandum for the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 7; *Memorandum by the Railway Board for the Royal Commission on Labour*, 28.

that matched social and material aspirations. For example, an agriculturalists' son from Lyallpur in Punjab worked as a cultivator for two years after his matriculation, then apprenticed with a master-carpenter roaming from village to village to become a carpenter, and later settled to learn the job of oil-engine fitter in 1937.¹¹⁴ While traversing these occupational paths, he preserved his literary skills by reading religious and secular texts in the hope of getting a non-labouring job. Behram Malabari, born in an artisanal caste family of Maharashtra, was first sent by his mother to various vernacular schools where he did not do well. Later, he was apprenticed to a carpenter. But he left it to continue his studies. In the end, he became a fine poet preaching reforms and writing texts.¹¹⁵ One who was born as an artisan did not die as an artisan and one who lived as an artisan did not always had an artisanal background. It is this struggle to achieve a different end, against the pressures of society, family, community, and capital that we turn to in five different episodes. The presence of educational institutes made such moves of artisans possible and also encouraged artisans to think of new careers. By no means was access to education the lone contributor in mobility. There were other means as well such as marriage, good networks, and money capital. However, education had emerged as a powerful means to challenge the existing hierarchies of socio-economic status as it has not just economic effects but also social. I will touch upon these issues in the next five episodes.

Episode I: Artisanal Aspirations, the Lucknow Industrial School, and the Imperial Economy

About 155 boys were admitted to the Lucknow Industrial School in March 1901. They included city residents and rural migrants, the unemployed and the employed, and the educated and the illiterate. Among those enrolled, the school reported there were 29 sons of 'bonafide artisans', mainly sons of railway workmen. By 'bonafide artisans', the school authorities meant

¹¹⁴ Thomas, *Work and Idleness Among Educated Village Youths of the Punjab*, 73-74.

¹¹⁵ *Gidumal, The Life and Life-Work of Behramji M. Malabari*, XVII-XVIII.

hereditary artisans. The rest were the sons of domestic servants, clerks, watch-makers, medical practitioners, and landowning peasants.¹¹⁶ The non-artisanal students came either from more prosperous middle and upper caste families or from more precarious families. They were the sons of muharrirs (clerks) who worked at the Munshi Newal Kishore Press, the Locomotive Office, and the Inspector General's Office, of shunters who worked at the Oudh and Rohilkand Railway, and of corn traders, engine drivers, station masters, cooks, peons, landlords, and mahajans.

The school offered courses in carpentry, smithery, glass-blowing, dyeing, and clay-modelling along with a limited literary education. The daily routine consisted of two hours of literary and drawing classes each and four hours of industrial workshop training. The literary and the drawing classes were compulsory. Boys were distributed among the industrial workshops, with 101 in the carpentry workshop, 54 in the iron-workshop, 22 in the clay-modelling workshop, and 13 each in the glass-blowing and the dyeing workshop.¹¹⁷ In practice, only 125 attended classes regularly.

In a seemingly bizarre move, 141 boys left the institution in 1902.¹¹⁸ On the school register, there were only 18 students left. Only two of them were sons of artisans against 29 in 1901, six of clerks, two each of mahajan, traders, and domestic servants, and one each of an engine-driver, a mason, a medical practitioner, and a pensioner. The school was declared a 'failed' institution. It was closed down in 1903.

The mass desertion of students was due to the new orders of government to abolish literary classes in the school. Literary classes had been an intrinsic part of the school curriculum since it was established in November 1892. Then it was only intended for artisans' son and its objective was to produce skilled artisans, mechanics, and foremen for the Lucknow Railway

¹¹⁶ *General Report on Public Instruction in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (hereafter *RPI*), 1900-1901, 1901, 28.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *RPI*, 1902, 24; *RPI*, 1903, 33.

Workshops in Charbagh. A lot had changed since then in the school which I will discuss later. For now, I want to discuss why artisanal and non-artisanal students deserted the school *en masse* after the abolition of book-learning from the school.

In the decisive 1901 Shimla conference on education which Viceroy Lord Curzon held, it was pointed out that 1) industrial schools had failed in their aims, 2) educated mainly non-artisans, 3) ignored the development of local industries, and 4) competed with general literary schools.¹¹⁹ In November, 1901 an Industrial School Committee under Colonel Clibborn was set up to propose a reformed scheme of industrial training. The committee proposed the establishment of supervision-based workshop training against the industrial school system, the abolition of literary classes, and the production of goods for the market. The idea was to adopt the practices of the Casanova Artisanal School—an Italian industrial training system where the poor were bound to master-artisans in a workshop and were given moral, physical, and manual training to become good citizens, honest men, and skilled artisans.¹²⁰

The Lucknow School became the first school to imitate the model. Headmaster P. H. Swinchatt took the lead and abolished literary classes except the drawing class. An artisanal workshop was established in Aminabad, one of the busiest market places of Lucknow, to train workers under master artisans through apprenticeship. Master-artisans were offered a fixed salary of Rs. 20, a rent-free room, machinery and tools, and an expert European supervisor. The move was part of the new colonial policy to revive the dyeing local industries through limited technical and industrial education.

On 18th March 1901, the school officials visited the local market ‘to ascertain the feelings of artisans regarding the recommendation made by the committee about the adoption of

¹¹⁹ *Report of the Industrial Schools Committee* (hereafter *RISC*), Home (Education), October 1903, Nos. 19, A, NAI, 3.

¹²⁰ *RISC*, Home (Education), January 1904, Nos. 32, A, NAI.

Neapolitan system of work in the Industrial School.¹²¹ Kedar Nath and Ram Nath, the embroidery merchants of the Raza Bazaar, Mohammad Ali alias Lala, the calico printer of Durbijaiaganj, Sitaram and Girdharilal, the silverware merchants of Yehyaganj, Hussain Ali and Kadir Ali, the Bidar Saz of Chowk, and Makhanlal and Narain Das, the copperware merchants of Yehyaganj opposed the move. They suggested to the officials that workers worked from their homes and were tied to a patron-client relationship. Artisans bought or received raw materials from shopkeepers, worked on them with the help of apprentices and family members, and later sold finished products for favourable market prices. A calico printer who produced clothes in summers spent winters selling the product.

The response from the big merchants and shop-keepers was discouraging. H. M. Cardew, the Superintendent of the Locomotive Workshop of Oudh and Rohilkhand Railways, argued that instead of approaching big traders-cum-artisans, the school should contact artisan-workers.¹²² The advice worked. The school authorities found a calico-printer with four boys, a copper smith with two boys, and a tarakashi (filigree) worker with one boy showing some interest in the colonial project.¹²³ Among them at least one was a migrant artisan from Mainpuri suggesting the different strata and origins of artisanal groups who inhabited Lucknow at this time. The workshop was started but it was soon closed down due to the lack of response among workers.

Bidisha Dhar, who studied the Lucknow Industrial School's history, has argued that since artisans had their 'own philosophy of work, their sense of time and imagination, their concept of design, their world view, community and kinship values . . .', they did not respond to the

¹²¹ Letter no. 3780, dated 22 March, 1901, File 413/2, Education Department Proceedings (EDP), March, 1902, IOR/P/ 6296, *BL*.

¹²² Pros. no.6-7, File 413/2.

¹²³ *RPI*, 1902, 24-25.

European mechanisation of the craft.¹²⁴ To work from a school space instead of from homes was to allow the European technical experts to exercise control over their body, craft, and knowledge. My contention is that such claims about artisans resisting the appropriation of new knowledge or new work settings cannot be taken on the face value from the evidence of merchant-cum-traders or records that noted their views. It was not artisans but trader-merchants who spoke on artisans' behalf. The world and philosophy of merchant-cum-traders was different from the world of artisans. Besides, there are two factual misreading in her work. First, the workshop model was not primarily intended to produce goods on a mechanised factory scale but was to appoint master artisans with an aim to train and supervise apprentices in a commercial environment. Second, the new workshop was not held in the school premises (Wingfield Manzil) but in Aminabad, the commercial hub of the city.¹²⁵ These two facts were crucial elements of the school reorganisation.

Captain E. H. Atkinson, the principal of the Thomason Engineering College Roorkee, was appointed to make an independent inquiry into the school's failure. His report, dated 13th February 1903, now survives only in extracts at the Indian National Archives. The importance of the report lies in the mode of enquiry and the moment of its production. To locate the cause of failures, Atkinson enquired artisans, visited artisans' workspace, and studied the school's record. It gives a very different reading of artisans' actions than what Bidisha has suggested. From Atkinson's report, we get to know that the workshops' failure was located in larger economic structures. The artisan was not a free agent. He wrote:

In practically every industry the workman is usually the servant of the shopkeeper. He works in gangs, on daily labour or piece work; the shopkeeper supplies all materials, and probably houses and feeds the workman, taking care to keep him in debt and well in his

¹²⁴ Dhar, Bidisha, '*Coping with the Changing World*', 150-52, 162; "The Artisan and Technical Education in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century India" in Deepak Kumar, Joseph Bara, and Nandita Khadria, *Education in Colonial India*, 269.

¹²⁵ Pros No. 21, File 413/2.

clutches. Thus the artisan seldom sells the articles he makes and it would be hard to find anyone to come and work on the system proposed and open a shop.¹²⁶

Atkinson suggested that worker-artisans were tied to the wealthy merchant traders and karkhanadars by a system of advance—a picture that we also get from the reports of industrial surveyors and Ardhendu's enquiry.¹²⁷ To join the school workshop was to break the existing ties of advances, regimes of apprenticeships, and supply of child labour.

Atkinson went into artisanal neighbourhoods to examine artisanal conditions. He found that each industry in which the school intervened was highly organised. It practised a division of labour. Describing artisanal workshops, he revealed:

I found, though the master artizans could each do the whole work, that, if the work was to be sold at the bázár rate at a profit, the factory system had to be employed. The men worked in gangs of 4 to 6 men, each man doing a piece of the work. For instance, in making a degchi, one man cuts the copper strips, another joints them, a third hammers one piece, a fourth another part, a fifth turn the edge, and a sixth polishes the degchi. The men work in the back lanes a few hundred yards from their master's shops in their own houses, surrounded by their families. If they left their quarters to go over to the Industrial School shop, they would have to walk perhaps three miles there and back, make arrangements for their food, and leave families all day. If a shopman could be induced to come and bring his workmen, he would lose the goodwill of his shop, and a rival would open a shop there the next day. . . . In every little workshop I saw from 4 to 10 apprentice boys. These were of any caste, they came very young, and sat and watched the master artizans, gradually learning their work, and getting wages as their skill increased.

¹²⁶ Extracts from a report by Captain E.H. de V. Atkinson, R.E., dated 13th February 1903 (hereafter *Atkinson's Report*), Home (Education) July 1903/ Nos. 61/ B/ NAI, 3.

¹²⁷ Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*.

Naturally no man who wished his boys to learn a trade would send them daily miles off to the Industrial School when he could learn all he wanted practically in his home.¹²⁸ Atkinson found that artisanal life was embedded in a network of power relations of merchant capitalists, imperial economy, workshop-owners, and moneylenders. Processes of production and skilling were embedded in it. Before the intervention into local industries through the workshop in Aminabad, the school's objectives were limited to the production of skilled artisans for railways and other modern industries. In terms of its geographical scope, it was limited to the Wingfield Manzil, an area close to the railway workshops and away from the market. However, in 1901-02 this was no longer the case. The school aimed to produce artisans not only for the European industries but also for the indigenous industries. This threatened to break the structures of local power relations which local elites, merchant capitalists, resisted.

Atkinson also provided an alternative argument of the failure in which aspirations of artisans to not be a manual worker and non-artisanal middle classes aspirations to be what they were played crucial roles. He argued that the school was attended by artisans for purposes contrary to the school's official objectives. What motivated artisans to come to the school was the idea of achieving non-manual labouring jobs. Literary education provided in the school was crucial for these unexpected aspirations. Thus once literary education was abolished, many parents stopped sending their children to the school. Atkinson wrote: '[artisans] send their sons not to turn them into trade workers, but with some other idea. What this idea is can be inferred from the fact that out of the 3 boys who passed out this year, two have been appointed drawing masters, but the third has not yet succeeded in getting an appointment.'¹²⁹ If they at all want 'their sons to be mistris and artisans, they can

¹²⁸ *Atkinson's Report*, 3-4.

¹²⁹ *Atkinson's Report*, 1.

give them training elsewhere. Boys are only sent whose parents wish them to do something else than industrial work.¹³⁰

Atkinson's enquiry suggests that artisans had begun to plan the childhood of their children differently than a century ago. Education was appropriated in the artisanal childhood. These changed meanings of artisanal childhood are registered in the community histories of tailors and weavers of this time.¹³¹ Instead of sending their children to do labour and tying up with master-artisans as apprentices, artisan-parents thought about the schooling of the children, calculated the long and short term benefits of education in terms of careers and having an educated person at home, and withheld their desires of multiplying family wages with the juvenile's labour.¹³²

Non-artisanal middle and lower classes had also joined the institute with similar intention both to retain their positions and advance their careers. The son of a clerk came with an aspiration to continue the family occupation or to get another government post. Majority of them had failed to do good in their literary schools. The Industrial School for them was one of the last hopes to secure a government employment. It was also true about artisans. Hereditary carpenters, blacksmiths, and bricklayers in Lahore also pushed their schooled sons into industrial schools when they found that their sons were unable to succeed in literary education.¹³³

To support his arguments, Atkinson examined the occupational status of 41 ex-students who passed through the institution in the preceding ten years. He found that more than 55 per cent

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Bholánath, *Wáyakwanshi Darjiyon Ka Itihás* (History of Wáyakwanshi Tailors); Lalaji Lal, *Tanti Jati Ka Itihás* (History of Weavers' Caste).

¹³² I explore the relationship between the artisanal childhood and indigenous apprenticeships in a future work on skills and apprenticeships in colonial India.

¹³³ *Ilahi, Some Poorer Artisan Classes of Lahore*, Publication No. 74, 7.

(24 students) had gotten jobs as drawing masters, draftsmen, clerks, and printers. Very few had joined railway workshops as artisans—the stated objective of the school.¹³⁴

Atkinson's investigation matches with reports in the local media. Local newspapers reported that artisans were the first to leave the school. The *Advocate* reported: 'They argued that there was no use of their attending a government institution. Here the extra advantage of a literary course hitherto enjoyed had been denied to them; that they would rather go to private workshops where, as paid apprentices, they might earn something.'¹³⁵ Artisans pursued industrial education in the hope that additional literary training would better their lives in future. And so did the "younger sons" of sharíf (respectable) families. The *Advocate* wrote: 'The idle class people ceased to send their sons to the school, for they did not want to make them quite illiterate Lohars and Barhais roaming from one muhalla to another and crying "Kam Lohar, Kam Barhai" (asking for the smithery and carpentry work).'¹³⁶

The *Oudh Akbár* noted that there was already a rumour circulating that the new headmaster Swinchatt would close down the literary classes and force students into intensive industrial training.¹³⁷ The *Advocate* warned, "if the school goes on with its present programme it can be safely predicted that only the staff of teachers will be left to be taught lessons (the lesson of 'how to manage') and not the boys."¹³⁸ In local conversations, the failure was located in the removal of the Bengali headmaster Tara Prassano in 1900, the liberal headmaster who unlike Swinchatt had combined general education with industrial education very well.

The headmaster played a decisive role in mediating the tension between the school's visions and the aspirations of boys. Boys constantly disrupted the functioning of the school by imposing counter-visions. Their motives were multiple: to get school certificates, to get textual

¹³⁴ Ibid., Appendix A.

¹³⁵ *SVN*, No. 15, 1902, 244.

¹³⁶ *SVN*, No. 46.

¹³⁷ *SVN*, No. 39, 1901, 651.

¹³⁸ *The Advocate*, 9 November, 1902 in *SVN*, No. 46, 1902, 689-90.

knowledge of the trade, to acquire literary knowledge including of English, and most importantly to get a non-labouring job. It was a story of failure and miscalculation on the part of the colonial state.

Episode II: The Lucknow Industrial School in the Past

The Lucknow Industrial School, the first of its kind in the North Western Provinces and Oudh (NWPO), was established as a response to the recommendations of the Technical Education Committee in 1891. Tied to the larger shift in education from literary to practical education in the 1880s, industrial schools were government's attempt to attract educated youths into industrial careers. The educated – including artisans – despised labour. It was this hatred of labour that employers feared. The principal of the Lucknow Canning College wrote to the Lieutenant Governor, Colvin, of the NWPO:

Why should the son of an artisan be tempted to enter a high school, to be taught to look down upon the handicraft of his father, and to have as his highest ambition the securing of an appointment as an inferior and ill-paid clerk? Better that he should be sent into an industrial school and a workshop, where his inherited aptitudes would prove invaluable to him and give him a good start on his way toward competency. He is sure to find employment somewhere . . . why should a young man whom nature has unfitted for the study of higher mathematics or philosophy be allowed to waste some of the best years in his life in a college, striving for the unattainable? Better that he should be earning an honest livelihood in a good shed, an office, or a shop.¹³⁹

Canning, like many other colonial officials, was conservative in his attitude. He was questioning the nature of colonial education which seemed to offer to artisans and workers the hope of a life without labour.

¹³⁹ Letter dated 25th September, 1891, File 413/2, EDP, NWPO, March 1893, IOR/P/4295, *BL*.

On the other hand, there was a recognition that the state needed to reform artisanal bodies in order to make them receptive and suitable for the imperial demands of mechanised, skilled, and educated labour. The empire's demand for trained labour was varied and gigantic and so was its ability and mechanisms to produce it. It needed trained artisanal labour for railway and the Public Works Department (PWD) workshops, for mechanical industrial establishments, and for the products of exhibitions and museums.

In Bombay, the Victoria Technical Institute coupled with the Ripon Textile School trained mechanical engineers for the cotton mills and railway workshops. Schools of Arts and Crafts such as in Madras and Calcutta trained students to produce artistic works for the European and native market. They also trained labour in new industries such as in aluminium works and chrome leather tanning. Along with producing wood-engravers, lithographs, modellers, they also produced architects and engineer draughtsmen.¹⁴⁰ Around 21 industrial schools in Bengal and others in Madras taught poor students in industrial trades that profited colonial or missionary industrial ventures.

When MacDonnell, the Home Secretary, investigated the subject of technical education in 1884, the issue of trained labour requirement was at the forefront. He proposed the establishment of technical schools at the district level. However, a scheme of technical education on such a large scale was rejected by the India Office in London. From the top, India was looked primarily as a market for British products and a supplier of the raw materials. Extensive technical education programmes similar to England were not logical for India. Technical education in England had emerged as a response to the threat posed by rapidly industrialising Germany and France. It was meant to increase England's productivity and fuel its industrial revolution. Policies governing economics of India were kept subordinate to the needs of the British capital. A colonial official argued that the assumption that the technical

¹⁴⁰ Bhargava, *Selections from Educational Records*, 109–12.

education would create a labour force necessary for new industries and help to revive the old industries in India was a ‘delusion’. Technical education of a limited nature was unfolded in India. Colvin clarified that institutionalised training was needed for the industries which came with the British rule and not so much for the hereditary or guild controlled “caste industries”.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, decline of the indigenous industries, exuberant taxes, and increasing poverty had produced a discourse in the local media that saw the establishment of technical and industrial schools in India as the only solution to the crisis. Newspapers such as the *Shahná-i-Hind* (Meerut), the *Oudh Akhbár* (Lucknow), and the *Hindustán* (Pratapgarh) published frequently between 1880 and 1890 on the necessity of technical education. They requested the taluqdars (local nobility) to establish industrial schools on public subscriptions.¹⁴² The Taluqdar Association saw in this a new opportunity to forge a benevolent relationship with the poor masses.¹⁴³ They proposed to establish an industrial art school, and offer a grant and a place at the Wingfield Manzil for it. The local government happily collaborated with the landed elites to reduce its financial burden. The school was established in the Wingfield Manzil, very close to the dwellings of railway artisans and a mile away from the railway workshop. The school was to follow the path of the Lahore Industrial School and produce skilled workmen for railway workshops.

Artisans, particularly the railway workshop workers, were asked to give names of their sons (above the age of eight) either to Pardew, the Workshop Superintendent, or to Munshi Ambika Prasad, the Assistant Inspector of Oudh Schools, who sat in the school at a particular time. Daughters were denied entry into the school as aims of the school were to produce a skilled masculine body for extracting hard manual labour. Artisans were told that their sons would get

¹⁴¹ Colvin’s Minute on Technical Education, *ibid.*, 99.

¹⁴² *SVN*, 1887, 2.

¹⁴³ Letter no. 1192E/III, File 413/2.

free tools and raw materials, sit on desks and chairs to learn drawing, and learn vernacular languages and English from books.

About 169 students from artisanal backgrounds joined the school. Of the total, 15 were sons of carpenters, 25 of fitters, 8 of blacksmiths, 8 of moulders, 4 of painters, 2 each of turners, watchmakers, and tinsmiths, and 30 of miscellaneous occupations.¹⁴⁴ Local embroiderers and dispossessed artisans such as weavers and spinners remained aloof from the school. It was possible that their admission was discouraged since the focus of the school was to get sons of railway artisans or the artisans from the caste of carpenters and smiths. Besides, artisans in these trades were predominantly poor, highly indebted and a change from the family trade required heavy capital.

Among those who joined the school, a few were already exposed to education. Of the total, 101 were already knew how to read, write, and calculate. Among them 37 knew ‘a little English’.¹⁴⁵ Contrary to the ubiquitous colonial perception that workers did not appreciate education even when it was provided at their doors, the number shows that a section of artisans did appreciate education. Whether they were already in the school or not, it is clear that artisans were ready for education when it was freely available to them.

However, as soon classes began in the industrial school, various notions held by artisans about education were broken. Boys were sent to the carpentry shop to learn to labour. They were asked to produce gymnastic sets for the boys of the zilá (district) schools where physical training was introduced as a subject. Artisanal boys instantly felt a hierarchy among the educated. They were marked out from others as being different.

Many students refused to do labour in the workshop. For them, school was about learning from books, about receiving literary education, and about not doing manual labour. At least

¹⁴⁴ *RPI*, 1893, 56.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter no. G/2330, dated 30th September, 1893, File 413/2.

eight students were thrown out for insubordination. About 40 students became irregular. Among the remaining 101, a few subverted the school's logic by appropriating the school education for their own purpose.

Limited literary classes offered courses in Hindi, Urdu, arithmetic, mensuration, and English equal to the level of the zilá primary schooling. Geometrical drawing was taught from the *Punjab School Drawing Copy*. Artisanal boys attached a premium value to literary education.

On his visit to the school in March 1893, C. H. T. Crosthwait, the new Lieutenant Governor General after Colvin, found that some artisans used the 'school as a means of obtaining an ordinary primary education' with 'no intention of becoming artisans'.¹⁴⁶ He wished to rename the school as the "School for Manual Training" and operate it on the sloyd system so that artisans have no confusion about the stated objectives of the school.¹⁴⁷ A school management meeting was called in Shimla in June 1893 to discuss the matter. A new curriculum was drafted. Classes were neatly divided into sections and classrooms—industrial and non-industrial. Textbooks such as the *Treatise on Carpentry* were introduced. It was also decided to initiate a smithery workshop.

A heated debate occurred between the new governor and J. C. Nesfield, the Director of Public Instruction, over reducing the hours of English lessons after the meeting. The Governor was not in favour of teaching artisans book-learning to the level of zila schools where students were taught poetry lessons and the knowledge of English.¹⁴⁸ Nesfield argued that English lessons were introduced for two purposes: first, to attract artisans into the industrial school, and second, to make them intelligent workers. He quoted Winmill, the railway authority, who had said that if artisans were denied general education, they would abandon the school. Artisans

¹⁴⁶ Minute on the Lucknow Industrial School, File 413/2.

¹⁴⁷ Sloyd was a system of craft learning with an aim of training eye and hand. It was started by Uno Cygnaeus in Finland in 1865. Later, it was implemented in Sweden, America, and in the princely state of Mysore in India. See, *The Straits Times*, 10th July, 1913, 9.

¹⁴⁸ Letter dated 31st July, 1893, File 413/2.

believed that their sons would get a job at the age of 14 in the railway workshop whether they were educated or not. English was introduced because orders, drawings, and instructions in the workshop were given in English and many foremen came directly from England with little knowledge of local vernaculars. He also quoted Tara Prassano, the headmaster, who said:

Whether the students enter into workshops, or get employed as draughtsmen, or start any commercial enterprise of their own, or work in any other capacity, a fair knowledge of English would prove of great use to them. The names of tools, materials, machines, &c., are all English, and they cannot understand them well unless they know the language. They would be able to exchange thoughts with the officers who almost always use English; and would not stand before them like deaf and dumb creatures, as is the case with the present class of handicraftsmen.¹⁴⁹

An effort was made to create a section of railway workers who knew the English language and modern methods of work. Crosthwait finally agreed to three hours of English lessons per week as against five. The two hours thus freed were devoted to workshops and drawing.¹⁵⁰

Within a month after the changes in curriculum, the Headmaster noted that attendance fell from 131 to 113. Artisans saw a value in learning English lessons. It not only gave them a dignified occupation, but also an entry into a dignified class. For example, L. M. Roy and A. Sonisean, students of the school, got jobs as a drawing schoolteacher and an Assistant Carriage Examiner respectively in 1894.¹⁵¹

Two more important decisions were taken in the meeting. First, special classes on surveying (by chain and compass), estimating (building, bridges, and roads), and engineering (road making) were planned. This inevitably enlarged the scope of the school

¹⁴⁹ Letter no. G/ 2330, dated 30th September, File 413/2.

¹⁵⁰ *RPI*, 1894, 69.

¹⁵¹ *Atkinson's Report*, appendix A.

to produce labour for the PWD. Second, classrooms were opened for the general public on the payment of fees limiting the number of free studentships to 100 for Indian artisans and 20 for European and Eurasians.¹⁵² Nesfield was approached by the ‘respectable natives’ ‘to have their sons taught to use their hands and eyes as a step toward entering some industrial calling, if only such training could be given them elsewhere than in a dirty bazaar shop.’¹⁵³ Its effects were visible in the 1894 admission. Out of the total 135 students, 45 students came from the non-artisanal background. They were sons of shopkeepers, teachers, cultivators, and clerks. The headmaster found that a majority of them were those who had failed to do well in general schools and their parents had now sent them to the industrial school in the hope of getting some jobs in a technical field.¹⁵⁴

Among the Hindus in March 1894, we see a fair balance of the upper and lower castes: 15 Brahamans, 11 Kayasths, 10 Lohars, 7 Ahirs, 5 Barahis, 4 Lodhs, 4 Kahars, 3 Teli, 2 Baidis, Khattris, Bhats, and Baniyas each, 1 Kori, Tamboli, Sonar, and Mali each. The rest included 51 Muslims and 13 Christians. Compared to the non-artisanal background, Students with artisanal background still dominated the institution. The proportion 45 and 89 respectively. However, the number of artisanal background students sank significantly in the coming year.¹⁵⁵ For example, in 1895-96, out of 160 boys who were admitted, 106 had artisanal class parentage.¹⁵⁶ By 1899 and 1900, their number fell to 17 and 10 respectively, while the number of students from a clerical background increased to 46.¹⁵⁷ Artisans increasingly found it difficult to keep their sons in the school. For example, 38 left the school between June 6 and August 21 in 1894 to join the labour market.¹⁵⁸ These figures could also

¹⁵² The fee levied was following: four annas for the initial three classes, six annas for the IV and V classes, ten annas for the VI and VII classes and one rupee for the VIII and IX classes.

¹⁵³ Letter No. G/ 1278 dated 11th July, 1893, File 413/2.

¹⁵⁴ *RPI*, 1895, 66.

¹⁵⁵ *RPI*, 1894, 70.

¹⁵⁶ *RPI*, 1896, 45.

¹⁵⁷ *RPI*, 1900, 51.

¹⁵⁸ *RPI*, 1895, 67.

be indicating that many students from the artisanal background found it difficult to continue due to multiple difficulties they faced. When we look the atmosphere outside the school, we see that the period after 1896 was a time of horrible famine. It had hit the poor classes of artisans badly and forced them to seek public relief work.¹⁵⁹ While it was true that a section of artisans failed to continue their education due to increasing poverty and the necessity to find waged work, these developments were closely linked to certain new trends inside the school that probably equally affected the participation of the artisanal students.

There was a slow dominance of the ‘respectable classes’. The 1895-96 school report complained: ‘Some of the better class of Muhammadans sent their children to school, but they were averse to manual labour, and only cared to learn drawing.’¹⁶⁰ The increasing gap between the working and non-working class background students’ would have produced new sociabilities. The increasing use of the school for non-labouring careers was becoming obvious and a trend.

Disturbed by the trend, the school increased the hours of manual training and drawing to eight in a day in 1897. Only for the Roorkee Preparatory Class, which prepared students for the Mechanical Class of the Roorkee Engineering College, literary training was provided. Soon, the most regular five Muslim students (Zakir Husain, Kamar-ud-Din, Mukhtar Ahmad, Muhammad Sultan, and Raza Husain) and 6 Hindu students (Ram Autar, Chhote Lal Sahib, Mohan Lal, Nanhe Lal, Mahadeo Prasad, Bhagwan Chand, and Niranjan Nath) left the school.¹⁶¹ The general attendance fell from 170 to 117. Boys told the Headmaster that eight hours of labour tired them for any literary pursuits in the night. Besides, parents did not like the fact that their sons were being made to labour in the school for long hours.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *Papers Regarding the Famine and the Relief Operations in India*, 1896, 78.

¹⁶⁰ *RPI*, 1896, 45.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

Now we can recognize that what had happened in 1902 was not totally new, but it was something unprecedented because it forced the school to shut down. The school accommodated various religious and caste groups, and classes of labour. But it seems that the majority aspired to a non-labouring life. The notion of a desired life varied. If we follow the life trajectories of these students, we see that these aspirations were not necessarily met, at least not in terms of straightforward linear progress in their lives.

Episode III: Life-Histories

Many of the conventional crafts in Lucknow such as kamdani, zardozi, chikan, calico-printing, brass and copper ware, and gota-weaving were not profitable and attractive in the early twentieth century for the young apprentices; those who remained were often tied to the merchant-trader through family debt and pressured into the position by family and circumstances. Artisans involved in these works themselves did not want their sons to learn these crafts. Discussing zardozi (embroidery of gilt and silver) workers, Ardhendu Bhattacharya wrote:

It is an exception today to find an apprentice learning this art for his future livelihood... No parents who cares for his child would care to bring him up in his own craft, for he knows full well that it should perpetuate poverty for his offspring. Even the karkhanadars (master-artisan cum shopkeeper) would hesitate to train their children in the same business and craft.¹⁶³

Workers constantly searched for an ideal career. In the process, they lived many occupational lives. Muhammad Raza joined the PWD as a draftsman after the school, but he soon left this job to become a government drawing schoolmaster in Husainabad, Lucknow at lower pay. Similarly, Ahmad Husain got employment as a glass-blowing

¹⁶³ *PBEC*, Vol. II, 1930, 393.

teacher in the Lucknow Industrial School after his course but soon left it to join as drawing schoolmaster in Gorakhpur.¹⁶⁴

The limited availability of jobs and specific skills required for certain types of jobs constantly forced artisans to negotiate their aspirations. For example, a son of a (Dalit) peasant in Benares who converted to Christianity at a very early age was brought up by the Presbyterian Mission in Saharanpur. Here, he took lessons in carpentry and iron-work at the Mission Industrial School. Later, the mission financed his smithery course at the Lucknow Industrial School (post 1900). Upon his return to Saharanpur this person taught in the Mission Industrial School at Rs. 38 per month. Not satisfied with the job and payment, he took a teachers' training course in Allahabad and became a drawing school master in a Gurgaon mission school. After working for a while, he was asked to teach geometry in English—a language he had not learned. He was forced to leave the job. He returned to Saharanpur where he knew people and opened a furniture shop which did not do well. Later, he became a wage labourer earning Rs. 1 per day at the North Western Railway Carriage Shops in Lahore.¹⁶⁵

Issues of freedom and status frequently shaped job choices. A Christian student, after taking carpentry and smithery courses at the Lahore Technical School for nine years, got a job as a blacksmith in the PWD earning Rs. 60 per month. After two years, he left it to become a supervisor of a building construction firm for Rs. 65. He had a free cycle for use, but no holiday in the week. So he left the supervisory job and became a mistri in a Lahore automobile company at Rs. 75 per month. When the firm refused his application for leave for his marriage, he resigned, and later got a job as a construction supervisor in the Canal Department with a pay of Rs. 60. After nine years, he fell ill and had to once again leave the

¹⁶⁴ *Atkinson's Report*, Appendix A, 5-6.

¹⁶⁵ Ilahi, *Some Poorer Artisan*, 32.

job. Failing to get any seemingly 'respectable' job, he began to work as a daily wage labourer in 1938-39.¹⁶⁶ We do not know what had happened to him after these years.

For many, industrial schools were a halting place, as much as an institution which could help them find a job. Humiliated at home by the everyday taunts of parents and brothers for not doing well in literary studies, students joined industrial training to try their fate. It was not surprising that the school headmaster constantly complained about boys' low levels of intellect and saw their task of educating them as a herculean task.¹⁶⁷

Artisans' sons in this period constantly moved out from their hereditary occupations, often revolting against the wishes of their parents and elder brothers to join the family craft. For example, a boy from the family of blacksmiths migrated from a Punjab village to Lahore to work in the city as an artisan. Finding the job exploitative, he became a pedlar (box-wallah) and then a driver of a trailer. The job did not yield much profit due to the trailer tax costing Rs. 3. The boy returned to his earlier profession for five years and collected enough capital to open a grocery shop. Once again his venture failed. He tried to open a falooda shop (a type of cold dessert), and a confectionary shop, gave them up, and became a hawker of books. Meanwhile, seeing his son struggling, the father pressed him to enter into the family occupation to which he finally agreed to do in the 1930s.¹⁶⁸ But many succeeded in leaving the family occupational traditions forever. Kristo Chandra whose father was a railway artisan became a government drawing school teacher after studying at the Lucknow Industrial School. Trained in the same school, Kristo Chandra's elder brother also became a teacher.

Even though a majority of boys attended the industrial school hoping to get a school teaching job on a salary of Rs. 30, they also tried their hands at the posts of draftsman,

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ *RPI*, 1895, 66.

¹⁶⁸ Ilahi, *Some Poorer Artisan*, 31.

others fitters—professions commanding social respect, authority over other workmen, and a salary sometimes higher than what an ordinary carpenter or blacksmith received. In 1895, 15 students joined the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railways, 6 in the Rohilkhand and Kumaun Railways, 4 the Indian Midland Railway workshop, and 2 the Lucknow Railway station as fitters, clerks, draftsmen, and blacksmiths. Maiku, All-ud-din, and R. Bruce, ex-students of the Lucknow Industrial School, joined the iron foundry of the Munshi Newal Kishore Press as blacksmiths in 1900. In 1907, there were at least four major printing houses in Lucknow employing 930 skilled hands.¹⁶⁹ Unlike opening their own karkhanas which required large amounts of capital and good networks, artisanal boys sought government jobs as it offered a decent salary and social respect. The Industrial School provided a possible space for the aspiring artisans to achieve a non-labouring career without breaking the ties with industrial lessons and simultaneously using the school's image to enter into the labour market. S. H. Fremantle's enquiry into the labour supply showed that wages of fitters, moulders, and skilled carpenters and blacksmiths working with machines had increased substantially in the early-twentieth century. He looked at the pay sheets of a workshop in Cawnpore and found an increase of 25 per cent in the nominal wages between 1900 and 1905. In general, he found that the wages of skilled artisans and fitters had increased for various reasons: high demand of skilled artisans in the burgeoning construction industry, the making of the Ganges canals and bridges, and the spread of plague (1902-11) in the region.¹⁷⁰

At one level, artisans' actions could be read as forms of resistance. But framing their thoughts and action vis-à-vis the school's visions alone would limit our understanding. What was happening cannot be reduced to subversion, resistance, or consent. Artisanal workers were constantly rethinking and imagining their lives in ways that had been denied to them for

¹⁶⁹ *Atkinson's Report*, Appendix A; See also, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. 16, 1907, 198.

¹⁷⁰ Fremantle, *Report on the Supply of Labour in the United Provinces and in Bengal* (hereafter *Report on the Supply of Labour*), 5-8.

centuries either because of their caste or because of lack of access to knowledge and capital. A matriculate shoemaker (Ad Dharmi) wrote to the members of an inquiry committee on idleness and employment:

Since in the past we were enumerated amongst Hindus; they used to usurp our rights. Therefore as a consequence of their oppression we have separated ourselves as a community (as Ad Dharmis). Still we have not been given any salaried jobs. Therefore give us either land or paid jobs. Many from our community cultivated land as tenants but they could not earn anything out of it. As other communities have a share in the police and military services, on a similar basis young men from our community should be also enlisted.¹⁷¹

This desire for positions monopolized by upper castes and classes was expressed again in the testimony of an educated weaver's son who wrote, "I cannot get any employment in the service. Only military is open for our class."¹⁷² Having no option, he joined the military as a combatant. The fact that artisans in Lucknow became and thought of becoming school teachers, clerks, and supervisors tells us about an aspect of labour history that has been significantly marginalised in our historiography. We see that even the most impoverished labouring populations, such as cooks, domestic servants, and peons sent their children for an education which they could not otherwise have afforded. By doing so, they defied the image of the worker that the stamp of class, caste, and community imposed on them. Working class selfhood, while defined through their own struggles and desires for better, well-paid, and respectable jobs, was also shaped by a close interaction with people living outside their class and castes. They defined themselves both in relation to the economically and socially more disadvantaged sections (wage labourers) and to the more powerful sections (the 'respectable' classes') of the society.

¹⁷¹ Thomas, *Work and Idleness Among Educated Village Youths*. 68.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Working class desires for middle class careers were not shaped in isolation, but were results of a constant interaction with their diverse immediate social world.

Episode IV: From Skilled Artisans to Mechanics: Pursuing New Knowledge and New Skills

The 1903 project of producing skilled artisans for indigenous industries failed in an unprecedented manner. Officials were forced to close down the bazar workshop and bring back literary education into the school. The number of students surged again. Of the total of 94 students in 1904, 14 were sons of artisans, 25 of clerks and mukhtars, 16 of servants, 9 of shopkeepers, 8 of pensioner, and the rest included of poets, reciters, and cultivators.¹⁷³

While there were a number of students from working class, the school was given orders to take students only with knowledge of the three Rs in order to avoid conflicts of aspirations. The task of primary education of artisans was left to the nearby Husainabad and Shah Najaf schools and the headmaster of these schools were contacted to send educated artisans to the industrial school.¹⁷⁴ However, in practice the school continued both to educate in literary subjects and to train in industrial trades. By 1907 the number of students increased to 243 out of which 83 were sons of clerks and mukhtars, 53 of artisans, 30 of traders, 30 of traders cum shop-keepers, 21 of landowners and agriculturalists, 18 of servants, 8 of pensioners and wasika grant holders, 7 of doctors and hakims, 5 of contractors, and 18 from miscellaneous occupational background.¹⁷⁵ The total number of students swelled to 325 in 1909 with the majority entering in the preparatory classes (191) where only the three Rs were taught, followed by the ordinary classes (98) and the special drawing classes (36). Students were simultaneously distributed in the industrial workshop and the division was following: 240 in carpentry, wood-turning, and cabinet-making; 57 in iron and steel forging, fitting, and machine

¹⁷³ *RPI*, 1904, 35.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *RPI*, 1907, 48.

work, and 28 in casting, moulding, and pattern making.¹⁷⁶ Two trends in the school became visible. First, students with clerical and other service backgrounds outnumbered artisan students. Second, literary education became the chief attraction of the industrial school. This disturbed Swinchatt who was desperately trying to learn the spoken mix of Hindi and Urdu as part of his official requirement. He asked the government to furnish him expensive machines such as carriages, steam engines, and drilling machines. Swinchatt wanted a complete transformation of the school—from an industrial school to a technical institute. Instead of producing artisans, he wished that the school trained mechanics for motor industries, sugar factories, and railway workshops.¹⁷⁷ Against his new scheme was Atkinson's suggestion, which proposed to make the school a preparatory institution for sending educated students to the Roorkee Engineering College which James Thomason had established in 1854. P. A. Hyde, the Carriage and Wagon Shop Superintendent, supported Swinchatt's move. Railway workshops were in need of trained mechanists, electricians, and low-grade engineers. S. H. Freemantle's 1906 enquiry into the labour supply in the province showed that big industries in Cawnpore and Lucknow were short of a skilled labour force, especially of fitters, moulders, blacksmiths, and carpenters.¹⁷⁸

The new Lieutenant-Governor John Hewett was interested in the industrial development of the province. In the backdrop of A. C. Chatterjee's industrial survey and Freemantle's enquiry, he organised an industrial conference in Nainital in 1907 where questions of industrial and technical education were discussed. In his speech, Hewett lamented that raw produce (cotton, hides and skins, wool) worth crores were being exported to other countries instead of being locally used and German and Austrian products: glassware, cotton yarns, woollen goods, and chemicals worth 108.3 crores were being imported.¹⁷⁹ Concerns that guided the conference

¹⁷⁶ *RPI*, 1909, 25.

¹⁷⁷ Pros. No. 29 and 30, File 413/2.

¹⁷⁸ *Report on the Supply of Labour*, 1-4.

¹⁷⁹ Hewett's Speech, Home, Education A, April 1908, Nos. 66-72, *NAI*, 4.

proceedings were: 1) how to 'adjust general education so as to predispose boys for industrial work, or break down prejudice against manual labour and 2) how to train: a) workmen, foremen, overseers and managers for organised industries; b) investigators; c) workmen of handicrafts; and d) technical instructors.¹⁸⁰ It was highlighted that technical education had to be oriented towards the practical needs of industry.

A multi-faceted technical education policy was proposed under the watch of a Director of Industrial Enquiries and Education. It included technological institutes for industrial research and training of managers, overseers, foremen, and investigators. One was planned at Roorkee for engineering work with a chair in hydraulic, electrical and mechanical engineering and the other at Cawnpore for researching and experimenting on the chemistry of sugar, leather, acid, paper, bleaching, dyeing, and the colouring of finished goods such as clothes. It also proposed a school of design and crafts in Lucknow to produce highly skilled craftsmen in textiles, metal work, wood and stone-carving, furniture, calico-printing, and modelling; schools for teaching workmen in particular organised industries were planned, such as weaving schools (Benares), leather chroming school, leather boot and shoe making school (Cawnpore), glass manufacturing school, carpentry school (Bareilly), and button making school (Lucknow); and industrial schools at Gorakhpur and Cawnpore for training fitters, turners, pattern-makers, moulders, general mechanics, electricians, and plumbers with limited literary education in practical mathematics, industrial drawing, and practical English.¹⁸¹ Seven more industrial schools were planned in industrial centres such as Cawnpore, Agra, Hathras, Allahabad, Meerut, Gorakhpur, and Jhansi. Such schools, Hewett believed, would create a love for work among workers along with diverting the energies of youth towards industries and producing a

¹⁸⁰ Bhargava, *Selections from Educational Records*, 255.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 255–60.

skilled labour force, including educated foremen, supervisors, and managers. Hewett quoted a merchant-cum-cotton mill manager who had told him:

Keep in mind, however, the good old British system of apprenticeship, which ensures a boy mastering his craft and, generally, loving it too. The Indian people don't go to work in the mills for the love of the thing, but to make a living.

Go where you will and search where you may, you will find the same complaint, and that is the poor quality of labour. And it is poor because the labouring man is not thrifty. He only values money for whatever it can give him at the moment. He does not value work for work's sake.¹⁸²

We see that the notion that workers did not love or care for work frequently informed the elites' discourse from Ardhendu to Hewett. This idea will keep coming back in the subsequent chapters. I think that these were not rhetorical or empty notions in this period. They were real concerns of authorities and employers who believed that emotions were central to the productivity and closely tied to the transgressive desires.

A total budget of Rs. 1,644,500 was proposed. However, the Finance Department denied funds for the scheme and halted it until the provincial government could find money for it. Limited funds (Rs. 770,000) were released in 1910-11 and a recurring grant of Rs. 571,000 was sanctioned in 1911 for the scheme.

Swinchatt was allotted more money than he desired. With reorganisation, the literary education was again abolished in the Lucknow Industrial School in 1909-10. The preparatory classes were closed down and boys below the age of 12 were thrown out. The enrolment fell from 325 to 134 with only 22 sons of artisans and 112 of non-artisans. The name of the school was changed to 'Lucknow Technical School'. Students with only an upper primary school

¹⁸² Hewett's Speech, Home, Education A, April 1908, Nos. 66-72, *NAI*, 13.

certificate were to be admitted.¹⁸³ Wilson, the Director of Industries, wrote, ‘the objects of the school are to train junior officers of the industrial army and to fit them to rise in the workshops and under the experience of practical life to be leaders of industry.’¹⁸⁴ In Swinchatt’s language the ‘elimination of swarms of little boys’ had marked the real beginning of the technical school.

In the school, the skills of hereditary artisans and of those ‘literary classes’ who were ashamed of doing manual labour were manipulated to handle machines.¹⁸⁵ The school now mainly produced mechanics, motor-drivers, painters, electricians, and a few skilled artisans. Students in different classrooms in 1916-17 were as follows: 54 students in the mechanic section, 39 in the junior section, 11 in the artisanal section, 14 in the automobile driving class, 9 in the oil engine driving class, and 4 in the painting class.¹⁸⁶ Painters learned to prepare sign boards and paint machines for government department.

Workshops were fitted with new machines, electric bulbs, and fans. Modern machines such as a 20 HP motor, a spare armature, a 30 K. W. dynamo, a polishing lathe, and a grinding machine table were bought in 1915. Lessons on oil engines, pumping station engines, maxim machine guns, and the wire wheel were designed. A new set of textbooks on moulding and casting, iron and steel, metals and their alloys, and properties of matter, written by the principal of the Gorakhpur Technical School, were introduced.¹⁸⁷

The Great War (1914-18) forced all the existing technical and industrial schools to gear their production and labour towards its gigantic appetite for industrial and technical products. Schools were converted into mini factories. Boys worked extra hours to produce munition shells. To energise workers, the government distributed free biscuits. The Central Shell Factory

¹⁸³ *RPI*, 1910, 31.

¹⁸⁴ *RPI*, 1911, 12.

¹⁸⁵ Pros. No. 19-21, Education, December 1914, A, *NAI*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ *Report on Technical and Industrial Education in the United Provinces* (hereafter *RTIE*), 1916-17, 1.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

at Lucknow sent drawings of the single shell blanks, and the school worked on it without halt. School boys produced about 20,726 single shell blanks by June 1916.¹⁸⁸

Effects of the new curriculum and approach were visible in the school's employment register of 1915-16. It showed that the market of the technical school had become highly diversified. Machines had created new positions and new notions of pride in work. To operate machines was to possess scientific and technical knowledge and to disassociate from the existing mass of manual labourers. Big and complicated machines such as printing, motor cars, railways, and trams brought prestige and a new knowledge economy in which the labouring poor found a new logic of work. However, machines were soon caste-marked in many industries including cotton mills, railways, and printing press, leaving the most lower castes and "untouchables" out of reach to these new machines.

Out of 19 former students, none of them were draftsmen or drawing school masters. Instead, six were working in the cotton mills of Cawnpore as an apprentices paid Rs. 15 to 12; seven as motor-car drivers of taluqdars and colonial officials; three as engine drivers in flour mills, the agricultural department, and a medical college respectively; 1 as a fitter at the Lucknow Railway Workshop; and 2 as painter apprentices in the Carriage and Wagon Shop at Lucknow.¹⁸⁹ Big industries, such as Messrs. Cooper Allen & Co., Muir Mills, and Woollen Mills, who had complained to Fremantle about the lack of skilled mechanics in 1906, absorbed the majority of students as assistant foremen, fitters, and apprentices on high wages. Abdul Hai became an assistant foreman at the monthly wage of Rs. 80; Yusuf Hussain became a fitter at a salary of Rs. 50 per month; and Beni Madho became an apprentice at Rs. 15. By the 1920s, Lucknow had various establishments that used machines in everyday such as flour mills, water works, and educational institutions, which needed oil engine drivers, repair mechanics, turners,

¹⁸⁸ Government Technical School, Lucknow, March, 1919, No. 9, Office of the Educational Commissioner, *NAI*; For a list of mechanical establishment that hired skilled mechanics, see, Sing and Gupta, *Ferrous Foundries of India*, 1948.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

tap instructors, fitters, and foremen.¹⁹⁰ Motor-drivers drew wages between Rs. 30 and 70. The profession itself was very new in India and the fascination with driving cars made it very popular among students. Lucknow had at least 20 cars in 1900s. But motor-drivers were required throughout the Empire. For example, Ramzan Bhaksh became a motor driver at the Field Service in East Africa at the wage of Rs. 70. Hamid Mirza and Munshi Raza Khan became the motor drivers of Col. S. C. Philson in Karachi at the monthly salary of Rs. 50. The Lucknow school was no longer producing skilled artisans mainly for the local railway workshops.

With new changes, we also see the exclusion of artisans from the technical schools. Raising the educational qualifications for entry into the technical schools resulted in the dominance of privileged classes in the school. The semblance of artisanal mobility that was generated through the industrial schools was drastically reduced with the establishment of technical schools. In official circles, what was appreciated was not the artisans' visions of mobility but the humble acceptance of manual labour as their natural mode of living.¹⁹¹ The poor classes of artisans were denied a share in the new job openings in mechanical work that came with higher wages. Instead, we see them pushed into manual labour through a different kinds of schooling such as weaving schools, carpentry schools, and railway workshop training schools.

By 1930, there were 30 government and 66 grant aided and private schools in the province providing technical education. And by 1936 when the Abbott Committee investigated the need for technical education, their numbers were 25 and 47 respectively.¹⁹² In the official classification, they were divided into first, second, and third class schools. For example:

¹⁹⁰ Sing and Gupta, *Ferrous Foundries of India*, 1948.

¹⁹¹ Resolution No. 1163- XVIII-425, dated the 27th August, 1913, Home (Education), December, 1914, No. 19-21, *NAI*.

¹⁹² Abbott, *Report on Vocational Education*, 79.

First Class	Second Class	Third Class
<p>1. Harcourt Butler Technological Institute, Cawnpore</p> <p>2. Government Technical School, Lucknow</p> <p>3. Government Technical school, Gorakhpur</p> <p>4. Government Technical school. Jhansi</p> <p>5. Government textile School, Cawnpore</p> <p>6. Government School of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow</p> <p>7. Government School of Dyeing and Printing, Cawnpore</p> <p>8. Government Carpentry School, Allahabad</p>	<p>1. Metal Working School, Aligarh</p> <p>2. Batuk Prasad Khattri Industrial Institute, Benares</p> <p>3. Leather Working School, Meerut</p> <p>4. Weaving and Cloth printing School, Bulandshahr</p> <p>5. Tanning School, Fatehpur</p> <p>6. Carpentry School, Dehradun</p> <p>7. Carpentry School, Naini Tal</p> <p>8. Carpentry School, Fyzabad</p>	<p>‘Model Weaving School’ at Muzzafarnagar, Khairabad, Najibabad, Almora, Agra, and Mau.</p>

9. Central Working Bareilly	Wood Institute,		
10. Central Institute, Benares	Weaving		
11. Leather School, Cawnpore	Working		

Table 1.1: Types and grades of Industrial Schools in the United Provinces.

The training of the labour force along both mechanical and arts or crafts line was pursued simultaneously. While the technical schools on mechanical lines pushed the ‘literary classes’ into the discomforts of industrial careers away from the overcrowded literary sphere ‘suffering from a species of mental indigestion which finds its relief in the political arena [nationalist politics]’, practical and industrial education with little theoretical knowledge came to be associated with the poor working classes.¹⁹³ Technical education was to reaffirm the caste division of labour, confining weavers to weaving, carpenters to carpentry, tanners to tannery, and factory workers to factories. Children of artisans were to specialize in inherited skills, folded back into different community spaces within a fragmented labour market. It was not only the absence of technical education that pushed manual labourers into their station, but its presence in the form of low grade practical and industrial education.

¹⁹³ Letter from A. Shakespeare, Esq. Secretary, Upper India Chamber of Commerce to the Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, dated 4th September, 1908, Home (Education), January, 1905, Nos. 57, *NAI*.

The Industrial School Committee of 1934 reconfirmed this division within technical education proposing distinct types of technical education for artisans and middle class men 'possessing a certain amount of general education'.¹⁹⁴ For middle classes, it proposed a central industrial school for each industry and for artisans, it proposed tutorial classes in respective industries such as in weaving, tanning, and cotton-printing.

Poor artisans who had been slowly pushed out of the technical school saw the newly established Government Art and Crafts School (1912) in Lucknow as a space to realise their ambitions. Here, they were taught art, art painting, decorative design, house decoration and architecture design, cabinet construction, ornamental heavy metal work, and gold and silversmith's work. The school seemed to be popular with artisans. For example, among 150 students in 1917, at least 42 came from the trade they choose to learn. By 1937, there were 226 students doing ordinary courses, 15 learning work to become teachers, and 31 attending short artisanal courses to learn new methods of their trades such as clay modelling, enamelling, metal casting, sculpting, art-painting, and wood carving.¹⁹⁵ After school, they got employed as draftsmen, design masters, drawing school teachers, skilled carpenters and smiths.¹⁹⁶ Between the years 1928 and 1935, of 204 students who had passed from the institution, only 15 joined industrial concerns, as against 85 who joined government jobs and other services. About 47 established their own businesses. In contrast to this, among 122 students who had passed from the Lucknow Technical School in this period only 3 had joined government service, 92 pursued industrial careers, and 5 opened their own businesses.¹⁹⁷

Artisans were at their best in demanding education when the gates of the industrial school were practically closed for their children and themselves. In 1913, about 150 workers and clerks gathered in a meeting of the Lucknow School of Arts and Crafts to demand a night

¹⁹⁴ *United Provinces Industrial Schools (Kharegat) Committee 1934.*

¹⁹⁵ Abbott, *Report on Vocational Education*, 94-95.

¹⁹⁶ *RTIE*, 1916-17, 3-4.

¹⁹⁷ Saprn, *Report of the Unemployment Committee, United Provinces*, 1935, 338.

school on the lines of the Lucknow Industrial Night School. Before we discuss these artisanal night schools, we need to examine how the night fitted into the artisan's schedule, space, and interests.

Episode V: Intellectual Nights of the Artisan Father

There is little information about how artisans working in a small workshop or in a railway workshop spent their nights. Certainly, they used it to relax after a day's labour and do household duties as husbands, fathers, and brothers. Hoey informs us that the work-processes of many trades, such as the making of glue, alcohol, and copper-shavings, included night as an important time period for preparing material.¹⁹⁸ Nights for mothers and daughters were significantly different. Besides their household and motherly duties, they spent their leisure hours doing chikan work to supplement family income. Hoey notes that with declining industries women of many poor families entered the market for sex work to supplement their family income. We also see a few male artisans spend their nights learning to read and write and seek some material advancement. The autodidactic worker worked in the day and educated himself at night.

Skills, particularly literary skills combined with trade skills, mattered in the promotion at the railway workshop. Workers' intellect, self-education, and literary skills were visible when visitors wrote about them. Nesfield, on a visit to the Charbagh Railway Workshop in 1882, found that workers were making an effort to learn literary skills, drawing upon their limited childhood education, and constantly trying for new jobs. Chedi was a fitter, a lohar by caste, who rose from the ranks of workers to supervise 45 workmen under him. Unschoolled Chedi learned to scribble Kaithi, used it to write down orders from supervisors, and instruct workers. He vernacularized the names of machines and technical terms. Another fitter Sheo Din also taught himself to write Kaithi. Khirode, a worker from the cultivating caste of Muraos in

¹⁹⁸ Hoey, *A Monograph on Trade*, 47,176,196.

Bengal, learnt to read and write Bengali by himself. Ram Khilal, a genius turner and supervisor of 150 workers, transliterated technical terms in Kaithi for workers and took shorthand memos of orders from the European masters. Santu, a migrant carpenter from Fyzabad, supervised 15 to 20 men. Never schooled, he educated himself in drawing and pattern-making. He drew models on paper and prepared patterns in wood which workers emulated. Nesfield also met two workers who had taught themselves English.¹⁹⁹

We see that ordinary workers often educated themselves to become fitters and supervisors. They appreciated the value of education and learning in their lives. Education by no means was the only mechanism of mobility among railway artisans. Nesfield met one Lodi, the bolt mechanic, a Brahman by caste, who entered the workshop as a helper supplying drinking water to workmen. While doing so and occasionally assisting artisans, he also learnt the names of machines and their work pattern and usage. In 1882, he was considered to be one of the finest workmen of the workshop.

A few drew upon their earlier experience of education in the workshop. For example, Kedi Ram, the iron-moulder, had been to a school in Moorshedabad. Life became precarious when his father died he had to stop going to school. He retained his knowledge and used it for his workshop job to become a fitter.

There were, of course, many workers who could not learn to read and write or forgot what they had learnt in school. Fitter Bulli had learnt Kaithi in his childhood by himself, but forgot it when he grew older. Similarly, Ram-ud-Din, the boiler maker and a Lohar by caste, told Nesfield that his father had taught him to write in Hindi but he had forgotten what he learnt. Nesfield commented that being literate was not a strict criterion for becoming a fitter or a supervisor in the 1880s. However, by the 1920s this had changed. Literate and English knowing workmen had more chances of getting into the railway workshop and being promoted to higher

¹⁹⁹ Nesfield, "Results of Primary Education in the North-West and Oudh," 99–100.

posts and salary grades.²⁰⁰ Illiterate Mahomed Ali, the Jamadar (jobber) of coolies, was considered ‘intelligent and trustworthy’. Sohodar the blacksmith who could not even write his name supervised around 400 workers. Yet workers used literacy to climb the hierarchal ladder within the labour market.

To reduce the educational efforts of the autodidactic workers to the needs of their job would fail to explain the night time schooling of workers, especially when literacy was not always an official requirement in the 1870s.

The night was different from the day. For workers it was a time for the family, for themselves, and for their community. It was a time that employers could not control in the way they controlled the day. It was at the night that workers could discover dimensions of life beyond labour.

As part and parcel of the restructuring of the Lucknow Industrial School in 1902, a night school was opened for the industrial school boys desiring literary training. The school failed as boys demanded literary education in the day school. They found it tiresome to attend the night school after the day’s labour in the school workshop. The night school had to be closed down.²⁰¹ In 1908, the evening school was revived. This time, it was intended for the railway workshop workers. These night schools were part of the local initiatives to educate the poorer classes of the city. They flourished in towns, cities, and rural areas. About 18 night schools were opened in Benares in 1907 with 599 students on the roll and a daily average attendance of 458. There were a few also in Lucknow but were mainly used by the younger generation as a substitute to private tuition and formal schooling.²⁰² In 1908, no less than 147 workmen, mainly mistris, from the railway workshop joined the Lucknow Industrial Night School.²⁰³ Taught by the industrial school teachers and senior boys, the older workers demanded that they

²⁰⁰ *Memorandum for the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 7.

²⁰¹ *RPI*, 1903, 33.

²⁰² *RPI*, 1908, 33.

²⁰³ *RPI*, 1909, 25.

should be taught the principles of engines, its anatomy, and names of the machine parts.²⁰⁴ Artisans studied along with the poor Europeans and Eurasians in the night school whose fees were paid by the railway authorities, but Indian artisans paid their own fees. This, of course, limited the participation of the poorest artisans. The number of total Indian students was 72 in 1917. But by then, the city had many other night schools in various artisanal neighbourhoods.

In 1913, the demand for the night school was primarily made by non-railway artisans of the city. Workers had agreed to pay a minimal fee: four annas for those who earned less than Rs. 15 a month, and eight annas for those who earned more. In September 1913, 58 students from various occupations enrolled themselves. The majority of them were workmen, and included two daftries (office peons), one drawing master, one draftsman, one tailor, four press workers, one glass cleaner, and five students of the Art and Craft school. We know about them because they were listed as the most regular students. Drawing, designing, workshop arithmetic, jewellery, and cabinet making were some of the subjects taught in the night classroom.²⁰⁵ Workers learnt the science behind these trades, new technologies that had revolutionised these trades, and the basic art of reading and writing. Attendance remained infrequent in the school. For example, enrolment was 26 in 1915 but as many as 80 workers would come on some days to attend classes. Watchmakers and goldsmiths were the new categories of workers that joined the school in 1915.

Such night schools were used by all sorts of workers—worker migrants, workers aspiring to not be workers, and non-hereditary artisans—to learn new skills, to secure new jobs, and to maintain existing employment and literary skills. The “untouchable” leader, Ram Charan, the son of a wage labourer hailing from the working class neighbourhood of Gwaltoli in Kanpur, entered one of these night schools in the early twentieth century when he was a worker at the

²⁰⁴ *RPI*, 1910, 31.

²⁰⁵ File no. 271/1913, Industries Department, Box. No. 31, *UPSA*.

Railway Audit Office in Lucknow.²⁰⁶ Later, he took a degree in law and became a lawyer fighting court cases for Dalits.

A series of night schools in the working class neighbourhoods were opened in the 1910s, such as in the Municipal High School catering to carpenters and other artisans living in Aminabad, and in the Kali Charan High School at Chowk for goldsmiths.²⁰⁷ Many night schools were financed by the government and employers with the idea of creating a disciplined, conscious, and civil workforce. They also emerged with the reform movements of the Arya Samaj and the Harijan “uplift”.

Workers ran their own schools. We know a little about one such school that was run in the buildings of the SPG Mission in Cawnpore. Financed by a regular contribution from workers and mahajans, the school emerged in 1903. There were 22 students in March 1904 and 55 in June 1904. Students included ‘a postman, two tailors, a tinman, several carpenters, two compounders, a few clerks and many banias and mahajans’.²⁰⁸ The subjects offered in the school were to give an opportunity for workers to apply for “better posts”.²⁰⁹ A special section taught English to already employed workers for fee ranging from 4 annas to Rs. 1. The fee was charged according to the earnings of a worker. In 1905, this section included a shoe-seller, a fruit-seller, a vernacular school master, and a lawyer’s clerk. They were there in the hope of better futures and learning some new skills and knowledge.²¹⁰ It was clear from their choices of courses. English was reported to be the most popular subject followed by Hindi, bahi-khata, and mahajani. Besides teaching general reading and writing in Hindi, Urdu, and English, the school offered classes in bahi-khata (shop-keepers account), commercial correspondence,

²⁰⁶ Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India*, 155.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Nos. 20 (C), File no. 271/1913.

²⁰⁸ *RPI*, 1904, 36-37.

²⁰⁹ *RPI*, 1906, 29.

²¹⁰ *RPI*, 1906, 29.

office-work, telegraphy, typing, stenography, and book-keeping. A steno-typist from a textile mill taught workers short-hand and type-writing with four typewriters.

All the teachers were workers themselves and taught either voluntarily or on a minimum salary. They often left these schools at their will.²¹¹ The school, most of the time at the financial mercy of native officials, the municipal commissioner, and rais (rich persons) of the city, was always in danger of collapsing. Workers, in fact, sought financial support from the Municipal Board Office in 1904. Though the Municipal Board made a grant of Rs. 20 in 1905, its annual reports stopped being published. Its existence, like many other worker night schools, was lost in history.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, I have discussed many entangled histories: artisanal aspirations and its suppression through education and by other means, the making of the skilled artisan and mechanic through modern training institutes, the bondage of artisans to work and employers, the exclusion of female artisans from the government technical and industrial educational initiatives, and the intellectual investment of workers in aspects of life over which they had relatively more control: childhood and night. I have suggested that artisanal lives in the period was marked by the attraction for literary studies, the creation of new desires for non-labouring positions, the fluidity and mobility of occupations. Schooling, industrial and night schools, I have suggested created a new realm of desire and a new obsession with literary studies. These new desires and aspirations, closely tied to the refashioning of artisanal subjectivities, were achieved by artisan's appropriation of childhood and night. Artisans appropriated schooling in conditions where their indigenous crafts were threatened by global industrialisation, the majority artisan-worker were reduced to wage labour through the nexus of merchant-capitalists, moneylenders, and workshop owners, their occupations were no longer restricted

²¹¹ *RPI*, 1907, 51.

to the members of artisanal community, and new mechanised trades requiring new skills opened new career opportunities.

Artisans, by not apprenticing their male children to workshops and sending them to industrial schools, silently rebelled against their pre-ordained lives, community norms, and social hierarchies. These actions of artisans were not limited to Lucknow and were not, by any means, universal. Hereditary carpenters in the Madras Presidency sent their kids to technical schools to learn drawing in order to become ‘mistris’ or get other more valued jobs.²¹² Among the 58 artisanal families (earning less than 50 Rs. per month) that Faiz Ilahi examined in Lahore, 39 adults out of the total of 67 adults in these families were getting formal school education (up to VIII standard). One artisan took English lessons from a private tutor to get a military job; another went to a European school. In these same families, there were 37 children (5 to 15 years old), out of which 13 were getting formal school education.²¹³ Education, artisans believed, was crucial to their own progress and the progress of the community. Yet among a few hereditary artisanal communities, education was also frowned upon. Many artisans believed that education led to the loss of traditional skills and community norms, and discouraged modern colonial education. For example, compared to the Muslim artisans, Ramgarhia Sikh and Christian artisans were far more open to the education of their children. Out of 37 children that Ilahi surveyed, at least eight were learning trades: two bicycle repairing, two carpentry, two furniture-making, one brick-laying, and one sweet-selling. All these eight children belonged to the Muslim artisanal families. Similarly, out of the total 26 adults in the Ramgarhia artisanal community, 22 were literate. In contrast, only 11 adults out of 30 adults from the Muslim artisan background were literate. Among the Muslim hereditary artisans, Ilahi writes, “their family traditions were such that they could not give up carpentry and take to a

²¹² Sastry, *South Indian Gilds*, 13–14.

²¹³ Ilahi, *Some Poorer Artisan*, 7.

new trade; to do so made one an object of ridicule in the biradari (brotherhood) and even deprivation of its privilege such as inter-marriage.”²¹⁴ Amidst these family, community and personal pressures, we see the emergence of patterns of desire among artisanal families for non-conventional careers, for education, and for futures that generally were reserved for elite and wealthy classes. The artisan father and mother, especially railway workers, articulated new futures for their children by sending them to schools. The desires for non-labouring careers were shaped by gender, class, caste, and community differences.

These patterns of desires, as we have seen, were so powerful as at times to change the orientations and objectives of official schooling. The transformation of the Lucknow Industrial School from a school to serve the labour needs of the local railway workshop to a school embodying artisanal aspirations is intriguing. Contrary to the intentions of the school and a conservative society, artisans became clerks, schoolteachers, supervisors, machine operators, and government servants.

These desires, however, were also subjected to the economic and social interest of the empire. The will of the empire was powerful enough to reshape the artisanal desires by excluding artisans, consolidating social hierarchies through new means such as by regulating the recruitment pattern in new jobs, and introducing new curricula. The arrival of Swinchatt from England and the recommendations of the Nainital Conference to admit only pre-schooled students and produce mechanics changed the nature of schools pushing artisans outside the boundaries of the school. The journey of the school from an industrial school to a technical school, from under the control of the education department to the industries department, and from a school of purely artisans to a school of mainly non-artisans was closely tied to the complex interplay of various interests and actors—artisans, non-artisans, students, school headmaster, the education department, railway authorities, industries department, and the

²¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

Lieutenant Governor General. We see how the working out of imperial interests heavily depended on individual authorities involved at the local level. Certain interests and actors dominated the institution at particular moments. The role of individual authorities like Tara Prasanno, P. H. Swinchatt, Colvin, and Hewett remained central in the shaping and reshaping of the institution. While on one hand, the desires and aspirations of students and their parents scuttled the objectives of state's policies and the school's curriculum in the early decades, on the other hand, we also see how school authorities with a new European headmaster backed by the state's new technical education campaign controlled the curriculum and redefined the composition and end results of classrooms substantially.

While the young artisanal and non-artisanal students challenged their fixed identities by entering the school, the school through curriculum, machines, and planned industrial pedagogy also transformed their notions about work, labour, respectability, and social position. Most importantly, it broadened the notions of skills and people who can have these skills to include mechanics and non-hereditary artisans. In the process, it was able to push away artisans from higher technical education by denying them admission to the technical school and channelling them into third grade industrial and artisanal schools. Yet artisanal efforts for mobility into another world were not entirely quashed. This is reflected in their autodidacticism and struggles to control nights. Nights, we see, were crucial in artisans' aspiration for new careers, gaining knowledge denied at the workshop floor and in childhood, and achieving what could not be achieved in the day. Yet neither the night nor childhood were spaces outside the workplace as spaces of artisans' "pure agency". They were increasingly constrained by their poverty and the power of school authorities to impose their elite visions in which artisans were just labouring entities.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the education of Dalits, excluded from the government industrial and technical schools, was caught in this interplay of different desires, imaginations,

and aspirations. The systematic denial of higher education to Dalits and Dalits' assertion for new careers through education is the theme of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

From Bondage to “Freedom”: Dalit Labour, Christianity, and Education

“Send us teachers! Give us instruction!”²¹⁵

Mehtars, Chamars, and Dhanuks demanded, when the American Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) missionaries visited their tolas (wards) and mohallas (neighbourhoods) in the 1890s. There was a sense of urgency in their demand. They no longer wanted their children to be illiterate and uneducated. Missionaries were both happy and alarmed by this premium put on education by the most degraded and “untouchable” labourers. The demand was directly related to their struggles for new life positions. J. Blackstock, a missionary in-charge of the Shahjanpore Industrial School and Orphanage in the NWP, remarked:

There seems to be very strong amount of opposition on the part of natives Christians to have their youth learn any trade or engage in any kind of manual labour. Frequently impertinent letters come to us, telling us that they did not send their brothers or cousins, as the case may be, to work, but to be taught, and if we do not do that to send them home. This prejudice is due, in part, to the low estimation in which any kind of physical labour is held by the people of India.²¹⁶

Blackstock was speaking at the third All-India Missionary Decennial Conference in Bombay in 1892. He reported that such aspirations affected the mission industrial school, which housed 160 converts. Most of the students were lower castes and Dalits. Compared to the artisans of the last chapter, the feeling of discontent with manual labour, as we will see, was much more strong among “untouchable” Dalit workers. Discontent with labour was due to the nature of work they did and the life of servitude that they lived. For centuries and for generations they

²¹⁵ *Annual Report and Minutes of the North-West India Conference*, Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), vol. II, 13.

²¹⁶ *Report of the Third Decennial Missionary Conference (TDMC)*, vol. II, 507.

were bonded agrarian labour. However, for their children, Dalits dreamed of a different world in which they were not servants, manual labourers, and “degraded members” of the society. The chapter will show that at the heart was a reconceptualization of Dalit childhood. Association with the white European missionaries since the late nineteenth century gave them another opportunity to go beyond their hitherto circumscribed life roles. They actively used the missionary presence to transform their relations with existing employers, neighbours, and among themselves. Education allowed Dalits to refashion their selves—not only in social but also in economic terms. Education had become their prime demand from missionaries. How and why did education become so central to Dalits’ demands at this time? How did missionaries and other private and official actors respond to Dalits’ aspirations of mobility? To what extent did notion of a fixed labouring identity for Dalits inform and shape educational initiatives targeted at them.

Two sets of literature, one analysing the relationship between Dalits and education and the other analysing the relationship among Christianity, conversion, and Dalits, informs our understanding about Dalit education. The first body of historiography, ranging from historical to anthropological and sociological in nature, suggests that Dalits consider education central to the concerns of social mobility, non-labouring opportunities, and community honour.²¹⁷ Taking a historical approach, the work of Shailja Paik, Philip Constable, and Eleanor Zelliott covered the issues of Dalits’ lack of access to education, discrimination in educational institutions, and Dalits’ initiatives and struggles for education.²¹⁸ A contemporary research on Punjab shows that while educational levels among Dalits have significantly increased, but it is not matched by higher occupational attainments among Dalits. Besides, the effects of education among

²¹⁷ Ciotti, “In the Past We Were a bit “Chamar””; Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery, “Degrees without Freedom”; Still, *Dalits in Neoliberal India*.

²¹⁸ Paik, *Dalit Women’s Education in Modern India*; Constable, “Sitting on the School Verandah”; Zelliott, “Experiments in Dalit Education”, in Bhattacharya, *Education and the Disprivileged*.

Dalits have been uneven, facilitating the social mobility in certain regions and of higher classes within Dalits.²¹⁹

The second set of literature familiarises us with Christian missions' proselytising agendas, the ideological aspects of civilising 'heathens', mass conversions of the "lower and untouchable" castes to Christianity, the role of the Christianity in refashioning the self and religious identities of Dalits, missionary educational efforts, and the missionary-colonial state relationship. The idea that missionaries offered Dalits a prospect of improvement in social status, freedom from the exploitation of agrarian bondage, the ownership of land, social respect, an opportunity for education, and emancipation from the oppression of caste society has been explored in great details.²²⁰ An interesting debate among historians has been about the motivations and the processes that led to the mass conversions of Dalits to Christianity. Duncan Forrester suggested that colonial land revenue policies and new legal infrastructure resulted in the loosening of the jajmani system which made Dalits economically insecure and forced them to seek new patrons. Christian missionaries, first to respond, offered new avenues of social mobility and a distinct religious identity for these discontented Dalits. Webster problematized Forrester's hypothesis and argued that the land revenue policy had not affected the relationship of landholders with Dalits. Besides, the jajmani system did not show signs of collapse in the nineteenth century. In contrast, he suggested that the religiously motivated Dalit convert leaders led the mass conversion movement in their homes, communities, and villages to which missionaries just responded by establishing schools, sending preachers and literature, and baptizing new entrants.²²¹ Webster claimed that what was desired was not always achieved. Caste inequalities were often reinforced inside the Church and in cemeteries, mass conversions

²¹⁹ Judge and Bal, *Mapping Dalits*.

²²⁰ Webster, *The Dalit Christians*; Oddie, "Christian Conversion in the Telugu Country, 1860-1900"; Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*; Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India*.

²²¹ Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, 63–71; Forrester, *Caste and Christianity*.

could little affect the oppressive agrarian systems, and very few converts experienced upward mobility.²²²

The recent work of Rupa Viswanath in the context of Tamilnadu has further complicated the picture. Demolishing the myth of Christian missionaries as entirely progressive agents and as advocates of social equality, Viswanath's study showed that missionaries were not very different from agrarian landlords when it came to the extraction of labour from Pariahs. She asserts that while missionaries brought the slavery question to the public light, they were more interested in replacing the harsh and cruel slavery of landlords by 'a gentler, less "Oriental" servitude'. Missionaries' critique of caste was directed against the 'religious' aspects of castes (rituals, superstitions) and not against the labour and political economic aspects (labour extraction and occupational hierarchies).²²³ They along with the colonial state framed the Dalit problem as belonging in the social and religious domain. Studies examining a similar nexus of political economy—Dalit labour, landed elites, colonial state, and missionaries—are missing in the context of the United Provinces even though missionaries and converted Christians were a significant force in the region since the 1880s. For example, the number of Christians in the United Provinces increased from just 47673 (including Europeans and Anglo-Indians) in 1881 to 179,694 in 1911 to 203,696 in 1931. The majority of them were rural labourers and belonged to Dalit castes such as Chamar, Pasi, and Bhangi.²²⁴ The role of Christian missionaries in producing a new realm of educational aspirations among Dalits in which they could express their desire for non-labouring careers and for unsettling with the status quo, and in producing new socio-economic hierarchies through industrial missions, is understudied.²²⁵

In this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between Dalit labouring lives and education in the context of the United Provinces, especially Cawnpore. I will examine how missionaries

²²² Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, 85.

²²³ Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem*, 15–19, 40–44.

²²⁴ Bhatta, "The Economic Background of the Christian Community in the United Province", 494.

²²⁵ On missionary education and elites see, Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire*, 1860-1920.

acted as agents of change in the north Indian society by offering education to Dalits and opening new “respectable” occupations such as those of teachers, pastors, and clerks for Dalits. Although revolutionary in terms of permitting Dalit access, the contents and visions of missionary education for Dalits was highly regressive, and reinforced the existing divisions of mental and manual labour along caste and class lines. The first section explores Dalits’ notions of education and their desire to be more than a worker in relation to their socio-cultural and economic world. I argue that Dalits approached education not only for social gains but also for economic advancement. Many Dalits made such calculations before conversion. They struggled hard to weave a new type of future for their children. The second section investigates how missionaries, who in the early decades of their mission supported literary educational efforts, began to increasingly control the nature of education given to Dalits—making it industrial, practical, and suitable for the occupations of Dalit castes. I suggest that missionaries saw Dalits and other poor children primarily as natural labourers, and this attitude governed their educational system in the late nineteenth century. They produced new moral and ethical logics to tie Dalits to “free” wage labouring positions. The “lofty desires” of Dalits to not be labourers were channelled through industrial schooling and industrial missions to make them industrial workers. Missionaries considered their presence and the education they offered as crucial to the progression of Dalits from bondage to free labour. However, missionaries, I argue, built their own capitalist castles on the grounds of Dalits’ aspirations and labour. They brought Christianity, capitalism, and converts together. I will elaborate these points by discussing industrial missions and the history of the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School. The third section analyses the period of the 1920s and 30s when missionary work was constrained by the emergence of Hindu nationalist organisations such as the Arya Samaj and the Harijan Sevak Sangh who further harnessed Dalits’ desire for education for their own nationalist and conservative socio-economic projects. I show that there was a consensus among the elite about

how to imagine Dalit childhood and lives, which were characterized in this view as essentially defined by labour. Towards the end of the chapter, I show that a few Dalits were able to use education to escape lives of labour, subverting the widespread representation of Dalits as labourers and workers. Throughout the chapter, an attempt is made to understand how the control over childhood was crucial for missionaries and Dalit parents to develop certain types of subjectivities among children.²²⁶

1: The Missionary Archive of Dalit Desires

Compared to south India and Punjab in north India where missionaries were successful in converting a large number of Dalits, missionary activities in the NWPO were fairly limited but nevertheless very significant.²²⁷ In the NWPO, they faced a large mass of what they called “ex-slaves”. According to E. W. Parker, one of the earliest missionaries to engage with the ‘lower orders’ in the U. P. in the 1850s and 60s, “depressed classes” were slaves in the past and ‘the English Government has, however, actually set them free and opened their way to rise to a better life.’ Slavery was abolished in the subcontinent in 1843. Likewise, authors of the district settlement reports in the region endorsed the same view. They further distinguished the slavery of north from the slavery of south—how the ‘untouchable slaves’ in the north had access to the house of their masters. Missionaries met with the lowest sections of the society: landless agrarian labourers, weavers, village watchmen, shoemakers, daily-wage earners, sanitation workers, and wage labourers possessing tiny piece of lands. Missionaries believed that centuries of slavery, exploitation, and ignorance had pushed them below ‘manhood’. However, the families of “untouchable labourers” were still bonded to the families of masters and of the middle and upper-castes in the countryside. As Ramnarayan Rawat shows, Chamars, even

²²⁶ A recent study by Karen Vallgård about how a universalised, sentimentalised, and scientific notion of western childhood began to shape the experiences of “native” children inside the industrial, day, Sunday, and boarding schools and orphanages of the Danish missions India, away from the influence of “brown parents” and the “heathen society”, has opened the field of childhood and missionaries in India. See, *Vallgård, Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission*.

²²⁷ On the missionary presence throughout India see, Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, 7–91.

though they possessed a tiny piece of land, performed forced labour (begar) for the elite castes.²²⁸ It was not surprising that Parker still saw the conditions of few Dalits as slavery—‘even now the oppression would be called slavery outside of India.’

To be a Dalit was to perform free labour for elites. The begar enforcers were landed elites (Hindus and Muslims), upper-castes, and local officials. Dalits had to offer their grass, hens, eggs, milk, and grains whenever it was demanded by these elites. Economic oppression was coupled with social oppression. Often they were denied entry into schools, motels (sarais), eating houses, temples, drinking place, and trams, and were forbidden to celebrate their marriages like upper castes or take the procession through ‘a Hindu mohalla’ and carry water while going to the latrine. Their women were denied ornaments. Their children were beaten if they attempted to attend schools or did well in education. They were forced to live in segregate mohallas and tolas, often called by their caste names as “Chamrauti”, “Pasiana”, “Koriana”, and “Khatkana”. Any form of insubordination was met with shoe-beating, burning of fields and houses, harassing and raping of their women, and a public spectacle of death by the government officials, landed elites both Hindu and Muslim, and upper-castes in general.²²⁹ It was within this world of oppression and tyranny that Dalits thought of ideas that transgressed the normal—ideas about educating themselves.

When missionaries visited the countryside in the search of converts, they met the most marginalised groups throughout the subcontinent demanding education for their children. In their published and unpublished writings, they wrote extensively on these marginalised groups. However, these sources, like many other missionary sources, are biased, present missionaries as saviours of Dalits, and have a tendency to over emphasise that people everywhere were keen

²²⁸ Ramnarayan Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability*.

²²⁹ Sanyasi, *Annual Report*, 9–21. See the Oral Evidence of Mr. Baldeo Prasad Jaiswara and Mr. Hari Tampta of the Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association, and the Note of Dissent by Babu Ram Sahai, Indian Franchise Committee, IOR/Q/IFC/73, *BL*.

for missionary education and the arrival of missionaries symbolised the emancipation of the oppressed souls from the orthodox system and structure. Yet, these sources, if we keep the bias in mind, are wonderful evidence of the labouring castes' desire for education and their upsetting of the established orders.

In 1859, the MEC had 3 native preachers, 5 communicants, 4 Christian boys, and 8 Christian girls in their school. By 1891-92, the MEC had a Christian community of over 50000 persons. The work organised from Lucknow spread into the interiors of Rohilkhand, Meerut, Bulandshahar, Aligarh, Mathura, Etah, Cawnpore, and Agra with 200 centres and converts distributed in more than 500 villages. The majority of their converts came from the "untouchable castes" and were engaged as agrarian labourers, leather workers, scavengers, boatmen, and domestic servants. For example, 2000 converts in Agra in 1892 were mainly "untouchables" who worked as leather workers (Rehgers), street and road builders, agrarian labourers, sweepers, and scavengers. About 5751 converts in Aligarh were mainly Chamars, Muslims, and Kachis. In Allahabad, the majority of converts and inquirers were Dalits and low-castes and worked as servants in hotels and private homes. In Cawnpore, converts were mainly Dhanaks, Chamars, Lal Begis, Mallahs, and Kachis.²³⁰ However, among converts, there were always a few upper and middle castes. For example, 400 persons who converted in Cawnpore in 1894 also included Brahmans, Bunias, Thakurs, Kayasths, and Sonars.²³¹

Stories behind these conversions are full of Dalits' desire for education. For example, when (Dalit) Sikh migrants in Moradabad heard of missionaries at a fair on the Ganges bank, a group of them from villages soon left to meet the missionaries in the Moradabad city to ask them to establish schools for their children. Subsequently, Sikh villagers from another village approached same missionaries for opening a school. Later, a fakir Chamar converted by the

²³⁰ MEC, vol. 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10.

²³¹ MEC, vol. 2, 18.

Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries sometime back came to the MEC missionaries saying that his followers were in Moradabad and he needed a school for them. Soon he mobilised 50 chamar boys as students.²³² Members from these two communities later converted to Christianity in large numbers and missionaries named their work “Sikh work” and “Chamar work”. Many “low-caste people”, says Parker, approached missionaries in Budaun district for schools. A successful “native preacher” and teacher of the MEC started with a small school but soon expanded to 14 evangelistic schools by 1888 with students distributed in 100 villages.²³³ In Kasganj, about 1400 persons converted to the MEC in 1893 and collected Rs. 540 for schools. However, the money mobilised to open schools was not enough. Hasan Raza Khan, the presiding elder (Chaudhari) in Kasganj, reported:

These newly baptized people entreated us very much to open small schools amongst them for the education of their children, so I opened fifteen small schools, but I could not do anything for other stations where similar help was needed.²³⁴

Faced with a large army of Dalit inquirers asking for education, he wrote to his superiors demanding more teachers. Such a phenomenon was not limited to north India; in the South (Travancore, Kerala) missionaries were met by the groups of Pulayas who wrote down petitions on palm leaves asking missionaries to open schools for their children.²³⁵ Missionaries, in their writings, appear both surprised and overwhelmed. They developed schooling as their dominant strategy of conversion. By establishing schools in rural and urban neighbourhoods for poor Dalits, they first trained the would-be convert, especially children, in Christian ethics and then converted them. Adults, they found, were difficult to educate. In 1891, the MEC had 10261 Christian children and young people and 5000 children of inquirers (those not yet converted)

²³² *TDMC*, vol. I, 29.

²³³ *TDMC*, vol. I, 32.

²³⁴ *MEC*, vol. 2, 25.

²³⁵ *TDMC*, vol. I, 43.

in 600 schools. Besides, they also had 45531 pupils in 1164 Sunday (preaching) schools.²³⁶ Each centre ran a school under a “native” Christian teacher who taught locals to read and write. The motive behind teaching was to enable converts to read Christian literature.

The presence of the large number of inquirers is interesting. It suggests that before conversion, Dalits calculated their interests, explored what Christianity was like, and inquired from missionaries about their future prospects. Missionaries kept these inquirers on hold due to their own limits of conversion and management. They attended free Sunday school in large numbers. For example, in December 1893, about 9408 Christians and 21329 non-Christians attended 524 Sunday schools of the MEC.²³⁷ The Sunday schools familiarised students with aspects of Christianity (the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the life of Jesus) through books. Poor students got free reading materials and a teacher who sometime helped them to read.²³⁸

If these numbers are to be believed to any extent, we have to also assume that a large number of Dalits did not come into the contact of missionaries and others remained silent about the demands for education. Nevertheless, missionaries termed Dalits (then known as the Depressed Classes) as “accessible” castes, unlike the upper-castes who were difficult to convert. Parker identified accessible castes as having four characteristics: (1) they were not orthodox Hindus and had their own peripheral deities, (2) they had less pride in caste, (3) they appreciated missionary presence and their efforts to alleviate their condition, and (4) they believed in progress. It was the last characteristic which is significant. Parker writes:

Many of them have an idea of “moving on”. Many places they have broken away from their old traditions to some extent, and are doing work their fathers did not think of ever attaining. Being thus willing to rise, they will take hold of those who may seem able to

²³⁶ *TDMC*, vol. I, 30-31, 34.

²³⁷ *MEC*, vol. 2, 53.

²³⁸ *MEC*, vol. 9, 34.

aid them; hence the way is open to teach and lead them. While there is encouragement in this point, there is also danger to be guarded against, lest the benefits of being raised socially become the motive that draws them to Christianity.²³⁹

Parker was both hopeful and alarmed by Dalits' desires to become more than what they had been for centuries. One of the strong motives for which Dalits converted was to seek a change in their material position. M. Tindale, an assistant missionary who investigated the Agra city schools of 'low-castes' converts wrote, 'there are some who earnestly desire to qualify themselves for positions better than their fathers ever filled.'²⁴⁰ For Parker, such desires were dangerous and needed to be 'guarded'. He wished to restrict the scope of missionary conversion to the social.

Dalits who converted to Christianity in the initial decades got educated and became preachers and teachers (in mission schools) in large numbers on a fixed monthly salary (between Rs. 4 to 6 in the 1890s). Christianity to them offered a passage to a class which was denied to them by the caste people and by the colonial socio-economic structure. Generally, missionaries chose bright students from the primary schools to train and educate in the normal school, in the theological school in Bareilly, or in their boarding Anglo-vernacular schools. In 1891, the MEC employed 261 persons as licensed native preachers, 381 as low grade preachers, and 736 as Christian teachers.²⁴¹ To become Christians, in converts' eye, was to be liberated from the landlords' bondage, to be educated, to be dressed, to have a house, to have a religious space, and to have a school for children and new economic possibilities. A few missionaries feared that Dalit converts who had begun to wear European clothes and live separately from their labouring group might be considered anti-national and alienated from the labour market.²⁴²

²³⁹ *TDMC*, vol. I, 27–28.

²⁴⁰ *MEC*, vol. 2.

²⁴¹ *TDMC*, vol. I, 30–31, 34.

²⁴² Bhatta, "The Economic Background of the Christian Community", 493-505.

Missionaries created a differentiated infrastructure of education. It was based on class, caste, race, and region. Dalit converts had to compete within this hierarchy to receive a place in these institutions of learning. The MEC maintained an Anglo-vernacular school and high school for the middle classes, and separate schools for white Christians. For the former, they ran Anglo-vernacular schools in Mathura and Canwore which were mainly attended by Brahmans, Rajputs, and Banias. In 1894, one-third of the students in these two schools were non-Christians.²⁴³ For white Christians, missionaries ran the Boys' Philander Smith Institute in Mussoorie and the Girl's High School in Cawnpore.

Not all children of converts could attend missionary schools, often due to poverty or mission's inability to provide schools and teachers. For instance, there were 7884 children under missionaries in 1892-93 and only 40 per cent (3142) attended school.²⁴⁴ Those rural converts in remote locations suffered badly from the lack of teachers and schools. By 1894, the MEC was facing a financial crisis and found it difficult to pay the existing teachers and train new ones.

The MEC began to reflect upon their policies. For example, S. Martin, a missionary based in Sialkot, Punjab raised questions over the policy of offering employment to converts. He writes:

Without entering into the question as to whether this was the best method of conducting Mission work at first, it is evident that when large numbers are inquirers, some other plan must be adopted. It would not be possible, if it were desirable, to provide houses or employment for them, and even colonization would prove inadequate. The course pursued in this work appears to me to be the only practicable one. The people remain in their old homes, and in their old employment, unless it is one that is inconsistent with a

²⁴³ *MEC*, vol. 2, 56.

²⁴⁴ *MEC*, vol. 1, 38.

Christian profession. The instruction they receive must be given at such times as will not interfere with their daily occupations.²⁴⁵

Martin argued for discontinuing the policy of offering material aid to converts and training preachers and teachers who were willing to work on a lower salary. It went simultaneously with another policy of asking converts to pay one-tenth of their earnings to the Church. Often not able to pay in cash, the poor converts paid in grain. Within Sunday schools, “Kauria Paltans” (Cowrie Army) were created who brought cowries, grains, and lentils to the mission.²⁴⁶ However, the crisis deepened when a series of famines, plagues, and cholera epidemics hit the region in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Not only was the converts’ ability to contribute financially to the Church reduced but a large number of deserted children were received by the mission. Concerned with news of decline in the financial support from America and the burden of baptising 10 to 15 thousand people at once, preacher Hasan Raza Khan of Kasganj, wrote to the white missionaries, ‘About 40 or 50 congregations have no teachers at present and members come to us and ask for teachers. Others send similar requests, telling us that the mission has forgotten them. They cry out that they with their children are left in ignorance.’²⁴⁷

Amidst these cries for education and the declining financial conditions of the mission, missionaries attempted to restructure education both to produce a limited number of educated elites to run its lower rungs of mission bureaucracy and to keep the majority of converts within the labouring fold. An attempt was made to channel the labour power of Dalits to make the mission self-supporting. “Industrial Missions” were established within the mission and an industrial bias was introduced in education at four levels.

²⁴⁵ *TDMC*, vol. I, 19-20, 21-24.

²⁴⁶ *MEC*, vol. 6, 31.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 31.

First, education was imparted in such a way that it interfered least with the occupational world of converts. For example, in Meerut, a teacher taught boys either early in the morning or by candlelight when boys were relieved from work. Thus in one village, the classes took place after ‘the pigs were brought and put into the pen’.²⁴⁸

Second, existing or new primary and upper primary schools began to introduce practical, vocational, and technical subjects. By the early 1920s, the Central Day School (Holman Institute) in Agra city trained as many as 600 children of Dalits and lower castes in industrial trades such as rug-making and soap-making. A Ford bus carried girls and boys living in various working-class mohallas to the mission compound.²⁴⁹

Third, for children received during the famine, orphanages-cum-industrial schools were established. By 1898, the MEC ran 6 orphanages with 300 boys and 350 girls. Boys and girls learned crafts, industrial work, and occupations such as dairy farming.²⁵⁰ Two orphanages in Ajmer (at Phalera and Tilaunia) produced 170 farmers, 19 weavers, 54 carpet-makers, 40 lace-makers, 80 embroiders, 6 carpenters, 12 teachers, 12 servants, 10 tailors, 17 gardeners, 4 blacksmiths, 4 printers, and 2 electro-platers in 1905. ‘Out of Death comes life,’ wrote one missionary.²⁵¹ Sons of the poor Christians were also sent to these schools.

Finally, the MEC began to establish industrial schools in urban centres to train Dalit converts in trades. By 1905, it had two industrial schools—one in the Ajmer city and other one in the Cawnpore city—that produced carpet-weavers, basket-makers, rope-makers, compositors, and carpenters. Another one was added in the 1930s in Ghaziabad (Ingraham Institute) to train Dalit Christians as peasants and tinsmiths.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ *MEC*, vol. 6, 21.

²⁴⁹ *Yearbook and Official Minutes of the North-West India Conference* (hereafter *YOM-MEC*), vol. 34, 50.

²⁵⁰ *MEC*, vol. 6, (1898), 29.

²⁵¹ *YOM-MEC*, vol. 13.

²⁵² *YOM-MEC*, vol. 47, 231.

“Industrial Missions” within the mission were an interesting phenomenon of the nineteenth and twentieth century missionary world. Historians working on the Christian missionaries in India have made passing references to it but have neglected to analyse its role.²⁵³ I see the presence of industrial schools as crucial for the industrial missions. In the next section I will explore the links between industrial schools and industrial missions and their implication on the history of capitalism and converts’ desire to be educated and not remain a manual labourer.

2: Missionary Capitalism: The Economy of God

Missionaries were a crucial agent in the expansion of global commerce, imperialism, and free trade policy to colonies. They were actively involved in the debates over the abolition of slave trade, the growth of contract wage labour, and the recognition of the rights of land ownership of the marginalised sections. The early Victorian missionaries (1830s and 60s) raised the slogan of “commerce and Christianity” and deemed their civilising missions and the expansion of Christianity crucial for the development of free trade, in making colonies into markets for British goods, as also as the spaces for the production of raw material.²⁵⁴ Missionaries cultivated values of thrift, honest labour, sobriety, and moral restraint among “heathens” and trained them into docile labourers (producer of raw material) and ideal consumers.²⁵⁵ Porter suggests that these links between Christianity and commerce were marginalised by the 1870s, and perpetuated the idea that missions ‘should sedulously avoid all economic activity’.²⁵⁶ In contrast, we see that missionaries reconceptualised their relationship with commerce and capitalism with a different vigour in the late nineteenth century through industrial missions, hitherto neglected aspects of Indian Christian mission history.

²⁵³ Hilliard, *God’s Gentlemen*; Fedrick Sunil Kumar N. I., “The Basel Mission and Social Change”.

²⁵⁴ Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*; Porter, “Commerce and Christianity”; Stanley, “Commerce and Christianity”; Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*.

²⁵⁵ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2, 9–15.

²⁵⁶ Porter, “Commerce and Christianity”, 617.

Industrial missions were part of the emerging global missionary capitalism which not only produced goods for a global market but also established missionaries as capitalist agents. Missionaries indulged in the production of coffee, clothes, tiles, carpets, bricks, and other commodities at an industrial scale with the labour of “natives”. Missionaries hardly published financial details of their industrial missions; instead, they extensively wrote on why they were forced to run industrial missions.²⁵⁷ E. M. Sadler, an educationists and professor of history at the Victoria University in Manchester justified the missionary venture in the following way:

As the economic activities and ambitions of Western civilisation impinge with overwhelming force upon native races in tropical or sub-tropical lands, efforts are being made to protect the interests of the natives by organising, in their behalf and in close association with missionary societies, forms of commercial and industrial enterprise which, while conducted upon business lines, will regard it as primary obligation to protect the native workers from unscrupulous and degrading exploitation [*sic*].²⁵⁸

The industrial shifts in the Christian missions resulted in three major developments. First, exclusive mission industrial missions were established mainly in Africa such as the Zambezi Industrial Mission (established in 1892, Malawi), the African Industrial Mission (1890s, norther Nigeria), the Nyassa Industrial Mission (1893, Malawi) among others. Second, as part of the industrial missions, various types of practical schooling got re-signified, such as agrarian, industrial, and craft schools. Industrial and agrarian settlements, employing the labour of “natives”, were established on large scales both as pedagogic exercise and ways to provide skills and employment to converted Christians. Third, to manage the business and industrial output, missionaries established industrial mission societies. The latter was an interesting development in the history of Christian missions which deserves our attention.

²⁵⁷ Buxton, “Missions and Industries in East Africa.”

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 281.

In 1903 the Uganda Company Limited, was formed in England to take over the CMS industrial missions in Uganda. The company bought 2 ½ tons of cotton seed to establish large scale cotton production, established a ginnery to process the cotton, acquired fields to start rubber and cocoa production, and a retail store to receive orders. In the British East Africa, the East African Industries Ltd. was established in 1906 which was engaged in the work of brick-making, cotton-planting, cocoa-nut cultivation, carpentry, laundry, and printing. Within two years, the company had acquired 1000 acres of land.²⁵⁹ Similarly, W. H. Fry, a businessman, in cooperation with F. W. Crossley of Manchester established an Industrial Mission Aid Society in London. The society aimed at providing the necessary capital for industrial mission societies located in colonies. The work was said to be run on purely business lines but with Christian ethics.²⁶⁰ In 1897, the society encouraged missionaries to establish cotton mills in India. In 1901, Mr. W. H. J. Hatch, the secretary of the society, wrote to all missionary bodies in India that a sale depot had been opened in London to sell all kinds of missionary products.²⁶¹ On similar lines, the United Free Church of Scotland missionaries established the Scottish Mission Industries Limited in Scotland with capital of £10,000 in 1904. The first industrial institutions that it took over were the mission printing press at Ajmer and Poona. The society maintained that its primary aim was to provide a livelihood to orphans. However, the profits made from the sale of commodities went to the foreign mission committee after an annual payment of 5 per cent of paid-up capital and formation of a reserve fund equal to one-half of the paid-up capital.²⁶² In New Guinea, a London Missionary owned company, Papaun Industries Limited, took over the production of cotton, sugar, rubber, coconut, and cocoa. To harness precious New Guinea timber, converts and locals were trained as carpenters, joiners, smiths, and boat-builders. Official reports maintained that it was all done in the name of

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 281–85.

²⁶⁰ “The Industrial Mission Aid Society, A Talk with Founder”, *The Harvest Field*, March, 1896, 81-86.

²⁶¹ “A London Depot of the Industrial Missions”, *The Harvest Field*, April, 1901, 358.

²⁶² “A New Industrial Mission Society”, *The Harvest Field*, June, 1903, 280.

‘material, moral, and spiritual advancement of the native of Torres Strait . . .’²⁶³ Yet, missionaries were wise enough not to train converts for posts that required high level skills and technical know-how. Writing on the needs of industrial missions in Africa, India, and elsewhere, missionary R. Wadlaw Thompson wrote in the missionary journal, *The East and the West*, ‘they (missionaries not in the favour of giving literary education to the indigenous population) thoroughly approve of such a work (black-smithy, carpentry, and agriculture) provided always that nigger who has been trained shall not be allowed to come into competition with the white man in any branch of skilled labour!’²⁶⁴ A deeper analysis of Indian industrial missions allows us to understand how these industrial missions developed, what they did, and how they justified their presence. Though significant, industrial missions remained one of the important aspects of missionaries in India, which unlike in Africa, operated on smaller scales and enjoyed limited success.

In India, it was commonly accepted among various missionaries that their number of converts had swelled due to recurring famines. The 1866 Orissa famine, the 1868-70 Rajputana famine, the 1873-74 Bihar famine, the Great Famine of 1876-77 in south India, the 1888-89 famine of Ganjam, Orissa, and North Bihar, the 1896-97, and the 1899-1900 famines of north India had not only wiped out millions but also left millions dislocated and famished. This provided an opportunity for missionaries to open humanitarian famine relief camps and embrace a large mass of abandoned children into the fold. Children ate less and were easy to baptise, mould, and train. In the public sphere, famines began to define the image of Christian missions. For example, converts were called “Rice and Famine Christians”.²⁶⁵ In north India it was often said that ‘if the missionaries had no orphanages they would have no Christians’. In

²⁶³ “The Significance of Industrial Missions”, *The East and the West: A Quarterly Review for the Study of Missions*, Vol. VII, 1909, 61-62.

²⁶⁴ “The Need for Industrial Mission”, 401, *The East and the West*, Vol. II, 1904, 398-404.

²⁶⁵ “Forty Years of Mission Work”, 103.

south India Christianity began to be called a “Pariah religion” as many converts were Pariahs.²⁶⁶

Many of the industrial schools and orphanages-cum-industrial schools were post-histories of famines. For instance, during the Great Famine, the Wesleyan Mission established industrial orphanages at Karur, Hasan, and Kolar and the Society for the Propagation of Gospels (SPG) established orphanages in Nazareth, Cawnpore, Roorkee, and Delhi among other places. Some of these orphanages were later turned into industrial schools, while others continued to operate as orphanages.

It may seem here that industrial missions were the result of famines. There is no doubt that industrial missions were tools to reduce the poverty of converts, but they also had alternative origins. For that, we need to go a little further into the past. At the 1858 Missionary Conference at Ootacamund, questions of industrial work were debated and it was concluded that mission industrial work ‘cannot be regarded as a necessary part of the machinery of Christian missions’.²⁶⁷ The only mission that pioneered industrial work and vigorously pursued industrial projects at this time was the Basel Evangelical Mission (BEM), located in Malabar and South Canara.

Basel missionaries who came to Malabar shores in 1834 were mainly peasants, traders, and artisans from southern rural Germany.²⁶⁸ They developed their entrepreneurial knowledge by learning new skills and industries by travelling back to Germany and to industrial centres such as Bombay or by inviting mechanists from Germany. They began by establishing a coffee plantation at the Balmatta Hills in Malabar. For labour, they depended on converts. In 1842, they bought 2620 acres of paddy land and leased it out to converts for extensive paddy cultivation. The official logic behind such plantation farms was not economic but moral.

²⁶⁶ Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem*, 41.

²⁶⁷ “Mission Industrial School”, *The Harvest Field*, June, 1892, 441-448.

²⁶⁸ Thomas and Schürer-Ries, “Visualising History and Space in the Basel Mission Archives”.

Missionaries argued that farms would settle poor and hungry converts and turn them into honest, hard-working, and self-supporting workers. The life of hard labour was presented as a sign of godly life. Influenced by Protestant ethics, Basel missionaries considered work to be the way to Christianise “heathens”. Contrary to the hopes of Basel missionaries, converts took little interest in the cultivation of land which they did not own. Besides, the majority of converts at this stage were from the Billava castes who were toddy trappers by profession and had little experience in paddy cultivation.²⁶⁹ The measures failed and the agrarian settlement collapsed.

Subsequently, Basel missionaries regularised their industrial activities and established an industrial commission in 1846 under the management of Christian merchants. Between 1852 and 1882, commodity production started on an industrial scale in the handloom weaving and the tile factories at various places.²⁷⁰ Besides, two printing presses (1849), one bookshop (1855), and one mechanical workshop were established. They not only supported mission work but also indulged in the production and trade of metal safes, books, water pumps, and lamp posts. In 1882, the industrial commission was amalgamated with the missionary Joint Stock Company, “Basel Mission Handlung Gesellschaft” (BMHG). The latter, established in 1859, managed the sale of finished products on the local and international markets.

Weaving establishments installed the most recent technologies like the fly shuttle, jacquard weaving, and mechanised knitting. Each weaving unit produced specialised goods; for instance, the Mangalore factories produced mercerised linen, stockinet, khaki uniforms (for the police and armed forces), and shikari (hunting) cloth, and the Cannonore factories specialised in checked design cloth. Tile industries, first in Mangalore (1865) and later in Calicut (1873) and several other places produced tiles with steam engines at a uniform temperature. They were traded throughout the British Empire and outside it. About 98 per cent of workers in weaving

²⁶⁹ Raghaviah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara*, 29.

²⁷⁰ Fedrick Sunil Kumar N. I., “The Basel Mission and Social Change”.

factories and 55 per cent of workers in tile factories were converts who were hired either on a daily wage or on a monthly salary.²⁷¹ To keep running their capitalist enterprises profitably, ties with local artisans, labour, and the market were maintained.

Basel missionaries simultaneously established a network of primary schools, industrial institutes, and orphanages to train labouring class converts to become industrial workers. Students were taught literary skills along with moral lessons and industrial trades. Efforts were made to inculcate in would-be workers a puritan work ethic. Class lessons imparted the values of hard labour, loyalty, honesty, and discipline.²⁷² Except for a few Dalits who along with Brahmans and other upper-castes were trained to be future teachers and preachers in the Anglo-vernacular schools, the majority were trained to become workers of different grades.²⁷³ The factory was represented as a pedagogic space for converts. However, workers were not always content with what missionaries preached. The Cannanore weaving factory witnessed a major strike in 1901 against refusals to give higher piece rates for a new design. ‘We have here a spirit of insubordination, insolence, . . . untruthfulness, disrespect and meanness . . . the education of these people looks like an impossible task,’ reported one of the managers.²⁷⁴

A capitalist spirit, commerce, Dalit labour, and Christianity were inextricable in the Basel Mission. Other missionaries criticised Basel missionaries for diverging from a strictly evangelical path. On the other hand, the BEM justified their economic enterprises as accidents, as results forced on them by circumstance. A frequent justification was that once converted, “native” Christians were ostracised socially and occupationally from their families and society,

²⁷¹ Raghaviah, *Basel Mission Industries*, 41.

²⁷² Divya Kannan, a PhD student associated with the TRG, explores work culture in relation to the Basel Mission in her doctoral work. See, https://www.ghil.ac.uk/trg_india/research/3.html#c1784, accessed on 26.05.2017.

²⁷³ *The Sixty-fifth Annual Report of the BEM in South-Western India*, 1904, Basel Mission Press, Mangalore, 1905; Shetty, “Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens”, 538.

²⁷⁴ Quoted from Raghaviah, *Basel Mission Industries*, 47–48.

lost their inherited wealth, and hence the mission was forced to rescue the jobless poor converts and turn them into self-respecting human beings.²⁷⁵

By the late-1880s, most of the protestant Christian missionary bodies opened their own industrial missions both to make their work self-supporting and “native Christians” self-sustaining. They either leased or bought land from the government and cultivated this land with the labour of converted Dalits. Others established industrial schools to train workers for industrial production. By opening their own missionary enterprises, missionaries believed that they were severing the tie between the depressed classes and serfdom. One missionary of the American Baptist Missionary (based in Kistna) vigorously demanded industrial missions at the Bombay Decennial Conference:

We need to agitate for their complete emancipation. In remote villages not only the Pariahs, as a class, but many Christians are still in practical serfdom. Their wrongs must be ours till “liberty to the captive” is proclaimed. The system of yearly agreement between the servant and his master, by which all incentive to spontaneous industry is eliminated, improvidence fostered, injustice facilitated, and religious and moral freedom imperilled, must be abolished, and give place to regular payment of wages at the time, and by the job, for all work done. Let them be no longer bonded servants but free men.²⁷⁶

For inspiration and management, missionaries looked to the Basel Mission, sent their members to the BEM for training, and invited Basel missionaries to conferences to speak on industrial missions. Basel missionaries, however, did not like to see themselves as missionary industrialists. Frustrated by such treatment, one Basel missionary, L. J. Frohnmeyer (Malabar) at the Bombay Decennial Conference succinctly argued that while the path of industrial work was traversed by many missionary organisation, ‘It is somewhat humiliating besides to see,

²⁷⁵ *The Sixty-Ninth Report of the BEM*, 1908; *TDMC*, vol. II, 479–92.

²⁷⁶ *TDMC*, vol. I, 12–13.

now and then, . . . such who know something of the existence of a Basel Mission, know it only by its industrial productions.²⁷⁷

Decades later, missionaries at the 1901 Madras Decennial Conference announced that industrial work should be considered by missionaries to be ‘spiritual work’ and ‘an essential element in mission enterprise’.²⁷⁸ It passed several resolutions towards promoting mission industrial work. The very missionary bodies who earlier criticised the BEM employed similar logics to defend their own industrial missions. In addition, they saw their industrial missions as mechanisms parallel to the one that the colonial government was running, which were industrial schools intended to ‘revive old industries, development of new ones, (and) save an increasing population from starvation . . .’²⁷⁹ Missionaries strongly believed that their industrial missions would solve the problem of the supply of skilled and efficient labour which the colonial government had begun to recognise. Through their efforts, which they called ‘economic chivalry’, they generated material resources and a skilled workforce.²⁸⁰ The government also recognised their efforts. It invited them to share the table at educational-industrial conferences and industrial school committees. The government encouraged missionary industrial schools by offering grant-in-aid. Missionary journals, being read by government officials, missionaries, and the Christian audience back in home, carried intensive propaganda and discussion over industrial missions, and presented them in a favourable light by representing them as means of rescuing degraded souls from utter poverty and starvation.²⁸¹ In 1888, one General Armstrong remarked at the Great 1888 Missionary Conference in London that ‘converts in Africa need industrial education for moral reasons and converts in India to

²⁷⁷ *TDMC*, vol. II, 479.

²⁷⁸ “Industrial Education”, *The Harvest Field*, March, 1903, 137–144; *Report of the Fourth Decennial Indian Missionary Conference (RFDIC)*, 140.

²⁷⁹ “Mission Industrial School”, *The Harvest Field*, June, 1892, pp. 441–448

²⁸⁰ “The Significance of Industrial Missions”, *The East and the West*, Vol. VII, 1909, 61.

²⁸¹ “Work among the Low and Depressed Classes”, *The Harvest Field*, February, 1893, 286–287.

keep them from starving.’²⁸² However, as we will see, logics of morality, poverty, and commerce were blended together in India. Missionaries deployed these logics according to the situation.

Missionaries also saw their industrial missions as civilising “natives”. The constitution of a new self-respecting social body and the transformation of immoral races into moral beings was an important project of missionaries. Industrial missions were new mechanisms to deliver the project. One missionary, R. Thompson, wrote, ‘Not only do we have to mould the people as a mass into a Church, we have to also mould them as individuals into men. They are now Malas, Pariahs, (and) outcastes. We must make them into those who need not be ashamed. There is a huge social work to be done . . .’²⁸³ Missionaries justified carrying out industrial work ‘among the backward and barbarous races of the world’. One missionary wrote in the pages of the prominent journal, the *Harvest Field*, that:

Industrial training, with its lessons of obedience to rule and steady continuance in labour . . . and its reward in the provision of larger civilisation . . . becomes in such cases a most valuable instrument and channel of Christian progress, and of the development of a self-respecting and progressive life.²⁸⁴

Industrial missions, through industrial schools, became one of the finest tools in the nineteenth and the twentieth century to socially engineer the labouring classes and create a trained labour force for capitalists’ enterprises. While contributing to a material rise in Dalits’ position, industrial schools attempted to make them content with labouring positions. To make converts work hard, produce goods, and obey their masters was a huge challenge for industrial missions. For this, missionary schools used classrooms, textbooks, and moral preaching.

²⁸² “Industrial Missionary Association”, *The Harvest Field*, December, 1911, 473.

²⁸³ “The Need for Industrial Mission”, *The East and West*, Vol. II, 1904, 403.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 402.

Missionaries generally saw poor converts as lazy, idle daydreamers. ‘We must first of all teach the natives that they cannot be Christians and sleep most of the time,’ wrote R. Black, a Dutch Reformed missionary.²⁸⁵ To teach them the values of hard work, lessons from Christ’s life were given. Industrial work was taught as “the Lord’s work”. Converts were told that the Lord’s work could ‘be done just as well as at the loom, the forge, the carpenter’s bench, and with the needle or the composing stick as the school master’s desk.’²⁸⁶ Work was infused with religious meaning and its meaning was re-signified in a Christian atmosphere where schools hung pictures of Jesus doing carpentry. The life of labour was celebrated over a life of idleness in moral stories narrated to students. Like industrial work, converts were taught to consider hard labour as a spiritual calling and a noble cause.

Missionaries often complained that converts had overly high ambitions. They used education as a gateway to secure a middle class life. They desired a place in the army as soldiers, in the colonial education system as teachers, in colonial offices as clerks, and in management as supervisors and contractors. Converts detested manual labour, vehemently opposed its imposition upon them and their children, and critiqued missionaries for not changing their economic positions. Often not aware of industrial schools’ curriculum, new converts sent their children to industrial schools but once they came to know that their children were learning labour, they withdrew them. Evidence of withdrawals is plentiful. Rev. H. Fairbank of the American Marathi Mission once said that if he asked 500 orphan boys in Ahmednagar if they would like to go to a school or learn a trade, 99 per cent of them would say “school”. He recalled an event from years earlier, when a missionary sent an orphaned boy to learn horseshoeing. However, when relatives of the boys came to know this, they complained that this incident had lowered down the dignity of their family.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Quoted from, Paterson, “The Gospel of Work does not Save Souls”, 390.

²⁸⁶ *Annual Report of the American Arcot Mission for the year 1890*, viii.

²⁸⁷ “Training in the American Marathi Mission”, *The Harvest Field*, April, 1901, 125–130.

In other ways, the missionary archives are full of converts' desires to escape a labouring life or particular type of labouring life. Disturbed by these aspirations, D. C. Churchill, a missionary attached with the American Marathi Mission wrote:

born into the traditional state of the "outcaste", taking their allotted place in a social ladder made up of all classes reaching from those who furnish the labour (without any assistance in that labour from "education") at the bottom, to those at the top whose two chief distinctions are that they are "educated" and that they do not labour, it is no wonder that Indian Christians, even more than the American Negro, have come to feel that "education" will emancipate the uneducated from labour.²⁸⁸

To missionaries, these desires represented false ambitions. Hatred for labour was not a way ahead. Industrial missions required dedicated, obedient, and trained labour. Such sentiments were required to be transformed into feelings that were receptive to an easy submission to the existing labouring regime. Missionaries believed that industrial schools would gradually 'combat the ruling sentiments, and turn many a young man into a first-rate workman with his hands, who would only make a most indifferent writer or school master.'²⁸⁹

To generate capital and support missions, missionaries in India established their own company, called Indian Mission Industries Limited with capital of £5000 divided into 4990 ordinary shares of 1 pound each. The company engaged in the production of carpets and inlaid metal for the American and English markets. Labour for these firms came from the boys and girls of the American Marathi Mission technical school in Ahmednagar where hundreds of children and youth were trained in various crafts including carpet-making.²⁹⁰ It was found that there were 1500 orphaned children in Ahmednagar city alone in 1902 who were trained in

²⁸⁸ "An Attempt to State the Problem of Industrial Education among the Indian Christians of Western India", *The Harvest Field*, April, 1915, 173. Emphasis added.

²⁸⁹ "The Industrial Side of Mission Work", *The Harvest Field*, April, 1897, 121.

²⁹⁰ "The Industrial Mission Aid Society", *The Harvest Field*, 1899, 71–72.

various industrial schools and orphanages as potential workers.²⁹¹ The company also established a rug factory close to the Sir D. M. Petit School of Industry where 70 girls and 80 boys were trained in rug-weaving, carpentry, and metal hammering of copper, aluminium, and brass. The Company in 1900 proposed to take over the industrial establishments of various mission bodies including of the CMS and the MEC and invest into the mission industrial works running in Persia, Ambala, Ludhiana, Saharanpur, Nasik, and Aligarh.²⁹² The industrial turn of mission societies occupied so much attention of missionaries that to manage this vast economy of God, they had to organise industrial exhibitions and annual industrial conferences. Besides, industrial work became an important subject of discussion in general missionary conferences. On podiums, missionaries presented papers on industrial schools, reported about the growth of industrial missions, and justified their actions.²⁹³

Along with training labour for their own industrial establishments, missionaries actively supported the industrial enterprises of Europeans by providing a trained labour force and by assisting in educating and training the labour force of factories. For example, one Mrs. Foy of the MEC maintained a day-school and a Sunday-school for the children of the employees of the Foy Brothers Shoe and Harness Factory in Cawnpore. Another manufacturer, Mr. Bond, supported a native preacher, 1 English Sunday-school, 3 native Sunday-schools, and 2 teachers of the MEC to educate and train his labourers.²⁹⁴ I will discuss capitalists' incorporation of missionaries in their strategies to control industrial labour in the fourth chapter. For now, I want to illustrate the role of the mission industrial schools in producing a trained and disciplined labour force for capitalists, offering converts alternative careers, and containing Dalits within the larger fold of labour. I will illustrate with the case of the Cawnpore Mission

²⁹¹ "Industrial Undertakings at Ahmedabad", *The Harvest Field*, February, 1902, 53–56.

²⁹² "Industrial Missions and Society", *The Harvest Field*, March, 1900, 117–118.

²⁹³ "The Relation of Industrial Education to the Evangelization of India", *The Harvest Field*, October, 1910, 378.

²⁹⁴ Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens", 538.

Industrial School for boys and girls which was run by the SPG. The MEC also had its own industrial school in Cawnpore but records are too patchy to give a detailed description of it, but it does reveal that several missionary bodies were involved in the project of industrial work and training Dalits at the same place and in the same time.

2.1: The Cawnpore Industrial School

The SPG mission industrial school in Cawnpore was called St. Martin's Craft School in official mission reports. Like many other mission industrial schools, its origins were also located in various famines. It began as an orphanage in the terrible famines of 1896-97. By then, the SPG had a stronghold in Cawnpore. Its establishment in the region was enmeshed in a bloody history. Accounts of the mission recalled that in 1857 two missionaries of the society, Haycock and Cockey, along with the native flock, were massacred. Schools and other mission buildings were burnt down.²⁹⁵ The SPG north India office, then based in Calcutta, proposed to shift the mission to Lucknow or Allahabad—centres under the tight control of the British government. However, missionaries decided to stay believing that there was more to gain by staying than by leaving a densely populated city and an emerging industrial town of north India.²⁹⁶

Before the industrial school was established, the SPG missionaries had 6 vernacular schools with 240 pupils in 1890, one Middle Anglo-Vernacular school at Generalganj with 200 students, and the Christ Church High School for the youths of the city which prepared students for the Allahabad University. These institutions catered to the whole population of the city and were mainly attended by affluent Hindu and Muslim families. For example, in the Christ Church High School, there were 222 Hindus, 45 Muslims, and just 8 Christian students in 1890.²⁹⁷ For the poorer sections of the society, the mission had a female orphanage called

²⁹⁵ "Lucknow, A New Indian Diocese", *Mission Field*, January, 1893, 16–17.

²⁹⁶ Joshi, *Lost Worlds*, 15–61.

²⁹⁷ *Mission Field*, April, 1890, 139–140.

Savadah Kothi and a boys' orphanage called the Boys' Home in Asrapur, a suburb in Cawnpore, which educated orphans and children of poor converted Christians together.

The foundation of the industrial school in the later records was traced back to this Boys' Home where there were 11 boys in 1890. The Home got crowded with boys in 1897. A series of monsoon failures and subsequent drought had affected the whole of north India. Crops had failed. Rivers had dried.²⁹⁸ Suffering extended to the NWPO, Bombay, Bengal, and the Central Provinces. The government soon opened poor houses and relief works and employed starving people as labourers on railway lines. Missionaries travelled to the worst hit areas, collected abandoned children and adults, and gave them food. In a retrospective study of the famine, it was calculated that no less than 7000 children were abandoned and from these 800 were received by Roman Catholics, the American missionaries, and the CMS.²⁹⁹ The SPG missionaries in Cawnpore also collected about 66 boys and 56 girls from the worst hit districts of Allahabad, Delhi, Fatehgarh, Faizabad, Lucknow, Jubblepore, and Banda. Many of them died in carts while being carried to Cawnpore. The survivors joined the existing 55 pupils of the industrial orphanage. For their upkeep, the colonial government gave Rs. 2 to the mission for every orphan.

Such a huge number of orphans falling in the hands of Christian missionaries created an alarm among Hindu and Muslim religious advocates. Vernacular newspapers of the time were full of rumours and incidents of Hindu and Muslim children being kidnapped by Christian missionaries. The *Rahbar* published from Moradabad alleged that the train which reached at Ajmer Railway Station on 5th March, 1897 had a coach full of famine stricken Hindu and Muslim boys from the north.³⁰⁰ The *Alam-i-Taswir* (Cawnpore) reported that missionaries had

²⁹⁸ For a data on rain in these years and crop failure, see, *Resolution on the Administration of Famine Relief in the NWPO during 1896 and 1897*, 14–17.

²⁹⁹ "The Indian Famine- A Retrospect", *Mission Field*, March, 1899, 88.

³⁰⁰ *SVN*, March, 1897, 228.

succeeded in turning 113,000 Hindu and Muslim orphans into Christians by 1885.³⁰¹ In 1900, the *Bharatodharak* (Meerut) published that in the ongoing famine, Christian missionaries had collected 500,000 orphans.³⁰² The *Rohilkhand Gazette* (Bareilly) reported a highly sensational article in its 16th April, 1897 edition, claiming that famine-stricken parents sold their children to missionaries for two annas.³⁰³

Such sensational news highlighted three themes intermittently: first, they accused missionaries of abducting Hindu and Muslim children and keeping them by force; second, they appealed to Hindu and Muslim elites to build their own orphanages; and finally, they accused the government of favouring Christian missions by allowing them to acquire famine orphans. These sensational news items, we will see later, contributed to the formation of counter Hindu and Muslim reform organisations which established their own orphanages.

Back in Cawnpore, there were enough boys in 1897 to run an industrial school—‘an institution that would be of permanent value to the Mission’, remarked F. Westcott, the head SPG missionary in Cawnpore. The school gave 2 hours of religious and secular instruction to orphans. For the rest of the day, they laboured to produce baskets. A few were sent to help in the mission printing press and in the carpenter’s workshop. About 5 bigger boys were employed in the Government Equipment Factory.³⁰⁴ It was a small beginning. To keep the school going, children of the poor converts began to be taken in the Home. For example, on 6th January 1898, a missionary wrote a letter to the head of the Industrial Home asking if he could ‘take 2 boys, aged 12 and 8.’³⁰⁵ The letter highlighted that the boy’s father had no work and the mother who was taught in the female orphanage was a zenana teacher on Rs. 10. In 1898, there were 240 boys in the Home and about 50 more were expected from the Banda missionary

³⁰¹ *SVN*, November, 1897, 704.

³⁰² *SVN*, No. 34, July, 1900, 415-416.

³⁰³ *SVN*, April, 1897, 283.

³⁰⁴ “Famine in India- Relief in Cawnpore”, *Mission Field*, June, 1897, 225.

³⁰⁵ *Cawnpore Quarterly Paper* (hereafter *CQP*), January, 1898, 1-2.

poor house. From the famine-hit regions, missionaries chose the best and most promising children. They selected boys from what they called as ‘hard-working castes, such as the Kurramis and Kachchis’.³⁰⁶ Children’s plasticity made their evangelical and industrial mission work easier. In the coming years, these “waifs and strays” would be transformed into competent and industrious workers.

In June 1899, the SPG missionaries realised the dream of founding an agrarian settlement run with the labour of collected boys. Missionaries rented 25 bhigas of land to cultivate crops in Birpur, a village few miles away from Cawnpore. A colony of farmers was set up by selecting children from the cultivating castes such as Kurmis and Kachchis. In the first batch, 12 boys were selected. They were of tender age but the missionaries believed, ‘an early start is essential in work that involves so much exposure to sun, and there was also the fear that their prolonged stay in Cawnpore should rob them in part of an inherited fitness for such work.’³⁰⁷ In October, 1899, the number of workers was increased to 18. A “Hindu Kisan” instructed children and adults on fields and a superintendent catechist looked after the whole settlement. The SPG including other missionary bodies such as the Salvation Army and the Free Church of Scotland maintained similar agrarian settlements using the labour of Dalits throughout the subcontinent.³⁰⁸ Two such settlement were being run in the NWPO—one in Ummedpur and the other in Kheri with the labour of converted Dalits and those from “criminal” tribes.³⁰⁹ In these enclosed spaces of labour training and extraction, it was possible to train converts both in values of thrift, honest labour, hard work, and bodily discipline and in Christian ethics.

In the Birpur settlement, boys resided in the village. They sowed crops in the day and protected it from the raids of deer, wild pigs, and other animals in the night. Whenever extra

³⁰⁶ *A Short Account of the St. Martin’s Craft School (A Short Account)*, 3; “Famine in India- Relief in Cawnpore”, *Mission Field*, June, 1897, 224.

³⁰⁷ *CQP*, July, 1899, 3.

³⁰⁸ See the essay by Brindavan C. Moses on “Panchama Land in Tamilnadu in Thangaraj” in *Land Reforms in India*, 119–28; Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem*, 120–23; Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, 75.

³⁰⁹ Both the places were located in the NWPO. Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe in Colonial India*.

labour was required, the industrial school was asked to provide it. However, it seems that the agrarian experiment failed and was abandoned at some point after 1900. No mention of it was made in the SPG missionary reports either in their monthly newspaper or in their annual reports. The focus, rather, was now more on the industrial side of the industrial school.

2.2: Life inside the Industrial School

There are very fragmented records to build an inside picture of the industrial school. To make my task easier, I will combine images and textual records to write industrial school history. The SPG missionaries designed a meticulous curriculum and divided schooling into three stages. In the first stage, boys were taught reading and writing in the vernacular. In the second stage, they did apprenticeships in the mission industrial workshops. In the final stage, they were either employed in the mission's industrial work or became journeymen. One stage prepared the students for the next stage. All three stages were part of industrial school life. Inside the mission compound were students, apprentices, workers, missionaries, and general labourers who transported things needed in the workshops.

Unlike the Lucknow Industrial School, the Cawnpore school was modelled on the English industrial training system. Boys until the age of 13 remained in the school and after that they joined workshops as apprentices. Rev. Fross Westcott, popularly known as “Chhote Sahib” among converts, was the man behind the school. Westcott was considered one of the pioneering advocates of industrial education. The British government asked him to serve as a member of the Industrial Education Commission in 1902. There were fundamental divisions among missionaries over the modes of training converts. Some believed that industrial training should be given to boys in their early childhood while others believed that smaller children would waste raw materials.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ “Notes on Industrial Education in India”, *The Harvest Field*, February, 1904, 47.

While age was one issue, the content of syllabus was another field of contention among missionaries. How much practical and industrial education should be given in the classroom? It seems that the policies of the Cawnpore School itself changed over the years. For instance, in 1903 the school syllabus was revised to make it more practical and tuned to the needs of the workshops. Earlier while only literary classes (reading, writing, and arithmetic) were given, now lessons in geography, drawing, and manual exercises were also introduced. English lessons were not allowed fearing that if ‘that language is acquired the boys will seek some clerical employment.’³¹¹ Such shifts to hard manual labour in the missionary education system catering to “native Christians” were also visible in Colonial Africa.³¹²

Literary classes were useful because they gave the would-be workers practical literary skills and dispositions that made them work for capital. Thus the values of hard-work, honesty, thrift, discipline, sincerity, and loyalty were taught. In the night schools, senior boys narrated moral stories from the Bible.

Boys from the beginning were taught to respect time. Time defined their bodily movements. It was not just the time that was spent in the school that was supervised, but the whole day cycle was controlled. A boy had to abide by the following schedule.

5.15 AM	1 st Bell for getting up
5.50 AM	parade and roll call
6 AM	short service in church
6.15 to 7 AM	physical drill
7.30 AM	preparation for school
9 AM	breakfast

³¹¹ *Annual Report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, [hereafter *SPGFP*], 1904, 90.

³¹² See, Paterson, “The Gospel of Work does not Save Souls”.

10 AM to 3 PM	classroom lessons in school and manual training
6.30 PM	dinner
7 PM	school again
8 PM	prayers followed by a bell for bed-time rest.

Like prisons, regiments, and reformatory schools, mission industrial schools followed a strict disciplinary regime.³¹³ Missionaries argued that the transformation of natives' bodies would be impossible without implementing this time-schedule. Their bodies were so used to an undisciplined life. It is not surprising that one of the earliest workshop that the BEM opened was of watch-repairing. Clocks, bells, gongs, and whistle regulated the bodily rhythm of school-boys which later was useful for workshop discipline.³¹⁴ While teachers watched the movements of boys in classrooms, a retired Sikh soldier looked after the discipline outside school hours.³¹⁵ Boys were made to learn to eat, sleep, play, and worship on time. A cook cooked food for boys from 3 to 6 a.m. and then again from 3 to 6 p.m.

Workshops, located within the mission compound, were the most important component of industrial schooling. Students passed from the Industrial School entered into the workshops as apprentices. Workshop's existence was outside the industrial school but their nature was substantially changed due to the industrial school. In one way, missionaries were preparing labour through schooling for their workshops. But with the labour of industrial school boys, new workshops were also founded over the years such as of leather and metal works.

The first workshop that came into existence was the printing press (1892). It was attached to the Christ Church Mission Press Limited, a company which went under voluntarily liquidation in 1895, when its assets were acquired by the SPG mission press. The workshop

³¹³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

³¹⁴ Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism".

³¹⁵ "St. Martin's Home", *Mission Field*, April, 1913, 103.

trained compositors, mechanics, and book-binders for the printing press of the SPG (Figure 2.1). W.E. Burrows, an English missionary-cum-mechanist, looked after the trade and training. The next workshop established was of carpentry (1894) under Babu Atma Ram, a Sikh foreman, who himself was trained at the Lahore School of Art. The workshop did carpentry work needed for the missionary compound, church, and missionary institutions, and whenever possible orders from outside were taken. Atma Ram gave lessons on drawing, tools, machines, and woods. Boys made pulpits, Episcopal chairs, altar tables, furniture of missionaries' house and church, or any other product that could be sold in the local market (Figure 2.2).³¹⁶ The work of boys was showcased in the industrial exhibitions and a sense of competition was instilled among boys from the different industrial schools gathered to showcase their work. In the 1902 Industrial Exhibition organised by the Indian Christian Association, the carpentry boys won a gold medal for their work. In 1902-03, the school hired an English cabinet-maker, H. R. Lock, who missionaries believed would improve the quality of good produced. But after supervising work in 1903, he left the workshop and returned back to England.

Nevertheless, workshops continued to do well. Col. Clibborn, the principal of the Government Engineering College at Roorkee, paid a visit to the school in 1900. Impressed with the work, he wrote to the Lieutenant Governor of the NWPO asking if the school could be affiliated to the Roorkee College.³¹⁷ It would allow a better inspection of the school.

³¹⁶ *SPGFP*, 1906, 91; *A Short Account*, 12.

³¹⁷ *CQP*, January, 1900, 13.

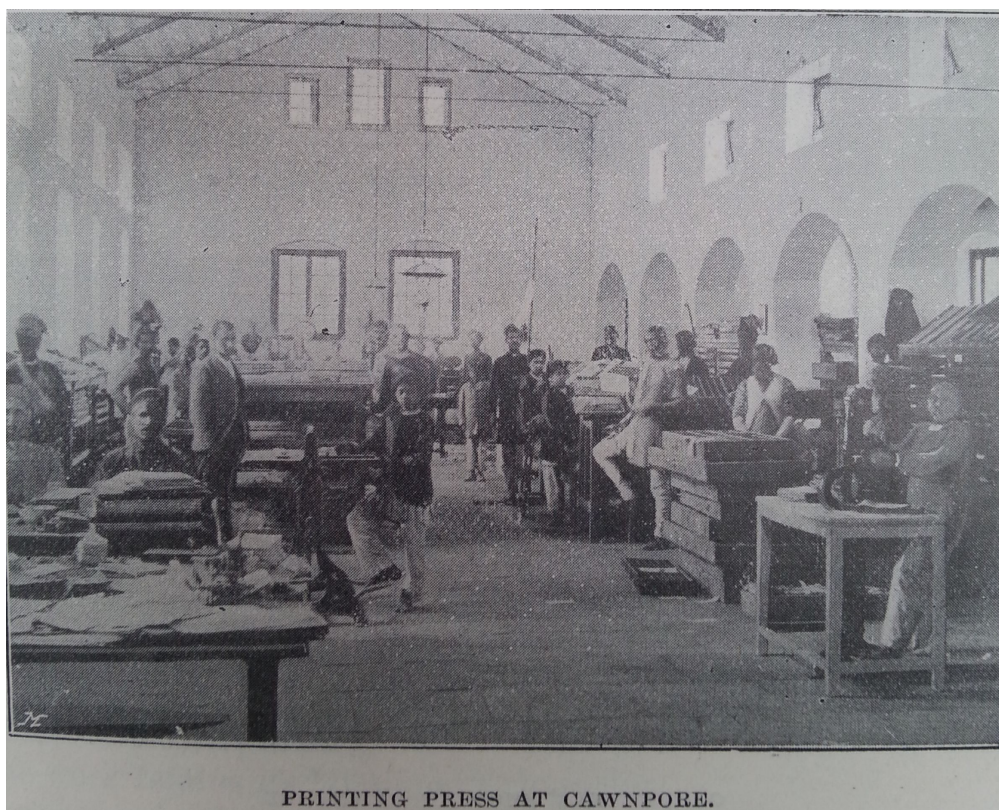


Figure 2.1: *Apprentices and artisans of the printing workshop, the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School. Source: The Weston Library, Oxford.*



Figure 2.2: *Students of the carpentry class, the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School.* Source: *The Weston Library.*

In 1903, the school opened a brass foundry with a finishing workshop under the European supervisor W.T. Huett. Goods for both the ecclesiastical and the secular brass business were produced in the foundry workshop. The moulders and fitters of the workshop produced metal castings for Cawnpore cotton mills and factories (Figure 2.3). In 1906, boys made brass lecterns and crosses for churches in England and Madras. The foundry workshop was special in the north Indian missionary world. Among Christian missions, which needed so much brass-work for its church, there was no other place where brass work was done by “Christian labour”.³¹⁸ To inaugurate the foundry on 3rd March, 1903, the Lieutenant Governor Sir James Digges LaTouche along with his wife travelled to Cawnpore from Lucknow on a special train. The Bishop of Lucknow and the Collector of Cawnpore also attended the function. In his speech, the Governor brought up a controversial issue. He warned, ‘in a workshop of this kind there are many matters which require regulation [such as] the time at which boys cease to be apprentices and earn wages for themselves . . . [T]here is a danger that the boys should be overworked and underfed in the interests of private profit.’ While first highlighting the danger of overworking children, the Governor shifted the conversation and pleased missionaries by saying ‘in the hands of the missionaries here there is no such danger, and the experiment now inaugurated will be of great value both to the Indian Christian community and to Government, which has, as you know an Industrial School of its own at Lucknow.’³¹⁹

Nevertheless, workshops were run on strict business lines and the aim was to make profit besides offering training to ‘low castes’ and Dalit converts. The apprenticeship period ranged

³¹⁸ *SPGFP*, 1906, 91.

³¹⁹ *CQP*, April, 1903, 13.

from three years in the Press Department to five years in the Carpentry Department and in the Foundry and Finishing Shop.³²⁰ Orders were received from outside and an annual sale bazaar at the Station Theatre was also organised in the month of December for the general public to come and buy the workshops' goods. Printers and carpenters generally worked from 7:30 AM to 5 PM daily except for Saturdays which was a half-working day.³²¹ When orders were many, apprentices along with workmen worked longer. Any overtime was represented as voluntary. For example, in 1897 the school authorities reported, 'of the famine orphans, 16 are now employed in the Mission workshops, 6 as carpenters, 5 in the press, and 5 as leather workers. For the most part they display great zeal, some having gone so far as to ask for longer hours of work.'³²²

³²⁰ *Directory of Technical Institutions in India*, 162.

³²¹ *Mission Field*, April, 1913, 105.

³²² *CQP*, April, 1897, 4.



Everything from road-building to needlework, from telegraphy to massage, is taught in industrial mission schools. This class, in a Cawnpore school, is developing competent blacksmiths.

Figure 2.3: *Students of the blacksmithery Class, the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School.*

Source: Willard Price, *Ancient Peoples at New Tasks*, 174.

What was produced in the workshop was sold at the market price. We have the sale figures for the workshop for 1903. In the absence of expenditure figures, it is difficult to calculate the extent of profit, but the figures suggest that the workshops had a substantial business footing in the market. The total sale of the printing press workshop was Rs. 13574-15-3 (Rs.-Anna-Pice) and of the carpentry workshop was Rs. 12453-0-2.³²³ The brass foundry, though it had not completed its first year, had earned enough to support all the children in the School, purchase a tool-grinding machine worth Rs. 376, and making a contribution of Rs. 100 to the General Mission Fund.³²⁴

We see that the school produced trained workers for the workshops which supported missionary activities financially. These students later joined as full-time artisans, mill-workers, fitters, or leather workers. In terms of numbers, the production of skilled labourers in a systematic manner was significant. However, the scale of mission industries and the production of Christian industrial labour was relatively small in north India compared to south India where the Basel Mission factories alone employed 3633 workers in 1913, which included 2679 converted workers.³²⁵ In 1905, we discover that the following grades of workers were produced by the Cawnpore industrial school. They included apprentices, journeymen, and independent workers (Table 2.1).

Trades	Present Apprentices No.	Working as journeymen	Passed out and	Withdrawn from the school	Died	Total

³²³ Ibid., 14.

³²⁴ *CQP*, October, 1903, 4.

³²⁵ *Report of the Basel Mission*, 1913, 20.

			working at trade			
Carpenters	17	3	13	13	1	47
Compositors	6	1	9	1	2	19
Printers	7	1	6	1	1	16
Bookbinders	3	0	2	0	1	6
Leather workers	5	0	12	4	2	23
Moulders, Fitters	15	0	4	0	0	19
Total	53	5	46	19	7	130

Table 2.1: *Number of apprentices, journeymen, and workers, the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School.*

2.3: The Savadah Kothi

The male industrial school was one aspect of the industrial mission; its other aspect was female industrial work. It was organised around the female orphanage (Savadah Kothi), which combined the function of a school and industry together. It accommodated 48 girls in 1895. By 1902 there were 86 girls on the school register with an average attendance of 80. By 1903, this number was 132. They included orphan girls and daughters of poor converts. The Kothi provided a mechanism to impart education and skills to Christian girls in an un-heathen

environment.³²⁶ They would later become wives of the local pastors and mothers of the future Christian community.³²⁷

Missionaries, as we know from the historiography on education, became one of the first prominent agents in the subcontinent to educate destitute, parentless, and Dalit girls. Girls from these sections were exposed to books for the first time. As per one governmental calculation in 1880-81, there were about 929 girls studying in 7 government recognised missionary orphanages-cum-schools of the NWPO. These orphanages were located in Secundra in Agra, Ramkatora in Benares, Asrapur in Cawnpore, Paori in Garwahl, Bareilly, and in Agra (2).³²⁸ However, labour was the lens through which the childhood of poor girls from marginalised sections was imagined by missionaries. The idea of a productive female body was institutionalised through formal education.

In contrast, missionaries' engagement with girls from wealthy backgrounds operated differently at the ideological level. For example, the SPG ran one school in the mission compound for daughters of Hindus and another one for Muslim purdah girls. The latter was under the authority of a Muslim woman who was educated at a CMS school in Agra. The school imparted literary education to these girls along with lessons in domestic science and religion. However, conflicts over religious training between parents and school authorities were noticed. Sometimes, 'parents become threatening, and not only take their own daughters away, but those of the same caste or family too', reported one missionary.³²⁹

The Savadah Kothi received a monthly grant of Rs. 80 for its educational contribution. As per the rule of the grant, it had to offer 5 hours of secular teaching and follow the government school syllabus and textbooks.³³⁰ Girls were taught Hindi reading and writing, arithmetic,

³²⁶ See Kannan, "Educating Poor Girls: The London Missionary Society in 19th Century South India" in Jacob, *Religion and Poverty*, 52–70.

³²⁷ *CQP*, January, 1904, 7.

³²⁸ *RPI*, 1881, 81.

³²⁹ *Mission Field*, April, 1918, 55.

³³⁰ *CQP*, October, 1902, 5.

geography in the smaller classes, and English and Urdu language in the higher classes. Missionaries, though interested in making girls literate, were not very keen to offer literary classes. Wherever possible they introduced trade classes sanctioned by the government for girls' schools such as sewing and knitting. Female missionaries who controlled the Kothi often relaxed rules to overdo trade classes. For example, in 1895 it was reported that literary education was only offered for 3 ½ hours, and the rest were dedicated to industrial training.³³¹ Inspectors of schools made similar complaints about other missionary female orphanages. With regard to the St. Joseph Orphanages in Agra, the school inspector wrote in her report, 'reading and writing had only a second place here, more attention being given to industrial and domestic accomplishments, needle work, and the manufacture of artificial flowers.'³³²

Life inside the female orphanage was spent doing various odd jobs such as sewing, mending, cooking, needle-work, lace-making, and cleaning of the mission compound. Elder girls were employed to look after little girls and boys who were kept together in the female orphanage in initial years. It was an important task during the famine, cholera epidemics, and plagues. For example, in 1901 there were 38 boys whom girls looked after.³³³ To diversify work and occupations for girls, an embroidery school was opened after 1910 for girls to learn the craft of gold and silver embroidery in oriental patterns. The produced material was sold in the Government village industries exhibitions.³³⁴

Only a few from these girls were selected to become teachers, particularly when they convinced missionaries of their mental abilities. Theoretically, a chance was given to them to study till the age of 16 when they appeared for the teacher's training class examination. However, their poor literary training in the orphanage school made them unlikely candidates. Once they had failed, the only options left for them were to become helpers, servants, nurses,

³³¹ *Mission Field*, February, 1895, 73.

³³² *RPI*, 1881, 59.

³³³ *Mission Field*, February, 1901, 74

³³⁴ *Mission Field*, April, 1918, 57.

matrons (ayahs), or factory workers. Missionaries believed that occupational and religious training inside the school would prepare girls for their future roles as useful and self-supporting Christian wives and mothers.³³⁵ Missionaries, as we will see later, redrew the boundaries of work, female labour, and the home.³³⁶

2.4: Ties of Capital: Missionaries as Labour Suppliers

Whether it was the Salvation Army or the SPG or the MEC, missionary bodies supported European factory owners by supplying trained labour or preparing labour that was suitable for employment in factories. Missions had become part of the larger history of global capitalism. In Cawnpore, the industrial city with towering cotton mills, leather factories, and mechanical establishments, the SPG maintained such ties with capitalism. They trained male and female labour for factories and produced goods for factories in their mission compound.

We come to know about the numbers of the Christian converts working in various factories from a report by Westcott. In 1899, Westcott asked managers of factories in the NWPO, Punjab, and Bengal to answer a set of questions. Out of 123 employers of labour, only 49 employers replied back. Among them only 23 employed Christian labourers. The total number of workmen in these 23 places was reported as 293 in which 39 worked as clerks and 254 as workmen.³³⁷ Workmen were divided into the following occupations: 86 as compositors and readers, 73 as fitters and mechanics, 28 as leather workers, 7 as bookbinders, and 58 in various other trades. We see that the majority of Christian converts took positions which required reading and writing skills.

The SPG mission often received frequent complaint from converts that gangs of caste workmen in factories and mills considered Christian workers as outsiders, resented their

³³⁵ See Kannan, "Educating Poor Girls".

³³⁶ On Dalit women, education, and patriarchy see, Paik, *Dalit Women's Education in Modern India*.

³³⁷ *CQP*, October, 1900, 1–6.

intrusion, and did not share work information.³³⁸ Converts in Bombay made similar complaints. Rev. S. K. Karmakar of the American Marathi Mission from Byculla, Bombay shared these concerns at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910). He argued:

A low caste workman will not be allowed to do any repairs at the house of a high caste Hindu; he must try and find work in shops or factories where his services will be tolerated. Otherwise he must do some menial work outside. There are mills in Bombay where low caste people are employed only in one particular department where wages are low. If such workmen try to acquire higher training they have no chance of securing higher posts. Indian Christians in rare cases secure high posts in the mills and factories on their having received good industrial training. This is one reason why many low caste people do not prefer to learn industry. In large cities like Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay there is some outlet for those who acquired some industrial training.³³⁹

Even though missionaries considered mills as heathen spaces, they continued to encourage workers to join mills. For them, mill owners who were also Christians offered an opportunity to give work to converts. However, the heathen argument was also used to justify the presence of mission industries and the SPG missionaries tended to absorb most skilled labour for their own enterprises. For example, in 1905, 11 boys finished their apprenticeship and only 2 joined the North-West Tannery as leather-workers.³⁴⁰

Missionaries also maintained ties with Cawnpore capitalists by providing trained female labour from the girls' orphanage. Senior girls worked for the two large factories of Cawnpore—the N.W. Tannery and the Cawnpore Woollen Mills. The two factories established their workshops in the mission compound—one of leatherwork and the other of machine knitting. The Tannery employed a male mistri to teach girls the required skills and then

³³⁸ “Industrial Mission Work at Cawnpore”, *Mission Field*, September, 1904, 277.

³³⁹ *Report of Commission III, World Missionary Conference*, 283.

³⁴⁰ “Cawnpore Industrial Mission”, *Mission Field*, February, 1906, 55.

supplied orders and materials. The leatherwork consisted of pasting already cut leather pieces or preparing canvas shoes by stitching with sewing machines. Then the finished work was returned to the Tannery for sale. The Woollen Mills also supplied their work, machines, and material to the mission. In 1902, there were four stocking machines. Factories paid the wages of the girls to the superintendent of the orphanage after deducting the cost of material such as cotton, needles, pastes, etc. Then the missionaries further deducted various incidental expenses and distributed the rest to the girls according to their work. Records mention that there were 20 girls working in these workshops in 1902. Missionaries constantly complained about the inefficiency of the girls. They argued that none of the girls could earn their own living after the whole day's work. To support herself, a girl was required to produce 10 pairs of work (shoes), but they could only do 6 pairs in a day.³⁴¹ We see here a fine example of not only the feminisation of work but also the domesticization of factory work.

Ties were also maintained by the other side, with manufacturers donating money to the Church and offering their services to the mission. Thus, when the brass foundry was inaugurated, the spacious shamiana at the inaugural function was borrowed from the Muir Mills Company. The brass key to open the foundry workshop was prepared by the most skilled worker of the Government Harness Factory without cost. The workman took a day's leave to design the key.

The Great War halted the rhythm of the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School like it had done for the government run industrial schools. The War had pulled it into new directions since 1915. Regiments such as the 5th East Surreys, the 5th Hants, the 10th Middlesex, the 5th Queen's, and the Cornwalls were stationed in the mission compounds. Mission workshops were reorganised to serve the needs of wartime capitalism. Soldiers helped student-workers make goods for the war. Boys and girls worked extra hours to produce goods needed for war. For

³⁴¹ *CQP*, October, 1902, 6-7.

example, carpenter boys made 800 boxes for ammunitions and cavalry accoutrements per month. These were then delivered to different parts of the war zone. Along with this, boys also worked on any other orders that outsiders and the Church gave. According to one account, official hours of work for mission workers were 48 per week, excluding the time for daily prayers, for Church service on Wednesdays and Sundays, for the bible class and special preparation service on Fridays.³⁴² Besides, subjectivities of a loyal soldier were created among students by forming cadet corps (Figure 2.4). It was not uncommon among industrial boys to join the army. However, the school was centrally concerned with the bodily and mental transformation of students from being poor, weak, and bonded child-workers to disciplined and healthy industrial workers (Figure 2.5).

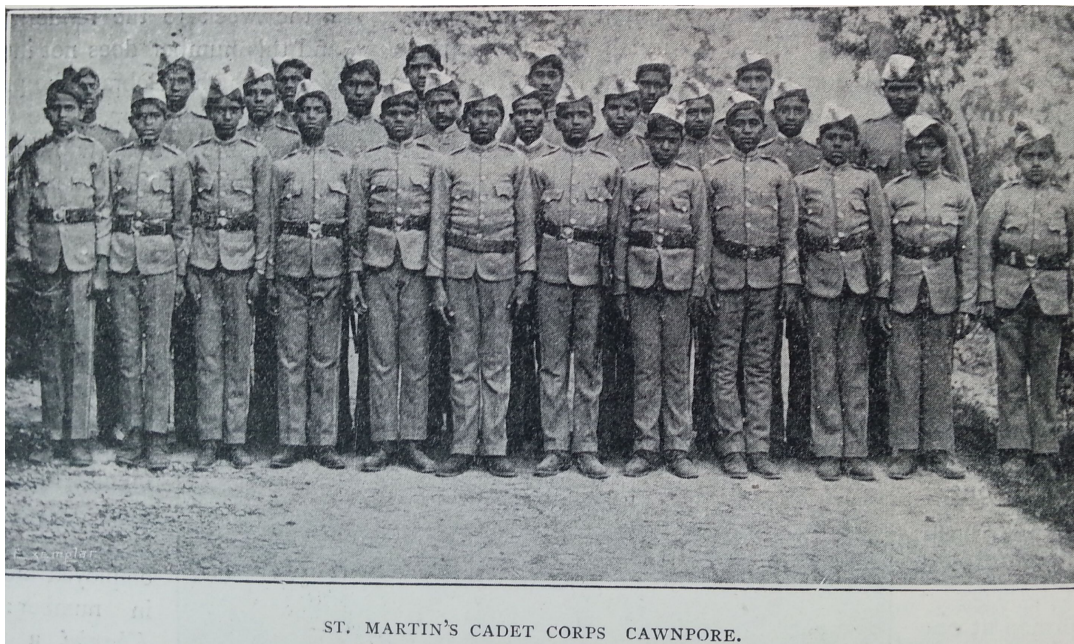


Figure 2.4: *The Cadet Corps of the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School.* Source: *The Weston Library.*

³⁴² “Indian Muniton Workers”, *Mission Field*, April, 1916, 85.

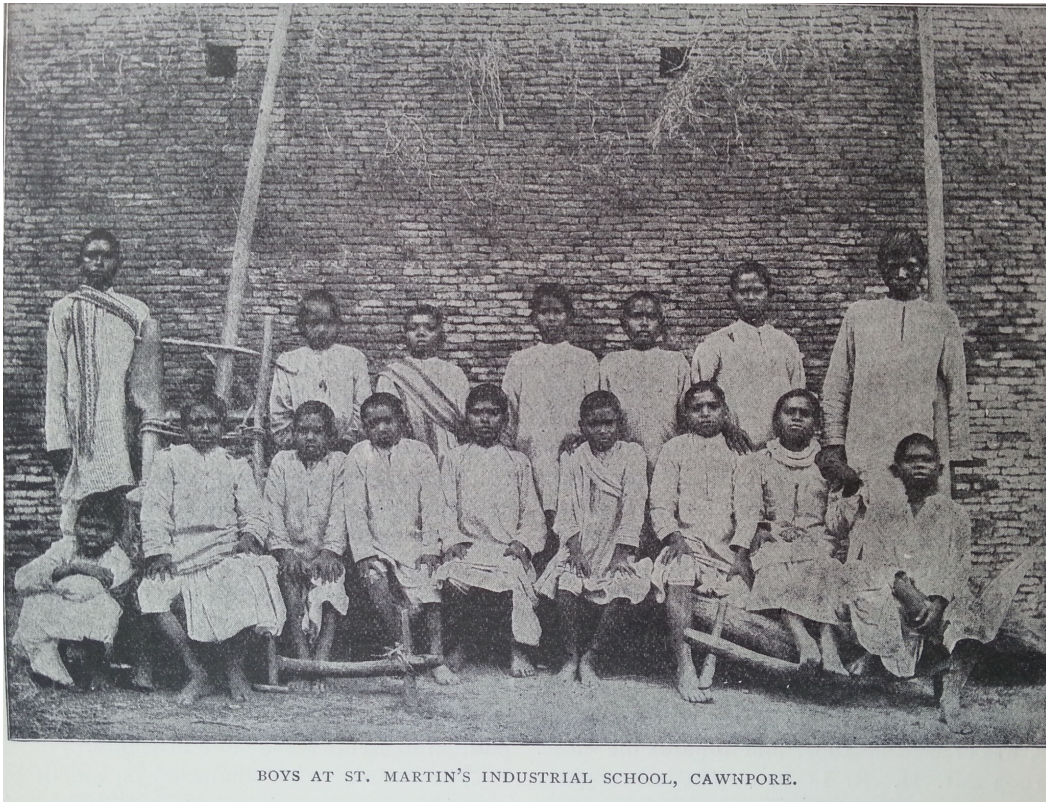


Figure 2.5: *A new batch of the boys at the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School.* Source: *The Weston Library, Oxford.*

Like the Cawnpore mission school, other missionary industrial schools were also geared to produce goods needed for the state. A post-war poem sung by the boys of the Baranagore Missionary Industrial School, Bengal valorises the manual labour that boys did for the war and capitalists enterprises.

Ladies and gentlemen! Accept, we pray,
 Our thanks for your presence among us to-day;
 And bear with us, while your attention we draw
 To our various work, both in peace and in war.

The soldiers in Mesopotamia have often used oil
 Kept in bottles of brass supplied by our toil,
 Many muzzle protectors and cartridge-belt studs
 Have gone from our workshops to their fighting squads.

Now that thrice-welcome peace has filled us with joy,
 And war-work no longer provides our employ,
 Our turners and fitters and moulders are free
 For orders from jute mills, and railways, and 'tea'.

For Assam tea-gardens we've sifters and driers;
 For jute mills, cop spindles and brass gills and fliers;
 For steamers, for trains, and for warehouses, locks;
 For municipal hydrants the best water cocks.

In exalted position our work may be seen,
 For government House a good patron has been;
 Brass handles for drawer-chests, and castors for chairs,
 And eyes for the brass rods on viceregal stairs.

We are glad to receive large orders or small,
 And try, by good work, to satisfy all,
 And be worthy that friends may us truly call
 'Very Industrious boys of Bengal.'³⁴³

³⁴³ Fleming, *Schools with a Message in India*, 29–30.

The poem, probably written by a teacher or senior students, had a specific audience in mind. Its intention included the emphasis on the school's role in sustaining the British Empire. Students were presented as "proud labourers" in the poem. It valorised students' giving of labour power to make things for the war, jute mills, tea plantations, railways, government offices, and the municipality.

3: Dalit Lives and Hindu Nationalists

By the 1920s, missionaries' control over Dalits' childhood was increasingly restricted by the educational efforts of the Arya Samajis through Shradhanand's Dalitodhar Sabha and the Congress through the Harijan Sevak Sangh. In this section I set out to examine how, with the involvement of these two organisations, along with missionaries and Dalits' assertion for a distinct identity, the problem of Dalit "upliftment" emerged as a national problem. In terms of how Dalits imagined their careers, there is continuity: Dalits continued to show desire for education in the 1920s and 30s, even as Hindu nationalists framed their lives as labourers. To these elites, the education of Dalits was meant to improve the social world of Dalits and not so much the economic. Webster argues that Dalit leaders who lead the conversion movements and brought 'Dalit cause to public attention' in the late nineteenth century were marginalised in the elite nationalist politics of the 1920s and 30s.³⁴⁴

The Arya Samajis pursued a vigorous policy of "reconverting" Christian Dalits to Hinduism.³⁴⁵ They came to have a strong hold in the western parts of the United Provinces, Delhi, and Punjab. In the United Provinces, they made inroads into Meerut, Bulandshahar, Aligarh, and Saharanpur. They established orphanages and schools to counter missionary presence. However, soon there were violent clashes between these two groups. Missionary

³⁴⁴ Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, 94.

³⁴⁵ On this see Tiné, "Kindly Elders of the Hindu Biradari" in Copley, *Gurus and Their Followers*; Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*; Adcock, *The Limits of Tolerance Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom*; Webster, *The Dalit Christians*. "Reconversion" does not mean here that Dalits were Hindus before conversion. See, Viswanath, "Dalits/Ex-untouchables" in *Jacobsen et al., Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 4: 779–87.

preachers, colporteurs, and school teachers constantly complained of being harassed by the Arya Samajis. For example, in Mathura where 18000 Christians lived in various villages and towns and many more Kolis (weavers) and Chamars were being converted to Christianity, the Arya Samajis came and disrupted the ceremony. Those who converted were later ‘greatly persecuted’, wrote missionaries. Dalit Christians lived ‘amid threats and abuses’, reported local pastors.³⁴⁶ Christian colporteurs shared their stories of not being allowed to distribute and sell Christian literature. From readers material was seized and burnt in front of the missionaries.³⁴⁷ In their actions, missionaries complained that Arya Samajis were supported by landowners who tortured Dalit Christians and the wealthy Hindus who supported efforts of the Arya Samajis.³⁴⁸ At some places, it was true. For example, in Hathras where there were cotton mills and presses, merchants and businessmen began to give a share of their income to Arya Samajis for the education of Dalits.³⁴⁹ By the late 1930s, the local heads of the EMC told stories of teachers’ houses being burnt down by the Arya Samajis in the night.³⁵⁰ Missionaries noted the period as a phase of defeat. They saw many of their converts falling into the fold of Hinduism by the Shuddhi movement of the Arya Samaj.³⁵¹ To regain their presence, local Christian preachers organised Jalasas (marches) in villages and paraded from village to village shouting ‘Yisu Masih ki Jai’ (Victory to Jesus).³⁵² Battles over individual converts were fought, with Dalits having more choices to bargain for than earlier. For example, those who converted to Christianity and did not see any improvement in their material situation converted to Hinduism and vice-versa.³⁵³ On the other hand, the Arya Samajis complained that missionaries and missionary school teachers and children harassed Dalit students of the Sabha schools, spat in

³⁴⁶ *YOM-MEC*, 1932, 44.

³⁴⁷ *YOM-MEC*, 1925, 50; *YOM-MEC*, 1933, 36.

³⁴⁸ *YOM-MEC*, 1933, 27.

³⁴⁹ *YOM-MEC*, 1925, 43.

³⁵⁰ *YOM-MEC*, 1938, 221.

³⁵¹ *YOM-MEC*, 1925, 51.

³⁵² *YOM-MEC*, 1929, 151.

³⁵³ *YOM-MEC*, 1930, 224.

their mouths, and beat them.³⁵⁴ They complained that landowners treated converted labour as free labour while they treated Dalit labour with cruelty and beat them.

The All India Shraddhanand Dalitodhar Sabha, established in 1921 in Delhi under Swami Shraddhananda, saw its efforts of restricting the movements of Christians as a way of saving their Hindu brothers from falling into the missionary trap. By March 1928, they had reconverted 54 Muslims, 3090 Christians, and 262 Christian families in various regions of U.P. and Punjab.³⁵⁵ The Sabha countered Christian propaganda by establishing schools for Dalits, appealing to landlords to treat Dalits gently, eating with Dalits, persuading Dalits to live in a clean manner, and distributing sacred threads to Dalits. Its vision argued for an equal social space for Dalit members without disrupting the local political economy. At the most, they wanted better treatment of Dalit labourers engaged in the farms of landlords. For this purpose, they held conferences in Bulandshahar requesting Rajput zamindars to promise not to ill treat their Dalit servants and treat them as brothers.³⁵⁶

The Sabha's main work was spreading education among Dalits. In 1928, the Sabha ran 51 schools in Punjab and U. P. In Bareilly alone there were 32 schools out of which 19 were night schools. Spread in the western part of the United Provinces in districts such as Hathras, Bulandshahar, Khurja, and Bareilly, the Sabha schools competed with missionary schools. Like missionaries, their schools catered to the educational demands of the sweeper community and of Chamars.

Dalits attended these schools in large numbers. For example in 1926-27, there were 821 students of which only 190 students were from the upper castes and 9 from Muslim background. The total number of students increased to 959 next year.³⁵⁷ The average daily

³⁵⁴ Sanyasi, *Annual Report*.; Swami Ramananda Sanyasi, *Annual Report on the Educational Work of the All India Shraddhanand Dalitodhar Sabha for the Ending March 1928*' (hereafter *EWSDS*), 2.

³⁵⁵ Sanyasi, *Annual Report*, 23.

³⁵⁶ Sanyasi, *Annual Report*, 32.

³⁵⁷ *EWSDS*, 7.

attendance was 73 per cent—an increase of 3 per cent from the last year. However, in Khurja and Bulandshahar (Ahmednagar), Sabha members complained of apathy for education among the sweepers and Jatav Chamars. The Sabha's annual report noted that it was for this reason that 4 schools were closed down.³⁵⁸ We need to see the attendance of students in relation to their poverty, their ability to escape the watch of cruel landlords, and the availability of necessities for schools, such as clothing, food, and study materials. The inspecting member of the District Board wrote the following after the inspection of Jahangirpur school:

I inspected the Achhut School, Jahangirpur on 6th April, 1928. Enrolment was 31 and attendance 21. Detail according to caste is 17 Chamars, 1 Koli, 5 Thakurs, 3 Vaishes and 5 Jats. Examined copy books and Takhties. Writing is generally good and reading ordinary. Writing to dictation is good. . . The Chamars are interested in reading. Owing to harvest attendance is poor. . .³⁵⁹

These schools operated in a constrained environment both from the side of students and teachers. Funded partially by district board funds and the Sabha, teachers were hired on lower salaries. Educated youth often used these teaching posts to prepare for the teacher training course and matriculation examination.³⁶⁰ Very often these schools offered basic training in the three Rs, although the Sabha desired them to teach about cleanliness, nationalist spirit, discipline, Hindu religion, and vegetarianism, and to counsel against the habits and customs of Dalits they deemed backward and harmful.³⁶¹ Inspector of schools reported there were various problems in different locations, such as missing teachers, a lack of furniture, no arithmetic courses, and no textbooks even for teachers. In some schools teachers taught from outside the textbooks, and at others geography and letter-writing became popular subjects.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ *EWSDS*, 4.

³⁵⁹ *EWSDS*, 35.

³⁶⁰ *EWSDS*, 10.

³⁶¹ *EWSDS*, 19.

³⁶² *EWSDS*, 21-39.

By the early 1930s, Congress nationalists' Anti-Untouchability Leagues began to enter small towns and villages spreading education among Dalits. The League later was transformed into the Harijan Sevak Sangh on 26th October, 1932 in the backdrop of the Poona Pact. The anti-caste leader Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had forced Congress nationalists to acknowledge the problems of Dalits and place these at the forefront of their programme. The Sangh, like the Sabha, had a highly regressive social and economic vision. Dalits were only an object of reforms. They were not allowed to become members of the Sangh's board, which was predominantly upper and middle caste. Eleanor Zelliott convincingly shows that the overall framework of the Gandhian reform was based on an understanding of castes as equal status but not as having equal opportunities. Gandhi believed that while untouchability had no place in Hindu society, Dalits (whom Gandhi called Harijan, children of God) were meant to serve the other three social orders (Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaishya).³⁶³ Webster argues that Gandhi did very little to implement his personal goal of abolishing untouchability while maintaining the caste system.³⁶⁴ The Sangh aimed at abolishing untouchability by opening public spaces such as wells, temples, cremation places, roads, gymnasia, sarais, and schools for Harijan (Gandhi's term for Dalits), by organising literary and vocational education for Dalits, and by co-dinning with Dalits. On economic aspects, its vision was 'inducing caste-Hindus to employ Harijan Hindus as domestic servants and inducing municipal and local bodies and individual to employ Harijan as clerks, etc., wherever possible.'³⁶⁵

The Sangh through its committees organised Harijan upliftment work throughout the subcontinent. A detailed survey-report of its work in Cawnpore elaborates what types of schools the Sangh had opened for Dalits. Its focus was on sweepers and the welfare programmes were led by Jawaharlal Rohtagi of the Swadeshi League, also the president of the

³⁶³ Zelliott, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, 152–55.

³⁶⁴ Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, 98.

³⁶⁵ *Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh (HSS)*, 20-22.

Sangh in Cawnpore. It ran 12 schools, mainly attended by the sanitation workers and their children. In 1933, 281 students from the sanitation worker background attended these schools. Of them, 26 were adults above the age of 15 and 115 were girls.³⁶⁶ The total number of students increased to 330 (205 boys and 125 girls) in March, 1934 which included 281 Bhangi and Dhanuk students, 13 Chamar students, 6 Dhobi students, 13 Kori and Nat students, 5 Pasi and Barwaria students, 9 Bania students, 1 Khatri student, and 2 Brahman students.³⁶⁷

According to the Sangh's 1933 survey, there lived about 1200 sanitation workers' families in Cawnpore city with about 700 male children and 600 female children between the age of 5 and 15. Out of them only 246 male children (35 per cent) and 115 (19 per cent) were in schools in 1933. Parents of these children were sanitation workers in various parts of the city. The Sangh estimated that about 28 per cent were employed in municipality, 14 per cent in mills, 13 per cent in private bungalows, 11 per cent in private Hatas and Houses, 3 per cent each in Cantonment and railway, and 12 per cent worked as private scavengers. About 16 per cent were reported as unemployed. Majority of them had migrated a generation ago from Punjab and districts of the U.P such as Banda, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Cawnpore, and Fathepur. They were mainly from the castes of Domar, Nagarchi, Lalbegi, Hela, Dhanuk, Basor, and Bansphor. Though subdivided on caste, regional, and occupational lines and burdened under debts equal to a whole year's earnings, sanitation workers were united in their desire for the education for their children. Through education, they attempted to ensure a different future for their children.³⁶⁸

The Sangh commented that a desire for education existed among the sanitation workers but the local municipal schools were practically closed to them. Of three schools where about 100 children of the sanitation workers were studying in 1933 were two Depressed Class schools

³⁶⁶ Rohatgi, *Harijan Survey Committee 1933-34 (HSC)*, 47.

³⁶⁷ *HSC*, Chart III, 65-66.

³⁶⁸ *HSC*, 7-8, 37.

and one a Ramakrishna Mission School. Even after the introduction of compulsory education in Anwarganj and Sadar Bazar wards and Moulganj and Patkapore wards under the U. P. Primary Education Act of 1919, sons and daughters were kept out of general municipal schools. Students who entered by invoking the law were harassed and thrown out by the headmasters. The headmasters refused to enter the names of boys on the school register even though they attended the school.³⁶⁹ This denial of education to the poorest sections of Dalits was even more widespread in the Cawnpore countryside. Teachers would not allow Dalit students to even sit outside the classroom. Wherever a few teachers attempted to bring these castes into schools, parents of the students rebelled. In such conditions, the Sangh ran 6 schools for them, educating 271 students of whom 212 were Bhangis and Dhanuks, 51 Chamars, 81 Dhobis, 46 Baniyas, and 11 Brahmans.³⁷⁰

These schools ran at different odd times. For example, 11 schools in 1934 ran for these times: the Har Bans Mohal Boys' School (10 AM to 4 PM; 7 PM to 9 PM), the Sadar Bazar Boys' School (7 PM to 9 PM), the Lachhmipurwa Common School (5 PM to 9 PM), the Gwaltoli Common School (6 AM to 11 AM), the Birhana Girls' School (3 PM to 6 PM), the Forbes' Compound Girls' School (3 PM to 6 PM), the Bhainsa Godown Girls School (12 PM to 4 PM), the Haddi Godown Common School (3 Pm to 6 PM), Mir Pur Common School (4 PM to 9 PM), and the Dalelpurwa Common School (10 AM to 3 PM).³⁷¹ We see that female exclusive schools were opened in the afternoon when women were relatively more free from housework. Night schools catered to both children and working adults while the Day schools were mainly oriented to children.

While at one level, the schools of the Sabha and the Sangh aimed at abolishing touch pollution, the elite reformers refused to recognise the economic basis of Dalit subordination

³⁶⁹ *HSC*, 48.

³⁷⁰ *HSC*, Chart III, 66.

³⁷¹ *HSC*, Chart III, 65-66.

and to offer them access to identical opportunities. By containing the problem of Dalit “uplift” into a limited social sphere, the elite reformers constantly evaded the question of social and economic equality. They hardly opened any higher educational institutions for Dalits. They, like missionaries, were promoters of an educated Dalit labour force. They envisioned limited economic mobility within the labouring framework. Thus through industrial education, both organisations wished to create trained industrial workers and artisans. While the Sabha by establishing D. C. Industrial School in Khurja hoped to train Dalit students into fine industrial workers and training them to become carpenters, smiths, tailors, and mill-workers, the Sangh opened industrial schools for Harijans to train them in handicrafts (spinning, shoe-making, tanning, weaving, bamboo and cane-work).³⁷²

Though Dalits got a very limited and restrictive education, a few of them used the available means to turn the world upside down. They used resources and the power of missionaries, the Sangh, and the Sabha to enter Anglo-vernacular schools. For example, 4 sons of sanitation workers used the scholarship and power of the Sangh to enter into a College and 16 others to get admitted to an Anglo-vernacular school.³⁷³ Similarly, through the Sabha, three students studied in the vernacular middle school, three up to VII class, one up to IX Anglo-vernacular class, and one for the intermediate (XII) college.³⁷⁴ The story was also similar in the case of missionaries. Dalits used missionary education to be what they could not be without it. They became teachers, compounders, clerks, policemen, composers, postmen, poets, players, and writers. An image of the printers and carpenters of the Cawnpore School as cricketers amazes me. It reflects how desires to have things which were associated with the middle and elite classes was so central to the imagination of poor Dalit boys (Figure 2.6).

³⁷² HSC, 20; There was one industrial school of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Bangalore, see, *The Times of India* (hereafter *TOI*), May 13, 1936, 13.

³⁷³ HSC, 64.

³⁷⁴ *EWSDS*, 51.

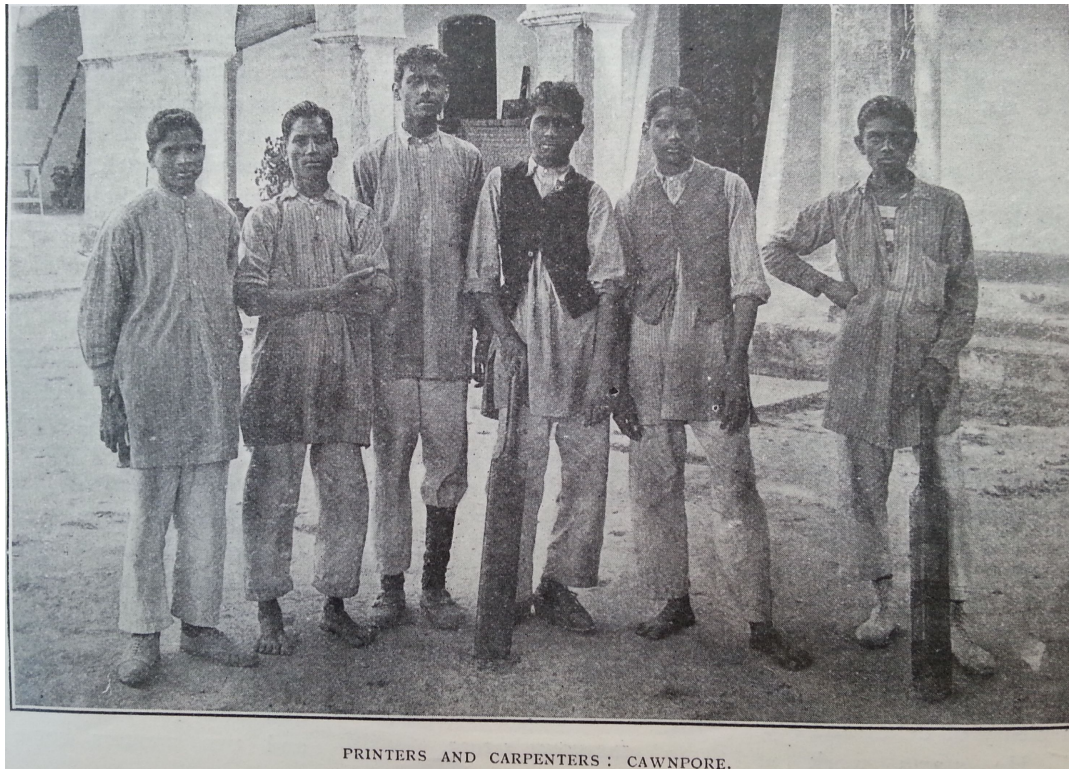


Figure 2.6: *The cricket team of printers and carpenters, the Cawnpore Mission Industrial School. Source: The Weston Library, Oxford.*

From these educational movements, there emerged Dalits who escaped from labouring life and joined the middle class by becoming clerks, postmen, lawyers, and teachers. There also emerged Dalits who, though they had escaped lives of hard manual labour, continued to be close to their community. They remained associated with their labouring class and used their knowledge to fight for their community. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was of course one such figure. However, at the local level there were many. One such example was Sudarshan—a Dalit who was born in 1909 and was educated in a Christian school at Nai Sarark. After leaving the school, he soon became a labour contractor of sanitation workers. When on 24 June 1933, sweeper-fillers employed in the municipality to collect the city's waste left work to protest the heavy work load due to the rubbish generated from the mango-eating in the city, Sudarshan took the lead and organised workers on the street. Ethnographic research of Nicolas Jaoul shows that in

workers' oral narratives, Sudarshan was the man who organised strikes. He was jailed for breaching the municipal laws and when he was released in 1936 he became a public figure and an icon among sanitation workers.³⁷⁵ Later, he established a Mehtar's Sabha—a union of sanitation workers. However, when we read the Sweepers Strike Inquiry Committee, no such person is mentioned. The only people who figure in the report are Fakirchand, Shibban Lal Saksena, and Prakash Narain Saxena, members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh who settled the strike.³⁷⁶ Others included Bharas Chaudhary (Benares), Arjun Singh (Bulandsher), and Ram Chandar (Meerut) who got educated and became the members of the United Provinces Legislative Council on the Congress Party ticket but also declared themselves “Ambedkarite” (the follower of Ambedkar).³⁷⁷ Educated Dalits in U.P. wrote their community histories, formed association of their community, advocated for the welfare of their community members, and asserted that their members were no less intelligent.³⁷⁸ Some of the committees that were formed included: the United Provinces Kahar Sudharak Sabha, Cawnpore; the Jatav Maha Sabha; the Dalit Jat Sudharak Sabha (at Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, and Basti), the All-India Bhurji Maha Sabha, Lucknow, the Mallah Panchayat at various places; and the Adi-Hindu Depressed Classes Association. Dalits such as Baldeo Prasad Jaiswara and Hari Tampta of the Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association put forward a strong demand of civic rights in front of the Indian Franchise Committee. Instead of religious rights, they demanded the end of untouchability, separate electorate, and the right to vote, to use public schools, public roads, and other public utilities.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ Jaoul, “The Making of a Political Stronghold” 279.

³⁷⁶ *HSC*, Appendix C, 77-79.

³⁷⁷ See the translation of the letter from these members to the Franchise Committee, E/433/U.P., IOR/Q/IFC/73.

³⁷⁸ Note of Dissent by Rai Sahib Babu Rama Charana, IOR/Q/IFC/73.

³⁷⁹ See the oral evidence of Baldeo Prasad Jaiswara and Hari Tampta, IOR/Q/IFC/73.

Conclusion

At one level, industrial missions can be seen as a response to the poverty of converts in the colonised world (Asia, Middle-East, and Africa), and on the other, they can be seen as ways to colonise the childhood and lives of Dalit labourers to make them workers for capital and empire. Missionaries for the first time encouraged Dalits to be educated and become something other than a bonded agrarian labourer. However, they also increasingly controlled Dalit childhoods for their and the larger capitalist interests. Mobility offered by missionaries came with its own visions and control. Within this framework of restricted mobility, missionaries both encouraged and tamed the desires of “bonded untouchable labourers” to not be labourers. Converted Dalits did become teachers, clerks, compositors, and free wage-workers of factories, but the labouring frame shaped the orientation of education providers. From the bonded labourer of landlords, they became the free wage workers of missionaries. Like missionaries, the moment of Dalit childhood was crucial for the Hindu nationalists to impart their own particular religious and secular ideas, however, there were certain glaring continuities in their treatment of Dalit labour. Both imagined lives of Dalits in terms of “free” servants, labourers, and workers. They all were deeply interested in the labour of Dalits, in making use of it for various capitalist or feudal enterprises, and in socialising Dalits for labouring stations.

Chapter 3

Proletarian Childhoods: Factory Children and Working Mothers and Fathers

My definition of ‘workers’ ‘Raj’ is different than that of others. As the workers are uneducated, they are deceived by the bania, the marwadi and others savkars [money-lenders]. Similarly, mill officials practice deception in the matters of wages, they also practice oppression and highhandedness. ‘Workers’ Raj’ means education for workers’ children, good rooms for workers to live, sufficient clothing. When this is got the workers get pleased. This is what is (meant by) their Raj. Right of citizenship for the workers. Places for the workers in Councils and in the Assembly.³⁸⁰

Govind Ramchandra Kastle, a Bombay mill worker from rural Ratnagiri and an accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (MCC), spoke these words in his defence at the Meerut courtroom. He was accused of conspiring against the British Empire and propagating revolution among Bombay mill workers. Himself an oppressed rural migrant, Kastle had climbed the ladder of the labour hierarchy to become a weaving department fitter in the Simplex Mill. Education of working class children was central in his envisioning of a workers’ raj (worker’s rule). It was the absence of education that made them an easy prey to greedy moneylenders and capitalist exploiters. ‘So long as they [workers] are not organized, have received no education, have no knowledge as to what is their interest and what is the interest of another, till then “Workers Raj” amounts to empty talk,’ stated A. Alwe, another accused and migrant mill-worker.³⁸¹ Both were trade unionists. By the 1920s, workers had put forth an organised demand for education, which, as we will see, was missing in the 1870s and 80s. Both Kastle and Alwe demanded proper education, clean

³⁸⁰ P 933-1606, Meerut Conspiracy Case, Defence Statements, GIPE-02410, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics Digital Archive, [hereafter *MCC GIPE*], 1015.

³⁸¹ *MCC GIPE*, 02410, 986.

housing, decent clothing, citizenship rights, and representation in political institutions—things that they as a class were denied. They argued for a politics in which workers would be equal political citizens with equal opportunities. Yet, this was by no means the only way in which education was placed centrally in workers' class struggles. A generation of workers had emerged in the late nineteenth century who used education to come out of the drudgery and yokes of manual labouring fold.

If we go back to 1890, we see Dhakia, a 14-year-old factory worker, demanding similar comforts in his individual capacity. He had joined one of the Bombay cotton mills when he was just seven. His childhood was spent doing labour, earning wages for survival. By 1890, he had changed four mills. The mill life, he told the 1890 Factory Commission, was oppressive. Work had broken his body and made his appearance dull and weak. He wished to become a “gentleman” and do a “gentleman’s service”. All he wanted was a life away from misery, poverty, and excessive labour. A typical Bombay gentleman at this time appeared in coat, shoes, and a topi (cap) with an umbrella in hand.³⁸² Dhakia lacked all this material wealth, though he dreamed of wearing nice clothes and having a wife.³⁸³ What Dhakia demanded was an ideal childhood and adulthood—a life of ease and comfort—which the necessity of mill-work had snatched from him. He lived in two worlds at the same time: the real exploitative mill world where there was only work and the imagined ideal world where he was a gentleman.

There was a connection between Carolyn Steedman’s mother who longed for a New Look dress and Dhakia who wished for nice clothes.³⁸⁴ Both lives were marked by the absence of material comfort. Workers saw work as displacing their right to a normal life. In their

³⁸² See the image no. CAB0008. Two Indian Gentlemen. Photog. anaon. Dated, 1890’s-1900’s on <http://www.indiabooks.co.uk/Indiabooks/PORTRAITURE/Pages/ETHNOGRAPHIC.html#3>, accessed on 18 October, 2016, 1:40 A.M.

³⁸³ *Report of the Indian Factory Commission 1890*, (hereafter *FC*, 1890), 23–24.

³⁸⁴ Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*.

narratives, there was a feeling of loss—an absence of happiness, childhood, nice clothes, schooling, good food, etc. Bobbin-carriers and doffer boys complained to the 1875 Factory Commission that they had no playmates, no free-time, and no toys to play with.³⁸⁵ The feeling of class difference, abject poverty, never-ending work, and lack of things in workers' lives had deep connections with the ways they had begun to imagine the childhood of their children.

In this chapter, I will discuss changing notions of proletarian childhood among worker-parents, child workers, and industrial capitalists. The organisation of the chapter is chronological. First, I will explain how early cotton mills in Bombay requiring labour on a large scale were dependent on child labour. I will explore the ideas of factory-capitalists who believed that the secret behind tying workers to work was to keep them ignorant and uneducated. Then they were met by a new type of employers who saw potential in educating their workers. I show employers' concerns about educating workers through both their views and actions. This section covers the history of cotton mills from the 1870s to the 90s.

It is followed by a section on the changing notions of childhood among worker-parents and worker-children in the same period. I explain how factory workers slowly began to appreciate the idea of educating their children, saw the childhood of their children in relation to their own past childhood experiences, and sent their sons and daughters to schools. Yet the school system remained inaccessible to many workers, either due to the availability of schooling or social and material poverty that required them to keep their sons and daughters at work. I examine factors that allowed or prevented such transformations in the imagination of working childhood.

Then I focus on the post-1890s period, when Factory Acts forced employers to open factory schools at the production site in order to retain child labour. I further explore various dimensions of factory schools which employers used to mould the proletarian childhoods in ways that were beneficial to the production process. I examine the role of factory schools in

³⁸⁵ *Proceedings of the Bombay Factory Commission*, Seventh Meeting, 1875 (hereafter *FC*, 1875), 7.

the production of a new type of working body which was de-politicised, trained, skilled, disciplined, sincere, and industrious. In contrast to the peasant factory worker who frequently left the factory to pursue agrarian life, employers sought to produce a new worker who was fully committed to factory work, factory discipline, and attuned to the rhythms of factory life. Scholars, studying industrial sociology, in the 1950s and 60s measured the presence or absence of work ethics, factory discipline, and commitment among workers and factors that explained workers' commitment to industrial life.³⁸⁶ I suggest that the question of commitment and discipline cannot be debated simply as presence or absence. There is a need to see how workers were produced as specific types of working beings: committed, disciplined, trained. The importance of education in the production of the new worker has not been studied systematically by labour historians in India.

Capitalists, Child Labour, and the Education of Factory Children (1875-1890)

Hunger was a real fear among Indians in the late-nineteenth-century India. Famine was an immediate experience in many lives. Many lived with a horrible memory of it while others feared its return.³⁸⁷ It forced dispossessed peasants, artisans, and bonded agrarian labourers to move to cities in search of wages and food. The Bombay textile mills flourished on their labour. In 1875, there were 16 textile mills in the Bombay city with 10,000 workers. This number had increased to 83 mills and 150,000 workers by the late 1920s.³⁸⁸ In all these years, children's employment was both encouraged and discouraged. In the initial years, they were visible in various statistics of labour.

³⁸⁶ Kerr, *Industrialism and Industrial Man*; Sharma, "Commitment to Industrial Wor"; Moore, Feldman, *Labor Commitment and Social Change in Developing Areas*; Morris, "Labor Discipline, Trade-Unions, and the State in India"; Lambert, *Workers, Factories and Social Change in India*.

³⁸⁷ McAlpin, *Subject to Famine Food Crisis and Economic Change in Western India, 1860-1920*; Sharma, *Famine, Philanthropy and the Colonial State*; Hall-Matthews, "Inaccurate Conceptions"; Sen, *Poverty and Famines an Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*; Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*.

³⁸⁸ Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries*, 2.

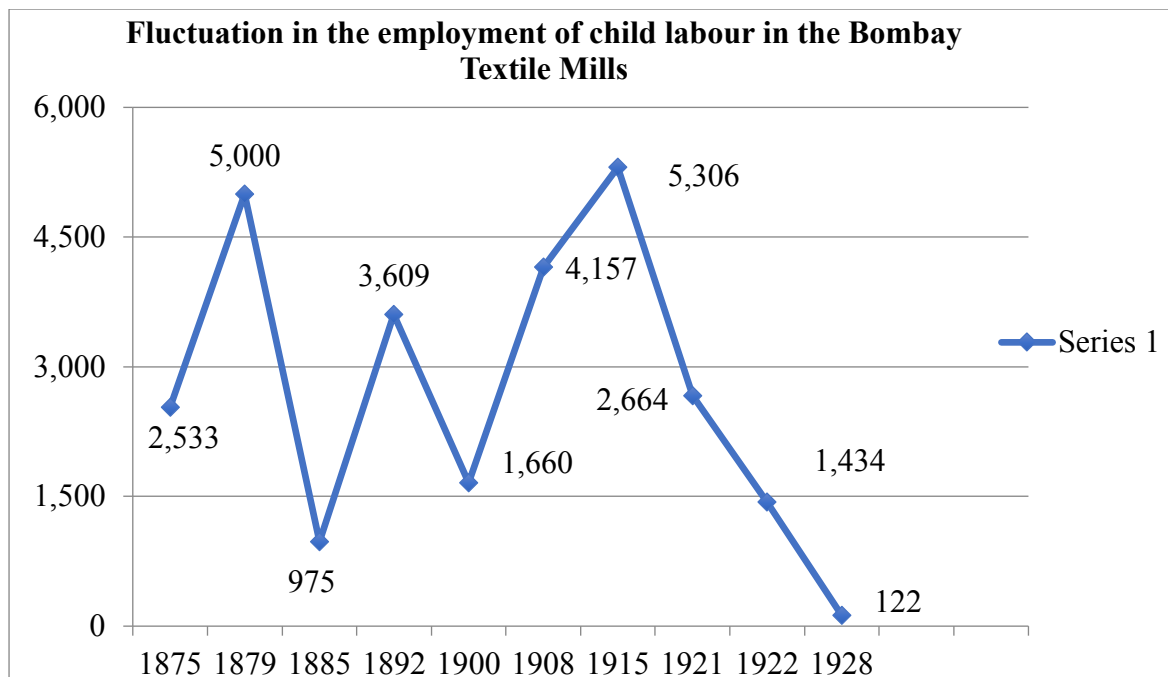


Table 3.1: *Fluctuation in the employment of child labour in Bombay Textile Mills.* Sources: *The Times of India Archive; The Annual Report on the Administration of the Factories Act in the Province of Bombay, 1892-1910; Burnett-Hurst, Labour and Housing in Bombay, 55.*

Children constituted about 25 per cent of the total factory workforce (2533) in Bombay in 1875. Among them, only 475 children were above the age of 12. The rest included children as young as five-year olds.³⁸⁹ In 1879, the number of workers increased to 26000 and 5000 of them were children.³⁹⁰ With consecutive factory acts from 1881, their number began to decline. By 1928 there were only 122 children officially working in Bombay cotton mills. Even though problematic, as I will suggest later, these statistical records show a preponderance of children in the initial years of the cotton mill history, which could have been due to the presence of a large number of unemployed children in Bombay, low wages offered to children, and the absence of protective legislation.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ *TOI*, 18 August, 1875, 3.

³⁹⁰ *TOI*, May 1, 1879, 5.

³⁹¹ Hugh Cunningham's work in the context of England (1680-1851) has questioned the notion of widespread employment of children in the countryside during the proto-industrialisation stage. Instead, he shows that there was a widespread lack of employment for children, often forcing parents to apprentice their children, admit

Employed as doffers, winders, spinners, and bobbin-carriers in textile mills, children worked alongside adults for 12 to 13 hours in temperatures ranging from 90 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Mill owners preferred to employ children along with women, since they were paid lower wages than adult males.³⁹²

By the 1870s, horrible stories of working conditions within the mills began to demand public attention. Mary Carpenter, the English philanthropist, who visited Bombay cotton mills in the late 1860s, lamented the absence of protective legislation.³⁹³ In 1872-73 report, Major Moore, the Inspector-in-Chief of the Bombay Cotton Department, officially reported on the horrible working conditions of factory workers. In 1874, the *London Times* published an article on the worsening health and morals of Bombay workers. In Bombay, there was a growing public discussion on the protection of factory workers, especially of children and women. It was led by a Parsee social reformer Sorabjee Shapoorjee Bengalee and supported by a weekly local newspaper, the *Rast Gofar*. Back in England, where factories were regulated and children were allowed to work only for half the day, and were supposed to study for the other half, news spread that mills in India nurtured evil practices and forced workers to labour for 14 to 16 hours per day.³⁹⁴ Besides, the Lancashire mills protested the fact that they had to compete with Indian mills running without protective legislation. Moreover, the colonial India government levied an import duty of 7.5 per cent on imported cotton manufactures.³⁹⁵ For Lancashire, this was doubly unfair, a violation of laissez-faire policy.

them into schools, or send them to other countries (infant emigration) such as Canada. Factories provided limited employment, especially to urban children. See, Cunningham, "The Employment and Unemployment of Children in England c. 1680-1851"; Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English Society 2 vols.*; Medick, "The Proto-Industrial Family Economy"; Levine, *Reproducing Families*.

³⁹² According to Jame Helm, the mill-manager of the Bombay United Spinning and Weaving Mill, wages of children in 1875 were between Rs. 5 to 7 per month, of women between Rs. 7 ½ to 8, and of men between Rs. 10 to 20, of skilled workers and overseers between Rs. 50 to 60. See, *FC, 1875*, Second Meeting, 21 April, 1875.

³⁹³ Carpenter, *Six Months in India*, 44.

³⁹⁴ Mukhtar, *Factory Labour in India*, 11-12.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

Moral outrage combined with the economic interest of the Lancashire industrialists was powerful enough to foreground the issue in the British Parliament. In July 1875, Lord Shaftesbury who had already pushed for factory legislations in England urged that unregulated employment in Indian factories was not just an economic issue for Britain but was also a moral wrong in which the exploitation of a class of illiterate and ignorant masses was facilitated by a class of the educated rich.³⁹⁶

Mill owners in India saw the introduction of protective legislation as a conspiracy of Lancashire mill owners and ‘wrongheaded philanthropists’ to kill India’s nascent cotton mills. Collectively, they argued that the picture presented in England about Indian mills was flawed. Indian mills were more ventilated and employed healthier workers than the English mills. Besides, mill-work gave a proper means of livelihood to the most unfortunate labouring class who otherwise would be employed in more precarious, strenuous, laborious, and ill-paid jobs like brick-laying, building construction, and grinding of grains.³⁹⁷ They reasoned that the “climate” in India and the “habits” of the lower classes supported long hours of work. India was not England. The English factory laws could not be forced on India. This history of tussle has been well discussed in the labour historiography.³⁹⁸

A Factory Commission was appointed in 1875 to enquire into the conditions of workers and the feasibility of a protective legislation. It was a half-hearted attempt. The Commission primarily consisted of leading mill owners. Mill owners and managers were invited to give their evidence to mill owners. Unwilling to relinquish their control over child labour, they defended the employment of children, vehemently opposed protective legislation, and objected to the education of workers. To agree to regulate hours of work for children was not only to lose their labour but also lose control over the future industrial workforce.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 16.

³⁹⁷ *TOI*, February 14, 1876, 3; *TOI*, March 30, 1875, 2.

³⁹⁸ Sarkar, “Regulated Labour, Unruly Workers”; Upadhyay, *Existence, Identity, and Mobilization*; Puneekar and Varickayil, *Labour Movement in India*.

Mill owners argued that to restrict hours of work was to kill India's nascent mill industry. Besides, famine-stricken families needed wages to survive. Factories provided employment. Any interference with existing work hours would produce counterproductive moral and humanitarian effects. Behind such arguments, their desire was to prevent the state from regulating the employer-employee relationship. To allow state intervention in this relationship would be to give more bargaining powers to workers. We see at least three types of response among employers who looked at the education of workers with suspicion.

I: Educated workers as a threat to the social order

First and foremost, mill owners equated the education of workers with the collapse of the class/caste boundaries. In their understanding, workers' children were destined to do labour. What distinguished these owners as a class from the workers was their elite education, their upbringing, and the privileges of their class.³⁹⁹ They argued that ideas about compulsory education for factory children were "absurd". People who advocated these ideas were 'well-meaning but ignorant'. They did not know the reality—the fact that only 5.07 per cent of the population in the Bombay Presidency was literate. How could the class of workers be educated first when 'the higher orders of society of India' were still illiterate?⁴⁰⁰ They reminded the commission that education was a leisure activity — a privilege of rich classes/castes. To educate the lower rungs of society was to disturb the social status quo, the fine class/caste balance that made up the social fabric of Indian society.

II: Educated workers as a threat to factory discipline and order

Mill owners argued that if workers were educated, they would lose interest in work, become discontent with their lot, and stop being workers. A direct connection was established between workers' education and idleness. Rao Bahadoor Becherdass, the manager of a spinning and

³⁹⁹ On the elite education of mill owners see, Natesan, *Famous Parsis*.

⁴⁰⁰ *TOI*, February 14, 1876, 3.

weaving mill in Ahmedabad told the Commission: ‘If they [workers] were educated, they would not pay much attention on [sic] the work as they do now.’⁴⁰¹ Another mill manager, Temooljee Dhunjeebhoy, shared his experience of lazy literate workers working in his mill. He said that these literate workers gathered other workers and passed their time by reading ‘trashy works such as the Bhajuns &c.’⁴⁰²

Educating workers was often directly linked to workers’ refusal to perform labour. Back in the districts such as Ratnagiri, from where workers had migrated, there were violent protests against the very limited opening for education for Dalits.⁴⁰³ It was reported that once educated, Mahars in villages protested against their menial status and refused to perform begar (forced labour). These stories were not limited to the countryside, but circulated in the city through the elite-controlled vernacular press.

III: Workers as a class not interested in education

A large section of the employers maintained that workers were not intelligent enough to appreciate the values and benefits of education. They viewed workers with certain innate qualities. Workers, they argued, were born to labour and the only childhood that could be envisioned for them was of ideal work. They wrote to the Commission:

that it [education] is not desired and would not be appreciated by the parents of the children or the children themselves, that education does not exist among the labouring class of India, that the measure [of education] could not be extended to other pursuits in which the labouring classes of this country and their children are employed, and that it would be an uncalled-for-restriction on the Indian mill owners, who, when able-bodied labour is so abundant in the country, would not subject himself to the surveillance of Government officers.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ *FC, 1875*, Evidence, 2nd June 1875, 1.

⁴⁰² *FC, 1875*, Evidence, 5th May, 1875, 6.

⁴⁰³ Constable, “Sitting on the School Verandah”; Education Proceedings, Bombay, February, 1895, 25-26, *BL*.

⁴⁰⁴ *TOI*, February 14, 1876, 3; *FC, 1875*, Evidence, 2nd June 1875, 1.

Factories, they stressed, were a boon for the labouring population of India. Had there been no factories, workers would have pushed their children into more laborious work such as domestic and brick works. Had there been no factories, the deviant and the orphaned child would have been loitering in the streets, turning into thieves, and disturbing the social order. Factories on the other hand were a source of discipline in their lives and in the city's life. It provided them with skills to earn an honest livelihood. Instead of education, they propounded that the earlier working class children started work in their lives, the better the class of workers they would form in future.⁴⁰⁵

Mill authorities did speak from their experience of literate workers in their efforts to deny any education or cut in working hours. They knew that not all mill workers were illiterate. For example, in the New Great Eastern Spinning and Weaving Company which employed 781 male and 89 female workers, 153 workers were literate and knew to read and write.⁴⁰⁶ But mill owners used the familiar rhetoric of anxious elites worried about rebellious workers. Education, they felt, would make workers discontent and unruly.

Though these were the dominant views, there were employers who had alternative suggestions. They argued for a limited education of workers that would make them efficient. For example, Motiram Bhaguboy, the manager at the Mazagaon Spinning and Weaving Company, believed that since there was a need for trained workers, child workers could be trained in repairing machines, along with a little knowledge of vernacular. Though he saw a necessity for these actions, like others, he was unwilling to reduce the work time of children. For him, relieving child-workers from work for half a day for such training was unnecessary, nor was there a need for a school for half-timers as was the case in England.⁴⁰⁷ Instead, such training could be given to boys after work hours on the shop floor.

⁴⁰⁵ *FC, 1875*, Evidence, 2nd June 1875, 1.

⁴⁰⁶ *FC, 1875*, Evidence, 12th May, 1875.

⁴⁰⁷ *FC, 1875*, 21st April Evidence.

It was reported that two mills in Bombay, namely the Morajee Goculdass Spinning and Weaving Mills and the Bombay United Spinning and Weaving Mills ran schools for male child-workers. Girls were kept out of these pedagogic efforts as they had to leave early for home. Boys in the first mill were given two hours of instruction and were taught Marathi and Gujarati along with the recitation of religious prayers.⁴⁰⁸ The other school at the United Mills in Girgaum was established on 1st February 1874 for working children below the age of 10. Education was imparted for one hour in batches of 8 to 10 to enhance ‘the intellectual conditions of the juvenile workers’.⁴⁰⁹ Representatives of both the mills told the Commission that education in Indian mills, like in England, should be enforced. In their understanding, a limited “education” should be given not to educate the child-worker per se but to mould him into a docile, industrious, and intelligent working body.

Their concerns were informed by the growing demand for a technically trained educated labour force. Their 30-year experience made them believe that relying on Europeans for these posts was both risky and costly.⁴¹⁰ A modest attempt was made to train labour locally inside the factory. Mehta writes:

The process of turning into a technician took place, from the beginning to its completion, inside the premises of a mill. The emphasis was on years of “practical” training, a direct experience of and with machines. Combined with low levels of general education that were necessary, the nature of the training just referred to facilitated the graduation of many a worker into the higher rungs of the technical hierarchy.⁴¹¹

Though such posts were reserved mainly for the Parsis and Englishmen, at times, Indians from castes involved in carpentry, smithery, and masonry were also admitted. A native apprenticeship system took place inside mills where men were trained for higher technical

⁴⁰⁸ *FC*, 1875, 28th April, Evidence.

⁴⁰⁹ *TOI*, 2 Match, 1874, p. 4.

⁴¹⁰ Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, 103.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 103–4.

posts by existing managers, engineers, and carding, weaving, and spinning masters.⁴¹² While the average worker was drawn from the existing local weaving caste (Julaha, who had migrated to Bombay about 100 years ago) and from famine-hit regions, employers emphasised on training labour to produce a more settled, efficient, committed workforce.⁴¹³ Complaints of workers' casual absenteeism without prior notice had become serious by the 1870s which was not the case in earlier years. A need arose to train and discipline labour.⁴¹⁴ A controlled system of education, a few employers thought, would tie workers to factories and make them more committed in their work.

However, those with such views were but a minority. The Commission decided that India was not in need of any protective legislation, thus allowing mill owners to retain the control over child labour for full time work.

Later, it came to public notice that all the workers who appeared in front of the Commission were influenced and intimidated to give their evidence in favour of the mill owners. In fact, a catechism was prepared by employers to train workers in answering the possible questions.⁴¹⁵ The issue received sustained public attention. Newspapers like the *Times of India* continued to publish stories on the horrible conditions of mill-workers.⁴¹⁶

Amidst continuing pressure from Lancashire for a legislation which was necessary to control both Indian competition and public outrage, a bill to regulate factory work in India was drafted and circulated in 1879. It set the minimum age to work at 8 and proposed that women and children under 14 should be employed only for six hours daily. Its proposed terms of the bill were not wholly accepted. Instead, the resulting 1881 Factory Act had reduced the minimum age to work to 7 and for full time work to 12. Children between the age of 7 and 12

⁴¹² Ibid., 103–6.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 117–18.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 118.

⁴¹⁵ *TOI*, May 1, 1879, 5.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

were allowed to work only for 9 hours in a day. The Act's effect was limited to the power-driven machinery mills that employed 100 or more workers and ran for more than 4 months. Child labour, per se, was not an issue here. Instead, the problem was the inhuman employment of children for long hours. There was a consensus that children from poor socio-economic backgrounds were destined to work; they must labour. In the same spirit, no legal provisions were made regarding the education of working children. The Act confirmed that education was the privilege of non-working elite children. Following the Act, mill owners began dismissing all little children from their mills due to fears of being caught and punished. They claimed that employing children for 9 hours was unremunerative as it disturbed the rhythm of factory work.⁴¹⁷ Besides, the availability of adult labour due to the continuous migration of peasants from the countryside made the withdrawal possible.⁴¹⁸ Out of the total of 49, 928 textile workers in the Bombay Presidency, only 975 workers were registered as child-workers.⁴¹⁹ It is quite possible that employers no longer showed child-workers on their registers. Factory inspectors often found that children worked overtime and that mills continued to employ children of age not sanctioned by the Act.⁴²⁰

When the second Factory Commission sat down for deliberations in 1885, mill owners lamented how the 1881 act had pushed children into more precarious and laborious jobs such as in the domestic service industry.⁴²¹ The new Commission further sought to regulate the employment of child. It suggested that children below the age of 8 should not be employed at all and children below the age of 13 should not be employed for full time work. An escape from the latter rule was envisioned in case any child above the age of 8 had gained certain

⁴¹⁷ *Bombay Factory Commission Report and Proceedings* (1884-85) [hereafter *FC, 1885*], 51, 69, 83.

⁴¹⁸ Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labor Force in India*, 51–56; Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*, 111–23.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

⁴²⁰ Mukhtar, *Factory Labour in India*, 20.

⁴²¹ *Ibid*, 79.

educational standards.⁴²² Two implicit notions clearly informed the suggestion. First, education was not an antithesis of work-culture, and second, education matured children quickly for work. We will see that these two ideas would become even more significant in the coming years through factory schools.⁴²³ For the moment, the Governor of Bombay, James Fergusson, was shocked at the suggestion, and refused to differentiate between schooled and unschooled children. He reminded everyone concerned that the main issue under consideration was not one of schooling but of the health of factory children.

Mill owners once again vehemently opposed the new proposals of reducing working hours for children. This time they argued that the English did not know how cruel Indian parents were. If children were not sent to mills, they would exploit the labour of their children in the worst possible manner. Dinshaw Manockji Petit, an ultra-conservative mill owner who owned seven mills, argued that if children between the ages of 9 and 12 were not employed full time, their parents would starve them and clothe them insufficiently. Instead of rescuing them, the proposed legislation would make poor children more vulnerable. No school system could stop children from working in two mills in a day—first six hours in one mill and the next six hours in another mill.⁴²⁴

In contrast, the weaving manager of the Morarji Goculdas Mill, Samuel Parkington believed that half-time schools were essential as he feared the supply of skilled labour in the near future would decrease. Besides, if registers were kept for school attendance and mill attendance, it was possible to check the double employment of children.⁴²⁵ However, the powerful lobby of Indian mill owners set aside any further regulations until 1891 when a new factory act was passed after the 1890 Factory Commission report. The new act increased the minimum working

⁴²² Mukhtar, *Factory Labour in India*, 22.

⁴²³ *FC, 1885*, proceeding dated 6th September, 1884, 27.

⁴²⁴ *FC, 1885*, 110, 137.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, 91.

age to 9 and reduced the working time of child-workers to 7 hours in a day.⁴²⁶ This was to have a huge repercussion for the education of factory children in the coming decade. But before turning to that, I first show that a lot was changing among workers in this period in terms of their organisation, politics, and worldview. At a time when the colonial state was busy defining the age of a working child, working parents were also engaged in rethinking the childhood of their children.

Workers as Parents: Changing Notions of Childhood (1875-1890)

Workers from diverse linguistic, cultural, regional, community, and caste background had joined factory life. Cutting across these differences, they were constantly learning to organise themselves. On 3 February, 1879, 500 workers of the Colaba Spinning and Weaving Company gathered in front of the mill owner's residence and refused to move until all their withheld wages were immediately paid. In the police report, it was alleged that workers had abused, insulted, and threatened the owner.⁴²⁷ It was perhaps one of the earliest recorded protests of slum-dwelling factory workers against the class of employers who lived in big mansions. In June 1884, weavers of the Kurla Mill agitated against working or repairing machines on alternate Sundays. Workers established charity associations to support each other in hard times. When it was heard that a commission had been set up to enquire into the workings of the first factory act, workers gathered to demand more leisure time. On 23rd and 26th September 1884, workers organised a public meeting and an agitation in Parel and Byculla. They sent a signed memorandum to the 1885 Commission in which they agreed to demand holidays on Sunday and a working day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Workers had begun to calculate clock time. A former mill store supervisor, Narayan Meghaji Lokhanday, coming from a low class background was the man behind drafting the workers' memorial. He collected the signatures of 5,500

⁴²⁶ Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, 130.

⁴²⁷ *TOI*, February 4, 1879, 2.

workers.⁴²⁸ Even if the rate of literacy was very low, workers were not averse to the use of pen and paper. In fact, they were learning new ways of practicing politics. Rutnagur writes:

The intelligent organisation which found its birth with the Factory Act agitation was unceasing in its efforts to make the average operative alive to his duties and obligations, as much as to his rights and privileges as a freeman. So it started an organ [*Din Bandhu*] for his special behoof [benefit/advantage]. It was being ready by hundreds on a Sunday. Its contents were verbally communicated to thousands of others, who, thereafter, intelligently discussed the same among their cliques and coteries, and the operative now understands his relations better than he did before.⁴²⁹

The memorandum addressed the demands of adult workers instead of female and child-workers. Although it invoked the latter's plight to push adult workers' demands. Workers demanded free time to spend with their families and children. They narrated to the Commission how their women folk did not get time for domestic duties, how they bought the necessities of life from street hawkers who charged 'exorbitant prices and supply [*sic*] inferior articles.' What is interesting to note is that there was no collective demand for education in the memorial, which, as we will see, is in contrast to various individual testimonies of workers. Long-term desires for education, and the concerns of female workers were buried under the pressure of more immediate concerns for leisure and shortened working hours.

In April 1890, 10,000 workers again gathered to pressure mill owners to concede to workers' demands. This time two women also spoke in the meeting. The Bombay Millhand's Association was born after the meeting with Lokhanday as its president.⁴³⁰

While a politics of labour solidarity was emerging, the issue of the education of workers was not foregrounded within this politics. Workers demanded education for themselves and

⁴²⁸ Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, 118-120.

⁴²⁹ Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries*, 316.

⁴³⁰ Mukhtar, *Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India*, 12.

their children in individual capacities. From the oral testimonies of workers given to the 1890 Factory Commission, we see a different politics of class-struggle unfolding among workers.

The Factory Commission of 1890 invited a large number of workers to speak. The members of the Commission were mainly Indians with no mill owners on board. In the workers' oral testimonies, one sees various agendas, demands, and expectations. Out of 40 factory workers (excluding the press-factory workers) who appeared in front of the Commission in Bombay, at least 22 demanded workers' education. Some of them had been already in a school. None of the workers said that they did not desire education, though a few were not asked by the Commission to give their opinion on education.

Genoo Babajee, a jobber who was sent by workers to represent their grievances told the Commission that workers 'want all our children educated'.⁴³¹ There would be no objection from the workers' side if two or four annas were taken from children's wages for schooling. But the education had to be "first rate".

Genoo's demand for a "first rate education" suggests that some workers at least were very serious about schooling of their children. It seems that whatever education workers could access at that time was inferior compared to the education which was mainly accessible to the children of the wealthy. The factory school in the Morarji Goculdas Mill (referred to above) to which a few working children had access was not a proper school. It functioned on the whim of the mill clerk who collected boys and taught them whatever little he knew of Marathi and Gujarati. Samuel Parkington reported, 'there is no compulsion. Sometime we hold it two or three days and times not. The school-man does not take much interest in it . . .'⁴³² Workers objected to the types of limited education that they had been offered so far. In Genoo's

⁴³¹ *FC, 1885*, 100.

⁴³² *FC, 1885*, 84.

language, there was a search for emancipation from ignorance. Ignorance, workers felt, bound them to factories, to low wages, and to a hard life.

Another important aspect was Genoo's willingness to pay for the child's education. It was in total contrast to the mill owners' and elite social reformers' views which stressed that workers were averse to education and, by no means, would pay for education. However, the ability to pay for the education was always linked to the issue of workers' low wages. In many of the family budgets of factory workers prepared by officials and economists in the twentieth century, expenses on education do not figure prominently in the poorer workers' families. When in 1875 child workers were asked if they would like to go to a school, they said yes. But when they were asked if they would like to pay for it, they countered by asking the Commission who would fill their bellies.⁴³³

Poverty, workers stressed, was the main reason for workers being illiterate and uneducated. Raghoo Bhicajee, the mule jobber, who was sent to represent the views of the Empress Mill workers, told the Commission, 'we [plural voice] think that up to 12 years some of the boys are physically unfit for the work and we think it best to leave protecting them to government. Boys under 10 should work only half a day . . . We think our children would be improved by education, but their parents are poor, and this is why we sent them to the mill.'⁴³⁴ Raghoo countered those elite views on workers' illiteracy which read workers' inability to send their kids to school as apathy towards education. Among workers we see at least two types of responses with regard to their own education and those of their children.

I: Illiterate workers who could not go to a school due to poverty

Shaik Mahomed, a migrant weaver from Benares working in the New Great Eastern Mill, was an advocate of workers' schooling. But he himself was an illiterate, desiring education. He had

⁴³³ *FC, 1875*, Seventh Meeting, 1875, 7.

⁴³⁴ *FC, 1885*, 99. Emphasis added.

learnt to speak a ‘fine Hindustani’ by himself. He told the Commission that if he had a son, he would certainly educate him first. He also had a daughter but it unclear if he sent her to school.⁴³⁵ He spoke about his childhood which was full of misery, poverty, and sudden accidents. He remembered that he could not go to a school as his mother needed wages from his labour and many family responsibilities rested on his shoulder.

II: Semi-literate or educated workers who left school due to sudden changes in circumstances

There were workers who studied in their childhood but increasing poverty forced them to leave school. Babajee Mahadoo, a 15-year-old worker, remembered how poverty had pushed him into the mills from his school. Now he was a responsible husband. Work and wages were necessities for him to run the family. When he came to give testimony wearing his silver ornaments, he said that his only complaint in life was that he missed his school days.⁴³⁶

There were many workers who were neither very poor nor unschooled in their childhood, but whom fate had brought into the mills. These workers had lost their land, property, and other forms of wealth in family feuds, law suits, gambling, and natural calamities. Twenty-four-year old Ganesh Narayan Dewal was educated in the New English School in Poona and knew how to speak English. But an unexpected turn in his life had forced him to become a weaver in the Khandesh Spinning and Weaving Mill. He told the Commission that he did not like it when young children had to work in mills due to poverty. For him, the appropriate age to work was 16. He believed it was the duty of mill owners to provide schooling but they neglected it.⁴³⁷

We see that workers were divided over who should be responsible for educating workers — the mill owners or the government. Thirty-five-year old Baloo Atmajee asked if government could enforce mill owners to establish schools for children of factory workers. For him factory-

⁴³⁵ *FC, 1890, 24.*

⁴³⁶ *FC, 1890, 24-25.*

⁴³⁷ *FC, 1890, 35-36.*

owners would never do it on their own. According to him, mill owners never treated workers with respect or recognized their dignity. Instead, they intimidated and scared workers with their vakeels (lawyers) if workers went to court against them. He worked on the slubbing frame in the Framjee Petit Mill and was a father of two children.⁴³⁸ Tukaram Luximan, a worker from Teli caste who worked in the mule department on piece-rates, had a different opinion. He thought that it was the duty of the government to provide education for factory children.⁴³⁹

It is interesting to see how workers demanded education for factory children in light of their childhood experiences and poverty, from what they saw in the mills, and from what they expected of their lives. Response of the male workers were gendered. When they talked of education, they only discussed the education of their male children. When mothers spoke, however, they also advocated for the education of their daughters. Like working fathers, they related the demand for education to their childhood experiences and working conditions.

When mothers recounted their childhood, there was very little happiness to remember in those remembrances. They spoke of the forced extraction of labour, poverty, and servitude both at home and at work. In short, they described to the Commission how they had been denied a childhood. Kondee, a female winder from Benares, was employed in mills when she was 10. Summarising her views, the Commission wrote: 'her parents beat her and compelled her to go to the mill. It is her experience of what she had gone through as a child that makes her feel so strongly about [not] sending her children to the mill.' She wanted to give her children all those things that she lacked in her childhood. Kondee had two daughters, and she said she 'would not like to put them to this work. She would prefer to get them married. She would under no circumstances like to send them to the mill as long as she was able to work for them'.⁴⁴⁰ Another 16-year-old working mother, Paroo Bai, who was said to be from the 'low Koonbi

⁴³⁸ *FC, 1890*, 31–32.

⁴³⁹ *FC, 1890*, 33–34.

⁴⁴⁰ *FC, 1890*, 49.

caste' revealed that her childhood was really harsh. She began to work as silk-winder when she was 10. She told the Commission that if she had a son, she would never put him to work.⁴⁴¹

While female workers were somewhat sensitive to the life of their female children, they reaffirmed many of the ideas about preferential treatment towards sons.⁴⁴² Parbutee Vithu, a widow working as a winder in the Bombay United Mills was the mother of three children—one girl of 11, another of 8, and a boy of 6. While she did not like to send her girls to mills and wanted to get them married as soon as she could, she sent her son to a school and wanted him to do something other than mill work. She emphasized that her boy was good in studies and had learnt to read the *First Book*. She asserted that she 'will never put him to work as a mill-hand. There is nobody else to look after him. I must nourish him and look after his comfort. It is dangerous to send an only son to a mill wherein he may have his hands and legs cut off.'⁴⁴³

There were also mothers who were forced to send their children to mills for work. The necessity of work and wages had suppressed their desires. For example, Thakee, a working mother, never wanted her daughter to work. She even believed that only greedy parents sent their children to work and she was not one of them. Her understanding was, 'we [parents] work for our children. Why should we make them work?'⁴⁴⁴ In reality and against her will, she was forced to send her 14-year-old daughter to a mill to work for five months. The reason was to save money for her daughter's wedding. We see that decisions to send children to school often depended on the family circumstances of workers and their willingness to spend money on education.

It is not surprising that many child-workers were being sent to schools by the 1890s. A few of them came to give evidence to the Commission and narrated their experience of learning in school and working in factories. For example, Luximon, aged 12, worked in the Sassoon and

⁴⁴¹ *FC, 1890, 57.*

⁴⁴² On this see, Amin, *Conquest and Community*, 59–63, 138, 160.

⁴⁴³ *FC, 1890, 36–37.*

⁴⁴⁴ *FC, 1890, 41.*

Alliance Silk Mill Company and had attended school for a year when he was working at the Gordon Cotton and the Empress Mills. But to attend school along with mill-work was difficult for him. What he learnt in the school he constantly forgot, for he had no time to study at home and worked for long hours in the mill. Factory work, he complained, was tiring, boring, and exhausting. He said there was little energy left to attend a night school after work. But he declared that he would like to go to school for 6 hours and work for another six hours.⁴⁴⁵ Venkoo Ramaya, aged 12 in his birth-certificate but 8 according to his testimony, told that he kept forgetting what he was learning in school.⁴⁴⁶

Night schools appeared strongly in the oral testimonies of child workers. Pandoo Ramjee, aged 12 or 13, was working full time in the thorstle department of the Jewraj Balloo Mill since when he was ten years old. He woke up at 5 a.m., attended the mill from 6.30 a.m. to 6.45 p.m., and slept at 10 p.m. In this tight schedule, he took time to attend the night school of the Theistic Association and had learnt to read and write.⁴⁴⁷ Like him, Bhagia Ganoo, aged 12, belonging to the goldsmith caste, was working in the Lallhee Spinning Mill, and had studied up to 3rd standard in a night school.⁴⁴⁸ The night school was a place where labourers from different castes and classes crossed paths in their pursuit of knowledge in working class neighbourhoods. They shared many things in common: their poverty, lack of time, and their working experience. Gowind Dowlattya, a Maratha upper-caste boy, had worked in the Government Mint as an arranger of rupees on a daily wage for two and half years. He was illiterate but had recently realised the need to educate himself. He joined a night school.⁴⁴⁹ I will focus on these night schools in detail in the next chapter.

⁴⁴⁵ *FC, 1890*, 58.

⁴⁴⁶ *FC, 1890*, 40–41.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

Then there were many who were forced to work by their guardians and parents. Thirteen-year-old Khoosia said that he was forced by his cruel aunt to work in the mill. His parents had died and the exploitative aunt, under whose care he was put, would not listen to his wishes to send him to a night school. When asked about his education by the Commission, Khoosia said he would like to see all small children in school rather than working in mills.⁴⁵⁰ Sheoram Mahadoo, aged 10, the son of a wage-labourer from the gardener caste, worked as a doffing boy. He did not go to school and was silent when he was asked about education. But he was vocal about his desire to work full time and to earn an adult's salary.⁴⁵¹ For him, wages brought freedom to buy what he fantasized and desired which his parents could not buy for him regularly. He told the Commission that he always spent a portion of his wage on buying sweetmeats for himself before paying the remaining wages to parents. Fantasies and dreams of workers were varied and complex. What Mahadoo was expressing was a deprivation complex.

We need to be wary of workers claims to poverty being the sole reason for their illiteracy. Had they not been poor, Raghoo claimed, their sons and daughters would be in schools and not in mills. Yet he and others may have been exaggerating the working class desire for education. There were parents who pushed their children into labour for extra wages and there were workers who supported the employment of children. Among workers, we also see a tendency to accumulate wealth in the form of ornaments. Incidents of theft reported at the Girgaum Police Court where a majority of workers lived showed that workers possessed expensive ornaments. For example, the mill-worker Luximan Ramjee owned a gold necklace worth Rs. 60, which was stolen by his chawl-mate Dagdoo Daji.⁴⁵² Similarly, mill-women like Cassee, Luxmee, and Tara possessed gold ornaments worth Rs. 105, 85, and 70 respectively.⁴⁵³ Of course, this was a highly gendered form of investment in ornaments among labouring women,

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁵² *TOI*, April 25, 1887.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., August 17, 1891.

including indentured coolie women. Ornaments helped them in times of major financial crisis. Possession of ornaments cannot be taken as a simple indicator of not being poor. Yet it suggests that the working classes in Bombay were not all paupers. For example, Mahdoo, the son of Pertab Sing Kshatriya, had been working in the Bhedwar Flour Mill for 15 years. At home in Jaunpur in the North Western Provinces, his father owned 40 bighas of land.⁴⁵⁴ It was possible that Mahdoo was given no share in the property due to a family feud.

Among workers, we see only selected categories and castes of workers, such as skilled weavers, who pushed strongly for education at this time. The demand for education was not universal among factory workers. The majority of “lower and untouchable” castes children remained aloof from the education system both due to caste norms and their poverty. Besides, upper and middle caste elites constantly reminded to them that education was foreign to their fate. Proverbs like *‘Bámnaghári livaná, kunbyaghári dáná, ani Máharárgári gáná’* (Education in the house of the Brahman, food at the farmer’s, and music at that of the Mahar) legitimised the unequal nature of education.⁴⁵⁵ While a common sense and perception was framed through other similar sayings and texts, the logics behind these sayings were often resisted by the lower classes. In addition, many workers had probably never seen a school, as not every village and hamlet had a school at this time. It was in Bombay city where for the first time they were exposed to various kinds of progressive ideas, schooling, and information about different careers. Nevertheless, this demand for education for working children was growing among Bombay workers. Workers’ oral testimonies to the 1907 Textile Factories Labour Committee are proof of this. We come to know of literate and illiterate workers who did not want their children to be employed in mills before the age of 12 and 13 and who sent their children to schools. They informed the Committee that if children were not employed in the

⁴⁵⁴ *FC, 1890, 54.*

⁴⁵⁵ Adarkar and Menon, *One Hundred Years One Hundred Voices*, 128.

mills at the age of nine, they would either play at home and take care of siblings or attend schools.⁴⁵⁶ Hardly any one of them was apathetic to the education of working children.

Differences on the basis of region were also very striking. Worker-parents in Cawnpore did not show the same enthusiasm for education as did the Bombay workers. All 13 witnesses who appeared in front of the Commission in Cawnpore did not make any demand for education. The Commission members were themselves biased. Officials omitted asking questions about education. Similarly, worker-mothers were also not very loud in making claims for education. Marid, a working mother, sent her son to a mill for the sake of livelihood. Similarly, Kassia, the weaving caste female worker from Jalaon, took her brother for mill work. Bhoodia had already started sending her son to the mills when he was eight or nine years old.⁴⁵⁷

Though education was not altogether absent from working children's lives in Cawnpore, certainly its scale and scope was lower compared to other industrial centres such as Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Calcutta. Out of the five working children who appeared before the Commission, two had received some education and had an inclination to learn further. Seo Audhar, a twelve-year-old Brahmin boy, working in the throstle department, had been to schools in his village before coming to the city. Except for multiplication tables, which he had memorised, he had forgotten all his lessons, including the first *Hindi Primer* which he had mastered with dedication. The necessity to work had forced him to leave his school, but he wanted to go back if the burden of family responsibilities were reduced.⁴⁵⁸ Rajab, aged 12, a domestic servant turned worker in the Cawnpore Jute Mills, had studied a bit but, like Audhar, he had also forgotten his lessons.⁴⁵⁹

Employers, Factory Schools, and the Reproduction of Labour

⁴⁵⁶ Textile Factories Labour Committee Evidence, 1907.

⁴⁵⁷ *FC, 1890*, 77–81.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

The 1891 Factory Act had forced employers to either eliminate child workers between the age of 9 and 14 or to declare them ‘half-timers’. Children could only be employed for seven hours in a day. After the change in the legal age for child employment, the number of working children in Bombay suddenly increased from 937 in 1891 to 3,609 in 1892. This was because the existing workers falling in that age group were legally recognised and enumerated as a “child” only now. Throughout the Bombay Presidency, the number of child labour totalled 5,946 — 4,672 boys and 1,247 girls.⁴⁶⁰

Employers, of course, found it difficult to do away with the needs of child labour in mills for economic reasons. They came up with a plan of educating children at the factory site and thus retaining the child-worker inside the factory premises. They proposed to have a school at the factory site for half-timers. One sees a sudden change in the attitude of mill owners with regard to the education of child-workers. From discouraging the education of workers, they now established and financed schools. According to one calculation, out of the 75 big and small factories in 1912, 17 mills had factory schools in their premises. There were other mills which were in the process of establishing factory schools. Out of 3,633 children employed in Bombay mills, 1,122 were said to be receiving some sort of education in these schools.⁴⁶¹

How do we understand the origins and functions of factory schools? Rajnarayan Chandavarkar calls them “fictional schools”. According to him, they were not meant to educate half-timers but to hold a constant reserve of labour in the mill premises.⁴⁶² These schools emerged as crucial labour control sites. Further, Aditya Sarkar in his doctoral work highlights the role of factory schools in evading the legal norms of the factory acts.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ *Report on the Working of the Factories Act in Town and Island of Bombay during the calendar Year 1892*, 15–16.

⁴⁶¹ Letter no. 7762, Provision of the Educational Facilities for Factory Children, File no. 46, Industries Department, 1908, *UPSA*.

⁴⁶² Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*, 328.

⁴⁶³ Sarkar, “Regulated Labour, Unruly Workers”, 188.

Building upon these discussions, I show that these schools were both legal and illegal spaces of social engineering where the control over childhood and child labour was crucial along with the remodelling of working childhoods for factory production. They were not only a shared space of evasion from law for mill owners but also for child-worker and parents. To understand their functions, it is necessary to go beyond the self-image of illegality and labour control that factory inspectors painted through their reports.

I begin the argument by showing how these schools were shared spaces of evasion and control in ways not so far discussed. Since factories ran for more than seven hours, two batches of half-timers were created. Each batch worked in two shifts — one working from 6 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and then again from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and the other one working between 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and then again between 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. By these arrangements, factory-owners were able to get a constant supply of labour. In long intervals, children were gathered in a room for schooling.⁴⁶⁴ But this was only a façade since employers were able to extract full time labour from both the batches. For example, when officials of the 1908 Factory Commission inspected one of the mills at 8 a.m. which employed 76 half-timers both batches were found working. In the school, located in the godown of the factory, only three children were found. After an examination, it was found that only 6 boys of the B batch could write, and these 6 boys attended a government school. The Commission wrote with regret, “it is obvious that such a school is useless, and only facilitates infringement of the law.”⁴⁶⁵ The school, other than being used as a reserve army of child labour, was used to facilitate the employment of children beyond legal hours, a point Aditya Sarkar emphasises. However, we need to see how illegality itself was organised and perpetrated which shows how child workers were also sometimes complicit agents.

⁴⁶⁴ *Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission, 1908* (hereafter *FC, 1908*), vol. 1, 7 Appendix F.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 9.

The role of the whistle was absolutely crucial in the factory world. Like clocks and time-keepers, whistles were a means of labour control, of communication among linguistically varied workers, and served as emergency alarms. They played a crucial role in the management of illegality.

The factory inspector, like the school inspector, was a state emissary who visited factories to ensure that the laws of the land were followed. If he caught employers evading the law, he took them to court. Because of his powers, he was a figure to be honoured, respected, placated, and, feared by employers. Inspectors made both surprise and scheduled visits to factories, day and night. L. W. Hartley, the Factory Inspector in Bombay, narrated his experience of a scheduled inspection of a mill in Baroch. Once Hartley arrived, he found one batch learning in the school and the other working. Of course, everything was fashioned, decorated, and planned before his arrival. Knowing this, he conducted a surprise visit next day. Not to his surprise, he found the school room locked and all the children working. When the headman was asked to call all the half-timers into the school-room, it was discovered that the room was too small to accommodate them.⁴⁶⁶

Mill owners generally came to know when a factory inspector would visit their mills for inspection, especially when mills were located far away. Margaret Read, one of the woman members of the Royal Commission of Labour, mentioned the use of whistles by jobbers as signs to alert working children.⁴⁶⁷ Hearing the whistle sound, children would either run to the school or hide in corners. Different sounds of whistles carried different messages. There were whistle sounds to call doffers, to announce dangers, and to arrange collective gatherings.⁴⁶⁸ Then, there were gong sounds for waking up mill-workers living closer to the mill, and to announce daily intervals and to mark the end of a working day.

⁴⁶⁶ *FC, 1908, Vol. II, 48.*

⁴⁶⁷ Read, *From Field to Factory*, 41.

⁴⁶⁸ Punekar and Varickayil, *Labour Movement in India*, 76.

Factory schools were used to evade laws and hold a reserve of child labour. These were, however, only two of its uses. There were others. It was also used to house children who had come to the mill for the first time and awaited medical inspection, and it worked as a crèche allowing parents to keep their non-working children with them. Some of these children worked at small jobs in the factory, like carrying water. In the Bombay Victoria Mills, employers used schools to hold newly recruited boys for weeks as the doctor who certified their age would only visit every Thursday. The mill's logic of keeping these boys in school was moral. They argued that the school prevented young boys from 'associating with undesirable persons.'⁴⁶⁹ The Manager of the Morajee Goculdass Mill, however, called these schools "blind schools" and attested in front of the 1908 Factory Commission that jobbers would take any child for work from the school whenever he was short of labour. The manager told that once he came to know the evil and illegality that jobbers committed, he ordered the closure of the school in his mill (one of the earliest factory schools, mentioned above).⁴⁷⁰

The crimes were committed with the help of jobbers, needy parents, and child-workers. While for the factory owners, the factory laws meant loss of labour, for many parents/guardians who lived on the earnings of their children, the laws meant loss of family income. Many children supported their single widowed or divorced mothers or ailing fathers on their wages. Vasant Parkar, an ex-mill worker, recalled how 'workers would pay the jobbers money to get their sons work in the mills.'⁴⁷¹ The law had increased the authority of jobbers and given them an opportunity to earn a little extra money from the wage-seeking child-worker.⁴⁷²

Most importantly, factory schools came to be used by employers to educate a skilled and trained labour force, especially in places where machine-trained educated labour was not readily available. These schools would become mechanisms to control the childhood of

⁴⁶⁹ *FC, 1908, Vol. II, 80.*

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 84–85.

⁴⁷¹ *Adarkar and Menon, One Hundred Years One Hundred Voices, 94.*

⁴⁷² On the bribery of male and female jobbers see, Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries*, 319–22.

working classes. They would become the site to exploit the vulnerability of working childhoods, to purge workers of their peasant desires to frequently visit villages and to own cultivable land, making them instead a pure industrialised labour force. Besides, the school would also discipline the independent ambitions and fantasies of working children to become clerks and government employees by turning them into industrious, loyal, and sincere workers. The control of the childhood of workers in colonial India was a zone of conflict among the state, parents, mill owners, and children themselves. Having factory schools allowed mill owners to impose their ideas and practices on the working child's body and mind in the early stages of their lives.

We need to see these efforts of employers in relation to their perennial complaint that factory workers were more peasants than industrial workers. It was alleged that factory workers considered agriculture as their primary occupation and saw factory work as a 'stop-gap which would provide him with the cash needed to add an extra bit of land to his plot, or to buy a new pair of bullocks or to pay off a pressing mortgage.'⁴⁷³ Employers complained that peasant desires among workers made them less committed to factory work and made them take frequent leave without notice. Less attention to work meant slow work, wastage of thread, and low productivity. A demand for skilled and orderly labour was noted from the early 1880s, but efforts to make workers trained and sincere to work were in the air since the 1870s.⁴⁷⁴

P. R. Cola, the owner of the Arkwright Cotton Mills in Bombay wrote in 1867:

Every factory where boys and girls are employed ought to have a schoolroom attached; and half an hour, morning and evenings, should be devoted to giving lessons to the children in reading, writing, and simple sums. It will be found that, after receiving this elementary instruction, order will prevail in the factory; they will be enabled to

⁴⁷³ Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, 118.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 315.

distinguish their number on the roll-call, which will save time, and avoid confusion on the pay-day; and they will attend to their work much better. It will impress their character and intelligence; by its influence their whole spirit will be moulded, if properly directed and they will enjoy the blessings of reading and writing, as long as they live'.⁴⁷⁵

Mills like the Morajee Goculdass Mill took efforts to establish factory schools. But factory schools as spaces for training ordinary workers would become prominent only in the early twentieth century. Employers thought that a controlled education would bring order among the working classes, make them intelligent enough to understand the workings of wage payments and roll-call, and to learn the ethics of work. The given education would also mould their morals, their minds, their spirit, and behaviour. The effects of education would be transformative and rewarding both for the workers and the employers. Vaikunthrai Ambalal Desai, the Secretary of the Ahmedabad Merchant's Spinning Mills, believed that workers did not understand the meanings of words like 'duty, system and honour'. Only a universal primary education for workers, which used primers and magic lanterns to depict the harms of liquor on the body and the family, and to valorise the virtue of thrift, could change the scenario.⁴⁷⁶ The strong evidence for the operation of such schools comes from outside Bombay. Here they were not necessarily used as spaces of evasion and as a reservoir of labour but primarily as spaces for the effective training and moulding of the working child.

Mr. Walters, the Special Inspector of Factories in Madras, noted that mills in Madras did not use schools to employ illegal labour.⁴⁷⁷ Walters probably had seen the working of the factory school at the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills (BCM) at Perambore. These two mills were established separately, the Buckingham Mill in August 1876 and the Carnatic Mill in June

⁴⁷⁵ Carpenter, *Six Months in India*, Vol. II, 133–34.

⁴⁷⁶ Written evidence of Mr. Vaikunthrai Ambalal Desai, *East India Industrial Commission*, 1916-18, vol. II, 16.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Oral Evidence of Mr. Walters, 323.

1881. They both maintained separate schools until 1912 when the two schools were merged. The factory school for the half-timers at the Buckingham Mill had begun in December 1903. Later, its scope was broadened to include the children of factory-workers. A night school and a mechanical apprentice class were also started for adult workers. These efforts were part of the mill's strategy to create a more settled working class. A total of 2,134 workers were attending the factory school, mechanical apprentice class, and night school during 1927-28. These figures also included the number of students in village schools opened by the mills in workers' settlements.⁴⁷⁸ The classes within the factory began with the Infant Class and ended with the IV standard. A fee of six pies per month was charged in the Infant Class which was increased to one anna once students started the I standard. Standard IV was the maximum level of education that the children could attain. After that they were expected to work in the mill. The school taught conversational English, reading and writing in Tamil, Telugu and Hindustani, arithmetic, drawing, and hygiene.⁴⁷⁹ Each subject, we will see, had set practical goals to achieve.

The idea of the school was to produce a class of de-politicised, intelligent, and healthy workmen who, the officials imagined, would 'acquire a little knowledge of English, reading, writing and arithmetic and in time become independent of interpreters'. "This should prevent their being led away by agitations and lead to the more intelligent working of machinery," mill-authorities explained.⁴⁸⁰ The functioning of mills was heavily dependent on interpreters who translated the orders of European supervisors, engineers, and master-weavers to the workers and vice versa. Workers' wage payments, sickness leave, feuds, and family deaths were all mediated by interpreters, and so was the working of new technologies, machinery, and technological concepts that came from Europe. Dependence on interpreters was so great that

⁴⁷⁸ *Royal Commission on Labour in India, Madras and Coorg*, Evidence. vol. VII, part II, 142.

⁴⁷⁹ *FC, 1908*, vol. II, 312.

⁴⁸⁰ Sharp, *The Education of Factory Children*, 2.

‘labour troubles and constant misunderstandings between the management and the workpeople arose.’⁴⁸¹ To do away with these issues, it was decided to educate workers in conversational English and the three Rs so that they could converse with their immediate European supervisors and calculate their wages for themselves.

Educating workers to this extent, of course, had its own dangers. Mill managers had already remarked about it in Bombay in 1875. The Buckingham Mill management shared similar views when it came to the lofty desires of worker-students. They believed that education would encourage workers to aspire to the life of gentlemen, writers, or clerks, unless the education given was tightly controlled, engineered, and disciplined.

To avoid encouraging bourgeois dreams among worker-children, the course was constantly prepared and revised with caution and ‘the subjects chosen [were] as few and as practical as possible.’⁴⁸² The principal of the school stressed the following four points that underlined the design of worker education.

1. The shortness of the school life of the half-timers.
2. The facts that parents of the children were uneducated and did not know the value of education.
3. The tendency of working people to despise manual work and to aspire to clerical work.
4. The fact that since half-time work leads in itself to nothing—in fact a blind alley—the boys need a chance of learning some work or profession which will enable them to earn, when grown up, a livelihood.⁴⁸³

The experience of the schools deepened the fear of conservative elites that education would corrupt the minds of the poor, the “untouchables”, and lower castes. The school had made the

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid..

factory a site of aspiration and hope: workers' children began dreaming of non-labouring jobs in unexpected ways. The story, we will see, was the same at the Empress Mill factory school in Nagpur where free books, slates, chalks and an attendance bonus in the form of extra wages were given to boys. The school, in albeit limited ways, had introduced new ideas about the future to the labouring population, ideas which were contrary to the visions of school authorities. We need to keep in mind that many "low" and "untouchable" labouring castes were exposed to education for the first time in their lives.

D. Flemming, a missionary who visited the school and interviewed teachers, was told that boys who were mainly "low castes and outcastes" applied only for the mill-writer jobs after finishing their education.⁴⁸⁴ Others tried for the post of cloth-markers which was a comparatively low paid job in the mill but required 'sitting with a coat' and no hard manual labour.⁴⁸⁵

Seeing the contrary results, employers, Flemming noted, introduced an industrial bias in the course structure which closely fitted to their demands for labour. Courses in carpentry, blacksmithery, tailoring, painting, whitewashing, washing and ironing clothes were started. Skilled workers in these crafts were badly needed in the mill.⁴⁸⁶ A mechanics course was also started with the aim of producing fitters, wiremen, and mistris for the mechanic's departments of mills. A picture of the workshop classroom (Figure 3.1) helps us see the classroom from the inside. The first picture is of the blacksmithery class: the teacher is inspecting two boys hammering metal on the anvil, the boys in the background are either doing other metal-works or assisting the two boys with hammers. In the second picture, we see the tailor-master at work, drawing the designs for a suit on the blackboard for teaching and demonstration purposes, while boys are at work on the sewing-machines, stitching clothes, sewing, and buttoning.

⁴⁸⁴ Fleming, *Schools with a Message in India*, 17–26.

⁴⁸⁵ Sharp, *The Education of Factory Children*, 7.

⁴⁸⁶ Replies from C. B. Simpson, Agent, *Industrial Conference 1908*, Oatacamund, 66.

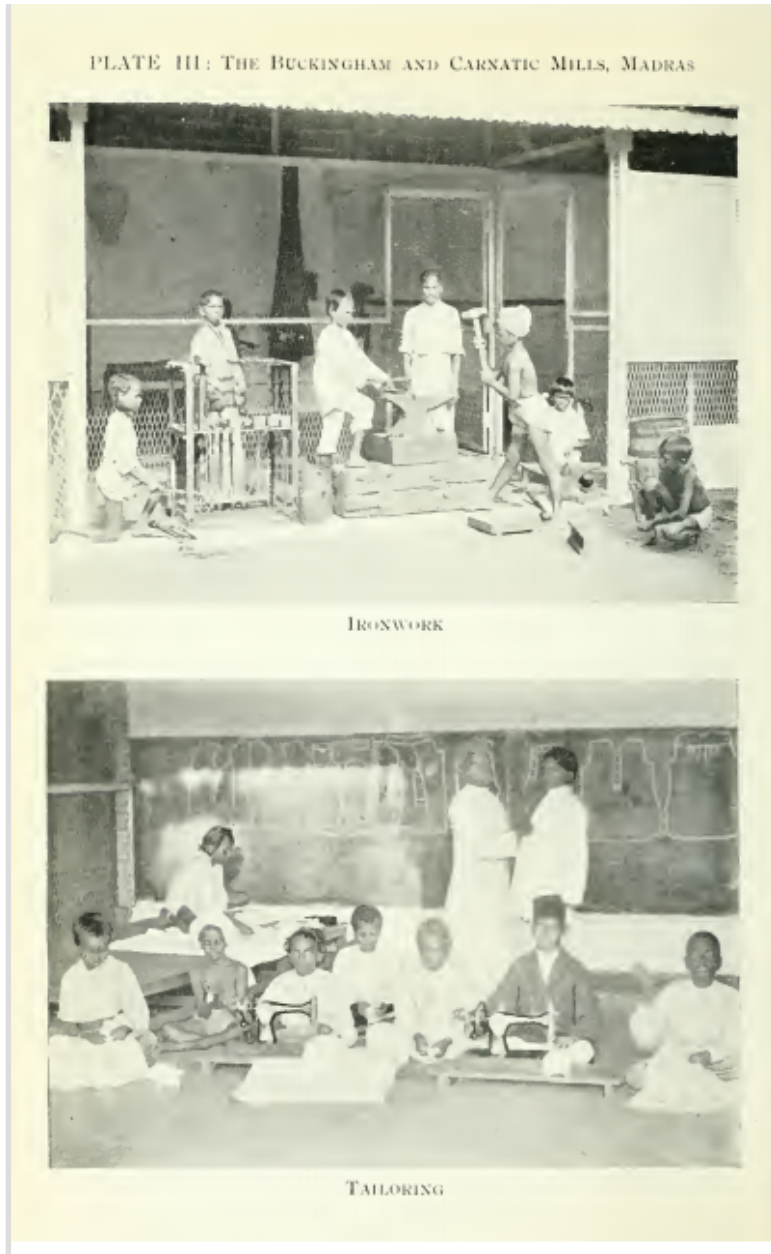


Figure 3.1: *Ironwork and tailoring classroom in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, Chennai.*

Source: Fleming, *Schools with a Message in India*.

The factory school, as the image shows, began developing distinct pedagogical practices of teaching. A big exhibition hall was created with charts showing parts of machines used in the mill and their names in English. Students from the first standard onwards were invited in this hall to memorise the names of machines with pictures, and they were asked to listen to the name of machines and identify them. Industrial technology was brought inside the classrooms.

A spinning machine with looms was demonstrated for understanding the working of machines. The night school master, generally the foreman and draughtsman of the mill, lectured students on ‘the theory of spinning, weaving, practical electricity, geometrical drawing, machine drawing and building construction’ and used these exhibitions and demonstrations to explain these subjects to other worker-students.⁴⁸⁷

A class of labour managers and trained jobbers and a sense of discipline and order was created through a system of monitoring. Senior students were given responsibilities to look after the junior students. Working as monitors, they had the responsibility to bring order and discipline to the classroom in the absence of teachers. The monitorial system, which took birth in the Madras Presidency almost a century ago,⁴⁸⁸ found its easy acceptance in the factory school both because of the way it imparted the value of the division of labour and because it resonated with the disciplinary regime of factory life, marked by clockwork regularity and constant surveillance.

To instil the values of industriousness, sincerity, loyalty, and honesty that factory work required, hardworking and regular students who performed well were awarded prizes in kinds, such as banians, shirts, towels, coats, buttons, and warm clothes. These were defective pieces of clothing from the mill. To ensure full attendance small children were given toys as incentives. The headmaster of the school wrote, ‘Working boys are so poor that even the smallest toy is probably unseen in their own homes and is a joy to them.’⁴⁸⁹

We see that employers sought to fashion the childhood of working children in specific ways through factory schools by bringing concepts of outdoor sports, playground, gymnasium, book education, and toys. However, underneath the masquerade of a middle class normative childhood, work and the ability to perform labour continued being the central objectives. It was

⁴⁸⁷ Sharp, *The Education of Factory Children*, 7–8.

⁴⁸⁸ Tschurennev, “A Colonial Experiment in Education”, 105–120.

⁴⁸⁹ Sharp, *The Education of Factory Children*, 9.

hoped that this would create a new apolitical, content, loyal, industrious, and trained working class, different to those socialised into peasant lives.

The factory school of the Empress Mills in Nagpur was another pioneering school in training child-workers. The Empress Mill had almost all facilities that the BCM had for its workers. It maintained two factory schools beginning in 1912, and provided free slates, pencils and books for its half-timers and a four anna bonus for those who attended schools on all working days. There were 300 half-timers learning in 1927, of whom eighty claimed a regular bonus.⁴⁹⁰ There is hardly any information on the exact nature of education imparted in classrooms. However, a classroom picture (Figure 3.2) of the factory school at the Empress Mills shows what was being taught.



Figure 3.2: *Factory School, The Empress Mill, Nagpur.* Source: *A Short History of the “Empress Mills”.*

⁴⁹⁰ *A Short History of the “Empress Mills”, Nagpur, 72.*

We see a class full of well-dressed boys with their slates and books placed on the ground. The well-groomed disciplined posture of boys and the headmaster seems to indicate that the visit of the photographer was expected. From the picture, it appears that the headmaster had written a few words on the blackboard, and the boys had to read them and explain their meanings and then probably listen to what the headmaster had to say. The blackboard has five phrases written on it: labour/industrial friendship, family man, pure/amiable God, and early morning. All these phrases indicate how the minds of juveniles were prepared for work culture. The term “Udyog Sakhya” meant developing a friendly relation with capital/industry. The concept of “Grihasth Manushya” was probably taught to teach boys how to be responsible husbands, fathers, and neighbours. There was always some religious and moral education in the schools of the poor, which was meant to raise the morals of degraded souls. Here the phrase “Saumya Ishwar” was perhaps noted to remind boys to believe in the God. The last phrase “Pratahkal” was probably a lesson on the benefits of rising early in the morning.

Factory schools were relatively helpful in settling the workforce and producing a generation of trained workers. The school at the BCM mills, spread over 18 acres, along with the housing scheme for workers, were part of the mill management’s strategy to settle workers. Workers, mill authorities often complained, would absent themselves at will, adversely affecting the operations of the mill. Mill authorities also recognised that peasant-workers were not used to the long working hours in a factory setting.⁴⁹¹ This led to a deterioration of their health at an early stage and longer absenteeism. For example, one of the two mills employed 4,501 workers in 1908. In the same year, 5,633 workers also left the mill. However, by the 1920s the picture had changed. The labour in the mill was more settled. The same mill employed 4,704 workers in 1928, and there were only 768 deserters.⁴⁹² The social reproduction of labour through

⁴⁹¹ H. Sharp, *The Education of Factory Children*, 5.

⁴⁹² *Royal Commission on Labour* [hereafter *RCL*], vol. VII, part 1, Madras and Coorg, Evidence, 133.

housing and schooling among other ways had resulted in remarkable achievements in settling and disciplining the new generation of mill labour. Both mills brought down the absenteeism of workers from 7.86 per cent to 1.07 per cent in 1928.⁴⁹³ The two mills employed over 9,000 workers, and about eighty to ninety per cent of them were second-generation workers who were committed to the factory work. Vacancies were primarily filled by the sons of mill-workers, and a preference was given to those who were trained in the factory school.

There was no doubt that the BCM school had made mill life more disciplined and that the “rowdy behaviour” of workers was purged through schooling, fines, and wage cuts. But it had also produced a generation of mass labour leaders in Madras. The official history of the school had no space for students who used their energies to push collective demands and organise labour. Not all workers were satisfied with the welfare committee that the BCM had established. Some of the students from the school had become members of the Madras Labour Union under the leadership of B. P. Wadia. The Union was formed in April 1918 and mainly comprised mill workers from the BCM and the Choolai Mill. Workers felt a need for a union during the first World War when living expenses rose dramatically. To avoid censure, suppression, and the loss of the gratuity money that the mill offered, workers met when ‘it was dark’.⁴⁹⁴ Natesa Mudaliar, a student in the weaving class, had joined the executive committee of the Union. He spoke good English and was well versed in the theories of his trade. Another member, Varadarajalu Naicker was also a holder of “good certificates” from the school.⁴⁹⁵ The labour movement had appropriated the best of the literate workers in its hierarchy.

Wadia, the labour leader asked a provocative question to workers: ‘What is the use of recreation grounds and night schools and museums when men’s self-respect is killed and they are not desired to show it?’⁴⁹⁶ Educated youths had witnessed and experienced the insults and

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 184.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 181.

abuses of the European mill authorities. Several cases of assault between workers and European technicians and managers were reported in the BCM. In one case, a European Assistant had branded a worker with a red hot iron.⁴⁹⁷ Workers wrote, ‘The European officers of the above mills ill-treat us in every possible way.’ They would taunt the workers every day, and tear their clothes if they were found hanging in the mills.⁴⁹⁸ These everyday abuses produced a strong motivation to form a workers’ union, in which the schooled workers played an active role.

In Cawnpore, very few factories had established factory schools. Mill owners were not sure of their benefits. To them, investment in education was not a priority. There were schools in some factories but they were primarily a means of holding half-timers in the mill. When the local government pushed mill owners to provide education for child workers in 1906, mill owners were extremely reluctant. They asked: what should be the ideal curricula for working children? Who would bear the expenses? And when it was decided that the education had to be of practical and manual training and the local government would contribute a grant towards meeting the establishment cost, mill owners showed a more sympathetic attitude. The Elgin Mills re-opened its factory school. The Victoria Mills agreed to open a school in the future.⁴⁹⁹ The leather factory, Messrs. Cooper, Allen and Co., also planned to open its own school. It suggested that since the majority of its workers were “low caste Hindus” and “low class Muslims” who were not welcomed in the ordinary schools of the upper and middle castes, the teacher would come from a low caste background and the course would be of a practical nature, such as scientific training in leather tanning. Sarada Balagopalan in her work on childhood discusses how the factory school pedagogy was heavily motivated to ‘turning children into efficient labourers’ and served as a ‘euphemism for a more efficient disciplinary regimen.’⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 179.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁹⁹ *RPI*, 1912, 76.

⁵⁰⁰ Balagopalan, *Inhabiting ‘Childhood’*, 66.

In Bombay, there were about 3,350 factory children in 1911 and 17 factory schools with an attendance of 465 children in 1917. However, these schools declined with successive factory acts, which redefined the age of children and restricted their employment. Factory-owners were not interested in investing in the education of factory children if there were no early future returns.⁵⁰¹ The 1922 Factory Act had broadened the age of a child to include those who were 15 years old. The effect of the new regulation was that children began to disappear from the regulated factory. By 1944, children constituted only 0.26 per cent of the labour force in the Cawnpore cotton mills.⁵⁰² In Bombay, the total number of working children decreased to 2,664 in 1921 and the number of schools to 5 and attendance to 310 children. By 1928, only 122 half-timers were reported to be working in the Bombay factories, and all the factory schools had vanished.⁵⁰³

Surprised by the disappearance of child workers in mills, the Royal Commission on Labour asked the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, General Department, 'Are they in school, or are they working in unregistered factories, or are they on the streets?' The Secretary, Mr. R. B. Ewbank, replied, 'In certain parts of Bombay compulsory education has been introduced.'⁵⁰⁴ The responsibility of educating the workforce had passed on to working parents, government agencies and social reform bodies, whose efforts mill owners supported through occasional donations and collaborations. The discourse of educating workers had shifted from the factory site to the working class neighbourhood following the World War I. I will discuss these neighbourhood schools in the next chapter. Before that, I wish to turn readers' attention towards the organised politics of factory workers, in which we see new concerns emerging with regard to the childhood of the factory-workers.

⁵⁰¹ File No. 46/1908, Industries Department Proceedings, United Provinces, 1908, *UPSA*, 116.

⁵⁰² Joshi, *Lost Worlds*, 88.

⁵⁰³ *RCL*, Vol.1, Part 1, Bombay Presidency (Written Evidence), 393, 44–45; Benjamin, "Child Labour in History", 356.

⁵⁰⁴ *RCL*, Vol.1, Part 2, Bombay Presidency (Oral Evidence), 183.

Workers' Organised Politics: Changing the Contours of Proletarian Childhoods (1890s-1930s)

While workers constantly used these schools in their own interests for a non-labouring career, they were also aware of the clear intentions of these factory schools as 'devices to enslave labour'.⁵⁰⁵ M. C. Sitaraman, a weaving master, said:

The school, general and technical in character, is the best part of the whole affair—the best part of the institute from the manufacturer's point of view. This pay him in rupees, annas, pies [sic]. This school trains up boys to become intelligent and skilled labourers and cooly clerks. This serves as a strong link of connection as well between the employers and the employees even under strained relationship.⁵⁰⁶

Despite such an image of the factory schools, workers did not stop sending their children to these schools. Instead, they constantly demanded a literary education of high level.

Worker politics in these decades had become more organised, violent, and assertive throughout the subcontinent. Before the World War I, workers protested, organised strikes, and led violent battles against wage cuts, increased hours of work, and physical and social abuse by employers.⁵⁰⁷ However, it was during and after the War that workers' unions emerged in Bombay and elsewhere. By 1921, the number of industrial workers in Bombay had gone up to 344,000 and there were nine trade unions in 1924.⁵⁰⁸ Workers by then had also organised several successful strikes.

Among workers, there was a greater unity emerging over the question of education for their children, which was missing in the 1880s and 90s. They realised that their lower and oppressed status in society was due to their educational deficits and illiteracy. Mill owners, they believed, had an interest in keeping them illiterate. When workers protested collectively over the more

⁵⁰⁵ Wadia, *Labour in Madras*, 189.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Sarkar, "The Tie That Snapped".

⁵⁰⁸ Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, 121.

immediate questions of working hours, bonuses, and wage cuts, they included the long-term demand of compulsory education for their children. For example, when workers from 75 mills met in a conference in December 1919, they not only demanded a shorter working day, provident funds, credit societies, and long interval hours but also the compulsory education of their children.⁵⁰⁹

Behind these organised demands, we see the emergence of a rights based politics among workers. Workers saw the education of their children not as a favour, but as their right among other human rights such as the right of citizenship, political representation, and striking. Kasle and Alwe's statements in the Meerut court, with whose remarks this chapter started, were centred on the claims of workers' rights. Thus they argued:

1. The worker is not a beast and has no horns etc. It is his right to live and it is equally his right to struggle for [*sic*] living.
2. We the working class who are ignorant and uneducated are able to carry on this struggle merely on the strength of organisation, that is of the Trade Union movement. I was working in a movement of this nature which was going on for mere rights of humanity.⁵¹⁰

Workers began to see themselves as political subjects and their demands for education were now placed as political demands. Aware of the meagre efforts that the state and mill owners made towards the education of their own children, trade unions began to run their own educational initiatives in Bombay, Cawnpore, and Ahmedabad. Except for Ahmedabad, these efforts were very limited and meagre. The Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad controlled and supervised 25 educational institutions in 1933. These comprised 12 day schools with 1,151 pupils, 9 night schools with 339 students, 2 nursery schools (on Montessori model)

⁵⁰⁹ Mukhtar, *Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India*, 20.

⁵¹⁰ P 933-1606 and 966, *MCC GIPE-02410*, 968.

with 123 kids, and 2 residential houses for boys and girls with 59 members. It spent Rs. 54,863 on education in 1933 compared to Rs. 42, 327 in 1929.⁵¹¹

However, the question of women's education was not raised by male-controlled unions. Male workers and employers together generally ignored the education of daughters. It rarely figured in their imagination. The dreams that women spoke of to the 1890 Factory Commission were rarely realised. Instead, their position, their demands, and their work was further degraded.

The woman worker fought against the double exploitation of two masters — the mill employer and the husband. The latter was 'harsher than the employers', the BCM female workers avowed.⁵¹² In Bombay too, the Girgaum Police Court reported several complaints of women alleging their husbands and other male workers for beating and sexually harassing them.⁵¹³ In 1926, BCM female workers raised their voices against exploitation. Consequently, 250 BCM women workers were dismissed. Female mill workers in Nagpur, facing similar harassment and violence, presented a 13-point petition to the Royal Commission on Labour. Their petition was an expression of their protest against an oppressive patriarchal world where women had no independence, rights, and voice. Their struggles were for a better future for their daughters and other female workers. The petition was presented by Radhabai Nimbalkar and Bhurkabi Kapuskar from the winding department of the Model Mills, Nagpur and Mrs. Savitrabai Dhargaone from the reeling department of the Empress Mill No. 5. Some of their demands were:

- No. 1 The Supervising staff over women employees should be women.
- No. 2 *Males supervising women should not be legally allowed.*
- No. 4 Pregnant women should get three months' maternity leave.

⁵¹¹ Mukhtar, *Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India*, 146.

⁵¹² *RCL*, vol. III, part 2, Madras and Coorg, (Oral Evidence), 176.

⁵¹³ *TOI*, September 20, 1889, 3; *TOI*, September 2, 1911, *TOI*, 10; July 14, 1888, 3.

- No. 5 The hours of work for women should be eight per day.
- No. 7 *Female labourers should have 2 representatives of their sex in the Legislative Council.*
- No. 8 *Arrangements should be made for schooling (i.e., education) for one hour daily in the mills.*
- No. 9 *There should be classes for girls also.*
- No. 12 Women should be on a permanent service and should be eligible to get a pension after 15 years' service.
- No. 13 There is considerable trouble felt by women from the jobbers.⁵¹⁴

In these demands, female workers combined their complaints and demands. One can see that their struggle was not just for equality at the work place but also for equal access to knowledge and political representation. The share in the political power was the most radical demand that they had put. Their petition shows that female workers fought the patriarchal world of the mill and the home. They demanded female supervisors because male supervisors at their mills were mean and biased. Women workers complained that male supervisors dismissed them 'even on frivolous grounds', fined them, beat them, and referred to them as 'women of bad character', which women saw as 'a great insult'.⁵¹⁵ They reported to the Commission that, a few years earlier, male jobbers had molested women. They told the Commission that revealing this information was not easy for them, as they feared that they might be molested again, fined without reason, or worse, thrown out of their jobs. They demanded shortened hours of work, three months' maternity leave, appointment of female supervisors, and provision for education. The demand for one-hour classes for themselves in the mill and schools for their daughters was also radical in the context of the time. This emerging working class feminism thus began

⁵¹⁴ *RCL*, vol. III, part 2, Central Provinces and United Provinces (Oral Evidence), 48–49. Emphasis added.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

articulating demands that until then were largely if not exclusively raised by their male colleagues.

Conclusion

The control of child labour was important in the early decades of factory expansion which required both ready labour to run machines. Factory Acts on the English model, in the employers' logic, threatened to put a stop on the practice of child labour. Conservative as they were in their ideas, industrialists saw the education of working class children as unnecessary. They argued workers as such were indifferent to formal education. To employers, workers' education symbolised the collapse of the social hierarchy, making workers more lazy and insincere, and privileging the labouring castes over upper castes who were yet illiterate in large numbers. In contrast, a few employers saw education as resolving the problem of an insincere and undisciplined workforce. They opened factory schools with limited goals. Consecutive factory acts, which limited the age and the hours of employment of working children, further forced mill employers to establish factory schools. These schools became mechanisms for both containing labour at the factory site and evading the law. Their critical importance, however, lay in moulding the childhood of working children.

Following the 1890s, we see a major shift in employers' strategies of controlling child labour, from retaining and employing child labour to socially engineering the childhoods of factory workers' children. Factory employers tried to control and mould the childhood of future workers by training them on machines, educating them about ethics of work, and indoctrinating them about harmonious industry-labour relations. Industrialists sought to produce a more settled working class through these measures, by which the social reproduction of labour was coupled with housing and other welfare schemes. Yet its effects were limited and sometime contradictory, as workers educated from these schools enthusiastically joined workers' unions and mobilised workers against employers.

In this chapter, we also see the changing views of workers' parents with regard to the childhood of their children. Peasants and the poor, as majority of them were, saw in education a new life for their children, an escape from what their own childhood was; they saw education as a means of achieving things that had been denied to them, not just now but for centuries. These conceptions were by no means universal, but were highly segmented on gender, regional, and community lines. Yet we see a fundamental change in the patterns of working lives, in that for the first time education (both free and paid) was demanded, and children were sent to schools. By the war years, we see that this demand for education was formalised by the pressure of workers' collective organisation. For the first time, education was posed as a 'right' by workers. In a sense workers were acting as political subjects, constituting themselves as self-defining individuals. They rejected elite perceptions of workers being ignorant and illiterate, and questioned the mill owners view that education was unnecessary for their survival. Female workers contested the male exclusive politics of the working class, and democratised the political space by their radical demands of education, the reorganisation of the factory management, and political representation. It is this struggle of workers for survival in a changing politico-economic atmosphere to which the next chapter of the thesis turns.

Chapter 4

Nights in Neighbourhoods

Intellectual History of Bombay and Cawnpore Factory Workers

There are many who believe that the Indian peasant and worker is far too literate and backward to even feel the possibility of a better and fuller existence. This may be true in the Indian village, but to anyone who has moved in the city working-class areas, the error of this hypothesis will be evident as the desires for a better standard of life and the growing discontent with present conditions are quite apparent in the life of workers.

Behram H.

Mehta, 'A New Deal for Industrial Workers'⁵¹⁶

Mehta, a sociologist and social worker, made these comments in 1941. He was referring to an ongoing struggle among the city workers for new futures. The discontented workers aspiring for 'a better standard of life' thought education was a way out. The discontent was visible in the working class neighbourhoods (WCNs) and in the individual's lives. In this chapter, I shift the attention from the factory (as a production site) to the urban WCNs of Bombay and Cawnpore and to the factory as a socialising site in order to chart out workers' struggle to be more than a worker and employers' reverse struggle to reproduce labour and capitalist conditions. Nights and neighbourhoods are both the focus and the analytical tools of my enquiry. They generally fall in the larger category of leisure social history, however, their creative aspects are understudied, especially in the Indian context.

Scholars studying the British working class have problematized the relationship between leisure and workers in multiple ways. Plebeian leisure (working class pubs, cinema,

⁵¹⁶ *Labour Bulletin*, Monthly Publication of the Labour Department, United Provinces, Cawnpore, (hereafter *LB*), vol. 1, October, 1941, 545.

Workmen's Association, clubs, football, etc.), which Eric Hobsbawm remarked was central to the formation of class cohesiveness and consciousness, came to be viewed as threat, irrational, immoral, and disorderly in the nineteenth century by the middle class elites, employers, and the state. They sought to mould workers' subjectivities through a controlled and 'rational' recreation (libraries, parks).⁵¹⁷ Andrew Davies' work, shifting from the commercialised leisure industry to WCNs, further complicated the picture of a homogenous working class leisure and argued that leisure patterns were marked by the difference of gender and economic inequality. Females were often denied leisure moments and recreational activities on the ground of sex, morality, and finance.⁵¹⁸ Brad Beaven focussing on the anxieties of middle class discussed four phases of leisure control where the moulding of working body through leisure invoked the concerns of status based rights during the Victorian liberalism, the moral bond between the state and the individual during the Edwardian era, economic efficiency during the World War I, and moral and social cohesion during the World War II.⁵¹⁹ Stanley Aronowitz, an American sociologist, saw capitalism as not just subordinating the work lives, but also moments outside work. Alienated work without an end, endangered weekends, long hours needed to commute to work and home, necessity of two jobs to survive, and vocational and business education, has fundamentally blurred the distinction of work and non-work hours. Capital, he asserts, wants a total subordination of the leisure moment.⁵²⁰

Labour historians in India have paid significant attention to WCNs, however, a similar rich history is lacking in the context of India. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar pictured WCNs as an extension of the workshop floor, where the politics of caste, community, and working identities was constituted and re-constituted. Social and cultural activities in WCNs have been studied

⁵¹⁷ Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour*; Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*; Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*.

⁵¹⁸ Davies, *Leisure, Gender, and Poverty*.

⁵¹⁹ Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*.

⁵²⁰ Aronowitz, *The Last Good Job in America*.

as aspects of work-culture.⁵²¹ Social ties woven in neighbourhoods extended to the workplace and vice versa. In this picture, the demands of industrial labour shaped the patterns of neighbourhoods. Irregularities and uncertainties of the job market and wages shaped the credit and social networks in the neighbourhoods. It was not merely a space for sleeping and rest but was an active site of labour-capital conflict and of ‘industrial and political action’. It was in neighbourhoods that workers were mobilised for both organising and breaking strikes.⁵²² WCNs are also accorded a limited autonomous social domain in few writings, including in Chandavarkar’s work. What is highlighted is the culture of the gymnasium, religious festivals and conflicts, cultural gatherings, and alcoholism among workers.⁵²³ It is always presumed in these writings that workers were never engaged in any intellectual pursuits. What was of immediate concern to workers was ‘their daily struggles of workplace and neighbourhood,’ writes Chandavarkar. Workers could not fit into the programmes of education offered by non-Brahman and Depressed Classes movements.⁵²⁴ Thus workers did not read newspapers and pamphlets, these were read to them. ‘The workers during this period were mostly illiterate . . .,’ concludes Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay in his work on the Bombay cotton-mill workers (1890-1919).⁵²⁵ Such notions have been reinforced both due to the lack of workers’ own writings and to historians’ analytical frameworks. For example, the nights of workers are never thought to be a significant object of study in the production of working class subjectivities. Besides, there is a need to explore new sources to write more nuanced histories of working classes. For this chapter, I mainly draw upon the reports of the social reform bodies working with the poor, court cases in which workers were involved, and the digital archive of the *Times of India*.

⁵²¹ Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*, 168–238.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵²³ Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*; Joshi, *Lost Worlds*, 115–26; Menon, “Battling the Bottle”.

⁵²⁴ Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*, 429, 431; Chandavarkar, *History, Culture*, 228.

⁵²⁵ Upadhyay, *Existence, Identity, and Mobilization*.

Building upon the previous chapter, I explore how the night, like childhood, became a site for struggle between workers and employers. While workers tried hard to keep their control tight over nights to pursue their personal desires, employers, social reform bodies, and the state simultaneously attempted to colonise their nights and make them part of the production process. The first section of this chapter studies the struggle of workers against employers to demand control over nights and leisure time. This demand for leisure moments among workers was linked with the night school. By studying histories of night schools, the chapter illustrates how the night becomes the site and time for workers to subvert the stereotypical image of workers as illiterates. I explore workers' attendance in night schools established by workers themselves, social reform bodies, and the government. I survey visions, curricula, and attendance of different types of night schools and motives that drew different classes, castes, and gender of workers into them. In the second section, the role of the night is analysed as a site for capital to reproduce its conditions. I show how employers began to control the free time of workers, including nights, through welfare activities and funding night schools. By the World War I, it was no longer viable for employers to exclude workers and their children from educational programmes but they kept a tight control over the education given to workers. I examine the establishment of workmen's institutes and housing settlements in the context of Bombay and Cawnpore as means by employers to colonise the free moments of working lives. In the third section, I illustrate how a night school culture among workers led to a widespread literary culture through the nightly circulation of reading materials from standing and moving libraries. I review the attendance of workers in WCN libraries, the contents of reading rooms, the book-borrowing culture among workers, and the collective reading of books in neighbourhoods. I demonstrate that workers were voracious readers, dedicated library members, and serious intellectuals, reading and writing political, religious, and poetic works.

Day and Night in Working Lives

The spatial division of the workplace and the neighbourhood in working lives was reflected in the temporal division of day and night — the day standing for hard labour and the night for repose. Night time was part of employers' strategy for the reproduction of labour power. It was the time for workers to give their bodies rest and prepare them for tomorrow's labour. This day and night cycle was necessary for smooth commodity production. Any intrusion in the cycle was an intrusion in the process of commodity production. Thus to drink alcohol, gamble, engage in labour politics, fall ill, and be absent from the next day's work was considered by mill authorities as a breaking of the cycle. Alwe explained that "If the brother or the mother or the father of a workman died and leave was asked for one day to perform the obsequies it was not granted. It was necessary to keep the dead body rotting till the worker was free from his [her] work."⁵²⁶

However, the reality was much messier with workers sleeping during work time, frequently visiting latrines for smoking and resting, reading bhajan books while working, absenting themselves from work, and demanding extra leisure hours. From the other side, employers introduced electric lights to stretch the workday into the dark hours, designed night shifts, employed time-keepers for surveillance, and fined lazy workers.⁵²⁷ The strict partitioning of temporality between the workday and rest time was of a shifting nature. In the early decades of cotton industries when there was no electricity, the workday began between 5:30 to 6:00 a.m. and stopped when it was too dark to work. For workers, the workday easily stretched into the night. To arrive at work at 5:30 a.m., Babajee Mahdoo woke up at 3 a.m.⁵²⁸ The worker-mother Doorpathee woke up at the same time. For her there was some extra work at home too. She needed to cook food for herself and for her little daughter, take a bath, dress herself quickly, and then walk about 1.5 miles to the mill.⁵²⁹ A 1933 academic study of India's industrial labour

⁵²⁶ Defence Statements. P 933-1606, 936, *MCC GIPE*-02410.

⁵²⁷ Over the struggle of working day between workers and employers, see Marx, *Capital*. vol. 1, 340–416.

⁵²⁸ *FC*, 1890, 24.

⁵²⁹ *FC*, 1890, 27–28.

stressed that the working women living in chawls (working-class one-room house settlements) woke up quite early, first to collect water from the common tap and then to fire cowdung cakes to cook food. It was only ‘after such a night and morning, they have to go to their respective mills and to work in their stuffy atmosphere till the evening’.⁵³⁰ In between, there were a few moments of relief and socialisation. For example, queuing to collect water was also the time for nurturing social ties with other women of the neighbourhood and discussing sex scandals and love affairs in the chawls, the cruelty of jobbers and headmen/women, and the future of their children. Doorpathee requested the 1890 Factory Commission: ‘It will be better if the hours are shortened.’ Jobber Genoo Babajee, a representative of workers, told the Commission that since workers were deprived of sleep, they decided in a meeting to work from 6 a.m. until it was dusk and not until dark. He sighed and then showed the wounded finger of his right hand which was cut while working in the dark.⁵³¹

Workers considered the time spent preparing themselves for labour to be part of the work and workday. The Bidi factory labourers of the Central Provinces, in their memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour (RCL), narrated their general plight: ‘Owing to incessant laborious work and to the anxiety of next day’s call the labourer never sleeps in peace.’⁵³² Excessive mental and bodily strain and the boredom of repetitive work in an enclosed space found its expression in demands for increased leisure hours and activities that took workers beyond the boredom of work.

When workers presented a collective petition to the 1890 Factory Commission, their prime demand was that work should begin at 6:30 a.m. and finish at the sunset. With such a change, they argued, employers would get a healthy working body which ‘working with energy would turn out work satisfactorily both as to quantity and quality.’ They reminded the

⁵³⁰ Panandi, *Industrial Labour in India*.

⁵³¹ *FC, 1885*, 100.

⁵³² *RCL*, vol. II, part 2, United Provinces and Central Provinces (Oral Evidence), 64.

Commission that, ‘The loss to mill owners from over-taxing the energies of their servants by the unnatural system of incessant work for nearly 13 to 14 hours a day, is far greater than they are aware of.’⁵³³ What workers complained of was the shortage of sleep in their lives, very little time to spend with their families, and the injurious effects of long working hours on their health.

However, workers were denied reduced hours of work on the grounds that their presence in factories was not equal to work. One mill-authority complained, ‘workers do not work all the time; they may be sitting down in one of the departments, they may be sleeping — and I myself have seen some sleeping—or they may have their meals.’⁵³⁴ Mill owners argued that if workers were given extra leisure time they would engage themselves ‘with undesirable social elements.’⁵³⁵ However, what workers did in the night was much more profound and transgressive.

Workers in the Night Schools

A great many of the labouring classes had a great difficulty in making both ends meet; and when they managed somehow to send their children to these [night] schools, they sent them with the object of giving them a rise in life, which showed that they appreciated the advantage of learning . . .⁵³⁶

A *TOI* correspondent wrote the above statement, reflecting the desires of learning among the poor workers of Bombay and the pain they took in educating themselves. Extreme poverty was just one set of constraints; the lack of time was another major barrier in the education of the working lives. As the dusk rolled out, many workers turned into students. Relieved from daytime work, they went straight to night schools at 7 p.m. and spent two hours enjoying the pleasure of reading, listening to the master, and holding a book. One Madhaudas Morarji wrote

⁵³³ *FC*, 1885, 106.

⁵³⁴ *RCL*, vol. I, part 2, Bombay Presidency (Oral Evidence), 83.

⁵³⁵ *TOI*, October 8, 1909, 8.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1890, 3.

with surprise that how low paid workers ‘who somehow or other are able to maintain themselves and their families, attending [sic] these night schools so enthusiastically instead of enjoying their well-earned rest.’⁵³⁷ Workers flooded night schools established by workers, individual philanthropists, and social reform bodies. Night to workers was not only meant for sleeping, as employers would like them to do. They reserved it for the pleasure of reading, discussing family matters, learning in night schools, drinking alcohol, going to fairs and popular theatres, and roaming in wide open streets. While the day symbolized bondage and humiliation, the night symbolised freedom, passion, and dignity. Night, however, was also constrained for workers due to overwork in the daytime and a crisis of housing in Bombay. Sleep was a necessity and workers had to negotiate how to get enough. It was not that workers did not sleep in classrooms. They did, and forced teachers to make their lessons more interesting.⁵³⁸

It is difficult to calculate the exact number of night schools at one given time. Their numbers kept changing and their reporting was often uneven. According to Madhudas Morarji, there were about 2000 people attending night schools daily in Bombay in 1911.⁵³⁹ In 1919, a *TOI* correspondent noted that there were about 50 night schools in various WCNs with an average daily attendance between 1,200 to 1,500.⁵⁴⁰ According to the municipal records of Bombay, there were 33 night schools under its watch with 1136 students in 1921-22.⁵⁴¹ Though educating a number of workers, the reach of these schools to many workers was limited by their locations in particular neighbourhoods, specific audiences they targeted, and constant financial problems these schools faced. My effort here is not to paint a contrasting picture of workers’ literacy against the picture of workers’ illiteracy but to draw attention to various

⁵³⁷ Ibid., May 11, 1911, 6.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., March 23, 1908, 4.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., May 11, 1911, 6.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., January 21, 1919, 8.

⁵⁴¹ Cursetji, *Educational*, 6.

hitherto neglected aspects of working lives and working class desires, whose meanings went beyond workers' occupational identity and had significant impact on the nature of the working class. In the following section, I will discuss various types of night schools that workers attended in Bombay and the changing nature of their numerical strength, social composition, and curriculum.

Type 1: Night Schools of Workers

Weavers like Bhiwa Ramji Nare participated in intellectual activities in their poor neighbourhoods that threatened to collapse all the distinctions of society and culture that the 'the educated and more influential classes' of the town maintained.⁵⁴² Nare established a night school in 1874 at his own expense for his poor brethren. 'The president was man in ten thousand giving his leisure time to conducting a school for the children of mill-hands,' wrote the editor of the *Indian Textile Journal (ITJ)*.⁵⁴³

Nare started his career as an ordinary worker at Rs. 8 per month but in 37 years he climbed up to become a master-weaver in the Morarji Goculdas Mill at Rs. 250 per month. His experience in the mill, his age, and intellectual pursuits gave him moral authority to speak on various issues affecting workers. He distinguished the older generation of workers from the present one, the latter in his eyes were degenerate. They wasted their nights and resources on drinks and theatre. He called them 'uneducated and thoughtless workers' who, finding ready cash at hand, indulged in vices. At work they were controlled by employers and in the night by drinking habits and other "vices". The worker pedagogue used to say, 'All this is due to want of education and want of knowledge of the value of time and money.'⁵⁴⁴ He cherished ideals of self-control. Education, he believed, would not only give workers the strength to control themselves but also return their lost dignity.

⁵⁴² Quoted from Chandavarkar, "Workers' Politics and the Mill Districts in Bombay between the Wars", 605.

⁵⁴³ Punekar and Varickayil, *Labour Movement in India*, 337–38.

⁵⁴⁴ *TOI*, December 12, 1907, 5.

In 1887, Nare with the help of his worker friends would go on to establish a free day school for workers in the Mararji's Chawl (Old Government House Road, Parel) and named it "Nare and Mandali's Free School". The school became popular and existed even after his death in 1916.⁵⁴⁵ One could see Nare's day school as workers questioning of the orthodox allocation of day just for work. To workers, the day was not just for work, and they questioned the imagined norm by constantly absenting themselves from mills, sending their children to schools, and visiting their kin and villages. Seeing the response for education amongst workers, Nare further established two schools which he could not maintain after his retirement in 1906. By now, he became a public leader and a representative of workers' voices. He founded the Kamgar Hitwardhak Union (KHU) in 1909 (an association for the promotion of workers' interest) and served as its president for eight years.⁵⁴⁶ Emerging as one of the earliest loose trade unions of workers, the association helped workers in distress, unionised them, provided them legal support through their pleader members, mediated their concerns with mill management, opened schools, and promoted temperance.⁵⁴⁷ It ran a Marathi night school in the house no. 247 at Ferguson Road. Scornful of the association and its pedagogic efforts, the editor of the *ITJ* wrote, 'The Indian operative is no more fit for Trade Unions than he is for scientific education or ever reading and writing. He has to first learn things that are much more necessary, touching his daily life and work.'⁵⁴⁸

It was the 'unfit' image of the working classes widely present and circulated by elites, colonial officials, and employers that workers like Nare were trying to undo. Education to them was one such tool to disturb the status quo and the fixed image of workers. Nare's schools had probably provided a new hope among the oppressed working classes to think of their and their children's childhood in alternative ways. When workers in large numbers supported Gokhale'

⁵⁴⁵ Setalvad, *Educational*, 290.

⁵⁴⁶ Rutnagar, *Bombay Industries*, 716.

⁵⁴⁷ Punekar and Varickayil, *Labour Movement in India*, 338.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 337–38.

Education Bill for compulsory education, the *ITJ* commented, ‘their ideas of education must have been no clearer than those of the Indian people, who believe that the purpose of education is not to make the recipient an honest, capable and intelligent workman, but to raise him above the degradation of manual labour.’⁵⁴⁹ Workers conception of education was fundamentally different from elites’ understanding. For workers, education presented the possibility to achieve what seemed impossible, and the night was the only time in their lives to achieve these desires.

Type 2: Night Schools of the Social Reform Bodies and Individual Social Reformers

A: The Theistic Association Night Schools

At the same time, when Nare ran his school, the Theistic Association began to alleviate the degraded souls of the city by offering them limited education. At least 239 workers attended 6 night schools of the Theistic Association in 1889.⁵⁵⁰ If we count the irregular students who attended schools infrequently and left with a little smattering of English, and arithmetic, no less than 2748 workers had attended the night schools of the Theistic Association between 1886 and 1890. In 1890, it was reported that the number of students in the Theistic Association schools had decreased due to new night schools being opened at Byculla and Dongri by some Christian missionaries and at Girgaum by a ‘private gentlemen’.⁵⁵¹ One keeps hearing about these ephemeral night schools about which very little information was ever collected and published. By 1912, over 26,000 workers had passed through the night schools of the Theistic Association. There were 9 schools with 565 students on the roll in 1912.⁵⁵² They were established in different WCNs: Thakurdwar, Girgaum (established in 1880), Khetwady, Dongri, Gaumdevi (1881), Kalbadevi (1876), and Byculla.

B: The Social Service League Night School (SSL)

⁵⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 339; See also, Balagopalan, *Inhabiting ‘Childhood’*, 77–80.

⁵⁵⁰ *TOI*, February, 1890, 3.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1890, 3.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, February 28, 1912, 10.

The SSL emerged as one of the more powerful social reform bodies by the World War I, distributing education to the lower orders of the city. It organised night schools in various WCNs. The desire to be literate, to be called and seen as educated, to read books and to express their thoughts in a disciplined tongue attracted about 450 workers daily in 15 night schools run by the League in November 1917. All of these schools were situated in workers' mohallas: 4 at Tardeo and Chikhalwadi, 4 at Parel, 2 at Byculla, 3 at Dongri, and 2 at Mandvi.⁵⁵³ In late 1919, there were 20 night schools with 980 students on the school registers and an average daily attendance of 750.⁵⁵⁴ By 1922, the number of schools and students had dropped to 15 and 618 respectively. At that moment, 10 of these schools were Anglo-Marathi, 4 Anglo-Urdu-Gujarati and 1 Anglo-Gujarati.

C: The Night Schools of the YMCA and other smaller Reform Organisations

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), a global organisation, started its work among workers in the north of the island of the city of Bombay in 1924. Inhabited by mill-workers, the chawls at Naigaum were 'crowded, restless and careless', and it was here that workers spent their leisure time. The YMCA began with a day and a night school. Later, they expanded to Worli chawl, Arthur Road, and Main Road, Dadar. They also had a centre for workers employed at the Municipal Pumping Station at Love Grove. Populated by 'industrial workers and nearly all belong(ing) to the depressed classes', these centres had 14 night schools giving education in English, Urdu, Gujarati and Marathi with an average daily attendance of 201. On a similar line, a Young Men's Hindu Association was started by Hindu youths to perform 'unselfish service for the good of the community'. It ran two night schools which was attended by peons, mill-workers, and other classes of worker along with a reading room and library.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ Ibid., November 16, 1917, 4.

⁵⁵⁴ *Social Service Quarterly* [hereafter *SSQ*], 1920, vol. V, no. 3, 193.

⁵⁵⁵ *SSQ*, January 1917, vol. II, no. 3, 173.

Besides these institutions, we hear the names of other institutions which ran night schools on a smaller scale. For example, the Indian Association, established in 1925 ran a night school for the ‘backward classes’ in the Matunga Labour Camp.⁵⁵⁶ Its aim included to provide a library, a reading room, and a playground for the working class residents. The Friend’s Union Society also ran a night school. It had 85 worker students in 1906.⁵⁵⁷ One Mr. and Mrs. Trimbuck of Colaba ran a night school for the 20 workers of the Oriental Spinning and Weaving Mills and the Government Central Press.⁵⁵⁸

Type 3: Special Night Schools for Dalits

As a rule, night schools were open for all classes and castes. But the presence of special exclusive night schools for Dalits suggests that high, middle, and low caste Hindus, Muslims, and Parsis refused to sit with Dalits. Discrimination was practised in these schools forcing reformers to start special Dalit schools. For example, the Theistic Association opened a separate school ‘exclusively’ for Mahars in Dongri in 1891 despite the fact that there already existed a night school of the Association. The majority of students in the new school were labourers of the GIP Railway.⁵⁵⁹ Another school for the ‘depressed classes’ was opened in Madanpura, but we do not know what classes of Dalits entered these schools.

The Depressed Classes Mission, a body to promote the welfare of “untouchables”, established its own night schools in Bombay so that Dalit labourers could get the maximum benefit from education. It began its efforts in 1907. It ran 9 night schools in various neighbourhoods such as at Curry Road (32 students), Elphinstone Road (56), and Deonar (21). There were 272 students and out of them, 109 were from the labouring background.⁵⁶⁰ By 1919,

⁵⁵⁶ *TOI*, April 19, 1927, 11.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, March 23, 1908, 4.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, February 1, 1890, 3. Mr. and Mrs. Trimbuck, residents of Colaba, also ran the Colaba Day and Sunday Schools with 100 students in 1890, mainly attended by students employed in government services and mills. See also, *Ibid.*, March, 31, 1887, 6.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, April, 30, 1891, 5.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, March 13, 1908, 5.

a total of 17 special ‘Depressed Classes’ (Nirashrit) schools existed in Bombay with 1855 students.⁵⁶¹

Visions, Students, and Insides of the Night Schools

Night schools were established to improve the conditions of the poor in general, but their ideological orientations differed from one organisation to the other. For example, while Nare’s schools were maintained by jobbers and weavers — elites of the working class, night schools of the social reform bodies were maintained by both working class and non-working class social reformers. The poor, for them, was enmeshed in a culture of poverty and required upliftment to prevent degeneration. The poor was a social problem that needed to be resolved to establish an orderly, civic, and healthy society.

The Theistic Association’s night schools were the result of a socio-religious reform movement led by educated Brahman elites of Bombay. Motivated by a mix of ideas of religious and social service, it distinguished itself from existing Hinduism which was ritualistic.⁵⁶² On a similar line, the YMCA claimed to utilise the ‘off’ hours of workers to ‘educate and uplift these village folk, overwhelmed with the strange demands of their city and mill life...’⁵⁶³ On the other hand, the SSL was led by elite social reformers and liberal labour leaders such as Narayan Chandavarkar and N. M. Joshi. It was a product of the Holika Sannam movement which aimed to abolish the ‘evil practices’ of drinking, gambling, and extravagance associated with workers on the occasions of the Holi festival. The movement was given a permanent institutional shape when college and school students, interested in social work, became volunteers and pledged to work for the upliftment of the poor masses.⁵⁶⁴

Activities of these social and religious reform bodies were part of the emerging middle class anxieties which feared the presence of a large mass of ‘uncontrolled’ and ‘undisciplined’ poor

⁵⁶¹ *SSQ*, January 1920, vol. V, no. 3, 152.

⁵⁶² Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis*, 162.

⁵⁶³ Rutnagar, *Bombay Industries*, 515.

⁵⁶⁴ *TOI*, March 16, 1918, 9.

in their space.⁵⁶⁵ These concerns were coupled with the emerging global discourse of welfare and social work in the nineteenth century. Middle class reform bodies, including the YMCA, of the industrialised societies such as America and England ran similar projects of disciplining the leisure moment of working class.⁵⁶⁶ Ideas of reform and welfare institutions were being circulated globally and implemented in specific settings. Members of the YMCA, the Theistic Association, and the SSL visited industrialised countries, studied the patterns of labour welfare, published news on global trends of welfare activities in their journals, and established similar institution (workers' club, libraries, boy scouts, and workmen's institutes) in India but in constraints that were specific to India such as of caste and racial difference, colonial rule, and limited financial resources.⁵⁶⁷

To return to the specificities of the night schools, we see that workers from diverse classes and castes attended these schools. Among students, there were mill-workers, government-employed service classes such as clerks, peon, postmen, and writers, petty-shopkeepers, domestic servants, hamals (porters), and other labouring groups employed at commercial firms, municipality offices, and the Port Trust. The 1901 report of the Theistic Association's night schools provided a breakdown of the classes of workers it attracted. Out of 592 students, 234 were peons and postmen, 73 compositors, 72 mill-workers and the rest from diverse working backgrounds.

We can say that factory workers in the school were in interaction with both the lower rungs of the middle classes such as with compositors and postmen and the lowest rungs of labouring classes such as coolies, domestic servants, cart-drivers, cleaners, and hotel workers. The crossover of different classes, castes, occupations, and religions gave night schools a peculiar character. It was a space of amalgamation and negotiation. There is very little textual evidence

⁵⁶⁵ *SSQ*, July 1918, vol. IV, no. 1, 34-41.

⁵⁶⁶ Winter, *Making Men, Making Class*; Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*.

⁵⁶⁷ *SSQ*, January 1920, vol. V, no. 3, 155.

on the sociabilities formed in these schools but differences of class and caste would have been important. The petty-shopkeeper might have felt uncomfortable while sitting with a domestic servant and the middle-caste postmen probably felt a similar unease sitting with a mill-worker. Presence of separate night schools for Dalits tells us that Dalit students were looked down upon.

The world of factory workers itself was fragmented along class, occupational, caste, generational, educational, gender, and regional lines. For example, a mill clerk with a ‘book case with some books in’ at his Girgaum chawl room was generally considered the most literate figure followed by jobbers, weavers, spinners, and other departmental labour.⁵⁶⁸ Night schools, in this sense, not only facilitated an exchange among diverse occupational background but further reaffirmed the hierarchies of the labouring world. The image of workers as “illiterate”, “gullible”, and “ignorant” was not only produced by the “other” class but it was very much prevalent within the working classes. One class of workers referred to the other class as illiterates, fools, and ignorant—the educated worker to the illiterate worker, the labour leader to the worker-follower, and the jobber to the reeler. Old workers such as Nare looked down on the present generation of workers as “drunkards” and the “uneducated”. Such a hierarchy is very much present in the letters of H. A. Talcherkar, a self-declared ‘occasional mill-hand’ and the secretary of the KHU.⁵⁶⁹ In the KHU, muqadums, jobbers, and master-weavers were on the top of the leadership hierarchy.⁵⁷⁰ The class of leaders maintained a separation from the class of followers. They accused an average mill worker of lacking a “communist instinct”. The latter had to be taught the rules of membership and obedience to union leaders.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁸ *Proceedings of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee*, vol. III (6th Dec.1928 to 10th Jan. 1929), 1246.

⁵⁶⁹ *TOI*, August 29, 1914, 8.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, October 25, 1909, 4.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, November 1, 1911, 5; Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics*, 206.

Two pictures of the YMCA night schools (one Urdu class and the other non-Urdu class) give a sense of the interiors of night schools and their subjects.

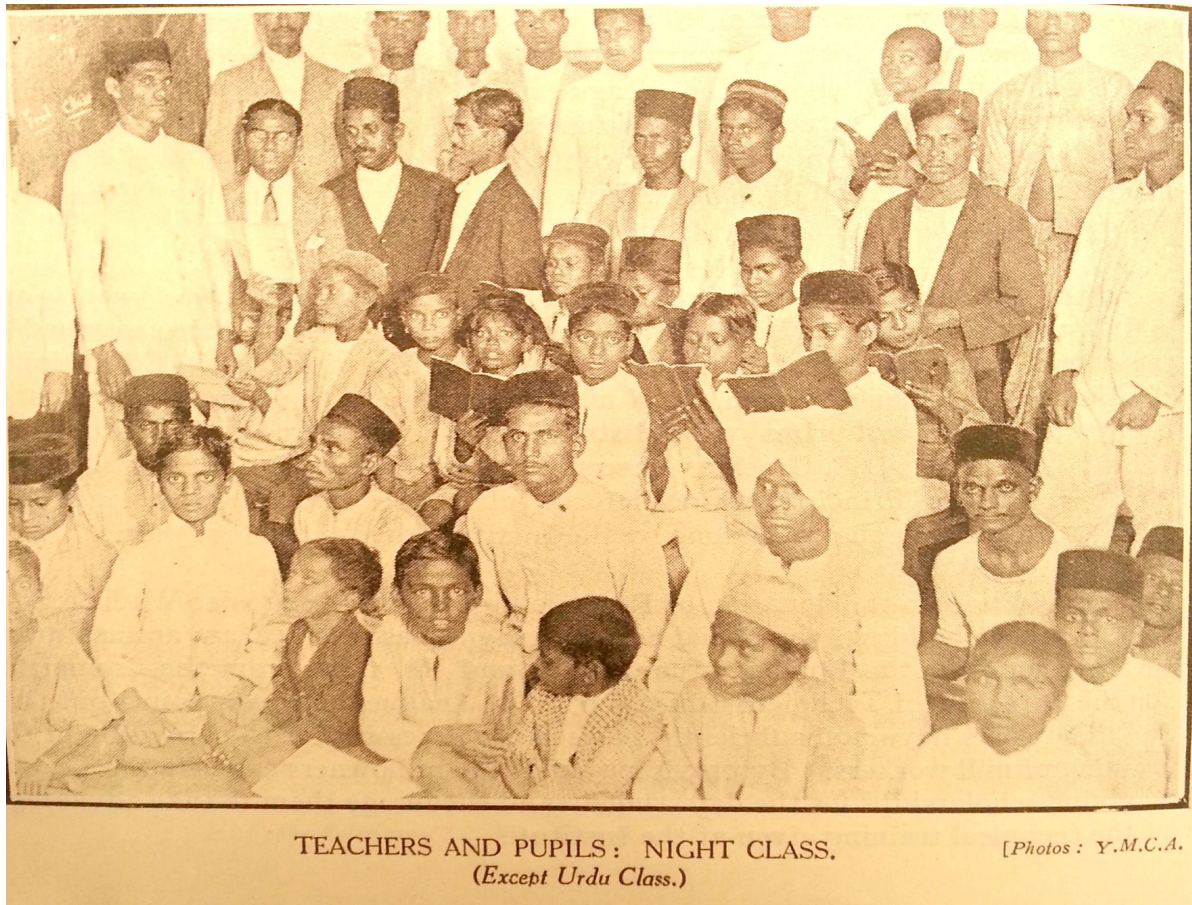


Figure 4.1: *Teachers and pupils in a night school.* Source: Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries*, 514.



SCHOOL FOR MAHOMEDANS : THE NIGHT CLASS.

Figure 4.2: *The night schools for Muslims.* Source: Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries*, 514.

In the two pictures, we see students holding books—some concentrating on books and others on the camera. Workers of all ages attended these schools. These are rare pictures of workers showing them nicely dressed, holding books, and reading in an otherwise large collection of worker photographs that show them ignorant, badly clothed, and in a distressed state. We see that there are students in coats with reading glasses and students in just a banyan and kurta, students with topis and without topis, and students in western shoes and in native shoes. The sartorial sense of students tells us that different classes of workers attended night schools. Besides, workers saw a link between education and being nicely and cleanly dressed. To be educated was to also dress like those who are educated. Clothing had emerged as a means of

both asserting and transcending the caste, racial, religious, national, class, and ethnic identity in colonial India.⁵⁷²

Various factors motivated different classes and castes of workers to attend night schools. Education gave workers a world of possibility to enter into newly created service occupations generated by the colonial political economy. Literacy gave them bargaining power in the competing occupational world where higher posts were often reserved for those hailing from literate classes or who became literate. Both first-generation learners, semi-literates, and educated workers used night schools to learn literary skills and keep their knowledge alive.⁵⁷³ Had it not been visions of alternative futures and emancipation from ignorance, mill-workers of Bombay would not have attended night schools with such enthusiasm and consistency at the cost of sacrificing their much needed sleep.

Attendance in night schools was never smooth. Schools were often empty altogether or flooded with pupils. Workers struggled with poverty, overwork, sleep, the demands of the family, and the needs of the body to attend night schools. While the majority of night schools were free to attend, many night schools of the Theistic Association charged a fee of 1 anna. Whether free or not, students had to bear the cost of primers, slates, and clothes. Besides personal circumstances, larger issues concerning the neighbourhood and individuals such as labour-capital conflicts, war rumours, diseases, and communal riots equally determined workers' attendance. For example, the general strikes of 1919 and 1920 emptied night schools. By January 1920 the enrolment fell drastically in the SSL schools.⁵⁷⁴ Seasonal migration of labour also affected workers' ability to attend schools. For instance, when the night school at Morland Road, Madanpura was started on February 12, 1918 to teach Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English to labourers for free, only 14 students came forward. On the other hand, the

⁵⁷² Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*; Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, xvi; Hardgrave, "The Breast-cloth Controversy".

⁵⁷³ See chapter III.

⁵⁷⁴ *SSQ*, April, 1920 vol. V, no. 4, 251.

Ghoghari Mohalla night school, opened at the same time, attracted 51 'labourers'. After an enquiry, it was found that the Victoriawalas (drivers of the horse-drawn carriages) who inhabited the Morland area had gone back to their homes in Kathiawar.⁵⁷⁵

Besides, increasing pressures to extend the work timeline into the night affected workers' ability to attend night schools. The distinction between the day and the night collapsed on the workshop floor when mills in Bombay began installing electric lights in 1896.⁵⁷⁶ Electrified mills could work till 8 or 9 p.m. In 1905, 39 out of 79 mills in the Bombay City had electricity installed in their premises and ran for 14 to 15 hours.⁵⁷⁷ Night-time work made the piece-rate workers more precarious. They had to either work for long hours or be content with reduced wages. Employers argued that since workers needed extra wages, they worked extra hours.⁵⁷⁸ A few mill-mangers believed that though work beyond 12 hours destroyed the efficiency and interest of workers in work, they were compelled to follow the pattern due to competition.⁵⁷⁹ A *TOI* correspondent wrote in 1905 that unless some external pressure was put, 'the cold-blooded inhumanity will continue'.⁵⁸⁰ Workers protested against late night work. In 1905, workers in a meeting at Chinchpogly drafted a memorandum for the government demanding a 12-hour workday.⁵⁸¹ The Factory Act of 1911 fixed the working hours of adult males to 12 per day. Reduction in the working hours forced employers to shift from labour-intensive mechanisms to labour-efficient mechanisms. These concerns would be reflected not only at the workplace but also in the way employers controlled the non-working hours of workers in order to train them and make them efficient.

Capitalism, Social Reproduction of Labour, and Control over Nights (1914-1945)

⁵⁷⁵ *SSQ*, vol. IV, no. 1, 43.

⁵⁷⁶ Upadhyay, *Existence, Identity, and Mobilization*, 47.

⁵⁷⁷ *TOI*, September 13, 1905, 8.

⁵⁷⁸ Tyabji, "Competitive Advantage through Contestation" in Kumar and Chandhoke, *Mapping Histories*, 192.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 194; *TOI*, December 12, 1907, 5.

⁵⁸⁰ *TOI*, September 13, 1905, 8.

⁵⁸¹ Upadhyay, *Existence, Identity, and Mobilization*, 50.

The never-ending World War I required that industries should go on. For that, the constant supply of labour was necessary. Cotton industry in Bombay suffered badly in the initial years of the War (1914 and 1915), but it soon made massive gains until 1922 when competition from Japan and the up-country mills increased, and the volatile labour conditions disturbed the working of Bombay mills.⁵⁸² But this decline was not absolute in Bombay in the 1920s and 30s, in fact, cotton factories diversified and increased their production by manufacturing finer quality clothes and yarn of over 30s counts.⁵⁸³ Throughout this period, the concern was how to organise production efficiently by doing night shifts, cut the wages of workers efficiently, and secure a supply of efficient labour. The War rumours resulted in the departure of many workers. At least 20 mills were shut down or operated infrequently due to the shortage of labour.⁵⁸⁴ The *TOI* wrote, ‘The question of the workpeople’s welfare had ever more urgently demanded attention than it does to-day . . . the tremendous special industrial developments which the war required in Western countries has led to the care of workers, both for their own sakes and promote their efficiency, being reduced almost to an exact science.’⁵⁸⁵ C. N. Wadia, the Chairmen of the Mill owners’ Association, in a 1919 meeting said, ‘Agriculturalists they (workers) were and agriculturalist they would remain to the end of time. The best they could do was to house them well, educate their children and to a certain extent reduce the hours of their labour.’⁵⁸⁶ Capitalist Dinshaw Wacha in a 1918 meeting asked other mill owners to change their attitude towards workers from ‘apathy and indifference’ to ‘broader sympathy,

⁵⁸² Chatterji, “The Political Economy of “Discriminating Protection””. On labour unrest and decline of industries see, Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*, 5–6, 114–18, 256–60; On the growth and politics surrounding Indian business, investment, and the expansion of industries during the war years see, Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914-1947*; Bagchi, *Private Investment in India, 1900-1939*; Ray, *Industrialization in India*.

⁵⁸³ Chandavarkar, *Origins of Industrial Capitalism*, 256–76.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 192-93.

⁵⁸⁵ *TOI*, July 25, 1918, 6.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, April 26, 1919, 11.

friendliness, and co-adjustorship'.⁵⁸⁷ Capital had to be a friend of labour. For this, employers needed to look into the welfare and grievances of workers.

These were both curative and precautionary steps. Industry was suffering badly from three related factors: the poor health of workers, absenteeism, and strikes. In 1917-18, there occurred two epidemics of influenza, one of small-pox, and the other of cholera. This was also the time when workers began to organise collective strikes on a large scale, often paralysing the whole industry and breaking the cycle of commodity production.

Leisure moments of working lives began to be taken very seriously. They were seen as the cause of tension in the capital-labour relationship. Whether it was bad living conditions in WCNs or meetings of workers, all occurred pre-dominantly in the spaces or moments of leisure. Through welfare programmes, employers in collaboration with the state and social reform bodies made an attempt to control over workers' leisure spaces and moments.

The social reproduction of labour through welfare in the war years became an accepted strategy of factory employers to control labour and make it efficient.⁵⁸⁸ In India, this strategy was by no means either accepted universally or considered the only solution. However, the strategy would gain further legitimacy among a few big employers of labour during the World War II. One such plan of social reconstruction and rehabilitation of working families was published in the *Labour Bulletin* of the United Provinces government in 1941.

⁵⁸⁷ *SSQ*, July 1918, vol. IV, no. 1, 36.

⁵⁸⁸ Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*.

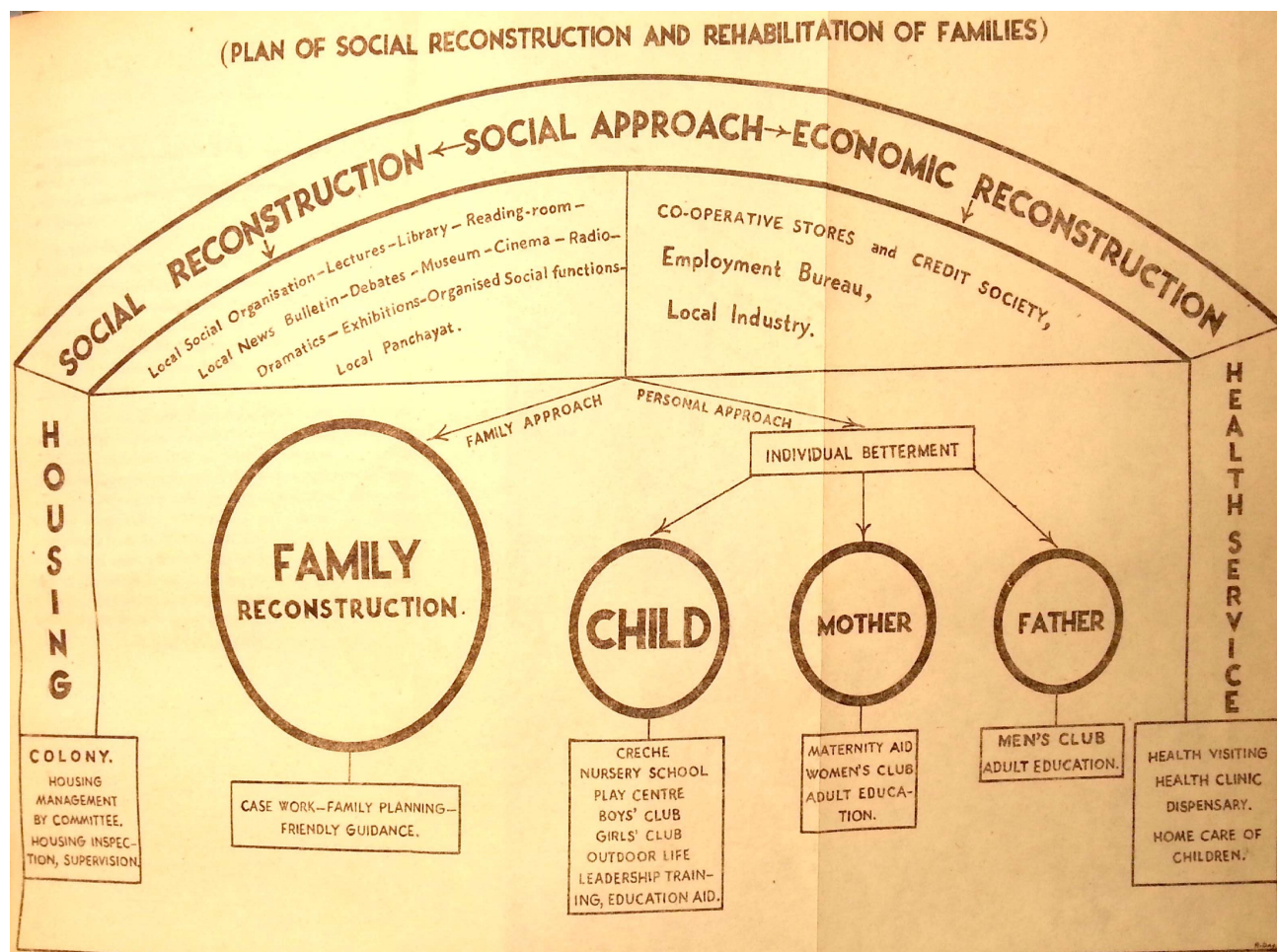


Figure 4.3: *Plan of social reconstruction and rehabilitation of families.* Source: *Labour Bulletin, Cawnpore, Vol. 1, October, 1941, 555.*

More than wages, investment in housing, health, and education came to be seen as bringing long term profits. These means became the ways to settle, discipline, and control labour. Reading rooms, libraries, debating, adult education, industrial education, and workers' club were means through which labour was to be moulded into a human being which was depoliticised, healthy, efficient, loyal, and industrious. Mill managements' co-operative stores, credit societies, grain shops, and temperance clubs offering tea and coffee at reduced rates were means to erode the influence of money-lenders, WCNs' "dadas" (neighbourhood boss), alcohol sellers, and merchant grain dealers over workers. By listening to the grievances of workers and

offering welfare mechanisms to selected set of workers, employers made an effort to weaken the labour movement and influence of forces that were outside their control. I will show at least three ways through which employers tried to gain labour support. First, they began to finance the welfare activities of social reform bodies, including night schools, in order to have influence on the curricula of night schools. Second, they began to collaborate with social reform bodies to bring welfare activities to the site of the factory and effectively train labour according to its needs. They established workmen's institutes at the factory premises to organise labour welfare. Third, employers offered their own housing colonies to workers which allowed a greater control over the industrial labour. It allowed them to socially engineer the working class more effectively.

I

Having a limited vision of educating workers for making them better social beings, the charity-cum-social reform organisations were not shy of taking money from mill owners who had their own interests in financing these schools. For example, the night schools of the Theistic Association and the SSL were constantly funded by mill-capitalists, especially from the early decades of the twentieth century.

By financing these schools, employers were able to penetrate into the workings of these schools—influencing educational policy, making educational content more in line with the factory demands, and limiting the effects of education on workers. One of the primary concerns was to depoliticize workers by controlling their leisure moments and energies which otherwise went into hatching conspiracies against industries.⁵⁸⁹ Dinshaw Manecakji Petit II, the Parsee mill owner, while presiding the 1920 prize distribution ceremony of the Theistic Association's night school annual function in Girgaum reminded the audience:

⁵⁸⁹ *TOI*, January 15, 1883, 3; February 28, 1912, 10.

the working class formed the bulk of the population and if designing and unscrupulous people wished to create disturbances, they often resorted to misleading and inciting the working classes to break into disorder and disturb the peace of the country, but if members of the working classes were not absolutely ignorant and illiterate, but had some training of mind they would refuse to be the tools of others and would never consent to disturb the peace of the city in which they lived.⁵⁹⁰

Employers spoke the language of moralists. They blended concerns of the industry with the larger concerns of the city. In their vision, night schools should not only educate workers, but also impart values of faithfulness, industriousness, and sincerity. Through their money, they were successful in altering the curriculum of these schools.

To give one example, the curriculum of the Theistic Association's night schools consisted of teaching vernaculars, English language, arithmetic, geography, history, grammar, and singing. Teachers gave morals lessons based on the lives of great men and saints like Christ, Shivaji, Akbar, and Tukaram. Values of thrift and self-reliance were cultivated among students by encouraging them to open their accounts in saving-banks.⁵⁹¹ Though the moral pedagogy was part of the larger discourse tied to the notions of civilisation and modernity, in the context of working classes, the moral education was a pressing need. It was to address the problem of workers as a class which was alcoholic, militant, uneducated, dirty, ignorant, extravagant, and ill-mannered. General textbooks of the Education Department such as the *Marathi Reading Series* and the *Royal Series of English Books* were used.⁵⁹² Books and salaries of teachers were paid from charity. For example, books were regularly donated by a Hindoo booksellers.⁵⁹³ However, once mill owners began to support these schools substantially and present themselves in public functions of these school, curriculum of these schools began to be more

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., March 20, 1920, 18.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., February 26, 1923, 9.

⁵⁹² Ibid., January 15, 1883, 3.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., April 23, 1890, 3.

of practical in nature. Focus on the book-learning was reduced. Geography, grammar, and history as course-subjects were abandoned. More practical subjects such as designing and book-keeping were introduced. The officials of the school maintained that the reasons for reorganisations were lack of interests among students. They argued, ‘pupils did not care much to study grammar and geography.’⁵⁹⁴

II

The workmen’s institutes in Bombay emerged as a joint collaboration of mill owners and social reform bodies such as the SLL, and the YMCA. The SSL managed a workmen’s institute in the compounds of the Currimbhoy Mills at Parel. The institute was intended to destabilise the links between workers and trade unions which looked after their concerns. Financed by Fazalbhoy Currimbhoy, the institute was to affect 20000 workers employed in 8 mills under the agency of Sir Currimbhoy and Sons. The institute provided educational, moral, and economic support to workers. The institute helped workers to write their applications relating to the non-payment of wages and other feuds between capital and labour. In early 1919, 100 such applications were written for workers.⁵⁹⁵ A night school, a factory school, and a library reading room were established along with the co-operative societies. In the institute, the temperance clubs gave weekly lecture on living a healthy life. Excursions were organised for workers to relieve them from the boredom of work.

Workers were not shy of taking benefits from the efforts of industrialists. When the gates of the reading room and library at the Currimbhoy Institute were opened on April 1, 1918, workers in large numbers showed up and attended it. For example, in 1919 no less than 26933 mill-workers issued 6 dailies, 10 weeklies, and 10 monthlies which included copies of a Marathi journal *Kamgar Samachar* (Workers’ News, started in 1908). In the first quarter of 1921, 3090

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., March 27, 1885, 3.

⁵⁹⁵ *SSQ*, July 1919, vol. 5, no. 1, 63.

workers read books and newspapers in the reading room. Tired workers were issued 840 books for a more private and intimate reading at home in the night.⁵⁹⁶

For illiterate workers, the institute ran a night school. In 1919, we see that 159 workers attended the night school. Night school at the mill premises after work made the average attendance (128) of worker very high. The mill-management, while giving an impression of offering mobility to aspiring workers, was not simply interested in educating workers, their main interest lay in producing a settled labour force. Lectures on elementary principles of mechanics and the process of spinning and weaving were given to workers along with simple reading and writing courses.⁵⁹⁷ In order to ensure that workers did not lose interest in the school, singing classes twice a week and drawing classes once a week were organised. Tea and coffee, and indoor games were available for workers to relax in between lessons.

Other mills who established workmen's institutes included the group of Tata Mills, David Mills, and Standard Mills under the banner of Messrs. Tata Sons Ltd. Similarly, the Crescent Mills also managed an institute called C. E. W. Institute. The Tata Sons Workmen Institute was established on November 1, 1918 and ran 3 library reading rooms and 3 night schools in three different premises educating 238 workers in the first year. In 1919, 451 workers attended the night school.⁵⁹⁸ In the first quarter of 1919, about 3800 workers consulted the three reading rooms. They issued more than 2000 books for private reading at home in the months of July and August, 1919.⁵⁹⁹ By the last four months of 1921, the readership in the reading room had gone up to 4146.⁶⁰⁰

The workmen's institute became popular outside Bombay as well. Mills such as the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras and the Empress Mills in Nagpur also maintained

⁵⁹⁶ *SSQ*, 1922, vol. VII, no. 3, 187.

⁵⁹⁷ *TOI*, December 13, 1920, 8.

⁵⁹⁸ *SSQ*, July 1919, vol. 5, no. 1, 67.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, October, 1919, vol. V, no. 2, 124.

⁶⁰⁰ *SSQ*, 1922, vol. VII, no. 3, 186.

successful workmen's institute. A picture of the Empress Mill's workmen's institute (Nagpur) gives a sense of how these institute would have looked.

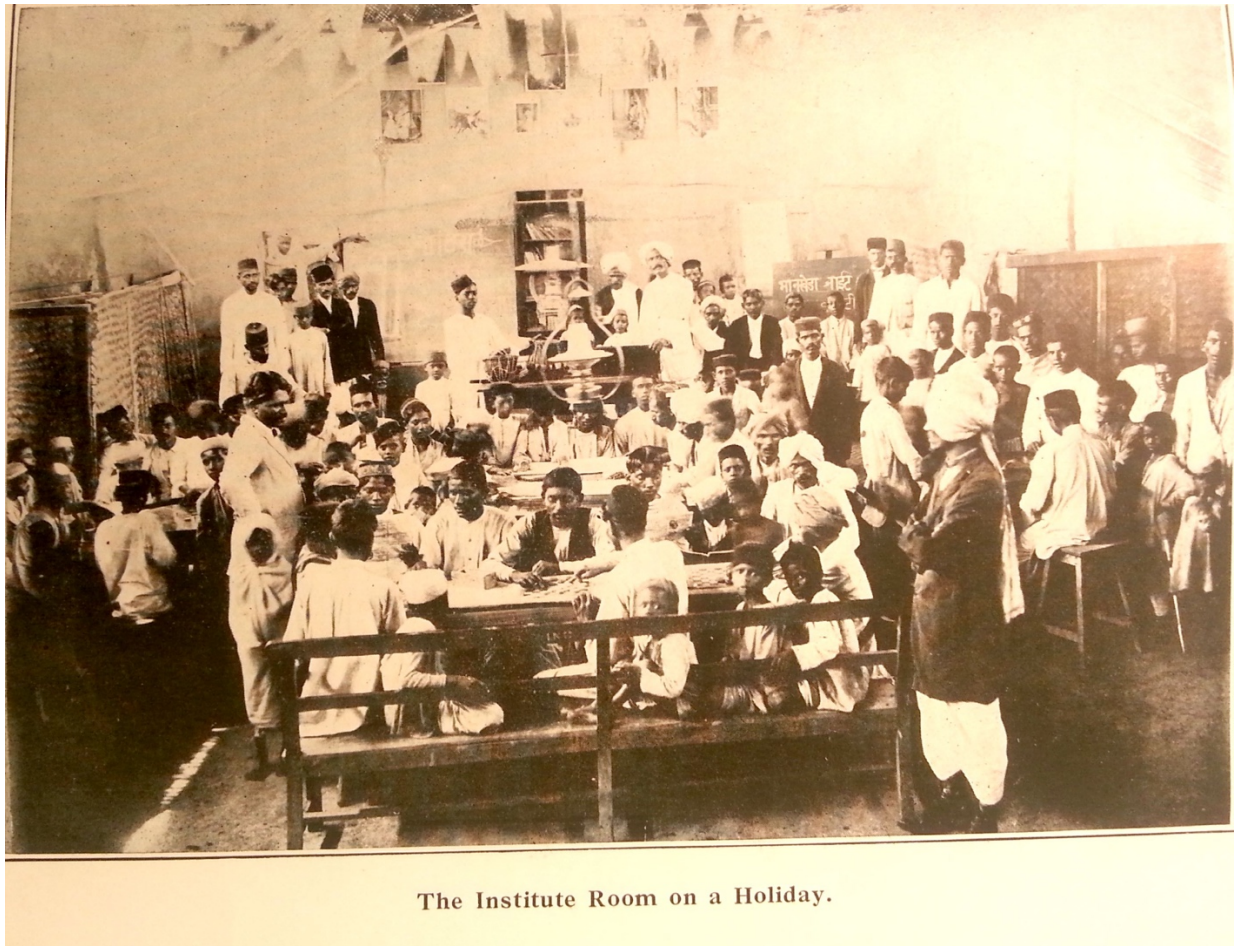


Figure 4.4: *The Workmen's Institute of the Empress Mill, Nagpur.* Source: *A Short History of the "Empress Mills", Nagpur.*

In the picture, we can see well-dressed workers and worker-parents sitting along with their sons and other young workers. In the centre, there is a lamp. They are playing carom (extreme left) and chess (front), reading books and newspapers (front table left side and the middle table group), and playing music instruments, tabla and harmonium (back table). In the room could be also seen a shelf with books (back), a blackboard with 'Bhankhera Night ?' written on it (back), and a few framed photographs on the back walls. It seems that it was a staged image,

produced to give the visual evidence of the mill's welfare centres and show that mill owners were interested in the welfare of workers, and welfare centres were popular among workers and their children. However, problematic these images can be, they indicate about the shifting policy of employers towards managing the leisure moments of working lives.

The fact that employers were generously spending on these institutes (costing as much as Rs. 7000 annually in Bombay) instead of spending the amount on increased wages signify the importance of these institutes in reproducing labour and labour conditions. Alongside investing in these institute, mill owners also adopted other mechanisms of making workers content. For example, the Messrs. Tata Sons Ltd. began a paid maternity leave scheme of 2 months for pregnant working women, a sickness allowance for sick workmen, and an accident compensation of up to Rs. 1000 in the case of an accidental death. The Currimbhoy and Tata Workmen Institutes also established joint committees of workers and management to bring labour and management closer and discuss capital-labour problems together.⁶⁰¹

III

Housing workers in a colony was another mechanism through which workers' free time was regulated for the benefit of industrial capitalism. Housing schemes helped mills to control, discipline, and settle workers. The British India Corporation Ltd. (BIC) in Cawnpore pioneered this. Established in 1920, the BIC amalgamated the business of the Cawnpore Woollen Mills (Lalimli), Cooper Allen & Co., the North West Tannery, the Cawnpore Cotton Mills, and the Empire Engineering Co. Ltd. in Cawnpore and the New Egerton Woollen Mills in Punjab. In Cawnpore, they built two colonies for their factory workers—one in MacRobertganj and the other in Allenganj. The BIC aimed at promoting harmony between labour and capital. Among other things, it offered subsidised houses to workers for accommodation, schools for education, and hospitals and dispensaries for sick workers. Each settlement had a boy's day school (224

⁶⁰¹ *TOI*, December, 30, 1920, 10.

enrolment), a girl's day school (217), and a night school (162) in July 1928. Along with this there was also one Dai's (midwifery) school (54) and one industrial school (55).⁶⁰² To manage affairs, the BIC, like the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras and the Messrs. Begg Sutherland & Co. in Cawnpore, employed a full time missionary as superintendent, 4 doctors, 5 nurses, 8 matrons, 8 compounders, 19 teachers, 2 sergeant patrols, and about a dozen midwives.⁶⁰³

The BIC maintained a newspaper, *Parosi Bat-Chit* (Neighbourly Chat), in Hindi and English, to share information about the mill and activities in the housing settlement. It was primarily a didactic newspaper to educate workers about sanitation, health, discipline, welfare activities, wages, and industrial-capital relation. Priced at 1 anna, the newspaper was intended for workers, the mill management, and the students of the BIC schools including girls. A reading of the *Parosi Bat-Chit* highlights an important aspect, hitherto not discussed in the chapter—the issue of educational propaganda that a few mill owners carried among workers. To assume that all workers were interested in education would be wrong. Articles in the newspaper inform us that a lot of workers had to be persuaded to send their children, especially daughters, to schools. One such article titled ‘Am Ke Am Aur Guthliyon Ke Dam’ (Enjoy free mangoes and sell the seeds, i.e. Education is free and profitable) instructed workers about the value of education. It informed readers that free schools of the BIC distributed books, slates, pencils, pens, books, and paper. In addition to that, soap and oil was offered to students to make them learn habits of cleanliness. The essay alleged that despite all these facilities, working-mothers ask, ‘What is the use of sending the girls to the school to learn? They cannot work in the offices?’ The author complained that it was narrow-minded thinking. He then described the various benefits of having educated daughters, wives, and mothers. The propagandist claims,

⁶⁰² *The Welfare Works of the British India Corporation, Ltd.*, 1928. IOR/MSS EUR F 221/15.

⁶⁰³ Saxena, *Wages and Labour Conditions in Cawnpore*, 103.

‘Educated girls do not so easily fall into the same useless habits of gossip and superstitious fears as do the uneducated girls, for they spend their time in reading good books and papers and in improving themselves.’ And, ‘A home is best built by a woman.’ Some of these moral lessons were part of a wider propaganda on educating women, but we see that these specific messages for workers were framed in ways that catered to the specific needs of working classes.

For example, the author illustrates his points by sharing the story of an ignorant wife of a worker who had gone to the city to earn money. The need arose for the correspondence, and while the male knew to read and write, the wife relied on a close friend to write for her. On one such occasion, the friend was not available and a letter containing secret information had come. The woman, now having no one to read her letters, asked a stranger to read it by paying 1 rupee on condition that he blocked his ears by putting cotton. The man happily read the letter and took money. Later, he began to blackmail the husband by threatening to reveal the private information if he did not pay him a further amount. Without an option, the husband paid for the ignorance and illiteracy of her wife. The propagandist appealed to workers that such cannot be your excuse as ‘the B.I.C. has made it possible for all your children to attend the settlement schools free of all cost...encourage your children and especially your daughters to get a good education.’⁶⁰⁴ Employers placed education among workers in a way that reflected workers’ concerns and their everyday needs within the overarching framework of transforming workers’ subjectivities.⁶⁰⁵

Though structured by the overarching needs of factory labour, workers in these settlements made the most of education. None of these educational institutions were failures. In the daily registers kept to record the participation of workers, we see that workers invested heavily in education. Figure 4.5 shows one such day-to-day record of the activities at the Allenganj

⁶⁰⁴ *Parosi Bat-Chit*, April, 1929, vol. 3, no. 4, 4.

⁶⁰⁵ In a forthcoming article, I show how letter and petition writing had become a very important activity of the industrial working class in the twentieth century.

settlement. In the registers of both Allenganj and MacRobertganj, tables, 9 and 10, were devoted to registering the attendance at day and night schools and at reading rooms. In the record, we see a peculiar trend in the attendance of the night school. While the average attendance was 42, each Saturday the attendance dropped below 50 per cent—from 48 on Friday to 17 on Saturday in the first week, from 50 to 19 in the second week, from 50 on Wednesday to 19 on Saturday in the third week. Reasons for the drop were not given, but can be guessed. Workers probably got busy in other aspects of their lives—visiting friends, going to cinemas, and spending time with family.

Daily Record of activities in Allenganj Settlement for the month
Single without Verandah 74, Single with Verandah 74, Double 74,

Date and Month	Births		Deaths		Removal		Arrival		Present Population	Schaubica	Medical		Sectors		Educational		Recreational							
	Residents	Visitors	Residents	Visitors	Party No.	No. of persons	Party No.	Number of persons			Made Sick	Prescribed	For men	For women	Boys School	Girls School	High School	Library	Reading	Amusement	Foot Ball	Cricket	Table Tennis	Badminton
1	3							3139	14805	12														
2								3139	14805	12														
3			1					3138	14795	12									15					25
4						1/2	4	3144	20805	12														36
5								3144	16696	12														
6								3144	16806	12									10					46.250
7								3144	18786	12									27					
8								3144	Sunday															
9	1							3145	14736	12														
10			1					3144	10916											36				
11	2		1					3145	16486	12									20					35
12								3145	18566	12									15					
13	1							3146	17456	12									10					20
14	1							3147	17846	12														
15			1					3146	Sunday															30
16								3146	16506	10										11				25
17								3146	14656	12									10					10
18			1					3145	17606	8														50
19								3145	11676	10														
20								3145	17566															
21		2						3143	13616	10										15				19
22								3143	Sunday															35
23								3143	15425	10														
24								3143	12135	12														
25								3143	Xmas Day															
26								3143	15405	12														
27	1							3144	11387															
28								3144	13427											15				2
29								3144	Sunday											15				
30		1						3143	10417	10														
31		1						3142	8507															15

Christmas Holidays

Figure 4.5: Everyday statistical records of the Allenganj settlement for the month of December 1929. Source: Correspondence and papers relating to the British India Corporation, MSS Eur F 221.

Beyond these walled settlements of workers, we know very little about the reading and schooling patterns of the 80,000 labouring population living in the crowded, ill-ventilated, and insanitary mud hatahs which numbered about 166 in 1929-30. They lived in worker bastis such

as Gwaltoli, Khalasi Lines, Raipurwa, Colonelganj, and Begumganj.⁶⁰⁶ Very little scope for education, except for the limited low cost municipal schools, the SPG mission industrial schools, and the Harijan Sanghs' (Dalit) schools, existed for workers.

By the II WW, we see a shift in the organisation of the industrial working class welfare. Along with a few social reform bodies, the colonial state through provincial governments intervened on a large scale in the leisure hours of workers. The war required that industries produced goods which consequently required a peaceful relationship with workers amid the growing tides of nationalism and communism. For example, the BIC alone supplied goods over Rs. 4 crores and about 90 per cent of it went for the defence purpose in the first 5 years of the war.⁶⁰⁷ The state began to regulate the relationship between labour and capital by establishing labour departments, appointing labour ministers, passing labour laws, and organising welfare activities. Its examples could be seen both in Cawnpore and in Bombay.

For example, in Cawnpore, labour mohalla libraries were established in post-1937 period as part of the local governments' initiative to rework the industrial-capital relationship which had become increasingly tense since the late 1920s. The state established welfare centre in WCNs. Libraries and reading rooms were established in Chamanganj, Deputy-ka-Parao, Gwaltoli, Jarib-ki-Chowki, Juhi, Babupurva, Colonelganj, Darshanpurva, Generalganj, Gilisbazar, and Ranjitpurwa for workers' benefit. These efforts to educate workers were driven by a different concern than the one started in the 1920s by the state where there were limited efforts to expand education as part of the Compulsory Education Act into various wards where workers also lived.

The government officials argued that these non-work activities would help to relieve workers from the boredom of work. It would refresh them. These centres also installed radios

⁶⁰⁶ See, Joshi, *Lost Worlds*, 121–23.

⁶⁰⁷ *The BIC Ltd.: Twenty-Five years of Progress*, MSS Eur F 221/46.

and loudspeaker for playing music, broadcasting news, and sharing information on the war. In 1939, the following plays in Hindustani were broadcasted from the Lucknow centre which were probably also listened to by the Cawnpore audience: *Hamsai ki Billi*, *Jhoota Khawab*, *Mir Sahab ki Id*, *Papi Nainan*, *Qartaba ka Qazi*, *Ao Kahani Likhen*, and *Samjhauta*.⁶⁰⁸ The centres also kept gramophones for playing classical music. Music was seen as relieving strained and overworked workers. A 1920s picture of a YMCA welfare centre in Bombay shows a teacher cultivating a taste for music among working class children through a gramophone. The YMCA reports mentioned that all its centres had a gramophone and records by Indian artists which were played for workers and their children.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁸ *Report on the Progress of Broadcasting in India*, 1940, 33.

⁶⁰⁹ *RCL*, vol. I, part 1, Bombay Presidency (Written Evidence), 42.



THE ELEMENTARY CLASS FOR YOUNG WORKERS.

[Photos: Y.M.C.A.]

Figure 4.6: *The YMCA school.* Source: *Rutnagur, Bombay Industries*, 516.

We see that employers had pre-calculated their educational efforts which allowed mobility to a few aspiring and intelligent workers but contained the majority workers in their places through a controlled educational mechanism and other strategies such as low wages, housing, and recreational activities. For instance, the Allen Cooper Ltd. and the Cawnpore Cotton Mills, which both maintained their own night schools, along with the BIC, trained the most intelligent and aspiring workers to become stenographers or typists in the factories.⁶¹⁰ However, the way workers used literary skills in their lives and for their lives went beyond the control of capitalists.

⁶¹⁰ *The BIC Ltd.: Twenty-Five years of Progress*, 32, MSS Eur F 221/46.

Worker-Readers and Worker Libraries

In this section, I will discuss how factory workers used education in their daily lives. By tracing a network of night libraries and reading rooms in WCNs, I will show that how workers developed a literary culture around their neighbourhoods. I will analyse visions of these libraries, the books circulated, and their readership and then link it to my overall concern with describing how nights and neighbourhoods were central in workers' mobility and in their aspirations to live as more than just workers. Questions like, what were workers reading, how much did they read, and how did they use their skills of literacy, are answered.

My first encounter with the reading culture of workers was through the reports of the SSL's travelling libraries in the Bombay City. The SSL had about 70 travelling libraries with 5000 books in 1912-13. Each travelling library, consisting of 50 books, was circulated in over 104 centres located in WCNs. Each library box was given to a worker-volunteer residing in a chawl. He or she was called a librarian and the job included issuing books to residents, safely recovering books, and the propaganda work of pursuing workers to read more. The librarian was either a worker or a student/teacher of the League's night school. At each library centre, a new box was brought after 2 or 3 months and the existing box was further circulated to another centre.⁶¹¹ Out of 88 centres for which statistics are available for the first year (1912-13) of the library project, it was found that 63 centres used only 1 box each, 15 used 2 each, 8 used 3 each, and 3 used 4 each.

Started in 1912, the library project of the SSL was an efficient system with a clear objective of developing a reading taste among the working people of Bombay including the 'depressed classes' — classes who otherwise were excluded from normal libraries. In one such case, a low caste reader of a library in Satara (157 miles away from Bombay) was thrown out of a library

⁶¹¹ *TOI*, August 14, 1912, 8.

by a conservative librarian.⁶¹² In the SSL, low caste and Dalit workers were made librarians of the centre to promote readership among their communities. The League designed its libraries for 3 types of audiences— “the middle and low caste females”, “the depressed classes”, and “the backward classes”. Factory workers, cutting across these target audiences, were their main subject of attention.⁶¹³

Readership in these travelling libraries was huge. Between July 1912 to July 1913, at least 2765 “low and middle caste” workers (1462 Deccani and 1303 Gujarati reading) borrowed 10209 (6210 Marathi and 3999 Gujarati) books. About 455 women (180 Deccani and 274 Gujarati) from the poorer neighbourhoods lent 1425 books (698 Marathi and 727 Gujarati). And about 663 Dalits loaned 1900 texts.⁶¹⁴ Worker-librarians sent reports complaining of the shortage of books, demanding more books, and praising the huge readership. They reported that workers already had a reading taste, and did not require to be persuaded to borrow books. Workers’ one room houses, crowded with humans, were generally without bookshelves but with travelling libraries they could now possess books for months. By 1915, the number of libraries was increased to 105 (57 Marathi and 48 Gujarati) and the number of issuing centres to 161 (83 Marathi and 78 Gujarati). There were more centres now than the travelling boxes which meant boxes had to be circulated faster to meet the demand. On an average, each library-box was sent to more than two centres during the year. Out of these 161 centres, 27 centres were handled by female librarians, 20 by Dalits, 3 by “the Poor Parsees”, and the rest by the “backward classes”. The total number of readers at all the centres had gone up to 7480 (2817 Marathi and 4663 Gujarati) in the second and the third year of the project. Readers included 1,832 women (459 Marathi and 1473 Gujarati) and 699 Dalits (256 Marathi and 443 Gujarati).⁶¹⁵

⁶¹² Ibid., August 27, 1915, 9.

⁶¹³ Ibid., Oct 27, 1914, 3.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., July 30, 1913, 4.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., Sept, 10, 1915, 8.

The above numbers allow us to make two analytical points. One, the intended audience of the League's travelling libraries was the poor Marathi and Gujarati speaking worker and among them, Marathi workers were the more voracious readers. The Hindustani speaking pardesis/purabias from the North, were left out initially from the scheme. The worker-librarian Mandaule raised this point in February 1913 librarian meeting suggesting that 'few libraries of Hindi books [were needed] in the chawls occupied by Purbhaya people.'⁶¹⁶ Perhaps, pardesis living in his chawl had asked him to get Urdu/Nagari books.

Second is the issue of female and Dalit participation in the reading culture. There was an increase of female readership from 445 in 1913 to 1,832 in 1914-15. The presence of such a large number of 'literate women' among the lower strata of society is intriguing. How they were educating themselves and where they had received their education is not clear. It is possible that a lot of illiterate working-mothers issued books for their school-going sons and daughters or had learnt to read at home along with their school going children. To promote reading culture among working women, one library was always kept at the sewing class of the Mahila Mandal, Parel and at the Nowraji Wadia Lying-in Hospital.⁶¹⁷ Another thing to notice is the high number of females reading Gujarati texts compared to Marathi texts. The same could be said about the depressed classes with less emphasis. However, the pattern is no longer valid when it comes to the number of male readers. Does that mean Gujarati-speaking people were more open to the education of females as well as of Dalits compared to Marathi people? The SSL reports are silent on the issue. Gujarat was certainly the most educationally advanced region in the Bombay Presidency after Baroda at this time which probably explains the presence of a large number of readers.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 20 Feb, 1913, 10.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 2 May, 1924, 5.

⁶¹⁸ *Report on the Question of the Introduction of Free and Compulsory Primary Education into the Bombay Presidency, 1922*, 12.

In terms of occupation, we notice that, like night schools, workers were not alone in taking benefits from the circulating libraries, they were accompanied by nurses, postmen, peons, clerks, soldiers, city artisans, and school students living in the same chawls. For example, when the war broke out, injured soldiers housed in the Lady Harding War Hospital also passed their time by reading books from circulating libraries. An SSL librarian was sent daily to the hospital in 1916 to meet the demand. Wounded soldiers read no less than 250 books (148 Hindi, 54 Marathi, and 50 Urdu).⁶¹⁹ To meet the demand of Urdu and Hindi speaking soldiers, the SSL acquired new sets of Hindi and Urdu books.

Workers had developed a strong literary culture which helped them to organize collective action and imagine new careers. Libraries were important because they allowed workers to hold a book for a while. In fact, workers often kept library books with them. They carried them while travelling to their homes. Librarian Mandaule reported about difficulties in ‘recovering books from some of the mill-hands on account of their abruptly leaving Bombay.’⁶²⁰ In the first year, 105 books were lost. In a July 1913 librarians’ meeting, it was decided to not lend books to people living far from the lending centre.⁶²¹

Enough readership existed among workers to start “standing/fix libraries” in WCNs by the 1920s. Besides, the presence of the SSL had become much more systematic in WCNs through welfare centres. The idea behind these centres was to give social workers a chance to ‘live with the poor, see their life at close quarters, try to help them in their difficulties and raise their standard of life.’⁶²² The League social-worker wrote letters and petitions for workers on the subjects of house-rent, wages, absence from work, and water-supply complaint to the municipality. In the last quarter of 1921, 33 applications and 17 letters were written at the Parel

⁶¹⁹ *TOI*, Jan 31, 1916, 5.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 Feb, 1913, 10.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, July 30, 1913, 4.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, January 21, 1918, 8.

centre.⁶²³ These welfare centres were also spaces of intellectual interaction among workers. To illustrate this point, I will discuss the night life around the Madanpura, Parel, and Tardeo welfare centres—each catering to different types of workers.

In Madanpura, the SSL centre was located at the Ghelabhoy Street where weavers from north India lived and worked in large numbers as handloom weavers and mill-workers. One Urdu library was established in November 1918 with 87 books, 2 Urdu weeklies, and 1 English monthly. Usually, males of the neighbourhood would come and read newspapers, issue books, and discuss various subjects. For the Gosha (veiled) Muslim women, the centre ran 4 circulating libraries in the neighbourhood.⁶²⁴ The Urdu library was a long felt need among Muslim weavers. On an average, 16 readers attended the reading room daily in June 1919. In the last quarter of 1920, 1101 readers attended the library and they borrowed 78 books.⁶²⁵ By 1920, the library housed 700 books in Urdu and Gujarati besides newspapers and magazines. The demand for newspapers was so huge that next year, 10 Urdu dailies, 3 Urdu bi-weeklies and 2 weeklies, 2 English dailies, 6 weeklies, 3 monthlies and 3 quarterlies, 3 Gujarati monthlies, and 1 Marathi monthly journal '*Samaj Sevak*' were subscribed suggesting an increase in linguistically varied readership of the library.⁶²⁶

Mill-workers, railway artisans, milkmen, vegetable sellers, hawkers, and domestic servants living in Parel showed a similar intellectual vibrancy. The League's Parel library for poor denizens was started in 1916 at Chinchpokali. In the last quarter of 1921, 3810 readers were registered who borrowed books 1110 times.⁶²⁷ The number of readers was increased to 14152 and of borrowed items to 2274 in 1926.⁶²⁸

⁶²³ *SSQ*, 1922, vol. VII, no. 3, 185.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, no. 1, 44-45.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, January 1921, vol. VI, no. 3, 170.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1922, vol. VII, no. 3, 185.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1922, vol. VII, no. 3, 186.

⁶²⁸ *TOI*, April 4, 1927, 13.

In Taradeo area, the SSL established a Depressed Class library for Dalit residents. The readership was huge. In the first quarter of 1919, about 1473 readers visited the reading room and 98 members issued books. In the last quarter of 1919, the numbers were 2500 and 225 respectively.⁶²⁹ Given high desires for reading among the “untouchable” sections, exclusive libraries for Dalits were also established in the neighbourhoods of Purbhadevi, Byculla, and Valpakhadi. The library in Byculla, located in the Ripon House at Bellasis Road, housed 300 books and was open between 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and between 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.⁶³⁰

Even considering that the SSL reports had a tendency to inflate the percentage of readers who attended their libraries, we can safely say that by the second decade of the twentieth century, the working class as a whole was not illiterate. In 1940, the average literacy rates among workers was 29.7 per cent which got increased to 42.5 per cent in 1955.⁶³¹ In the same period, the average female literacy had increased from 2.9 per cent to 5.9 per cent. Social reform bodies had played a significant role in this increased literacy. Besides, traditions of workers educating each other which took root in the time of Bhiwaji Nare continued to survive in the twentieth century. Morris D. Morris writes, ‘By comparison with five years ago, I have been struck by the number, of workers I have seen in the mill areas sitting on the pavements teaching others to read.’⁶³² Workers filtrated the knowledge of printed texts among those who could not read. The public readings of books, pamphlets, and newspapers was a common phenomenon among workers seeking information. Illiterates would participate in large numbers in the public book readings of the SSL. For example, in 1913, at least 2,553 workers attended 131 public readings of books at 20 centres.⁶³³ These lectures-cum-book readings were

⁶²⁹ *SSQ*, January 1920, vol. V, no.3, 194; *SSQ*, July 1919, vol. V, no. 1, 63.

⁶³⁰ *SSQ*, April 1919, 199.

⁶³¹ Morris, “New Data on Cotton Mill Workers of Bombay”, 1226.

⁶³² *Ibid.*

⁶³³ *TOI*, July 30, 1913, 4.

organised in nights, on Sundays, and on other public holidays. In 1915-16, over 272 public readings were organized which 3,379 illiterates attended.

Such an exuberance for public reading among weavers, Dalits, and other working people requires explanation. I argue that there was an explicit link between the widespread reading culture and night schools. For example, there were at least 8 Urdu schools in various crowded neighbourhoods of Madanpura such as in Teli Mohalla, Ghogari Mohalla, New Nagpada, Moreland Road, and Tank Bunder.⁶³⁴ Madanpura weavers valued education. When 3 seats in the Bombay Legislative Council were allocated for labour candidates, Madanpura Muslim weavers and mill-workers unanimously agreed for one Syed Munavvar who possessed a BA degree.⁶³⁵ Besides, there are direct evidence suggesting close links. Dalit-worker-librarian Kooka Galla requested to the League that a night school should be established in his neighbourhood to increase the levels of literacy.⁶³⁶ This link between night schools and high attendance in the WCNs night libraries can also be noticed in Cawnpore during the 1940s.

The *Labour Bulletin* of the United Provinces noted the high attendance of workers in the reading rooms of labour mohalla's libraries. For example, the total number of readers in the Labour Department's libraries in the United Provinces (Cawnpore, Firozabad, Hathras, and Lucknow) was 268,111 of which 70.87 per cent (190037 readers) attendance belonged to Cawnpore. The huge number of literate workers in Cawnpore reflects a thriving intellectual culture which existed among workers. In 1944, the number of working class readers in Cawnpore was 245260 and of the whole U.P. was 444,069. By 1944, new centres such as Agra, Allahabad, Bareilly, Mirzapur, Meerut, and Shahrampur had been added to the existing ones which partially explain the large number of readers outside Cawnpore in 1944. Even then the proportion of the Cawnpore worker-reader amounted to more than 52 per cent (Table no. 4.1).

⁶³⁴ *SSQ*, July 1919, vol. 5, no. 1, 65.

⁶³⁵ *TOI*, November 29, 1926, 13.

⁶³⁶ *TOI*, 20 February, 1913, 10.

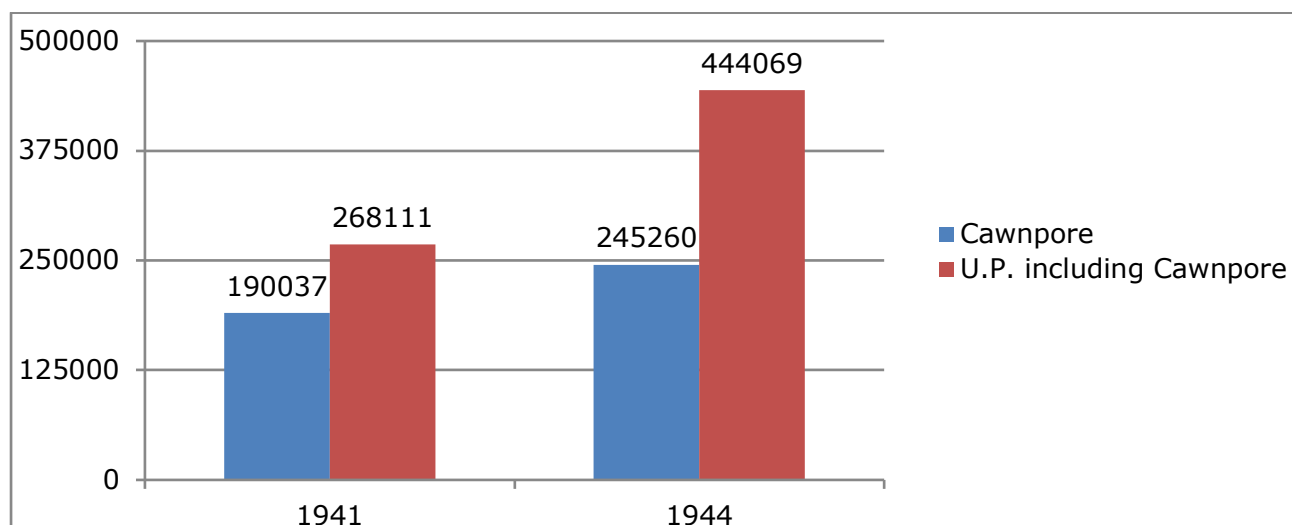


Table 4.1: *Readership in the Labour Mohalla Libraries of Cawnpore and U.P.* Source: *Compiled from the various reports of the Labour Bulletin.*

We also get monthly figures of readers attending reading rooms, library members issuing numbers of books, and illiterates listening to public book-reading. From the data, we see that the borrowing of books was again a strong culture among Kanpuria workers. In 1944, a total of 17323 books were borrowed from the labour mohalla libraries of Cawnpore. Besides, the interest of illiterates in printed texts, like in Bombay, was equally fascinating. For example, in 1944, 21989 illiterates attended public book readings organised by the different centres. For the year 1941, complete figures of reader attendance from all the labour mohalla libraries are available which I calculated. I tried to contrast these figures with the figures of 1904 available for 5 neighbourhoods (Table no. 4.2).⁶³⁷

⁶³⁷ Figures for the first ten months (January to October 1940) were given as monthly averages which I re-calculated to get the approximate monthly attendance.

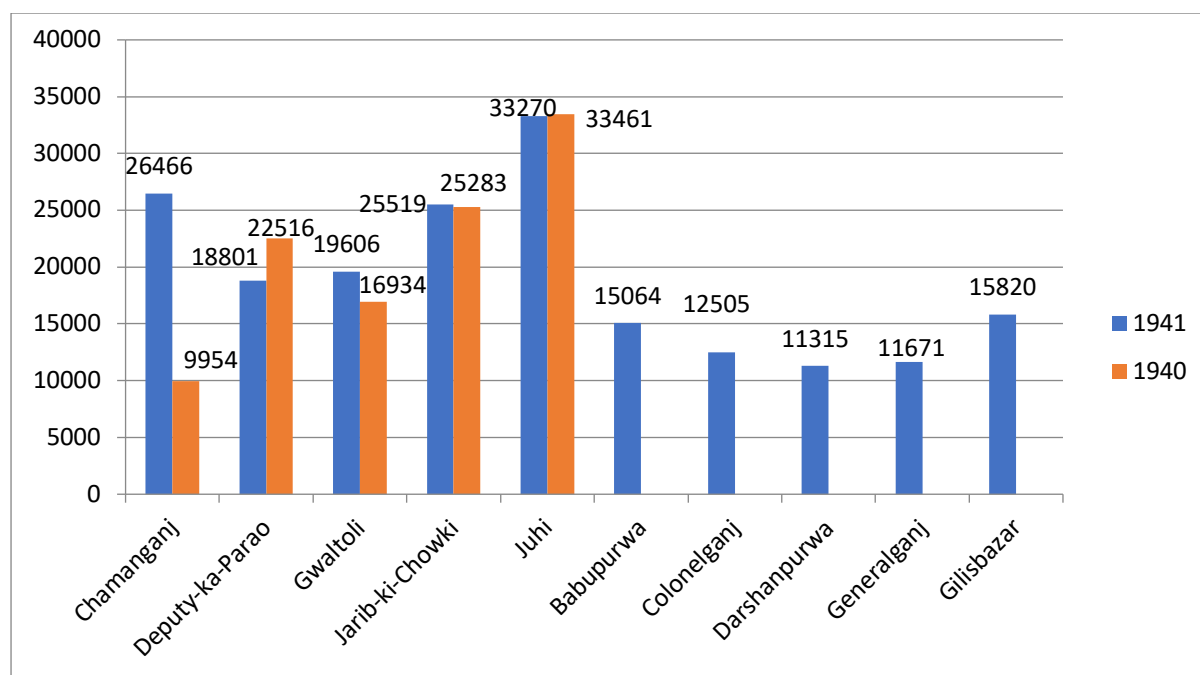


Table 4.2: *Readership in the WCNs of Cawnpore*. Source: *Compiled from the Labour Bulletin Reports*.

From this limited but hitherto unexplored data, we can make two analytical points. First, attendance in all the neighbourhoods kept fluctuating. Attendance at the Juhi and Jarib-ki-Chowki centres was higher than at the other centres. Second, the number of readers at the first five centres was stable except for the Chamanganj. Reasons for which are difficult to guess. It could be that more and more workers were mobilised to attend the reading room or figures were not calculated properly for the previous year. Whatever would have been the case, the number of literate workers in the neighbourhood was growing rapidly. For example, at Chamanganj, 313 students attended the night school in the beginning of 1941 and this number was increased to 425 by the end of the year. Similarly, at the night school in Juhi, at least 666 workers attended night classes in December 1940. The average monthly attendance was noted to be 710 in 1940. In the same period, it was 167 at the Gwaltoli night school.⁶³⁸ This stark

⁶³⁸ *LB*, Vol. I, January, 1941, 44–45.

difference in the attendance at night schools in Juhi and Gwaltoli corresponds to the difference in attendance at the reading rooms of the two centres.

We see that workers used their literary skills and knowledge in ways that were not just restricted to the imagining of new careers. They used education to know things from books, to understand events happening around them, and to subvert their image as illiterates. A 1944 labour welfare report from Cawnpore mentions that a lot of workers in these reading rooms could be ‘seen scanning the news of the war or awaiting to hear from their more literate fellow-men as to what is happening in the various theatres of war.’⁶³⁹

What was it in these libraries that workers were so interested in reading at the expense of their sleep? It is clear that workers were reading all sorts of material offered by these libraries. This material was in line with the SSL’s larger objective of producing a civic public—one which was not militant, unruly, and anti-social and spent leisure time in reading a particular type of literature. An early report of these libraries mentioned that each travelling library contained books on biography, history, religion, mythology, travel, sanitation, hygiene, essays, etc.⁶⁴⁰ Books for circulation were decided under the gaze of the library committee. Anything considered obscene, romantic or sex manuals was set aside. More than 50 per cent of the SSL’s book collection came in the form of donations from the wealthy classes. Out of 3000 books in 1913, 2000 were donations and the rest were bought from book-sellers.⁶⁴¹ Those who gave books included professors, wealthy Parsis, and other city elites. For example, in 1915 one R. B. Lotewala gave his 97 books and a Gujarati sympathiser offered 20 books.⁶⁴² In a way workers had access to texts what social elites of that time were reading on philosophy, religion, science, arithmetic, history, nation, and astronomy. The library at the League’s head office was exclusively consisted of books on social and labour problems, numbering in all about 1415

⁶³⁹ *LB*, vol. III, March 1942, 122.

⁶⁴⁰ *TOI*, October 9, 1912, 7.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, July 30, 1913, 4.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, February 4, 1915, 5.

books, 1850 pamphlets and 80 periodicals.⁶⁴³ We also get fragmentary evidence revealing that the Marathi journal ‘*Samaj Sevak*’ was popular among the Marathi-knowing weavers of Madanpura.⁶⁴⁴ In his private enquiry at the Tata Mills night school, Burnett-Hurst found that mill-workers loved reading the novels of Hari Narayan Apte and religious texts such as Ramayan, Mahabharat, and Tukaram’s preaching.⁶⁴⁵

Reading among workers was by no means limited to the books of the SSL’s libraries. Workers accessed printed writings from their unions, bookshops, and schools. Panchanamas (inquests) of the houses of workers related to the Meerut Conspiracy Case shows that worker-leaders possessed varieties of texts. In the house of one Appajirao Narayenrao in Girgaum, a member of the Worker’s and Peasant’s Party (WPP), the following reading material was found: *Deshtyagacha Itihas* (borrowed from the Nityanand Library), and *Ireland ka Swantantrya Yuddha* in Marathi and *Awakening of Asia* in English.⁶⁴⁶ From the room of A. A. Alwe in the Shivram Angri’s Chawl, the following material was seized: copies of Kranti newspapers, *Lahan Mulacha Maharssht* (Marathi), *G. Ward District Congress Committee Report*, a Marathi note-book, and *English Khadi Patrika*.⁶⁴⁷ Also found was a manuscript article supposedly written by Alwe in Marathi with the title ‘*Capitalism has Flourished but the Workers had Continued to Starve*’. At Kastle’s place in the Development Chawl (No. 24 and Room no. 17) at the Deleslie Road Police Station, the following material was found: a diary, handbills, pamphlets in Marathi called *Girni Kamgar Union* in his black coat, various hand-written letters, song booklets of the GKU, books titled *Principle and Policy*, *Political Resolution*, *Karmanook* (Marathi), booklets of the Bombay Taxi Union Drivers (probably belonging to his

⁶⁴³ Ibid., October 13, 1925, 7.

⁶⁴⁴ *SSQ*, 1922, vol. II, no. 3, 185.

⁶⁴⁵ Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing in Bombay*, 115–16.

⁶⁴⁶ P. 1283, *MCC GIPE-245042*, 73–74.

⁶⁴⁷ *MCC GIPE-023787*, 79–81

son who was a taxi driver), notice to the workers of the Bomanji Petit Mills, and finally the most important thing a Juventa portable typewriter.⁶⁴⁸

We see that worker-intellectuals read various types of material—from communist to nationalist literature, from sophisticated and philosophical texts to everyday meeting notes and leaflets, and from history books to fiction. In the oral evidence of many workers during the trial, one comes to know about many short-lived newspapers that were circulated among workers. Other than the *Kranti* (in Marathi) and the *Kirti* (Urdu), the mouthpiece of the Bombay WPP, we also hear about *Pyam-i-Majdoor* (started in 1929) and *Mazdoor* (started in July 1927) in Urdu, *Mazoor Bandhu*, *Nawkal*, and *Kaiwari* in Marathi, and *Swadhin Bharat* in in Hindi.⁶⁴⁹ Mirajkar, the labour leader, in a workers' meeting in the open ground of Dadar Railway Station is seen persuading workers to read the party mouth-piece *Kranti* against the cheaply available *Lokshahi* to get the right information about labour movement. Degrading *Lokshahi*, he says, “In it one Narayan Rao Kulkarni suggests that the mills should be opened after coconut day and men would resume work. But I tell him that he should do his Kulkarniship in his village and not in Bombay. God knows, what ass had told him so.”⁶⁵⁰

Workers had mastered the art of collective reading both in public spaces and in their homes. Collective reading of religious and political books was a common thing among mill-workers even in the early decades of factory life. By the twentieth century, though it had become institutionalised through welfare centres, workers continued to hold their own collective readings. Tailor Shivaji Divte recollected that in his gala (a tenement measuring 10 by 12 feet for workers living) mill-workers woke up at 5 a.m. and read Dnyaneshwari (verses written by the Saint Dyaneshwar, a popular Bhakti poet) between 5.30 - 6 a.m., before going to work.⁶⁵¹ Family enquiries by a Bombay PhD student into the house of Bombay Dalit workers revealed

⁶⁴⁸ MCC GIPE-023797, 26.

⁶⁴⁹ *The Bombay Textile Labour Union, Second Annual Report*, 1928, 21.

⁶⁵⁰ P. 1716, MCC GIPE-023793, 21.

⁶⁵¹ Adarkar and Menon, *One Hundred Years One Hundred Voices*, 96.

that they spent a lot of time reading religious books. For example, Marathi speaking Dalits organised Puran (pothi) reading at their homes in the month of Shravan. It was a collective reading and one puran took a week to finish followed by a dinner. Out of 985 families, 228 families spent Rs. 2465.5 on this occasion. Texts such as *Shani Mahatmya Pothi* were read. Among the Gujarati speaking Dalits, bhajan reading was popular.⁶⁵²

The ability to read newspapers and write letters and petitions brought social prestige in an age where the majority were illiterates and gave them a moral authority over other yet illiterate workers. When workers became leaders, mobilisers, strike-organisers, and writers of pamphlets, revolutionary songs, and leaflets, they drew from their experiences of education. G. R. Kadam, a Bombay mill-worker and secretary of the GKU's Sewri centre, had attended a school till 6th standard and knew to read and write Marathi.⁶⁵³ As refereed in the earlier chapter, labour unions and movements were quick to seize the most literate workers, these workers organised workers meeting in the mill, conveyed messages to the union, wrote minutes of the meetings, wrote handbills, and distributed pamphlets.

A few also used their skills to become poets, read literature, and write their own prose. The wretched conditions of mill-life produced worker-poets who used their nights to give a rhythmic narrative to their experiences. Mirajkar, a labour leader, announces proudly in one of the 1928 worker meetings in open ground at Lalbeg:

our labourers are not just mere speakers but they are becoming poets. This is the 2nd good thing in labour movement. It is an easy way to express our thoughts by means of poems. At the time of Shivaji there were also poets. They including Goudhalis used to make an awakening amongst the people by means of their poems, and ballads. You also know men who sing "Powdas". The same sort of people are amongst us now . . .⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵² Pradhan, *Untouchable Workers of Bombay City*, 102–3, 127–30.

⁶⁵³ D. W. 26, *MCC GIPE-023798*, 35.

⁶⁵⁴ P. 1714, *MCC GIPE-023793*, 11–12

Listen to the two self-educated working class poets, Gangaram and Jayaram Pandu Devag, whose poem (Girni Phataka) on the 1928 General Strike became popular among workers and sold for half an anna.

I

In shake 1850 [sic] the misfortunes of the workers turned up, there was great prosperity and so capitalists [sic] grew fat. They take away what belong [sic] to us and do not give us sufficient food to eat. They look at our sufferings in a merciless manner.

Even their heart does not melt, their intellect is very dull; they think of breaking the spirit of the workers. God could not tolerate this and he was put in a difficult situation. He took the tenth incarnation and declared the Great War.

II

Just as a mighty struggle was waged between the Kauravas and the Pandavas in the Dwapar age in the same manner the workers fought in a terrible manner with the capitalists in Bombay.

The capitalist thought of effecting a cut in the wages of workers, the workers heard this and how did they denounce it?

When workers heard the news they were greatly enraged (and said) what a curious hard justice is this that they take away what belongs to us and do not give it back.

God can be easily conciliated on the strength of organization, our lives would be (spent) in vain if we do not take revenge upon the capitalists.

The workers began to say: let us unite and declare a general strike; the workers are being insulted and our stomachs are now being really pinched.

The heroes of the mills came out and laid a siege of the city of Bombay; an assemblage was formed and the sea of the army was filled in a furious manner at that time.

An army (consisting) of a lakh and a half is marching (forward) to swallow capitalism; only the old men and children were left out, the youths rushed [sic] filled with heroic sentiments.

The mill workers with their banners, their heroic followers of Alve, (and those of) Joglekar and Mirajkar vie with one another.

The sword of Mirajkar does not rest satisfied in its scabbard, that of Dange is really electricity and it goes one better than lighting.

(And the army of) Lalji Pendse and Krishna Arsekar, making real preparations, take part in the procession in an orderly manner.

Mayekar burn in his heart and so does Borker: Kastle, Ghate (and) Bradley Saheb always hold (in their hearts the idea of) taking revenge.

Other heroic workmen also came forward; how can their number be computed? As many men as were workers came forward, the men had not the least anxiety.

Just as the monkeys fought with the demons in Lanka in the same manner the workers struggled against capitalism in Bombay to its severe detriment.

III

(Workers) assembled in the Nagu Sayaji's Wadi in such a manner that it appeared as if it was another National Congress . . .

Mr. Alve was appointed president, he is like the great serpent Takshaka in swallowing the enemies and is altogether like a bower of [sic] Pipal tree in breaking down opposition and upholding his own arguments.

Eloquent speeches are made enthusiastically with the weapon of words, (and they) spread the paper of unanimity and write a resolution on it with their tears...

When afterwards at the time of the strike people did not get food to eat, they said it would be better to go to their native places instead of dying of starvation.

The people with one voice determined to fight and they say before their eyes the example of the Satagraha of Bardoli.

They received money from Russia (and other) foreign countries for (the supply of) grain to them, they (the workers) went to invite King Shivaji to have a look at the fight...

The misfortune of the workers takes the form of pride, (and) it finds a lodging in the heat of Boreker he becomes a knife (struck) in our chest.

The exchange of the blows of the knife took their stand on the ground of the battle of wits (lit: chess board) but such an unfortunate turn took place that they (the workers) were check-mated by a pawn (of the Capitalists) . . .

Let there be no such distinction as this is a Hindu, this is a Mussalman (or) this is a Mahar (untouchable), let there be unity, how and how long shall I exhort this . . .⁶⁵⁵

The author uses the poem to unite disunited workers. This creative piece is a wonderful example of workers' history in their own voice, of their intellect, of the poet's ability to blend historical (Shivaji) and mythological (Mahabharata and Ramayana epic) figures with workers' struggle for social and economic justice. For the poet, workers were on the right side, and the employers were evil and committing moral wrongs. Ideas about being insulted, a sense of fighting the evil mill owners, feeling of loss, misfortune turning into pride, the deceit of employers by cutting wages, employers taking labour power without giving anything back, workers being checkmate by powerful employers in the war of wits, and appeals for unity along caste and communal lines are beautifully invoked in the poem. Worker linked their present struggle and injustice with the struggles and injustice committed against the good people in the past. Remarks about employers lacking intellect are interesting because they undo the received hierarchies of intellect.

⁶⁵⁵ Gangaram and Jayaram Pandu Devag, *Girni Workers' Phatka* (published by Girni Kamgar Union, February 6, 1929), P. 940-T, *MCC GIPE-023793*, 74–77.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have suggested that the night was not necessarily an extension of the work culture for workers, even though employers attempted to colonise workers' nights either by extending work-hours or through welfare programmes. While the day at the factory required workers to exhibit a strict posture, alertness, docility, time-thrift, discipline, and respect for masters, the night was the time for workers to question norms, to not behave as workers, to act as patriarchs, to become cruel and authoritative parent, and to pursue intellectual dreams that were not possible to accomplish in the daytime. Night, employers increasingly felt, could not be left outside the production logic as it was the time when workers pursued their lofty desires of politics, education, and imagined new roles for themselves. We see the beginning of employers' strategies to reproduce labour power and labour conditions through welfare activities that would become a classic hallmark of industrial capitalism throughout the twentieth century for acquiring efficient labour efficiently.

Under this overarching theme, I also made two other related points. First, I showed through the histories of night schools that workers were interested in education and were willing to forgo their leisure and comfort of bed for their intellectual pursuits. Second, I illustrated through the histories of labour mohallas' night time libraries and public reading that workers as a class were involved in reading literature both in a very intimate and personal style and in a more open public reading culture. Both men and women, literate and illiterate, "lower" and middle class, and "touchable" and "untouchable" workers' were involved in using their leisure moments that went beyond their stereotypical working identity.

Workers, we see, used education in varieties of ways from acquiring information about events, reading fictions and religious texts, organising labour politics, imagining non-labouring careers, and narrating hard experiences through poems.

Conclusion

The suicide of Dalit students in the higher educational institutions of India forces us to rethink the relationship between the labouring castes and education.⁶⁵⁶ On the one hand their life histories narrate experiences of aspiration and struggles for education, and on the other hand their forced deaths reveal the hollowness of India's education system. Though supported by a legal structure promoting equal access to education, they from the beginning are not prepared for higher educational institutes. Since their childhood, they are denied access to identical learning opportunities. When the labouring castes enter into education, their struggles are not for equal access but are for opportunities and knowledge similar to the one that the elite class students have. This educational crisis is exacerbated by the increasing privatisation and liberalisation of the education sector. It is producing its own inequality where the majority of private primary education is for the children of the wealthy upper castes and middle class and the inefficiently run government education is for the poor and the lower castes. What I am suggesting here is that there is a pre-history of what we are facing now. I have shown that the labouring castes and classes (artisans, Dalit agrarian labourers, and factory workers) did not just fight for an equal access to education but they increasingly fought for identical opportunities—a claim over literary, scientific, and high technical knowledge. Within these struggles of the marginalised, we see further complexities of region, caste, and gender. I have shown that Dalits and lower castes had different experiences within educational institutions created for working classes. But both took to education to express their concerns. Such struggles are somehow erased from our national memory and scholarly writings. This desire for identical knowledge and education was intimately tied to their dreams of being something more than what their fathers and mothers were—both in economic and social sense. We come

⁶⁵⁶ The death of Rohith Vemula in January 2016 (University of Hyderabad) and Muthukrishnan Jeevanantham in March 2017 (Jawaharlal Nehru University) challenged monolithic view that Indian universities were progressive. Suna, "The Death of a Historian in Centre for Historical Studies, JNU".

to know of these desires when we listen to the oral histories of the labouring castes, read their writings, and track struggles of their lives. They value education hoping that they will transcend the conditions they have inherited.

I have historicised this desire to transcend the inherited past and imagine new futures through their struggles for education. Workers' refusal to perform manual labour and behave in the 'expected ways' often constituted a powerful silent rebellion against the socio-economic status quo and the labour supply chain of the capitalist order. It was the labouring castes' overthrowing of the centuries old system of oppression by asserting their claims over knowledge, disrupting the norm, and rebelling against the class and caste system. This overthrowing's powerful manifestation was to be no longer a worker and to unsettle the prescribed identity of labourers imposed on them. Slow and silent abandoning of the fields of master, workshops of merchant-artisans, shop-floors of factory owners constituted insubordination. These aspirations of workers came with their desires to educate themselves, to see them as literate, as intellectuals, and above all, as creative members of the society. The dominant order considered such moves and desires as a threat and uprising that needed to be crushed, controlled, and disciplined. I have explained why elites considered such desired as threat. These desires threatened their privileges, dominant positions in the society, claims over new jobs, control over a mass of labouring bodies, community honour, and most importantly their notion of superiority. Their classic response was to celebrate and valorise labour in the education programmes of labouring castes' children. A few within them opposed any idea of educated Dalit or a low caste worker. Elites either denied education to the labouring classes or refused them to give identical educational opportunities.

Educational institutions were not spaces of equality; they were forced to appear so by the struggles of the labouring castes. It was within these limited spaces of learning that workers had to realise their desires, overcome their economic and social constraints, and lay the

foundation for a new future. As we know from present that this process is still incomplete. Workers' desires to not be workers and employers' desire to keep labouring castes within the labouring fold and train them for better productivity were tied through the process of education. I have shown that these processes never produced direct envisioned results; these desires, ambitions, and visions got limited by the constraints put by workers, school authorities, the colonial state, the local socio-economic structure, and parents. Thus the educational experience of the labouring castes was never a one-sided history. Visions of school authorities clashed with desires of the labouring castes, and desires of the labouring castes were fraught with tensions of caste divisions, female exclusion, and regional difference. Dreams of a non-labouring life were never homogenous across class, caste, gender, and region. They were limited by the politics of 'possible'—what could be achieved and what could not be. Yet, I assert, it is these varied dreams and desires that shaped the nature of working classes in India and elsewhere that require systematic mapping.

Education was both the cause and the means of aspirations and containment for the labouring classes. The story that has unfolded here has a dual perspective: the perspective of the labouring poor and the perspective of the dominant. The colonial state and private actors such as factory-owners, the SSL, the Arya Samaj, the Theistic Associations, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the YMCA, and Christian missionaries, though containing multiple contradictory ideas within themselves, brought the complexities of the social into the educational system and considered education as a tool to educate the poor and keep them subordinated. While often providing opportunities to the most marginalised sections of the working classes, these diverse actors usually championed what seemed the cause of capitalist relations by producing different types of labouring bodies. This connection between capital and labour was not as unmediated as it seemed. In this thesis, education is presented as a site where not only the existing socio-economic conflicts (e.g., class, gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, and labour) were played out

such as the building of a repressive apparatus, the formation of labouring subjectivities, and the production of skilled bodies or the formation of the working class consciousness, the emancipation of Dalits from socio-economic and cultural subjugation, and access to education and service class jobs to the labouring castes. New socio-economic conflicts were generated at the site of education: the emergence and closure of the desire to not be a worker, the labouring castes' ability to acquire literary skills, privileging of middle class and upper castes, a rise in general aspiration for government jobs, and the questioning of the existing knowledge hierarchies. Historicising the labouring poor's desire for education and the process of their containment within the labouring regimes by the same education helps us understand the socio-economic dynamics that emerged in the late nineteenth century and continued to have a powerful hold over the nature of education system, career opportunities of the labouring poor, and the notion of socio-economic justice in post-colonial India.

On the one hand, we see that for the first time education emerged as a powerful tool for the marginalised sections to refashion their identities, economic predicaments, and presence within the socio-cultural space. The mixed pressures of the labouring castes' demand for education, need of the educated trained workmen for newly established industries, liberal and welfare façade of the colonial state, the nationalist politics, and transforming social relations (conversion to Christianity) made it possible that the hitherto neglected and excluded labouring castes should be given a share in education, that they should be exposed to books, classrooms, and teachers on a large scale. For the first time, sons of Chamar agrarian labourers and daughters of oil-pressers (teli) reached the school on a relatively large scale. Ignorance and the lack of access to education, they believed, was one of the reasons for their subordination and oppressed life. Access to education, they imagined, would make them free. Labouring parents dreamed of different careers for their educated children. They wanted their children to become what they could not think of becoming in the past and what the children of the neighbouring

middle class became—teachers, doctors, nurses, supervisors, policemen, postmen, etc.

I have suggested that patterns of aspirations were contingent on historical factors and time. They depended on the access to education, poverty of workers, emerging new job markets, notions about education in the community, availability of free time, and necessity of wages. Certain classes of labour appear to have invested more in education over others. For example, in comparison to non-Dalit destitute, Dalit destitute appropriated education with far more vigour both due to the emergence of Dalit movements which emphasised on gaining education and centuries of their total exclusion from schools and their subjection to the most inhuman occupational practices and public treatment. Significant differences can also be noticed in terms of classroom experience. While the lower labouring castes had access to industrial, technical, factory, and night schools, Dalit destitute were kept out from these institutions. For them, special Dalit exclusive institutions were opened. By no means was the spread of desire democratic and linear within different social groups. Among artisans, railway and government workshop workers dominated the educational institutions. Among the mill workers, it was weavers, muqaddams, and other better sections of mill labour, and among Dalits, it was Chamars. The circularity of education and the desire to not be a worker was often broken either due to the experience of schooling or extreme poverty. Not every educated worker became a non-labouring entity and not every educated worker wanted to move beyond his or her labouring station.

On the other hand, education also emerged as a powerful instrument of producing an efficient and trained working class for the dominant. Wherever education was granted to the labouring castes, if it was granted at all, the nature of education was predominantly designed as practical, technical, mechanical, and industrial both to make them productive labouring bodies and to control their high aspirations. Where it was not practical or offered even a narrow ladder for a rise, it was gradually restructured to suit according to the destined careers of the

labouring castes. Such patterns of working class education were global as its structures were built by capitalists such as missionaries, factory owners, and officials who had global connections. It was no coincidence that within the labouring groups, some sections of workers received more attention than others with regard to education. For example, there was an effort to educate and train workers of railway workshops, mills, printing presses, and missionary enterprises. The mass of unskilled labour engaged in transport, domestic service, factories and other industries was left out.

Whether it was the colonial state, employers, or social reformers who distributed education to the poor, they all were plagued by an economic logic that was to create a refined, settled, industrious, loyal, and skilled workforce. Driven by their conservative ideas to keep the labouring castes within their social and economic world, the infrastructures of education that developed in the nineteenth and the twentieth century were based on an assertion of social and economic inequality. By offering a controlled education to the labouring classes, not only their desire for education were moulded into dispositions suitable for labour extractions but the conditions of capitalist production were also produced at the site of education itself.

But, as I have shown, what was imagined by these elites was not always realised. Workers' own politics, notions of education, work, and career resisted such imposition. In fact, more than appropriation, they often contested and transformed the working and the envisioned logics of these institutions. Besides, the politics of local and imperial—limited financial resources of the colonial state, visions of school authorities such as headmaster and schoolteachers, and larger shifts in economy and polity limited the efforts of these institutions.

However, between these two contradictory and opposing desires, the everyday uses of education were crucial for both the parties. The labouring classes appreciated education not only because they wanted to abandon the labouring life but also because they found education useful in their lives. Benefits of literacy and education were immediately felt. With education,

the migrant worker could read and write letters, navigate the paper world of factories and workshops from asking a leave of absence to reading handbills of strikes, and calculate the wage arrears and the interest charged by money lenders. Workers used education to read and understand sacred texts. The ambitious worker used his educational skill to climb the wage hierarchy. One of the most important everyday usages of education can be seen in the labour movement which accommodated the literate sections of the working class into it and also promoted a new generation of politically conscious literate worker (Chap. 3 & 4). Educated youth from the labouring castes often remained closed to their communities, worked for its improvement, fought for its space, and educated other members of their community. The worker-escapee escaped manual labour without severing ties with his community, people, and locality (Chap. 2 & 4). School authorities, the colonial state, missionaries, and factory-owners also found industrial and practical education useful for workers. It not only helped in controlling the independent aspirations and desires of workers but also made them useful for commodity production. Skills taught, habits practiced, and values imparted in these schools helped employers to raise a settled, disciplined, and efficient labour force. Besides, goods produced from the labour of students not only made schools self-supporting but also profitable.

Childhood and the nights of working classes were both analytical and methodological tools of my research where desires and anxieties of the labouring poor and the elites played out. These moments, I argue, were central to the emerging subjectivities of the working classes. The control over childhood and night was absolutely central to the agendas of both the parties—employers and workers. These moments fit very well in the life cycle of day-night and generational change. I have suggested that workers did not always see childhood and night as an extension of work-culture. However, employers, the colonial state, missionaries, and social reform bodies saw night and childhood in continuity with the day and the need for labour.

Thus when factory employers opened factory schools for the children of workers, they did not see children as students but as future workers.

Worker-parents, in this period, had developed different sensibilities towards the childhood. They rethought the childhood of their children. Schooling was favoured over the labour of juvenile children. They saw education playing a central part in achieving new social and economic roles. It helped their children in securing new career options which were not available to them earlier (Chap. 1, 2, 3, & 4). They saw the childhood of their children in the light of their own exploitative childhood and life experiences. From the artisanal-workshop worker to the Dalit agrarian labourer and from the factory worker to the domestic servant, workers had learnt to negotiate between the labour of their children and schooling. Many workers said no to labour and many others combined labour and education together for their children. This was one of the biggest transformations that had occurred within the labouring families. Of course, such changes in terms of newer imaginations of childhood often depended on gender, region, caste, and class difference but there were cases which blurred such distinctions. For example, some male factory workers stressed the importance of education for their single daughters (Chap. 4). However, these were individual exceptions within larger patterns. There were also some regional variations. The Bombay factory workers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were more keen on educating their children than their peers in Cawnpore. Compared to many classes of artisans in Lucknow, railway artisans both Muslim and Hindus regarded industrial and technical education as a way out for their children (Chap. 1). By educating or planning to educate their children, workers created new meanings of proletarian childhoods. Control over childhoods was crucial in breaking the links of bondage and agrarian slavery. Thus when Dalit labourers heard of missionaries, they ran and asked them whether they would establish schools for their children (Chap. 2). Drives to educate children were not always led by parents, but instead sometime by social reform bodies, educated workers, and

worker-friend circles (Chap. 4). Workers' visions of childhood were often plagued by the lack of information about career options or poverty. For suggestions on career plans, they depended on missionaries, educated members of their community, school-teachers, or knowledgeable persons at the workplace. Ideas about educating children and thinking of different career options for children were the result of interaction between the lower and middle classes.

Like with childhood, workers also invested their energies in trying to secure control over their nights. Nights, especially for artisans, factory-workers, municipality workers, and domestic servants, became crucial moments to subvert the image of being illiterate and ignorant. For them, night stood as the opposite of the day. While the day symbolised work, alienation of human emotions, and subordination, night became the moment for workers to symbolise freedom from work and disciplined body, liberty to do things that were unusual for workers, and a chance to spend time with family. Workers' struggle to take control over their nights from employers after the electrification of mills was part of their effort to claim this time. During the night, workers attended night schools, read books borrowed from the circulating and the night-time libraries, unionised themselves, drank alcohol, wrote poetry, and did theatre. The large numbers of the urban proletariat attending night schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is an intriguing phenomenon. Education gained in the night was often used for personal desires of reading books and writing letters along with trying their hands at new jobs requiring literacy (Chap. 1 & 4). Night, like childhood, was gendered. The night experience of the men differed from those of women. Though the examples of women studying in night schools are not altogether absent (Chap. 2), as a rule they did not attend night schools. Social norms and harassment by men discouraged them from going out at night, and requirements of labour at home kept them busy in the early hours of nights (Chap. 3 & 4). In fact, in many cases night was another moment of subordination for females. This however did not stop them from borrowing books and attending schools that opened in the

morning or late in the afternoon (Chap. 4 & 2). Nights were not exactly free moments for male workers. Night time was increasingly constrained by a tired body, the necessity of sleep, and the need for housing. Many workers in Bombay spent their night under the open sky.

A lot has changed between the late nineteenth century and now. The tradition of night schools, night time reading rooms, and circulating libraries have died down. The meanings of the night have changed. Nowadays, aspiring worker-students learn in the day and work at night. From doing tailoring to the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) call centre job in the night, poor students have learned to manage the distribution of leisure, work, and study time.

While the night and childhood were fundamental for workers to realise their aspirations of moving beyond their labouring stations, these two moments also became crucial for the reproduction of conditions of capitalism and an unequal socio-economic order. The two moments of working lives allowed industrialists to assert their control over industrial labour and conservatives to uphold the socio-economic order. Capital and the colonial state increasingly turned the moments of night and childhood into phases for the maturation and progression of workers. Thus through childhood, prospective workers were trained in industrial skills, morals, and knowledge of work. Through the night schools and workmen's institutes, workers were offered recreation and practical education—indoor sports, night schools, cafeterias, cinema, and theatre—things that relieved the boredom of the tired worker and made him productive for tomorrow's labour.

All four chapters have challenged certain fundamental assumptions and hypotheses of labour and the educational studies that I highlighted in the introduction. Education and the labouring classes together in the colonial period are an anomaly in academic writings. The view that workers were illiterate, and education was a sphere of the middle and upper classes is constantly reinforced. In contrast I have shown that workers were neither illiterate nor silent about their claims to be educated. I suggest that the Indian census, problematic as they are,

cannot be a reliable guide to map the percentage of working class literacy. As many workers moved out of the working class after getting educated and the census officials hardly reporting the educational level according to occupations, any number from the census indicating the levels of education among workers would be misleading.

Workers' demands and struggles to be educated forced elites to create structures of education that sustained their socio-economic dominance and workers' subordination. Far from excluding labouring classes from the project of modern education, a section of elites had opened various forms of non-elite schooling where only the children of the poor went. The issue for the people in authority—colonial state officials, missionaries, and Indian elites—was not so much about the access to education but the form and content of education.

The creative lives of workers to be more than workers challenges the dry prose of labour historiography which both valorises and restricts working class history to their working identity. The latter denies them a history of future, a history of family planning, and a history of aspirations. It also fails to narrate a history of capitalism that is plagued by workers' aspirations and challenges. Capitalism as a global system of commodity production has been able to co-opt such aspirations and threats of workers by offering education, recreation, housing, and other welfare activities to workers. Besides, specific constraints such as the World Wars, lack of skilled labour, nationalist politics, conversion to Christianity, and protests of the labouring castes resulted in the establishment of new career opportunities and new types of working class education. However, by these efforts employers also met the needs of the production process which required both a highly educated and skilled workforce and an illiterate coolie labour force. It constantly co-opted the aspiring workers in the managerial and service class and kept others waiting or denied them a quality education. Capitalism created the façade of meritocracy among workers. In fact, it learned to rest on the artifice of merit.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁷ Bowles and Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*.

It gave working class students an illusion of fairness through the systems of examinations, awards, and school infrastructure (Chap. 3 & 4). However, as we see through different chapters, schools' agenda of producing efficient labour force and maintain status quo in the time period was not a hidden agenda but was an overt one and in that they did not succeed in doing what they aspired to. Workers did a keen reading of school curriculum, suspected schools as 'devices to enslave' them to labour, and protested against schools' discriminatory practices and differentiated syllabus.

I have shown that the modern notion of pedagogy and education was premised on an unequal notion of society within which multiple contradictory views can be located. However, overall there was a continuity in the anxieties and hopes of elites that the labouring castes should not be encouraged to abandon labour, whether they were educated or remained illiterate. The labouring poor knew this inequality and they created a space for their desires within these constraints. Education enabled them both to integrate as wage labourers in the capitalist system and to disintegrate from its labouring structure. But in the process, workers developed complex subjectivities, learned hitherto denied skills of reading and writing, and indulged in activities that traditionally belonged to the terrain of middle and upper castes.

Factory workers and artisans developed a rights-based discourse of education. The notion of education as a right of the labouring children developed from below and was not imposed from the above (Chap. 4). Workers fought for education and knowledge because for centuries it was the cause of their suppression and others' dominance. They demanded equal access to information and educational infrastructure. However, once education reached the labouring groups, it produced certain new conflicts in the form of newer hierarchies between the educated worker and the illiterate worker (Chap. 4 & 1).

The rise of democratic values, pressures from below for inclusion and representation, and the necessity of the capitalist system forced this highly unequal education system to stand for

equality, although it continued to perpetuate unequal values, as critical educational sociologists have argued. I have shown that within this highly unequal education system, established to subordinate the labouring castes to the position of labour, workers weaved their own network of opposite desires, subordinated rules of the status quo, and created space for alternative careers in their lives.

In India, access to education, and not access to identical educational contents and institutions has remained the primary goal. Consequently, what emerged was that education itself became a means to establish regimes of inequality. When opportunities arrived for the marginalised groups to take advantage of education after equal access to education was guaranteed by law, new criteria of entry qualifications for non-labouring jobs are being set and new binaries of private and public education regulate the educational achievements of students.

I would like to end this thesis by invoking one last question. What happens to these desires of not being a worker when ‘work’ suddenly disappears from the working lives? Similar questions have been frequently raised in the context of post-industrialised societies such as Western Europe and America where there are now very limited ‘industrial jobs’ waiting for workers or there is just work ‘without an end’ in an information technology-led era.⁶⁵⁸ How does one understand the relationship between school, work, and the capitalist system in a more complex time, marked by the loss of ‘real jobs’ and working class subjectivities (culture)? One response which Lois Weis drew from her ethnographic study of a deindustrialising region in America is that male youths have produced contradictory notion of self, with no jobs waiting for them in a declining economy. This these boys have calculated. In such a context, right-wing ideas get reasserted and boys view African-Americans as a threat and as ‘others’ and young females as ‘inferior’.⁶⁵⁹ She sees a possibility of progressive movement among female students

⁶⁵⁸ Aronowitz, *The Last Good Job in America*.

⁶⁵⁹ Brexit in the UK and the rise of Donald Trump in the USA have brought the question of the complex relationship between labouring classes, class, inequality, race, and right-wing politics into the limelight. See, Pai, *Angry White People*; Lopez, “Survey”; Hanley, “What Do We Mean When We Say “white Working

who dream to control their lives in their own terms, get emancipated from the control of patriarchal husbands, and build their own career in the wage labour market.⁶⁶⁰ Scholars have returned to this question in a book titled, *Learning to Labor in New Times*, and interpret these concerns in the light of class identities becoming ‘ambiguous’, service class jobs or low paid jobs remaining precarious with no possibility of advancement, and the broken promise of education as a vehicle for social mobility. While working class lads are entering into service class jobs such as tourism and many still considering these jobs ‘feminine job’, their conventional notions of labour and gender have radically changed. In the book, Weis returned to the girls whom she had interviewed a decade ago. She finds that girls have achieved many of their ‘dreams and aspirations for an education and career’. However, there is no escape for them from the patriarchal oppression of their partners.⁶⁶¹

Industrial workers in certain regions of India have also experienced rapid deindustrialisation. We know the story of Kanpur and Mumbai, industrial centres which closed their mills in the 1980s and 90s, leaving thousands of workers without jobs. As Chitra Joshi remarks, factory workers, whose fate was tied to the mills providing them jobs, found themselves in a new situation where they were insecure about their and of their children’s economic lives, considered no-work as a physical degradation, and remembered the times of their employment in factories as empowering.⁶⁶² Workers in Kanpur have shifted to more precarious jobs such as home based hosiery production, tea stalls, rickshaw-pulling, and vending. Sumeet Mahskar’s work on Bombay’s ex-mill workers show that the majority of workers have shifted to jobs of security guards, courier works, work in shops, and hereditary caste occupations. Through his data, he shows that Dalit workers have little access to privileged

Class”?”; Hanley, “High Status, High Income”; Hanley, “Why Class Won’t Go Away”; Khan and Shaheen, *Minority Report: Race and Class in Post-Brexit Britain*.

⁶⁶⁰ Weis, *Working Class Without Work*.

⁶⁶¹ Dolby, Dimitriadis, and Willis, *Learning to Labor in New Times*, 1–10, 81–113.

⁶⁶² Joshi, “Hope and Despair”.

job in the service sectors and lack the networks, necessary to establish small business.⁶⁶³ It will be interesting to investigate the role that workers' desires for a non-labouring jobs for their children played in facilitating this massive transition with an ease. When this shift occurred, there was already a presence of substantial literate workforce, exposed to the middle class culture of consumerism, which was ready to take these non-labouring jobs. However, the precarious and insecure nature of these jobs, low salaries, and the constant detachment between the labouring body and the costly products that they sell (cheese, wine, clothing, etc. which they cannot buy) or the services they provide had not only resulted in the degradation of these non-manual labouring service sector jobs but also have produced a new realm of desires for better and secure life and subjectivities of class difference among workers.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶³ Mhaskar, "Locating Caste in a Globalising Indian City: A Study of Dalit Ex-millworkers' Occupational Choices in Post-industrial Mumbai" in Still, *Dalits in Neoliberal India*, 107–32.

⁶⁶⁴ On this see, Maitra and Maitra, "Tapping into the "standing-Reserve"".

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- 2017 Postdoctoral Fellow, French Institute of Pondicherry, India (funded by the British Library and the ETH, Zurich) (Oct–Dec).
- 2017 Global History Fellow, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (April–September)
- 2013 Assistant Professor in History, Delhi College of Arts & Commerce, Delhi University (Jan–April)

Education

- 2013–17 *PhD, Modern History*, Centre for Modern Indian Studies, University of Göttingen, Germany (Winner of The German Historical Institute London Thesis Prize for the outstanding thesis on the British Empire History, 2018)
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- Dissertation title:** *Learning to Dream: Education, Aspiration, and Working Lives in Colonial India, 1880s-1940s*. **Committee:** Prof. Rupa Viswanath (CeMIS), and Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya (JNU), Examiner: Prof. Bhavani Raman (Toronto).
- 2012 UGC-NET Certificate
- 2012–13 *MPhil, Modern Indian History*. Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University Delhi (Incomplete, left to join PhD).
- 2010–12 *MA, History (First Rank in the University)*. St. Stephen’s College, University of Delhi.
- 2007–10 *BA Honors History (First Rank in the College)*. Delhi College of Arts and Commerce (DCAC), University of Delhi, India.

Fellowships and Grants

- 2017 *Volkswagen Global History Fellowship* (April–Sept., 2017).

- 2017 *The History Project Grant*, Centre for History and Economics, Harvard University, USA.
- 2013–17 *Transnational Research Group Doctoral Fellowship*, German Historical Institute.
- 2014–17 *Graduate School of Humanities Research Grants*, Göttingen.
- 2010 *Commonwealth Scholarship*, United Kingdom, nomination from India for an M.A. Degree in the U.K.

Awards

- 2018 *The German Historical Institute London Thesis Prize* for outstanding PhD Thesis.
- 2013 *Lala Ram Mohan Prize*, University of Delhi, for scoring highest marks in M.A.
- 2010 *All Round Excellency Award*, DCAC, for Student of the Year.
- 2010 *Damyanti Pathak Award*, DCAC, for being the best student in the college.
- 2009 *Sanjay Gupta Award*, DCAC, for scoring highest marks in the B.A.
- 2008 *Best Essay Award*, Human Rights Organisation, USA.
- 2008 *Best Essay Award*, International Transparency, Hongkong.
- 2008 *Best Essay Award*, Nandini Voice for the Deprived, Chennai, India.

Professional Association and Services

- 2018 Editorial Board Member, *Asia in Focus*, Journal of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (January onwards).
- 2009–10 *President*, History Association, DCAC.
- 2013– Member, Association of Indian Labour Historians.

Publications

Monograph

- Forthcoming *The Silent Rebellion: Working Class Dreams, Education, and Capitalism* (to be sent for the review to the Cambridge University Press).

Peer-reviewed Journal Articles

- 2018 ‘Labour in Your Cup: Global Histories of Labour, Commodities, and Capitalism’, Review Essay, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 63, 2, pp. 321–34.
- 2018 ‘Skilling and its Histories: Labour Market and the Making of Skilled Workers in Colonial India (1880-1910)’, *The Journal of South Asian Development*, Vol. 13, 3, pp. 1–23.
- 2019 ‘The ‘Untouchable School’: American Missionaries, Hindu Social Reformers and Educational Dreams of Labouring Dalits in Colonial North India’, *South Asia: The Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, 5 (forthcoming).

Book Reviews

- 2016 Book Review. *Conquest and Community: The Afterlife of Warrior Saint Ghazi Miyan*, by Shahid Amin, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2015, xxi + 327 pp., Rs. 850 (hardcopy), ISBN 978-81-250-5967-7 in *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 7, Issue 4, 2016.

Journalistic Writings

- 2018 Impressions from the Dump-Trump Protest in London, 12 August 2018, *Countercurrents*, <https://countercurrents.org/>

In Popular Media

- 2018 Interviewed by Jyoti Punwani for the *Mumbai Mirror* (3 December), 'The Worker as Intellectual', <https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/civic/the-worker-as-intellectual/articleshow/66913078.cms>

Workshop Organised

- 2016 *International Workshop, Young South Asia Scholar's Meet (Y-SASM)*, University of Göttingen, Germany, June 24-25.

Public/Seminar Talks

- 2018 'Nights of the Bombay Worker: Neighbourhood Night Schools and Emancipatory Dreams', Tata Institute of Social Science, Bombay, 27 November.
 2018 'Rethinking Labour & Capitalism: New Evidence from the Joseph Stephens Archives', Swedish Labour Movement's Archives and Library, 23 October.
 2018 'Envisioning the New Småland: India and the British Empire at Huseby Bruk' Free Speech House, Växjö, 15 October.
 2018 'Joseph Stephens and his Construction Workers: Managing Labour in the (Transnational) British Empire', Linnaeus University, 27 September.
 2015 'The Escape from Poverty: Lucknow Artisans in a Global Institution', Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January.
 2015 'Beyond Colonial Borders: Mission Industrial Schools in Global Perspective', Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 28 January.
 2015 'The Great Fears of Modern Societies: Industrial and Reformatory Schools in Colonial Settings', Transnational and Global History Seminar, University of Oxford, 10 February.
 2014 'Primed to Labour: Industrial and Artisanal schools in Colonial India, 1880-1930', German Historical Institute, London, 2 September.

Conference/Workshop Papers

- 2019 'Nights of the Bombay Worker: Neighbourhood Night Schools and Emancipatory Dreams', Yale Modern South Asia Workshop, 1-2 February.
 2018 'Mathematics of the "Bazaar": The Social History of Practical Mathematics in Colonial North India (1859s-1940s)', 25th European Conference on South Asian Studies, Paris, 24-27 July.
 2018 'Missionary Capitalism: Industrial Missions of the British Empire', *Between and Beyond: Transnational Networks and the British Empire*, University of Warwick, 21-22 June.
 2017 'The Night of Factory Workers: Capitalism and the Non-Working Time in the Working Class Mohallas (Bombay and Cawnpore, 1880s-1940s)', *Time & Money: Themes in Labour Relations*, Göttingen University, 18-19 December.

- 2017 ‘Artisans, Apprenticeship, and Cultures of Craft Guilds in Colonial North India, 1850-1950’, Labour, Education and Knowledge: Entangled Histories in 20th Century Capitalism, International Workshop, Basel, 2-3 October.
- 2017 ‘Modern Technology, Skill-knowledge formation, and Labour: Evidence from Cotton Mills and Railway Workshops (1870s-1950s)’, TRG Poverty and Education Final Conference, German Historical Institute & King’s College, London, 27-29 September.
- 2017 ‘Agrarian Schooling and Scientific Agriculture: The Production of a Well-Informed Trained Peasantry in the British Empire’, South Asia Graduate Workshop, SOAS, UK, 12-13 June.
- 2017 ‘Artisans, Apprenticeship, and Cultures of Craft Guilds in Colonial North India, 1850-1950’, The New Economic History of India, University of Cambridge, 11-12 May.
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- 2016 ‘More than One Mode: Apprenticeship and the process of Learning Labour in Colonial India’, International Workshop on Children, Apprentices and Slaves, College de France, Paris, 4-5 Feb.
- 2015 ‘Schooling the Poor Child: A Dialogue between the Global and Local Poor in Colonial India’, Society for the History of Children and Youth Conference, Vancouver, Canada, 24-26 June-
- 2015 ‘Histories of the Mission Industrial School: Its Everyday Working and Remembrance’, Colonial Christian Missions and their Legacies Conf., University of Copenhagen, Denmark, 27-29 April.
- 2015 ‘Training ‘Unruly Natives’ into Productive Bodies: Industrial and Artisanal Schools in Colonial India (1880s-1940s)’, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science Workshop, Berlin, 5-6 Feb.
- 2015 ‘The Escape from Poverty: Artisans and the City Poor in the Lucknow Industrial School’, International Conference on Skill Development and Social Transformation in India, University of Oxford, 12-13 January.
- 2014 ‘Poverty, Crime, and the School Curriculum: The Poor in Reformatory Schools’, International Conference on Modern Transformations and the Challenges of Inequalities in Education in India, Department of History, University of Delhi, 27-29 November.
- 2014 ‘Localising the Global: Industrial Schools in the Missionary Discussions, 1880s-1940’, International Conference on Missionaries, Materials and the Making of World, Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, 15-17 September.
- 2014 ‘Histories of Miscalculation and the Politics of the Possible: The Reproduction and Production of Subjects in Colonial Industrial Schools’, Young South Asia Scholar’s Meet, ETH, Zurich, 21-12 July.
- 2014 ‘Poverty, Crime and Curriculum: The Poor in Reformatory Schools’, TRG GHIL Workshop, London, 7-9 July
- 2014 ‘School as “Evasive Space”: Worker’s Dreams and Mill Owner’s Politics in the Cotton Mills of Colonial India’, Xth International Conference on Labour History, India, 22-24 March.
- 2014 ‘Globalising the Local and Localising the Global: Discourse on Poor, Poverty, and Vagrancy in Industrial Schools’, International Young Scholar’s Conference, JNU, Delhi, 5-7 February.

Summer/Winter Schools

- 2017 8th History of Educational Doctoral Summer School, University of Sassari, Porto Conte, Italy, 08-11 June.

2014 “Primed to Labour: Industrial Schools in Colonial India”, Winter Academy, Humboldt University, Berlin, 16-25 January.

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Publications

I have published one article using the research material from my thesis (1st chapter). Arguments and the content material of the article are not very much identical to the chapter, but I have used the source material from the chapter. Article looks at the history of skilling in colonial history developing the case of the Lucknow Industrial School.

Article Title

Skilling and its Histories: Labour Market and the Making of Skilled Workers in Colonial India (1880-1910), *The Journal of South Asian Development*, Vol. 13, 3, 2018, pp. 1–23.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174118810050>

I have submitted an article titled ‘‘The ‘Untouchable School’: American Missionaries, Hindu Social Reformers and Educational Dreams of Labouring Dalits in Colonial North India’ to the journal *South Asia: The Journal of South Asian Studies* which has been accepted for the publication. It is attached. The article partially draws material from the second chapter.

My other published articles include one review essay and one book review, which are not related to the above thesis content.

Review Essay Title:

Labour in Your Cup: Global Histories of Labour, Commodities, and Capitalism’, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 63, 2, 2018, pp. 321–34.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859018000305>

Book Review:

Conquest and Community: The Afterlife of Warrior Saint Ghazi Miyan, by Shahid Amin, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2015, xxi + 327 pp., Rs. 850 (hardcopy), ISBN 978-81-250-5967-7

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Skilling and Its Histories: Labour Market, Technical Knowledge and the Making of Skilled Workers in Colonial India (1880–1910)

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Arun Kumar¹

Abstract

Written in the backdrop of the emerging official discourse around occupational skill training in contemporary India, this article returns to the past to explain how the meanings of skill and skill training were produced through the interaction of the colonial education system and industrial actors in modern India. Using archival records, it studies the history of the Lucknow Industrial School—one of the earliest government institutes to skill Indians in various industrial trades and for the local railway workshop. The article argues that industrial training institutions, while crucial in defining and legitimizing a discourse of skill and efficiency based on the scientific and technical knowledge of workers, were subjected to the competing political and training discourses of the shop floor, financial unwillingness of the British empire to create a large infrastructure of industrial and technical education for the colony, local caste politics and aspirations of students. All these forces shaped the nature of skill transference and produced unintended results which strained the relationship between the training institute and industries. Similar conflicts and issues surround the contemporary skill programme. A historical study of skill development during the colonial era allows a better understanding of the prospect and perils of the present-day Skill India Mission.

Keywords

Skills, industrial schools, technical knowledge, informal and formal economy, industrial curriculum, railway workshops, children, youths, Lucknow artisans

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The Skill India Mission (hereafter SIM) is an ambitious state-led programme. For the first time in independent India, the state is asserting its power on an unprecedented scale to provide a large infrastructure of industrial training and thus mediating the labour–capital relationship in this particular way.¹ By training future workers and regulating existing training methods, the state is not only intervening in sectors such as construction, IT, textile, hospitality, aviation, tourism, leather, electronics, fashion, nursing, food and light engineering, but it is also seeking to induce industrial development by attempting to meet the demand of industry for skilled labour. Since the launch of the first National Skill Policy in 2009, India has seen the establishment of numerous new vocational institutes in the countryside and urban areas. According to the National Skill Policy of 2015, around 12,000 training institutes and 3,200 polytechnics exist in India (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship [MSDE], 2015, p. 5). Skilling has emerged as a new business where amateur educationists and local elites are investing their money and resources in establishing new vocational and industrial training institutes (ITIs). Responding to the needs of capital, the state has parcelled out the responsibility of training to these private training providers, with the educational sector being expected to take over the training responsibilities of the shop floor. The official hype around SIM has, however, subsided recently. Two major concerns have come to haunt the Skill Mission—the inability to train workers according to the expectations of industrial interests and the failure to provide jobs to those who have undergone skill training. Only 15 per cent of newly skilled workers are reported to have found jobs between 2015 and 2018 (*News Click*, 2018). Employers consider a significant section of those who received skill training to be unemployable. Multiple agencies are involved in training labour, with confusion and a lack of understanding as to what one means by skills, how skills should be imparted and what should be the curriculum and the length of skill development courses.

In this respect, importantly, there is no engagement with past skill development initiatives and no attempt to draw lessons from them. In skill development policy documents, the past appears to be a *tabula rasa*. There is no awareness of very similar issues and challenges faced by skill policies and ITIs in the past. The 2015 policy reads, ‘Our country presently faces a dual challenge of paucity of highly trained workforce, as well as, non-employability of large sections of the conventionally educated youth, who possess little or no job skills’ (MSDE, 2015, p. 2). Precisely, these concerns—the lack of a skilled workforce and a literary-oriented education system—forced the colonial state to initiate India’s first primary level practical, industrial, technical education programme in the 1880s. Continuity in terms of a mismatch between the work of training institutes and the demands of industry is even more glaring. The absence of a historical understanding in policy documents is mirrored in the scholarly literature, where the theme of skill development has been rarely explored from a historical perspective. This article is an attempt to bring these issues to light, and also to draw attention to the role of major historical events and processes in shaping the trajectory of occupational skilling in modern India, such as the introduction of modern technology, colonialism, de-industrialization and educational aspirations of the lower-class students.

This article is divided into four sections. The first two sections explore visions, policies and workings of the first official skilling programmes, and the final two sections investigate the everyday functioning and experience of skill training. The first section deals with multiple ways in which discussions and debates about, and policies on, formal skill learning took shape in colonial India, straddling the fields of education, industry, economy and labour. I will examine how imperial concerns and local pressures forced the colonial state to establish only a limited infrastructure of industrial and technical education in the late nineteenth century. Building upon this, the second section elaborates the history of the Lucknow Industrial School (hereafter LIS) and its role in the production of a trained and skilled labour force for the local railway workshop and regional crafts. I will explain how the school curriculum, textbooks and teaching methods defined and legitimized a new understanding of skill and skill training that was different from the conventional apprenticeship system—a point further elaborated upon in the fourth section. The third section provides an inside view of the LIS and its confrontation with the aspirations of students. I show how artisan students used the LIS education to acquire non-labouring government posts that defied caste boundaries of mental and manual labour. These aspirations had transformative effects on the everyday functioning and vision of the LIS. The fourth section studies the relationship between the LIS (the supplier of trained labour) and the Lucknow railway workshops (employers) in terms of expectations and concrete training. The article demonstrates that the understanding of skills and skill training that the LIS developed did not match the expectations of the railway workshop. Workshop officials constantly questioned the school's ability to train a suitable labour force.

The regional focus of this article is Uttar Pradesh, then known as the North-Western Provinces and Oudh (NWPO) and later changed to the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh in 1902, and the temporal focus is limited to the late nineteenth century. Along with contemporary socio-economic writings, this article uses historical records and digital source material held at the National Archives of India (Delhi), the UP State Archives (Lucknow), the British Library (London) and the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (Pune).

Discourse on Practical Education and the Beginning of the Industrial Institutes

By the 1880s, the colonial state felt a need to institutionalize programmes of practical and industrial education to produce industry-oriented Indians. Over the coming decades, colonial officials reminded each other that the programmes of industrial and technical education could not be implemented on a large scale in India because of its industrial underdevelopment (Swaminathan, 1992, p. 1612). Behind the rhetoric, we will see, was the colonial state's unwillingness to spend large sums of money on skilling infrastructure. Various industrial and technical education committees and enquiries—the Industrial School Committee (1903),

the Indian Industrial Commission (1916–1918), the Royal Commission on Labour (1929–1931)—show the willingness of colonial officials to engage with programmes of industrial and technical education. However, when it came to establishing an extensive permanent infrastructure of industrial and technical education, the colonial state often left the matter in the hands of private capital. We will see that it introduced industrial and technical education on a limited scale to produce skilled workers and foremen for modern industries that were critical to the political economy of the colonial state, such as railways, public works infrastructure, munitions during the war and for indigenous industries that did not compete with British industries, such as handloom weaving, carpentry and carpet making.

The immediate impetus to providing industrial and technical education was generated by a crisis in the colonial education system which came to be seen as being too literary-oriented and producing educated elites whose only aim was to secure a non-labouring government position (*Papers relating to Technical Education in India*, 1906 [hereafter *TEP*]). The crisis was deeply informed by an entrenched colonial notion that Indians as a whole were lazy, idle and superstitious. Colonial officials unanimously shared the opinion that educated Indians despised manual labour. E. C. Buck, a Bengal Civil Servant and later the head of the 1901 inquiry into the state of industrial and practical education, collected thousands of petitions from disillusioned youths in the 1880s who unsuccessfully pursued government jobs. Buck noted,

to obtain a clerkship in a Government office is, at present time, perhaps the chief object with which a native of India seeks education. He is often indeed inclined to consider that a knowledge of English, however slight, gives him a claim to be employed by the English officials. (Buck, 1883, p. 4)

The ‘native’ that Buck referred to was an upper- and middle-caste Indian who had access to primary and secondary education. Educated Indians mastered their knowledge of English with the help of inexpensive self-guides that were easily available in the book market. Texts such as *Angrezí ki pustak: Jinko ám taur par logo ne pasand kiyá hai* (The Popular English Book) and *English teacher: jis se Hindi aur Urdu jánane wálá mánush 6 mahine me Angreji sikh saktá* (The English Teacher: A Six-Month Guide for Hindi and Urdu Speaking Learners) were widely advertised in Hindi newspapers and magazines. Let us look at an employment petition of an aspirant that Buck reproduced in his collection. Written in broken English, the petition was addressed to Charles Dickenson Field, the Session Judge of Burdwan.

Sir,

Excuse intrusion as it is a petition; the necessity for some occupation that brings me bread by fair and honest means urged me to write this; and your great reputation for influence in the affairs of the state and for a high minded considerateness emboldens me to connect your august name with this petition.

Gently born but differently brought up- for it were idiotic to presume a Native youth's education is properly finished any time of his life- the premature death of my father

obliged me to leave the University before obtaining a Degree and this circumstance fixed my doom. I have tried junior teacherships and subordinate Clerkships, but without any great improvement in my condition. I have been out of employ these many months and now do I beg the favour of your kindly putting me somewhere under you that I can honestly maintain myself and those that naturally depend on me.

My qualification are soon told: this is my own hand on composition and penmanship, I can cast accounts, I am able bodied, young and willing; and very needy. My drawbacks are want of a patron and absence of certificates, and poverty, which is no crime . . . (Buck, 1883, pp. 11–12)

The trope of a dual ‘crisis’ of education pervades the writings of education officials, who refer to the reality of limited non-labouring jobs and the high aspirations of literate castes. ‘Native’ preference for government jobs and the likelihood of discontent among those failing to secure a decent employment began to be seen as an educational crisis that needed to be resolved immediately. J. C. Nesfield, the education officer of the NWPO, carried out an inquiry into the effects of the colonial education system on rural youths and reached the conclusion that the education imparted to Indians was too literary. He wrote,

The form which discontent takes in this country is not of a healthy kind for the Natives of India considering that the only occupation worthy of an educated man is that of a writership in some office, and especially in a Government office. The village school-boy goes back to the plough with the greatest reluctance; and the town school-boy carries the same discontent and inefficiency into his father’s workshop. Sometimes these ex-students positively refuse at first to work; and more than once parents have openly expressed their regret that they ever allowed their sons to be inveigled to school. (Buck, 1883, pp. 5–6)

In 1884, the colonial government ordered the provincial governments to promote practical and technical education in their respective provinces. Next year, MacDonnell, the Secretary to the Home Government, was appointed to survey the nature of existing government and private (primarily missionary) technical and industrial educational institutes in the country and to propose a road map. MacDonnell, in his memorandum, emphasized that the emerging industrial economy of India required trained and skilled workers for which training institutions were needed. He pointed out the necessity of restructuring primary and secondary schooling in order to shift the educational orientation of the masses. At the primary school level, MacDonnell recommended the introduction of drawing and ‘object lessons’ (a teaching method involving a physical object or visual aid). At the secondary school level, he proposed a bifurcation of the education system into literary and practical sides. For practical education, he advocated the setting up of technical schools at the district level (*TEP*, 1906, p. 22).

However, colonial officials in England rejected his proposed technical education saying that such plans were unsuited for yet-to-be industrialized colonies. Expenditure on such a large scale was neither profitable nor necessary. At top of the colonial administration, India was seen primarily as a market for British products and a supplier of the raw materials. An extensive technical education

programme similar to the level of England was not logical for India. Technical education in England itself was newly implemented. It had emerged as a response to the threat posed by rapidly industrializing Germany and France. It was meant to increase England's productivity and fuel its industrial revolution. In such a context, policies governing the economy of India were to be kept subordinate to the needs of the British Empire. A colonial official pointed out that it was a 'delusion' to assume that technical education in India was meant to create a labour force to industrialize India and help in reviving its old industries. J. R. Colvin, the Lieutenant Governor of the NWPO, however, clarified that institutionalized training in India was needed for the industries that came with the British rule and not so much for the hereditary or guild controlled 'caste industries' (Colvin's Minute, *TEP*, 1906, pp. 133–134).

The result of the imperial intervention was that only limited activities were sanctioned, such as the introduction of object and drawing lessons in government secondary schools and the establishment of a few technical institutes aligned to the needs of state-controlled industries (*TEP*, 1906, p. 37). However, at the local level, the nationalist critique of the colonial government's economic policies, deindustrialization of indigenous industries and a growing arts and crafts movement among colonial officials would force the state to establish industrial institutes and programmes (peripatetic weaving classes, arts and craft schools) to skill labour for craft industries that would not compete with British products. We will see that these forces also influenced the institutional trajectory of the LIS.

Due to the lack of a clear-cut central policy, the response of the local governments to industrial and technical education question was varied. Initially, only the Madras government prepared a presidency-level technical examination scheme, providing grants-in-aid to private (mainly missionary-run) industrial and technical schools, and establishing higher engineering technical institutes. These schemes were implemented loosely over the years with very little investment in establishing primary level technical institutes, producing qualified teachers and reviving local industries (Swaminathan, 1992, pp. 1616–1619).

It was only in 1886 that the issue of labour demand was discussed in the light of practical education schemes. The central government advised provincial governments to conduct industrial surveys and form expert committees to investigate the nature of industries that required trained labour. Consequently, industrial surveys were carried out in the provinces over the next two decades. In Madras, E. B. Havell did a detailed survey of industries in 1888 and concluded that a large number of indigenous industries, except for goldsmithing, coarse weaving and a few others, had declined due to the import of manufactured goods from Europe, loss of elite patronage, changes in local fashion and taste due to colonialism. The government found Havell's survey futile from the perspective of designing a technical education scheme, since Havell, being an advocate of the arts and crafts movement, did not focus on the needs of modern industries (*TEP*, 1906, p. 83). In Bengal, E. W. Collin surveyed the existing industries and recommended the establishment of technical institutes and training workshops for modern industries, such as mining and railways. The NWPO government did

not take any action. Instead, a pressure to establish industrial and technical institutes in the province was building up from the below. The local vernacular print media carried out a sharp critique of colonial economic policies. They blamed colonialism for India's deindustrialization and argued that the measures taken by the colonial state to revive art industries through art schools, such as in Punjab and Madras, were half-hearted. *Oudh Akhbār*, published from Lucknow, demanded technical schools 'so that the people may be able to eke out their living by arts and industries, and the large sums of money which they remit to foreign countries as the price of various foreign articles they have to buy at present, may be retained in the country' (*Vernacular Newspaper Reports*, 1898, p. 93; [hereafter *VNR*]). *Citizen* wrote that the colonial government was selfish. It denied higher technical education to Indians on the grounds that India was not yet ready for such high knowledge. According to the newspaper, 'this plea [was] purely imagery' (*VNR*, 1903, p. 308). *Koh-i-Núr* published from Lahore brought out two articles on the issue in January 1883 criticizing policies of the colonial government (*VNR*, 1883, p. 116). A critique of the colonial education was also reflected in the vernacular satire. A popular satirical saying in North India advised youth to forget about Anglo-Vernacular secondary education and instead to go and cut grass:

इंडिल मिडिल की छोड़ो आस
लेके खुरपा खोदो घास

'Give up all hopes for the Middle and the like [education]. Take a hoe and cut grass [for a livelihood]' (Chaturvedi, 1930, p. 178).²

By the 1900s, the nationalist critique of British colonialism was not just premised on the drain of wealth from India and deindustrialization of indigenous industries. The colonial state's unwillingness to establish industrial and technical institutes was seen as depriving India of its development potentials and thus denying it a place among industrialized countries. The Swadeshi movement and Gandhian mass nationalism promoted the establishment of nationalist technical and vocational educational institutes. A Swadeshi Cartoon Booklet published a cartoon that tied the issue of unemployment among Indians with the absence of industrial institutes in India (Figure 1).

The notion that India was poor because it lacked industrial and technical education was shared by both the colonial officials and nationalists. While the nationalist elites wanted higher technical institutes in India, a section of colonial officials was hesitant to create a large infrastructure of industrial and technical education. However, both sides came to provide higher technical education only to the educated upper castes and the middle class. Modern industries, such as, railways, textile mills, printing presses, were run by experts, skilled workers, overseers and managers from Europe. The dominance of elite castes in literary education and the colonial sociological belief that upper castes were an intellectually superior class resulted in turning the higher technical education into a privilege of the upper and middle castes. Shahana Bhattacharya, in the context

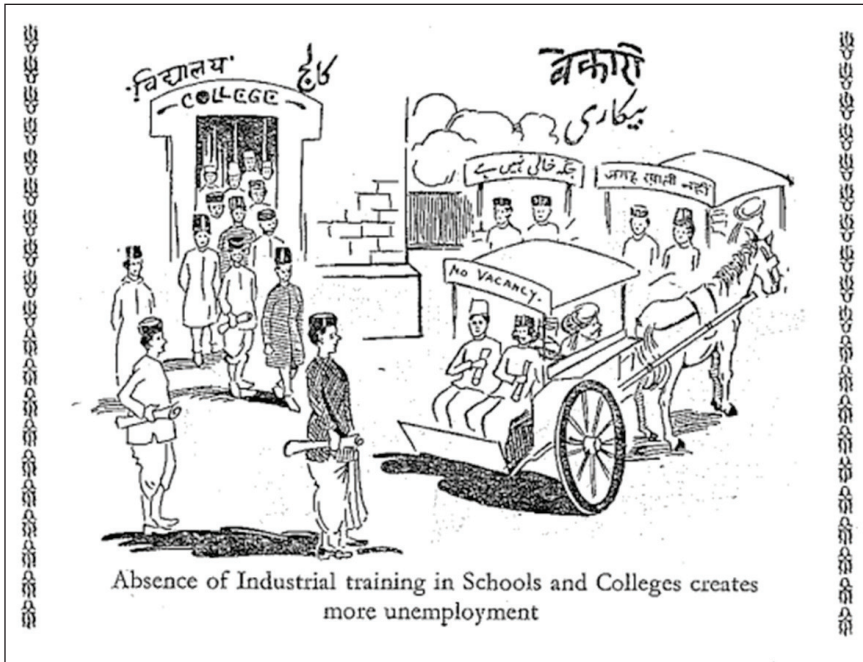


Figure 1. Absence of Industrial Training in Schools and Colleges

Source: Swadeshi League (1938, p. 47). © The British Library Board, P/T 2978.

of leather industries and leather training institutes in colonial India, shows that technical institutes remained a preserve of educated elite castes and the mass of 'outcaste' labourers continued to perform degraded manual labour. For elites, technical education rearticulated the stigmatized profession of leather tanning and production as 'science', thus allowing them to learn the trade and become an expert without losing their caste status (Bhattacharya, 2018, pp. 29–35). While the higher levels of technical education remained restricted to educated upper and middle castes, industrial education with a strong component of manual labour training, to a large extent, was opened to the labouring class. Industrial education, in such a context, was meant to manipulate traditional skills of artisans and workers in order to make them ready for modern enterprises that required knowledge of mathematics, scientific ideas and Western technology. Thus, once a concrete programme of practical education took shape, one sees the bifurcation of industrial and technical education according to the class and caste of students. But, this division was diluted by the efforts of upper- and middle-class students, who entered industrial schools (meant for artisanal classes) by displacing labouring classes. They used industrial education to gain non-labouring government positions (Report on Industrial Education: Part I, 1903, pp. 2–7). In the process, technical institutes which aimed to produce a limited class of scientific and technical experts, highly skilled mechanical labour, foremen and supervisors were favoured because of their better results.

Let me illustrate this complex entanglement of caste politics, student aspirations, imperial visions, actions of local colonial officials, the changing nature of industrial and technical institutes through the history of the LIS in its early years of existence (1892–1903).

Skills and the Lucknow Industrial School (1892–1903)

The establishment of the LIS in November 1892 was both a result of the local government's response to the imperial call for creating an infrastructure of practical education and of the local aristocrats' (*taluqdars*) demand for an industrial school in the city. *Taluqdars* saw industrial education as a progressive and modern element for the locality and as a means to revive their patronage relationship with the poor masses.³ The provincial government was acting on the recommendations of the 1890 Technical Education Committee, which proposed the establishment of an industrial school and an art school in Lucknow and the reorganization of the Roorkee Engineering College—the only higher technical education institution in the province (established in 1854)—to produce surveyors, engineers, draughtsmen and other high-grade technicians (*TEP*, 1906, p. 133). The state took over the land and money that *taluqdars* were willing to invest in an industrial institute, and the LIS was born as a collaborative institute of the colonial state and aristocrats. It was resolved that such an institution should expand the industrial profile of the city, which had several small-scale handicraft industries (weaving, pottery, metalwork, embroidery) and modern industries (railway workshops, printing presses, machine repairing shops). It was thought that the ideal students for the school were low-caste artisans who in the recent years had been demanding education for their children. Practical education fitted their labouring occupations. The principal of the Lucknow Canning College wrote to Colvin:

Why should the son of an artisan be tempted to enter a high school, to be taught to look down upon the handicraft of his father, and to have as his highest ambition the securing of an appointment as an inferior and ill-paid clerk? Better that he should be sent into an industrial school and a workshop, where his inherited aptitudes would prove invaluable to him and give him a good start on his way toward competency. He is sure to find employment somewhere . . . Why should a young man whom nature has unfitted for the study of higher mathematics or philosophy be allowed to waste some of the best years in his life in a college, striving for the unattainable? Better that he should be earning an honest livelihood in a good shed, an office, or a shop.⁴

The school was modelled on the Lahore Railway Technical School (established in 1889). Its stated objective was to produce trained male working apprentices for three railway workshops at Charbagh in Lucknow, which manufactured railway tracks and coaches and required a large number of skilled smiths and carpenters. The school began with a literary class and a carpentry workshop, and 2 years later, a smithy workshop was added. It offered a literary education and

manual labour training to the apprentices who were employed at the railway workshop and to the sons of artisans. Classes in reading, writing, arithmetic, elementary mechanics, physics and drawing were offered along with the manual training in industrial workshops under the watch of skilled artisans brought from the railway workshop.⁵

By combining the practical and theoretical aspects of a trade, the school produced a new understanding of skill and occupational training. This new understanding was based on a notion that asserted the superiority and modernity of school training over the conventional apprenticeship system. Artisans under the native system of apprenticeship became skilled by repeating actions of master artisans, but they were seen as good imitators, not creative skilled workers. They did not learn the scientific methods and principles of a trade. The knowledge of science, arithmetic, drawing, geometry, machines was essential for places like railway workshops where modern machinery was in operation under the watch of European managers and skilled overseers. Workers here needed the knowledge that would allow them to understand drawings, designs and instructions of European engineers and finish the task with a greater precision and very little wastage of tools and raw materials. They were also required to learn Western scientific weights and measurements and the names of imported machinery hitherto foreign to their tongue and ear. A little knowledge of English was thought to be necessary along with the ability to work according to the rhythms of clock time. Tara Prassano, the headmaster of the LIS and an alumnus of the Shibpur Engineering College, stressed,

Whether the students enter into workshops, or get employed as draughtsmen, or start any commercial enterprise of their own, or work in any other capacity, a fair knowledge of English would prove of great use to them. The names of tools, materials, machines, &c., are all [in] English, and they cannot understand them well unless they know the language. They would be able to exchange thoughts with the officers who almost always use English; and would not stand before them like deaf and dumb creatures, as is the case with the present class of handicraftsmen.⁶

The superiority of the LIS was premised on the fact that skills that were required for railway workshop carpenters and smiths were not possible to learn under the indigenous artisanal apprenticeship system. European supervisors, carpenters and foremen brought with them new knowledge of specific trades, new skills and new work practices. The LIS did not only impart these new skills to students but also articulated them conceptually and demonstrated them in practice through workshops. An analysis of what boys were taught inside the classroom allows us to see how new skills were transmitted and older skills of artisans were manipulated for new work settings.

In the initial years, the LIS had standardized, codified and formalized the trade knowledge of smithy and carpentry. A whole new industrial curriculum was designed and transmitted through lectures, textbooks and workshops. Textbook lessons and classroom teaching were followed by manual labour training in the workshop. In the literary class, boys learned to read and write Hindi, Urdu and

limited English from primers. They were also taught arithmetic, mensuration, and geometrical, scale and freehand drawing via textbooks. In the carpentry workshop, boys first learned to handle the tools of the trade, such as various types of chisel. *Rukhání* chisel was used to make clean cuts on wood; *majhólá*, a larger and thicker chisel, to do coarse work; *golak*, a curved pointed chisel, to cut grooves; *rammá*, a long chisel, to make mortise holes; and *girdá*, a small chisel with a rounded edge, to make lines on the wood (Amin, 2005, pp. 85–86). In the same class, they also learned an art pattern called *kingrí* to make simple borders on chairs, tables and other furniture. The second year was spent on mastering the use of *rukhání* and *kingrí* pattern along with the introduction of new art patterns, such as *lehrá* and *paunchí*. In the third year, boys mastered more sophisticated tools of the trade: *ára* (large saw), *ári* (smaller saw) and *rándá* (plane). In the fourth year, students used their newly acquired skills to experiment on various types of locally available wood. They learned to make mortise and tenon joints—a skill to join different parts of wood to make a chair, stool or a table. In the fifth year, the more sophisticated techniques of dovetail and scarf joints were taught, which were used to make table drawers, cupboards and scientific apparatuses. The syllabus also included learning the skill of making roof trusses and centring, wood turning, polishing and painting.⁷

In the smithy workshop, lessons in metal began with the learning of filing and heating iron. After that, boys were taught methods of hitting hot metals precisely and moulding them. Boys learned to make nails, bolts with square heads, rivets and tongs. In the third and fourth class, they learned techniques to make hammers, axes, hexagonal and octagonal bolt heads and nuts. In the fifth year, they learned welding, screw cutting, use of lathe, drilling and punching machines. They also learned to identify and use different varieties of iron and steel. A monograph on the trade and industries of Lucknow City informs us that the city imported varieties of *wiláyatí* (foreign) iron. The *chaddar* variety was used to make house utensils; the *sikh* variety to produce chains, hinges and gratings; and the *pattiya* variety to make cartwheels (Hoey, 1880, p. 141). It was in the sixth year that sophisticated metals such as tin and brass were introduced to students. In the literary classrooms, boys learned metal properties and temperatures required to melt various metals.

As mentioned before, what distinguished the instruction received in the school from the local apprenticeship system was the use of trade textbooks. All the boys had to read an Urdu textbook, *Technical Dialogue*. For the carpentry class, a textbook titled, *The Roorkee Treatise on Carpentry*, was listed in the course. Prepared by the Roorkee Civil Engineering College, it explained and visualized skills on the paper through drawings, texts and pictures. In 1897, Mitchell's *Carpentry Workshop Practice* replaced *The Roorkee Treatise*. The former was used in the technical classes of the City and Guilds of London. However, it seems that instead of the full textbook, only selected portions, such as lessons on lap and secret dovetail, square scarf and combined joints, were taught. The book carried images of designs, which helped boys to imagine what they were making and how they were making. Some of the designs from the book are given in Figure 2.

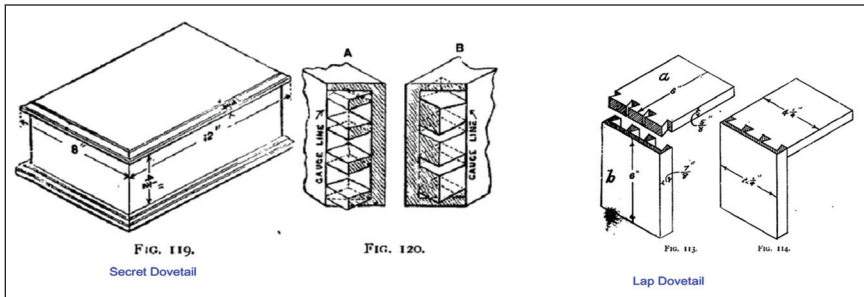


Figure 2. Secret and Lap Dovetail

Source: A. G. Mitchell and Mitchell (1896, pp. 82, 85).

To prepare workers as per the requirements of the Charbagh workshop, modern machines were either bought or borrowed from the railway workshop for training purposes. For example, the carpentry class got two lathes for wood turning and a fret-sawing machine for wood cutting in 1895. In 1893, Chhedi Mistri, a ‘competent’ workman from the Charbagh Railway Workshop, was employed as the instructor of the smithy workshop. There was a constant effort on the part of the school to make their education and training relevant for the railway workshop. Students passing from the school did join as workmen in various railway workshops and mechanical establishments in North India. For example, in 1895, 15 students joined the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railways, 6 joined the Rohilkhand and Kumaun Railways, 4 joined the Indian Midland Railway workshop and 2 students joined the Lucknow Railway station as fitters, clerks, draftsmen and blacksmiths.⁸

On the one hand, the LIS produced skilled workers for the railway workshop. On the other hand, it also produced skilled workers for emerging industries outside the railway workshop and influenced the hitherto conventional training methods of trades (carpentry, iron work, glass-blowing). Goods manufactured in the school were sold in the local market. Whether these were locks, kitchen equipment, metal tools produced in the smithy class or chair, tables, doors from the carpentry class, everything was sold at the market price. Carpentry students made doors and windows of colonial offices and *taluqdars*’ houses. They also produced cartwheels, which were in huge demand in the region. In Lucknow, landed elites and wealthy castes such as Brahmans and Banias had entered into the lucrative business of cart transport (Nevill, 1904, p. 53). With the introduction of new courses on glass-blowing, dyeing and clay modelling after 1894, the LIS was no longer an institution merely catering to the skilled labour demand of the railway workshop. The deindustrialization critique of the colonial economy and a growing local pressure to revive indigenous industries, as discussed in the first section, forced the LIS to negotiate its objectives. Its aim now included training skilled workers to revive already declined local crafts. It was believed that if the skills of conventional artisans could be modified in the light of newer technologies and advanced trade methods, there was a potential to revive and

improve indigenous industries. The class in glass-blowing was started in 1894–1995 with a ‘crude native mud’ furnace and rudimentary tools. It was taught by one of the two surviving hereditary glass-blowers of the city. Boys were trained to make bulbs, flasks, plain jars, bottles, flanged jars, oil pots, water jugs, smoking pipes, funnels, lanterns, bell jars and other glass articles of everyday use. They also learned to make sophisticated lamps, which illuminated city streets, railway stations and *taluqdars*’ houses. However, soon there were complaints that the glass-blowing class would not be successful unless better qualities of raw glass and modern methods of glass treatment were used for the training purpose. It was suggested that only new machines and methods could revive the fast disappearing industry from the competitive Austrian and German glass industry (*General Report on Public Instruction*, 1897, p. 85; [hereafter RPI]). But the colonial state was unwilling to spend large sums of money in modernizing the trade. Consequently, the glass-blowing class failed.

Students’ choices further reinforced the linkages between the wider market, skills and the school curriculum. The subject preference of students in the LIS informs us about the hierarchy of trades in a rapidly changing political economy and labour market of the city. The school statistics indicate that the majority of boys opted for the carpentry and smithy classes. In 1895, 116 boys chose carpentry, 44 smithy and 13 glass-blowing. In 1900–1901, 101 boys opted for the carpentry class, 55 for iron work, 13 for glass-blowing, 13 for dyeing and 22 for clay modelling. Although the school administration largely allotted trades to students based on a student’s caste and occupational leaning and seats available in a classroom, students asserted their own choices. When the smithy classes were opened in August 1893, the headmaster reported the following, ‘a large number of boys are anxious to join the blacksmith’s department, but I am unable at present to comply with the wishes of all. They are being gradually transferred from carpentry to blacksmith’s shop as vacancies arose by the withdrawal of boys (*RPI*, 1894, p. 70)’. It appears that students’ trade choices were shaped by the prevailing market wages. The Lucknow Gazetteer reported that while an ordinary carpenter, smith and mason earned about ₹7 and 8 annas monthly on an average, a skilled artisan, a mechanic or a plate layer employed in a railway workshop received comparatively higher wages. A skilled carpenter employed in the building industry earned about 6 to 8 annas per day in the 1880s (Hoey, 1880, p. 68). However, compared to carpenters, wages of smiths witnessed a sudden increase due to the emerging trades, which employed Western machinery (Nevill, 1904, p. 4). The growing demand for smiths along with an increased wage influenced the classroom composition of the LIS. With new technology and new forms of occupation, certain tasks and skills within one particular trade became more popular and valuable over others. Thus, in the carpentry trade, skills of a joiner were considered to be far more complex and valuable than that of a wood painter and polisher. While the LIS played a key role in legitimizing these differences through its knowledge economy and in defining the new regime of skill and skill training, the transfer of skill was not a straightforward process. Rather, as we will see, it was mediated by students’ aspirations and shifting visions of colonial authorities.

Social Composition, Aspirations and the Lucknow Industrial School

The LIS in the initial 2 years after its establishment was only open to students from the artisanal class. The state recognized the poverty of artisans and made education in the LIS free. Books, tools, notebooks were also given freely to students. In 1894, the school began to admit boys from the ‘gentlemen’ class—middle- and upper-caste Muslims and Hindus. Unlike the artisan class, sons of the gentlemen class had to pay a small fee. The number of free students got limited to 100. Changes brought by the new policy were already visible in the same year. Out of the total 135 students admitted in 1894, 45 students came from a non-artisanal background. They were sons of shopkeepers, teachers, cultivators and clerks. In terms of castes, we see a fair balance of upper- and lower-caste students: 15 Brahmans, 11 *Kayasths*, 10 *Lohars*, 7 *Ahirs*, 5 *Barahis*, 4 *Lodhs*, 4 *Kahars*, 3 *Telis*, 2 *Baids*, *Khattris*, *Bhats* and *Banias* each, 1 *Kori*, *Tamboli*, *Sonar*, and *Mali* each. The rest were entered as Muslims (51) and Christians (13) (*RPI*, 1894, pp. 69–70). Students with an artisanal background, mainly the children of the railway workshop artisans, still dominated the institution (89 against 45). However, their number got reduced significantly in the coming year. For example, in 1895–1896, out of the total 160 boys admitted to the school, only 106 had artisanal parentage (*RPI*, 1896, p. 45). By 1899 and 1900, their number fell to 17 and 10, respectively. Artisans increasingly found it difficult to keep their sons in the school. Extreme poverty could have been one reason as it was the time of recurring famines in the region. In 1894, 38 students left the school between June 6 and August 21 to earn wages (*RPI*, 1895, p. 67). The number of students with a clerical background rose to 46 (*RPI*, 1900, p. 51). The sudden disappearance of labouring class students was accompanied by a sudden increase in the number of students from non-manual labouring classes who were also upper and middle castes. The headmaster complained that the majority of boys from the ‘respectable classes’ were ‘refuse’ of the general schools where they had failed in their studies, and their parents had then sent them to the LIS in the hope of them getting jobs in the technical line (*RPI*, 1895, p. 66). This fragment of evidence does suggest the extent to which industrial education was still considered a taboo among the conservative elite castes. However, this shift in the social composition of students could not only be attributed to the poverty of artisans. The development of the LIS as an institution that opened doors for students to be employed as teachers, clerks, typewriters, supervisors, foremen—jobs which upper and middle castes considered their caste privilege—also contributed.

As discussed earlier, literary training in vernacular language, English, and drawing along with classes on mensuration and arithmetic for 4 hours in a day were an integral part of the industrial school curriculum. The knowledge of drawing and English that would-be skilled artisans was required to have also made them eligible for clerical and drawing teacher positions. Drawing lessons had been recently introduced in the government secondary schools, giving rise to a significant demand for art teachers. Boys from labouring classes found an opportunity to pursue a non-labouring respectable career. They constantly applied for a

government job with a fixed salary, which until now were usually reserved for the 'respectable caste' students. In this way, they sought to defy and overcome the constraint of caste hierarchy and the division between mental and manual labour. By applying for teaching positions, they attempted to surmount their fixed occupational identity that came with their birth in a particular caste. The stigma attached to manual labour often shaped their understanding of respectable and non-respectable work. Artisanal students used education provided in the LIS to disturb the rigid norms of work and identity underpinning their lives. On his visit to the school in March 1893, C. H. T. Crosthwait, the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor General, found that some artisanal boys used the 'school as a means of obtaining an ordinary primary education' with 'no intention of becoming artisans'.⁹ While these developments in the school led to an argument between school authorities and the local government over the question of making the school curriculum more practical and oriented towards manual labour, the school, in the meantime, got flooded with students from non-labouring backgrounds who saw a career opportunity for themselves, after being trained at the school.

Now both artisanal and non-artisanal class boys used the school to get non-labouring jobs. The tension between students and the school became more visible forcing the school authorities in 1897 to increase the time spent on manual labour training in workshops and drawing by 8 hours in a day. Consequently, five most regular Muslim students (Zakir Husain, Kamar-ud-Din, Mukhtar Ahmad, Muhammad Sultan and Raza Husain) and six Hindu students (Ram Autar, Chhote Lal Sahib, Mohan Lal, Nanhe Lal, Mahadeo Prasad, Bhagwan Chand and Niranjan Nath) left the school.¹⁰ The general attendance fell from 170 to 117. Boys complained to the headmaster that 8 hours of labour exhausted them, leaving no energy for any literary pursuit in the night. Besides, their parents did not like that their sons were made to labour in the school for long hours.

These attempts at social and status mobility by students did not go down well with the school authorities and the government. E. C. Buck, who was appointed to inquire into the state of industrial and practical education in 1901, concluded that throughout India, industrial schools were being used by a class of students who were not interested in doing manual work. He argued that an illiterate artisan boy trained in his fathers' workshop was a better skilled worker than the schooled trained artisan.¹¹ Later in 1902, the Industrial School Committee Inquiry, which examined the differences between the indigenous apprenticeship system and the industrial school system, further reiterated the failure of the industrial school. It suggested that workshop training occurring in real market conditions was the best method of skilling workers. The report pointed out, 'Workmen educated far above the average of their "class" become unfitted for work, discontented, and give trouble to the foreman and the management' (Report on Industrial Education: Part I, 1903, p. 7). The local government, now under immense pressure, announced the abolition of literary education from the LIS in 1902. A full-time industrial workshop designed to offer only practical training was opened in a busy commercial street of Aminabad where students worked as *apprentices* and produced goods for the local market under the watch of a skilled master artisan. Students and the railway workshop apprentices were allowed to learn literacy

skills in a night school, located in the LIS building. But, the students complained that it was difficult for them to attend the distantly located night school in the night after working in the workshop. The night school failed, and so did the LIS apprentice workshop system. Out of the total 155 enrolled students in 1902, 141 boys withdrew (*RPI*, 1902, p. 24; 1903, p. 33). The LIS was eventually declared a 'failed' institution and was closed down in 1903. It was later reopened in its old style (literary education combined with manual training) but was reorganized as a technical institute under the watch of a European principal, P. H. Swinchatt (*RPI*, 1903, p. 33). Under his charge, the name of the school was changed to the Lucknow Technical School, and it now aimed to produce mechanics, fitters, electricians, repair workers, motor drivers, carpenters, smiths for modern industries, including the railway workshop.

Conflicts with the Railway Workshop

There is very little information in the archive about the Charbagh railway workshop, and my request to use the archival material held by the workshop was rejected by the local officials. My analysis in this section is based on very fragmentary evidence, but it suggests that railway workshops in colonial India had developed a sound system of training workers since the introduction of railways in the 1850s. Industrial schools, while supplying the needs of skilled labour for railway workshops, came to exist in tension with the apprenticeship system developed at the railway workshops. From the limited records, we find that even though officials and skilled workers of the Lucknow workshop were involved in establishing and running the LIS, the workshop had a tumultuous relationship with the school. With the very concept of establishing a feeder school for the workshop, not only a new category of skilled worker that was trained differently had emerged but also an institution was born that threatened the idea of the railway workshop apprenticeship system. When opinions of local colonial officials were gathered in the 1880s as to the need of an industrial school in Lucknow, Colonel J. G. Forbes protested. In 1888, he wrote to the provincial government that *mistris* in railway workshops, foundries and other government workshops trained their own workers and as such, no practical demand existed for an industrial school (Colvin's Minute, *TEP*, 1906, pp. 91–92). He suggested that railway workshops should be recognized as real technical schools. However, his opinions were sidelined, and the LIS was established. Expert master artisans from the railway workshop were appointed as teachers, and officials from the workshop attended meetings to decide the curriculum and syllabus of the school. But after a few years, when it became clear that the school was being used by students for purposes other than attending the railway workshop, the workshop officials launched a full critique of the LIS. They began to complain that students who joined the workshop were weak in their training. In 1899, the Superintendent of the Charbagh Locomotive and Carriage Workshop wrote to his higher authorities that he was dissatisfied with the quality of trained boys. In his letter, he questioned

the ability of the LIS to train expert workers. According to him, the training provided by the school was uneven, lacked thoroughness and real practical experience. He validated the opinion of Forbes that workshops were the best place to skill workers. Apprentices in a workshop, he argued, could not abandon training as they liked. Workshop rules and norms bonded them through a formal or an informal apprenticeship contract, and apprentices were forced to work in all weather conditions. In a workshop, a senior skilled artisan supervised their work, taught them methods and pointed out their mistakes. During the apprenticeship, the apprentice selected his favourite branch (brass foundry, smith's shop, fitting shop and carpenter's shop). By supervising apprentices' actions and their bodies and paying them for their work, the workshop turned a 'native child' into one of the finest workmen in 5 years.¹² Contrasting this to the training of an industrial school, he wrote,

Now, in Industrial School, there is no work a boy can be employed at for a couple of years during the time he is learning to work, simply because it is only a school, and there is not that variety of jobs to be worked at like there is in a workshop, and there is no pay or incentive to cause a boy to work; the result is, he either gets tired of doing the same thing over and over again, or else after he gets a smattering of his trade he thinks he has learned all and is far too superior to go and start work at a workshop as a workman. Another point against such a school is, that there is no demand for men such as are turned out, as every large concern has lots of boys who are learning to work, and who are sons and relatives of men in the same works, and who in turn drop into the places of the older men as they leave, and who are glad to advance step by step, and are really worth their money as time goes on. They are far superior to any school-made workman, and they do not think half so much of themselves as the latter, and consequently are more in earnest with their work and will go on improving; whereas the school-made workman after his five year's training has to start pretty much as an apprentice if he gets into a workshop, and has to begin to learn all over again.¹³

The disentanglement of workers' training from the shop floor produced tensions between the school skilling programmes and the shop-floor skilling. How shall we explain these conflicts and failures in the presupposed seamless flow and interdependence of the modern education sector and industry? Was it because the two systems generated two distinct notions of skills and skilling that were not compatible with each other? And, if they were not compatible, why was it so?

Louis Althusser's formulation that education reproduces 'diversely skilled labour power' and produces conditions conducive to capitalist production outside the shop floor is not very helpful here as it does not consider the problem of skill transference, differing expectations of students, authorities and teachers (Althusser, 1972, pp. 133–154). From the records of the Charbagh workshop and other similar railway workshops, it is clear that railway workshops had created their distinct system of labour training. Locomotive and carriage workshops employed varieties of skilled European and Indian workers and unskilled Indian coolie labour. Among the skilled worker category, workshops hired enginemen, engine drivers, mechanics, turners, draughtsmen, carpenters, smiths, firemen,

fitters, stationary engine driver, boiler smiths, spring smiths, carriage turners, painters, coppersmiths, sawyers, brass founders, tin men, iron moulders, carvers and carriage builders.

We get a detailed picture of the earliest system evolved to train natives and Eurasians at the Greater Indian Peninsula Railway (GIPR) workshops (locomotive and carriage) during the 1860s from a report by F. I. Cortazzi, the Locomotive Superintendent. Out of 1122 workers employed in the two GIPR workshops (Byculla and Lanowli in Maharashtra) in March 1861, only 56 trained workers were recruited from England, the rest (82 Europeans, 24 Eurasians and 960 Indians) were trained inside the workshop. Except for the highly skilled posts such as of enginemen and foremen which were reserved for Europeans, natives were trained inside the workshop to be employed as machine-men, turners, moulders, carpenters, smiths and fitters. The workshop hired young boys as apprentices who were trained by senior workers. Cortazzi reported that the two workshops were training 76 boys as carpenters, boilermakers and painters in 1861. But these boys were not under any formal apprenticeship contract. However, the table that he presented at the end of his report also included 76 bounded apprentices (60 as fitters, 12 as carriage builders, 3 as smiths and 1 as a painter). He did not explain why certain boys were under a formal contract and others were not. One reason could be that the contracts made it difficult to get rid of inefficient or deviant apprentices. Cortazzi hinted towards this line of argument, 'my system being that if I find a lad does not progress in his business to get rid of him and put another in his place who do the shop more credit'.¹⁴ The Under Secretary of State for India, Herman Merivale, wrote in 1861 that the GIPR system of training 'natives' inside the workshop was a cheap and efficient system of procuring skilled labour for railway workshops. He wrote that importing skilled workers from Europe was a costly affair that other railway companies should not follow. Cortazzi argued that while it was good to train Indians for skilled work, certain jobs such as of enginemen and foremen required higher mental abilities that only Englishmen possessed. 'Natives have no so much nerve and presence of mind in emergencies', he wrote.¹⁵ But his fixed racialized ideas of skilled work, grounded in the assumed superiority of the White race, were often challenged by workers, and once he was forced to employ an exceptionally skilled Indian worker as the foreman of turners.

The GIPR workshops continued to train Indians through the apprenticeship system and discriminated them on the grounds of race. When Burnett-Hurst examined the GIPR workshops in the 1920s, a European foreman told him that 'native machine-men' were not mechanics as

they have no knowledge of mechanics and they carry out their duties in a perfunctory manner. So long as the man is confined to the particular task to which he is accustomed and which he has been trained to perform, so long will he carry out his work. He has not the ability, however, to apply his knowledge. (Burnett-Hurst, 1925, p. 98)

Hurst confirmed that the system of training apprentices from a young age was still in practice. He was told that workshops employed 11,000 'men and boys' in 1921.

Boys joined the workshop as apprentices on screwing/drilling machines when they were 16 or 17 years old and learned their way up for 5 years (Burnett-Hurst, 1925, p. 99). From being unskilled coolies, they become skilled machine-men. But many remained unskilled, and others were discriminated on the ground of race (Sinha, 2012, pp. 325–323) and for their lack of scientific and technical knowledge.

Evidence suggests that railway workshops cultivated a very specialized task-oriented notion of skill among Indian workers. They designed a formal and informal apprenticeship system that valorized manual dexterity and discouraged the transfer of scientific and technical knowledge to Indians as such knowledge, tied to higher posts, was seen as an exclusive preserve of Europeans and sometimes of Anglo-Indians. European engineers and foremen praised Indian workers for their skills (manual dexterity and the ability to finish a specialized task), but maintained that they were incapable of possessing broader scientific and technical knowledge, necessary for highly skilled technical posts of enginemen, foremen and overseers. Workers who surprised European officials with their scientific, technical and overseer skills became exceptions. A racialized notion of knowledge and skill and a specialized task-oriented training of young workers under the watch of superiors, both native and European, endorsed the concentration of workers from a particular caste, family or region in one department. Hurst saw that complex machines were looked after by Parsis, 'other machines' by Ratnagiri Marathas and Punjabi Muslims, moulding by Kamatis from Hyderabad, smithy by Boris Muslims, brass foundry by Marathas, carpentry by Gujaratis, painting by Pardeshis (Burnett-Hurst, 1925, p. 98). This mode of training workers within the bounds of the workshop was also prevalent at the Charbagh workshop. The aforementioned educational official Nesfield visited the Lucknow workshop in 1882 and wrote down about workers, their education, skills and work experiences. He found that workers earned their way up through hard work, loyalty, experience and constant skilling within the demarcated occupational spheres where Indians were employed. Thus, a Brahman boy, who entered the workshop as a helper supplying drinking water to workers and assisting artisans, learned about machines and work pattern and gradually became one of the skilled workers. We do not know which department he joined. Nitin Sinha (2012, p. 324) in the context of Jamalpur railway workshop showed that those who started as cleaners could become firemen, drivers and shunters after their training. Nesfield was told that literacy was not a formal criterion for becoming a fitter or a supervisor, but fitters whom he met were literate and had used literacy to advance themselves. Chedi, a Lohar caste fitter, rose from the rank of workers to become a supervisor, but over the years he had learned to scribble Kaithi to note orders from supervisors. For workers, he vernacularized English technical terms and names of machines. Nesfield also met fitter Sheo Din, turner Ram Khilal, carpenter Santu, moulder Kedi Ram—all skilled workers using their literary skills on the job (Nesfield, 1883, pp. 90–100).

Railway workshops had produced a culture of skilling under a paternalistic tradition that was governed by the hierarchies of caste, race, region and age. Even though many students with the scientific and technical knowledge and

workshop experience from the LIS joined railway workshops, they were looked down upon by the officials and senior workers and were rarely given direct appointments as skilled workers. Instead, they were hired as apprentices (beginners), earning wages similar to the workshop apprentices. However, the necessity of literate and more thoroughly, scientifically and technically trained workers continued to be a key issue for the workshop, suggesting that the notion of skill had to be broadened to include the knowledge of science, maths and technology for a successful development of railway workshops. The Lucknow railway workshop in 1922 envisaged a technical institute, parallel to the status of the Lucknow Technical School. Literate and schooled apprentices working in the workshop were given admission to attend six lectures in a week. Existing textbooks in the market, which were considered to be too abstract and theoretical, were rejected. Instead, the teacher became more important. A good instructor was appointed on a salary of ₹95 per month.¹⁶ There is very little information available on the exact nature of training in the technical institute. It is known, however, that before this instructor was employed, the chief draftsman instructed apprentices for 2 hours. While the instructor of European and Eurasian apprentices received ₹95 per month, the instructor of native apprentices received ₹30 per month suggesting that racialized profiling of skill and skill training continued to be relevant inside the workshop.

Conclusions

This historical account highlights four points that are of relevance to contemporary policymaking on occupational skilling. First, I have tried to show that meanings of skill in the past were often very fluid. What may be considered skills in a school may not be seen as skill at the shop floor. In the aforementioned case, the LIS operated on a notion that the skilled worker was both a practical and theoretical person who was not only to be trained in manual labour through workshops but also in work ethic, discipline, sincerity, and, most importantly, the knowledge of science, mathematics, drawing, vernacular languages and English. However, the railway workshop, where the boys were to be employed, had shaped a different notion of skill and skill training which was mediated by the power relation of race, caste, age, region and by the strict hierarchies of mental and manual labour. Here, scientific and technical knowledge was the privilege of Europeans, and Indians were *seen* as having a 'sheep mentality' who were good at doing specialized routine tasks (manual dexterity) but were incapable of learning scientific and technical principles of machines. While these boundaries were not always very tight, these racialized logics of skills seem to govern the overall life of railway workshops in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Attempts to breach these power relations by industrial school boys were not welcomed as boys educated at the LIS were too theoretical for the railway workshop officials and workers. The lack of the same theoretical and scientific knowledge was seen as the cause of Indian workers' inefficiency. Thus, in the foundry work in the GIPR workshop, Indian workers were seen as seven times inefficient compared to a

European worker. In the mechanic section, the efficiency of Indian workers was just one-third of a European mechanic (Burnett-Hurst, 1925, p. 100). Skill emerged as a quantifiable entity in which Indian workers were far behind.

Second, I have pointed out a conflict with regard to the methods of training between the ITIs and the industrial shop floor. The two did not have seamless connections. We saw that programmes of industrial and technical education did not directly translate into skilling. Employers of the Charbagh workshop considered that the learning of trades via classrooms and textbooks produced inferior workers because schools lacked thoroughness, compulsion and harsh work regime of the shop-floor apprenticeship. However, these notions about school-trained workers were never neutral but were informed by the power politics of railway workshops and workers. Educated, well-trained, scientifically informed workers from outside threatened the authority of workers who built their status inside the workshop by working hard, showing their loyalties to superiors, and by learning skills for years.

Third, I have highlighted the problems of skill transference in an industrial institute. The LIS history shows that aspirations of students could radically transform the nature of an ITI. What was to be taught in the school could not always be imposed from the top, but students constantly ruptured these visions and forced institutes to consider their aspirations. In this particular case, labouring caste boys, who for centuries were denied secondary education, used the school to fulfil their dreams of getting respectable jobs as teacher and clerks, and posts which required intellectual skills and were usually reserved for educated upper and middle castes. However, the LIS was soon hijacked by the elite castes of Lucknow City who threw out the poor labouring classes from the school and asserted their rights over the new education and related government jobs. Results of this intense politics of caste, competition for government jobs and student aspirations were that the LIS became an institution of the middle-class and elite castes and ultimately failed. When it was reopened, its curriculum included training that was heavily shaped by the aspirations of students and the state's desire to produce mechanics, drivers, foremen.

Fourth, I have shown that colonial policy towards industrial and technical education was a product of many visions: visions of the educational officials, nationalists, conservative landed elites, arts and crafts movement advocates, industry personnel, school headmasters. The LIS was never an institution with fixed goals; its objectives kept changing according to the need of colonial officials, local pressures and students' aspirations. The colonial state's unwillingness to spend large sums of money on local industries and in developing India's technical education infrastructure resulted in materializing only a few limited government technical institutes which were subordinated to the needs of British colonialism, while also being reshaped by the aspirations of students.

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Notes

1. In post-independent India, the state established a few ITIs, enacted an apprenticeship act in 1961 and instituted an advisory body called, the National Council for Training in Vocational Trades (Pendse, 1967). The overall effort of the state was extremely limited, and a number of private ITIs had emerged.
2. The term ‘Idil Middle’, used in this rhyme, referred to Anglo-Vernacular schooling.
3. Letter no. 1192E/III, File 413/2, Education Department Proceedings, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, July 1893, India Office Records (IOR)/P/4295, British Library (BL), London.
4. Letter dated 25 September 1891, File 413/2, EDP, NWPO, March 1893, IOR/P/4295, BL.
5. Letter no. 2042E/III, *ibid*.
6. Letter no. G/ 2330, dated 30 September, *ibid*.
7. Syllabus of the Lucknow Industrial School, *ibid*.
8. Report by Captain E.H. de V. Atkinson, R.E., dated 13 February 1903, Home (Education) July 1903/ Nos. 61/ B/ National Archives of India (NAI), Delhi.
9. Minute on the Lucknow Industrial School, File 413/2.
10. Letter no. 238, dated 2 November 1897, File 413/2.
11. ‘Industrial education in India’, Indian Textile Journal (ITJ), April 1901, p. 186.
12. Letter no. M/28, from the Locomotive and Carriage Superintendent to the Manager, Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway, dated 19 January 1899, File no. 27, Appendix A, IOR/L/PJ/6, BL.
13. *Ibid*.
14. Papers on training of natives for engine drivers and so on, 19 July 1861, No. 707, L/PWD/2/108, BL.
15. *Ibid*.
16. Notes, Scheme for the training of Indian apprentices in the Locomotive and Carriage and Wagon Shops, Lucknow, Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway/Railway/Establishment/ January 1922/ 2450-E-19/3-16/A, NAI.

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The ‘Untouchable School’: American Missionaries, Hindu Social Reformers and Educational Dreams of Labouring Dalits in Colonial North India

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This article explores the history of Dalit education beyond the usual analytical frames of access and exclusion. It suggests that the mere inclusion of marginalised groups in educational institutions does not guarantee equality. Rather, inclusion can set the process for generating newer forms of exclusion and suppression. It investigates Dalits’ dreams of education in Uttar Pradesh by examining hitherto unexplored records of the American Methodist Church missionaries and the Arya Samaj from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I argue that education provided to Dalits was limited, hierarchical, and practical, and was subordinated to the missionaries’ and Arya Samajis’ visions of maintaining Dalits as productive, disciplined, loyal bodies—wage workers, housewives, farmers. Dalit dreams had to create a space for themselves within a hierarchical, limited world of education and opportunities.

Keywords: Dalit education; Dalit labour; wage-worker; American missionaries; rural schooling; Dalit dreams; North India schools; ‘untouchable’ education; Arya Samaj schools; industrial education

This article discusses how Dalits of Uttar Pradesh (henceforth UP) negotiated their dreams of education and non-labouring positions through schools established by the American Methodist Episcopal Church (henceforth MEC) missionaries (1850–1930) and later by the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform organisation (1920–30).¹ It will show that Dalits' desire for schooling got intimately tied to their aspirations of escaping manual labouring jobs and claiming 'respectable' non-labouring jobs (teaching, preaching, clerkship)—a preserve of 'literate' elite castes. Missionaries and missionary education cultivated these desires and dreams, but they also contained them by offering limited and differentiated education to Dalits. So much power ascribed to schools by labouring castes worried missionaries and Arya Samajis who saw Dalits primarily as labouring bodies and offered an education that educated Dalits but as docile, industrious, clean, morally-sound, loyal religious bodies—male Dalits as industrial and farm workers and female Dalits as productive housewives. These educational visions and Dalits' aspirations evolved over the years as the mission spread and constituted each other mutually through dialogues. Dalits' demand for education was shaped by their experience of subordinate socio-economic status and religious bodies' educational policy. Similarly, visions of missionary education were shaped by religious bodies' needs (conversion, need for labour, teachers, and pastors) and students' aspirations. I show that both missionaries and Arya Samajis focussed on the issue of access—opening schools for Dalits and making them literate—and, prepared them to accept their roles as manual workers by denying them higher literary and scientific education or by offering industrial education. Through this article, I want to stress

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that the processes of educational inclusion are often accompanied with conflicts, exclusion, and suppression of dreams that we need to accept and examine critically. Access to educational institutions alone does not guarantee the equal participation.

The question of Dalit education has been framed through the lens of access and exclusion, the role of elite actors in establishing schools for Dalits, caste discrimination inside educational institutions, Dalits' struggles and initiatives for establishing schools and using education for generating socio-economic equality.² Scholars have debated the role of Christian missionaries and the Arya Samaj—the two most important private actors of education in modern India—in opening schools for Dalits. Hayden J. Bellenoit in his work on missionary education in UP stressed that missionary schools were primarily meant for the literate elite—castes, while 'nearly all converts in north India' remained illiterate.³ While such conclusions are overdrawn, missionary education that emerged in UP was deeply hierarchal and castiest. Missionary education, in general, had been seen as providing education to Dalits and challenging caste inequalities (G.A. Oddie) and generating socio-political consciousness and socio-economic mobility (Duncan Forrester, D. Kooiman), spiritual emancipation (J.W. Gladstone).⁴ Scholars

² Shailaja Paik, *Dalit Women's Education in Modern India: Double Discrimination* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Eleanor Zelliott, 'Dalit Initiatives in Education, 1880–1992' in Parimala V. Rao (ed.), *New Perspectives in the History of Indian Education* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014), pp. 45–67; Philip Constable, 'Sitting on the School Verandah: The Ideology and Practice of "untouchable" Educational Protest in Late Nineteenth–Century Western India', in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 37, no. 4 (2000), pp. 383–422.

³ Hayden J.A. Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860–1920* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 76.

⁴ G.A. Oddie, *Social Protest in India: British Protestant Missionaries and Social Reforms, 1850–1900* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1979); Duncan B. Forrester, *Caste and Christianity: Attitudes and Policies on Caste of Anglo-Saxon Protestant Missions in India* (London: Curzon Press, 1980); Chinna Rao Yagati, 'Education and Identity Formation among Dalits in Colonial Andhra' in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.), *Education and the Disprivileged: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India*. (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2002), pp. 84–120; R.E. Frykenberg, 'Modern Education in South India, 1784–1854: Its Roots and Its Role as a Vehicle of Integration under Company Raj', in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 1 (1986), pp. 37–65; Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India: The London Missionary Society in South Travancore in the 19th Century* (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1989); J.W. Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and People's Movements in Kerala: A Study of Christian Mass Movements in Relation to Neo-Hindu Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala, 1850–1936* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984); Joseph Bara, 'Tribal Education, the Colonial State and Christian Missionaries: Chhotanagpur', 1839–1870 in Bhattacharya, *Education and the Disprivileged*.

have problematised the radical image of missionary education through different regional case studies, but they continue to see missionary education unproblematically. Koji Kawashima in the context of Hindu ruled Travancore princely state argued that missionary education got subjected to the social conservatism and pressures of the local state by the 1890s.⁵ Philip Constable in the context of the Bombay Presidency reemphasised that missionary education operated in constraints set by the colonial state and Indian society, and the demand for education was led by ‘untouchables’.⁶ Within this historiography, there is a consensus that missionary education was crucial for waging anti-caste struggles. The nature of missionary education vis-à-vis Dalits’ desires is not given importance. Otherwise, missionary education has been seen as a tool for facilitating imperial ideology, nationalist ideas⁷, proselytization and conversion⁸, producing religion-based community identities⁹. Same is true in the context of studies on the Arya Samaj and Dalit education in UP. The uplift agenda of the Arya Samaj—opening schools, public wells, temples and educating values of cleanliness—is seen as educating Dalits who later in their career became Dalit leaders and led anti-caste organisations.¹⁰ Ramnarayan Rawat’s study shows that Arya Samaj’s programmes appealed to Chamar leaders who were claiming a superior caste status (Kshatriya) in the 1920s.¹¹ However,

⁵ Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore, 1858–1936* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶ Constable, ‘Sitting on the School Verandah’, pp. 383–422.

⁷ Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire*.

⁸ Jonathan C. Ingleby, *Missionaries, Education and India: Issues in Protestant Missionary Education in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000).

⁹ Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012).

¹⁰ Badri Narayan, ‘A Book Also Travels: Circulating Small Booklets in Dalit Poorva’, in *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2010), pp. 1–15. Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002), chap. 1; Ramnarayan Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability: Chamars and Dalit History in North India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 140–41; Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 155–57.

¹¹ Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability*, pp. 136–41.

he does not point out that Arya Samajis formed alliances with landlords to keep Dalits in labouring positions and made schooling subordinate to these goals.

Rupa Viswanath in her recent work on Pariahs in Tamil Nadu provides a radically different view where she shows that missionaries believed in and practised social hierarchy and difference—a point also made by Jana Tschurenv with regard to gender, race, and education in the early nineteenth century India.¹² Viswanath argues that missionaries did not ‘uphold an egalitarian ideology, except insofar as that meant equality before God alone’ and were interested in replacing the harsh and cruel ‘oriental slavery’ with gentler ‘free servitude’. According to her, missionaries’ critique of caste was directed against the ‘religious’ aspects of castes (rituals, superstitions) and not against the labour, political, and economic aspects (labour extraction and occupational hierarchies).¹³ Within this overall argument, schools for American missionaries, according to Viswanath, were a means to produce self-disciplined, thrifty ‘free servants’ content with their rural labouring positions, and for Pariahs to alter their conditions of subordination in their ghettoised neighbourhoods lacking school buildings.¹⁴ While I agree with her reading, I also show that education, both to missionaries and Dalits, meant more than what she suggests, and its meanings were shaped by constant dialogues and negotiations.

This article provides a history of Dalit education from the perspective of elites’ visions as well as of subalterns’ desires, highlights the role of transnational actors (the global) in producing a discourse and practice of Dalit education in the Hindi and Urdu speaking area of north India to which regional actors responded, and shifts the scholarly attention to UP where there has been hardly any work on missionaries and Dalit education. The first section of the

¹² Jana Tschurenv, ‘Incorporation and Differentiation: Popular Education and the Imperial Civilizing Mission in Early Nineteenth Century India’ in Michael Mann and Carey Watt, (eds), *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 93–124.

¹³ Rupa Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 88–89, 15–19, 40–99.

¹⁴ Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem*, p. 66, 75.

article, by doing a close reading of the MEC records kept in digital forms at the Yale University Library, explores American missionaries' engagement with the education of high-castes, Dalit desires and demand for education, and Dalits' conversion. It shows how Dalit conversion to Christianity and mission's need for a trained workforce led missionaries to open their schools for Dalits and offer respectable non-labouring positions to them. However, missionaries' prejudiced views about Dalits made them see Dalits as mere labouring entities. Mass conversion of Dalits from the 1890s, an expanding mission with first-generation Christian leaders, and a highly differentiated system of education meant that quality education could only be given to limited converts which produced a deeply hierarchical Christian community divided on the lines of education, region, and occupation. The second section analyses the entry of the Arya Samaj in the region in the 1920s and how they expanded educational opportunities for Dalits by establishing exclusive Dalit schools. Arya Samajis' alliances with local landlords and businessmen to crush Christian and Islamic influence among Dalits led them to establish basic literacy schools that perpetuated Dalit subordination. I will stress that there was a continuity between missionaries and Arya Samajis in terms of imagining Dalit lives as labourers and offering only limited, practical education to Dalits.

Dalit Dreams, Education, and the American Methodist Missionaries

When MEC missionaries established their first mission (Bareilly, 1857) in Oudh and Rohilkhand, a region situated between the Ganges and Himalayas (Image 1) in north India, they followed the advice of Alexander Duff, a famous Scottish Church missionary, of inducing high-castes to Christianity by establishing English schools for them.¹⁵ They combined it with bazaar preaching.

¹⁵ J.L. Humphrey, *Twenty-One Years in India* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1905), p. 34.

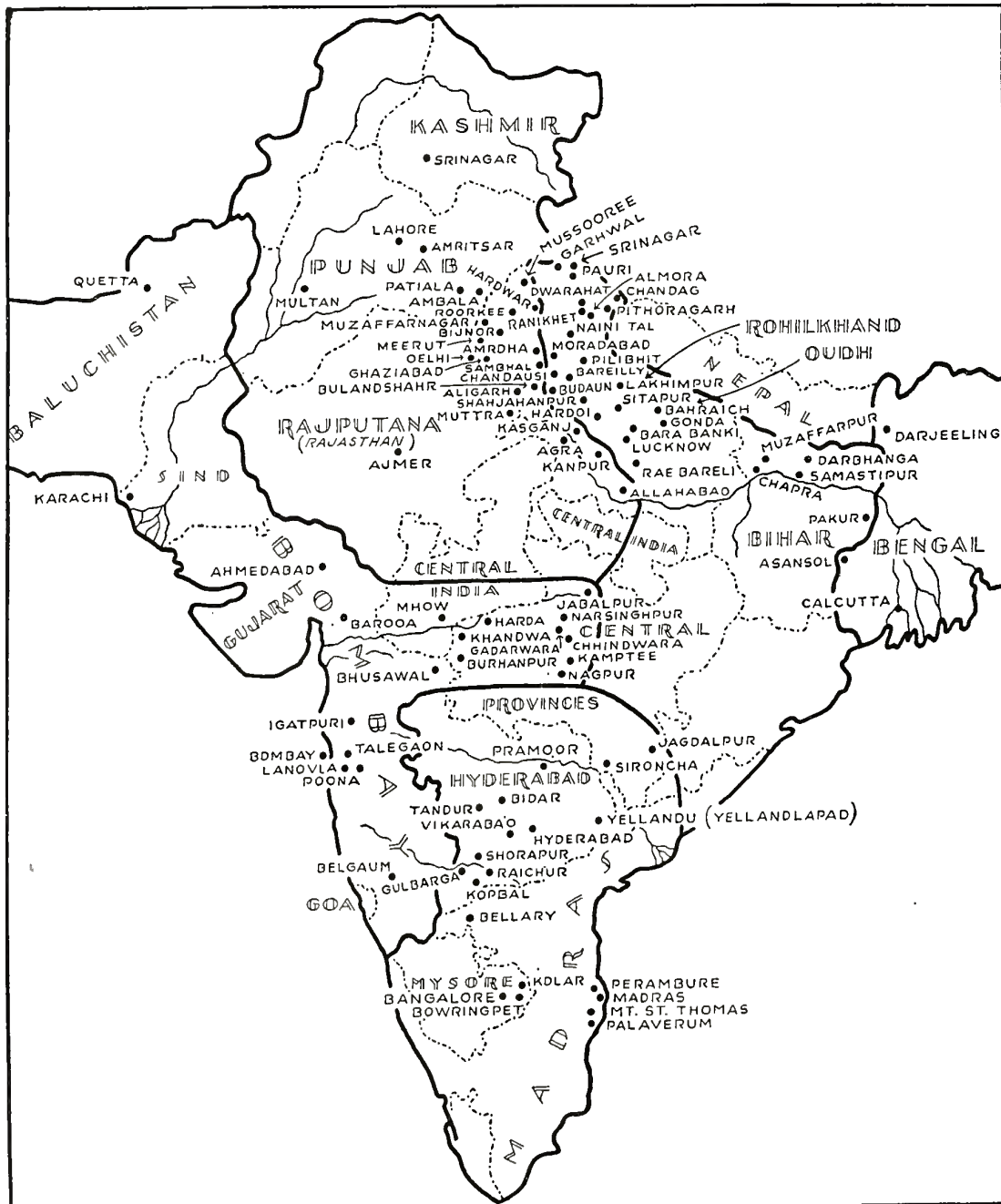


Image 1, MEC mission stations, 1895. Source: Wade Crawford Barclay, *The Methodist Episcopal Church, 1845–1939: Volume 3: Widening Horizons, 1845–95* (New York: The Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, 1957), p. 638.

Over the years, missionaries established primary, secondary, and high schools in the region and learned Hindustani for street preaching. However, both methods largely failed in bringing

converts. James Thoburn, one of the earliest missionaries and first Bishop of the MEC, remembered, ‘the whole work seemed so utterly unpromising that at times the thought could not but present itself that it might as well be given up’.¹⁶ The congregation was formed of native assistants provided by the American Presbyterians and domestic servants of missionaries.¹⁷ Successful conversions only happened when Dalits themselves came to them or missionaries visited their neighbourhoods. William Butler, the founder of the MEC, wrote,

A group of two or three dozen houses will be found on the outskirts of the town, inhabited by Chumars [Chamars], or leather-dressers; another by Chuhras, a very low caste of labourers, and so on. Going into one of these quarters [a mohalla] the workers began to hold meetings in a more formal way than possible in the bazaars.¹⁸

In 1859, a mass of ‘untouchable’ Mazhabi Sikhs from villages surrounding Moradabad city reached out to missionaries asking for education and employment. Fifteen or twenty of them were baptised.¹⁹ A Church Missionary converted Chamar came to MEC missionaries asking for their help in establishing a school for the Chamar community. The school he established began with fifty Chamar students.²⁰ In the following year, Chamars in Budaun asked for schools.²¹ Subsequently, Bhangis (sweeper caste) from Budaun who were mainly agrarian labourers and brick-makers by profession reached out to missionaries.²² Schooling, sometimes coupled with employment, was a primary demand of Dalits. It had emerged as an important outpost for conversion among Dalits. In 1872, Zahur-ul-Haqq, a preacher and later the first native presiding elder of Amroha station, noted that Chamar weavers at Hasanpura village

¹⁶ J.M. Thoburn, *India and Malaysia* (Cincinnati: Cranston & Curts, 1892), p. 264.

¹⁷ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, p. 264.

¹⁸ W.C. Barclay, *The Methodist Episcopal Church* (henceforth MEC), 1845–1939, *Volume 3* (New York: The Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, 1957), p. 464.

¹⁹ Humphrey, *Twenty-One Years*, pp. 115–16.

²⁰ *Report of the Third Decennial Missionary Conference Held at Bombay, 1892–1893* (henceforth TDMC), Vol. 1 (Bombay: Education Society’s Steam Press, 1893), p. 29.

²¹ TDMC, Vol. 1, p. 32.

²² *Ninth Annual Report of the Mission Stations* (henceforth ARMS), 1873 (Lucknow: American Methodist Mission Press, 1874), p. 10.

(Amroha circuit) were enthusiastically educating themselves and sending their children to the missionary village school. He alerted that a mass conversion among Chamars would break out soon in the neighbouring Moradabad district.²³

Dalits demand for schools needs to be looked in the context of their subordinated position in the society and their exclusion from indigenous and government schools. To be a Dalit was to perform unpaid or little-paid forced labour (*begar*) for the elites—landed and rich upper-castes (Hindu and Muslims) and local officials. Rawat shows that landlords since the late nineteenth century became more brutal and harsher in extracting *begar* from Chamars to cultivate their own lands.²⁴ Dalits had to offer their grass, hens, eggs, milk, and grains whenever elites demanded. Economic oppression was coupled with social oppression that had a gendered element. Dalits were denied entry into schools, motels (*sarais*), temples, drinking place, and trams; forbidden to celebrate their marriages and carry water while going to the latrine; their women were denied to wear ornaments. Any form of insubordination was met with shoe-beating, burning of fields and houses, harassing and raping of their women, and a public spectacle of lynching to death.²⁵ White missionaries opening schools for Dalits and visiting their ghettoised neighbourhoods, situated at the outskirts of villages and towns, altered the social fabric and power relations of villages and towns. MEC Missionaries wrote that elite Hindus and Muslims often became hostile to converts as they feared that Dalits would no longer be submissive to them, their children would be educated. ‘In the elevation of the Chumars’, elites saw ‘their own degradation’, wrote Thoburn.²⁶ Aspiring Dalits moved to Christianity with huge risks. Dalits who used missionaries to get education took years to converts as they

²³ *Eighth ARMS*, 1872, p. 5.

²⁴ Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability*, pp. 72–73.

²⁵ *Annual Report of the All India Shradhanand Dalitodhar Sabha* (henceforth AISDS), Mar. 1927 to Mar. 1928, (Delhi, 1928), pp. 9–21. See also the oral evidence of Mr Baldeo Prasad Jaiswara and Mr Hari Tampta of the Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association, and the Note of Dissent by Babu Ram Sahai, *Indian Franchise Committee Report*, IOR/Q/IFC/73, India Office Records, British Library.

²⁶ J.M. Thoburn, *My Missionary Apprenticeship* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1884), p. 129.

feared persecution by caste elites and ostracization by their own community members.²⁷ Dalits feared that once missionaries were gone from their villages, there would be no one to protect them.²⁸

Dalits did not join schools just to be literate, but they wanted to attend schools, be eligible for jobs that were usually usurped by educated elite castes who attended schools. Upper-castes, from the beginning of the century, had used missionary schools to learn vernacular and English education and apply for jobs as scribes, teachers, interpreters, clerks, postmen, advocates—positions on which the everyday functioning of the local colonial state rested.²⁹ Once educated, Dalits asked missionaries to employ them as teachers, interpreters, preachers, and assistants. J.L. Humphrey, the missionary who converted Mazhabi Sikhs, gave details of the two converts, Main Phul and Gurdial Singh. Phul attended a missionary school, became a teacher, and returned to his village to teach and preach. Gurdial became an assistant of E.W. Parker, the presiding elder missionary and later the Bishop of the mission. Gurdial requested Parker if he could bring his wife from the village which Parker agreed. She got educated and became a village teacher. Missionaries' need for a local Hindustani speaking workforce and their inability to convert high-castes provided opportunities for 'outcaste' labouring bodies to emancipate themselves from the bondage of forced manual labour and caste exploitation. There were just 209 converts in 1864. Missionaries educated them and hired them as servants and assistants, preachers, exhorters, Christian community leaders, and most importantly as teachers.³⁰ By 1884, the MEC in North India employed 166 native preachers, 425 teachers, 646 Sunday school (religious singing schools) teachers.³¹ We do not what proportions of them were Dalits, but Thoburn in the 1890s commented that there were more than a hundred 'depressed

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 129–30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–36.

²⁹ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *History of Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 307–22.

³⁰ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, p. 267, 269.

³¹ William Butler, *From Boston to Bareilly and Back* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1885), p. 475.

class' teachers.³² The alleviation of Dalit converts to such salaried positions had symbolic meanings for Dalits. Such employment, education, and the company of a White person had given them a sense of sudden importance. A Dalit Kabirpanthi Guru converted to Christianity, adopted a Christianised name (Andrias), and became a salaried preacher.³³

But missionaries did not convert all Dalits that came to them. Later, in their reflections, missionaries regretted their prejudiced actions.³⁴ At that moment, missionaries were not too happy about Dalit conversion as it degraded the status of mission and Christianity. In 1859, Butler wrote to the Missionary Society at home that a large amount of money had been locked in the fine school and church buildings for 'perishing multitudes for whose souls no man cares'.³⁵ Taylor, the successor of Butler, had gone to the extent of saying that Dalits could not be raised above their 'servile' state and funds spend on them were 'a great hindrance to the spread of the Gospel among the better classes'.³⁶

Converting upper-castes was a fetish among missionaries. Missionaries strongly believed that upper-castes, especially Brahmans, were superior, cultured, dominant, and intelligent beings in comparison to 'outcastes' who lived in their enslaved state and showed apathy to everything that was progressive and modern including education.³⁷ Missionary records celebrated the conversion of high-castes in their reports by giving names and photographs of the convert, circumstances of the conversion, and truthfulness of the convert's religious beliefs.³⁸ Such an honour was rarely reserved for Dalit converts. Missionaries constantly reinforced the view that high-castes formed the best, true, and intelligent converts by picturing them against Dalits who, according to missionaries, were poor, hungry, 'unclean', immoral and

³² Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, p. 406.

³³ Thoburn, *My Missionary Apprenticeship*, pp. 126–27; Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, p. 266.

³⁴ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, pp. 266–67.

³⁵ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 467.

³⁶ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 649, see the footnote.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 646.

³⁸ *Eighth ARMS, 1872*, pp. 16–17.

joined Christianity for socio-economic reasons. Thoburn in his writings on Dalits wrote that the ‘depressed classes’ were not only superstitious, timid, destitute, uncivilised but also repulsive (carrion-eaters) and of low character.³⁹ Missionaries’ love for high-castes shaped their hierarchical educational programme. The majority of their educational resources, especially the higher education, continued to be devoted to the educational desires of elite Hindus and Muslims, even though the majority of converts were Dalits. They were not ashamed of maintaining exclusive Dalit schools, called Chamar and Bhangi/Mehtar schools, exclusive Christian schools for converts who were mainly ex-Dalits, and general schools primarily catering to caste Hindus and Muslims. Justifying the hierarchised education system to American readers, Thoburn wrote, ‘we have long since learned that it is useless to fight against either wind or tide. The people of India, like the people of America, will send their children to schools which are near to their own social level’.⁴⁰ Hierarchies of caste, class, and colour became sharper after the primary education level. Missionaries maintained Anglo-vernacular boarding schools and high schools for elite castes and English boarding schools for Eurasians and Europeans. Poor Dalit converts were kept out of these institutions. Fees in these schools ranged from US\$1 to 2.50 per month.⁴¹ High-caste students were taught geometry, science, English literature, high math. In contrast, converts were just taught reading and writing. Only best converts were given scholarships to attend free Christian boarding schools and the Bareilly Theological Seminary. At the bottom were the free orphanage-cum-boarding schools for waifs and the poorest. Thoburn stressed, ‘... even the poorest of our Christians do not care to send their children to be associated with them [orphanage school students]’.⁴² Take a closer look at the hierarchised educational structure of Chandausi, a sub-circuit of Moradabad station, in

³⁹ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, pp. 400–03.

⁴⁰ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, p. 335.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 334–35, 342.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 335.

1881. The MEC maintained a general Anglo–vernacular boys’ school, two separate schools for Chamars, and one school each for Hindu and Muslim girls.⁴³

Serving elite castes gave missionaries an acceptance and legitimacy within the local society in the post-revolt period.⁴⁴ Educational institutions, supported by the Grant-in-aid scheme of the colonial government, provided symbolic power to the mission and identity to missionaries. Even though MEC missionaries had realised that their schools did not return any high–caste converts,⁴⁵ they continued to maintain schools for elites. The major beneficiaries of missionary education were non–converted elite castes. In 1873, the MEC mission ran 64 vernacular schools with 2253 students, 78 girls’ schools with 1560 students, 33 Anglo–vernacular boys’ schools with 2650 students, and 4 Anglo–vernacular girls’ schools with 444 students in the 19 stations of north India in 1873. Altogether, there were 190 schools with 6836 students. At that time, the mission only had 876 full baptised members and 691 probationers.⁴⁶ Despite producing a hierarchised and differentiated education system, missionaries maintained their self–image as the only agent of caste liberation, ‘human equality and progress’ in the region.⁴⁷ They placed themselves against high–castes who did not allow Dalits into schools and the colonial government who never implemented its open–to–all educational policy.

The mobility provided by missionaries was limited and forced by circumstances. Had high–castes converted, missionaries’ reaction towards Dalits would have been different. Dalit converts were rarely educated and trained to become teachers in caste high–schools where only caste Hindus and Muslims studied and taught under the headship of White Christians.⁴⁸

⁴³ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 615.

⁴⁴ MEC missionaries understanding of the local society was profoundly shaped by the ‘horrors’ of the 1857 revolt when the very first mission of the MEC in Bareilly was burnt down, members beheaded, and a bounty of Rs. 500 was placed on the head of Butler. Barclay, *MEC*, p. 452.

⁴⁵ Thoburn, *My Missionary Apprenticeship*, pp. 198–99.

⁴⁶ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 487.

⁴⁷ Humphrey, *Twenty-One Years in India*, p. 58.

⁴⁸ Thoburn, *My Missionary Apprenticeship*, p. 202.

Missionaries took the credit for any aberration.⁴⁹ Dalits had to create a space for themselves within this limited and differentiated education that was opened to them for the first time by missionaries. Otherwise, their lives were fixed as labouring bodies, often as wage workers.⁵⁰ Missionaries' early attempts to settle Dalits as manual labourers failed and they blamed Dalit's uncivilised, uneconomic, and corrupt character for failures.

In the 1860s, missionaries secured huge wasteland grants in Lucknow and Shahjahanpur from the government and began settling Dalit converts as tenants who would make the land fertile, cultivate it, and pay the land rent to missionaries. They also established a carpentry industrial school in Bareilly to teach converts carpentry. Such acts of landlordism and producing wage-workers failed severely.⁵¹ In his diary, Thoburn noted various incidences of missionaries' benevolence and converts' unwillingness to work hard and honestly, temptations to use credit money for immediate comfort and show uneconomic behaviour and insubordination.⁵² An industrial association was formed to give credits to farmers for seeds, day labourers for carts, and weavers for yarn, but it also failed. Missionaries blamed the failure on the childlike impatient behaviour of converts. Thoburn writes that once he had arranged apprenticeship contracts for a dozen of converted children to work as bricklayers under an English engineer, but converts threw their tools as they wanted adult wages, not the apprentice wages. A second attempt to provide work to forty converts as bricklayers also failed. He noted, 'All went well for two or three days; but as soon as their stomachs were well filled, and they had a little surplus money in hand, they became insubordinate, made unreasonable demands, and finally left in a body and went back to their village homes'.⁵³ Various other efforts to establish factories and farm colonies failed.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 649.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 479, footnote,

⁵¹ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, pp. 270–71.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 272–74.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 274.

⁵⁴ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 479, footnote; Butler, *From Boston to Bareilly*, p. 369.

Converts' unease to work as labouring entities, in contrast to their success as teachers, preachers, exhorters, assistants that missionaries commended, brought the conflict between missionary and Dalit desires at the forefront. Missionaries' failure to settle converts as agrarian wage labourers, coolie labour, and craft workers was reflected in their U-turn on the position of employing converts. Thoburn wrote, 'It does not seem to be God's plan to gather out the converts from among their countrymen, but rather to encourage each man to remain in the place where the providence of God has placed him...'⁵⁵ He quoted Ellice Hopkins, the author of *Work Among Working-Men*, to argue that it was 'sin', not poverty, that kept lowest classes in their position.⁵⁶ Such a position framed Dalits' oppressed conditions as a product of Dalits' own attitude, behaviour, and action. Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in Tamil Nadu believed that Pariahs were their 'own worst enemies'.⁵⁷ Missionaries' new conviction that Dalits should remain in their existing vocations freed them for finding alternative employment for Dalit Christians.

Missionaries' framing of the poor male Christian converts as wage workers and female converts as productive housewives was more apparent in the two orphanage-cum-industrial schools established in 1860. Orphaned boys and girls, collected during various famines, along with the children of the poorest converts were taught and trained at the Bareilly female orphanage and the Shahjahanpore boys' orphanage. Because of their orphaned status, missionaries had greater control over the lives of these children. Other than giving a basic literary education, missionaries trained girls in sewing, knitting, cloth-making, domestic-work and boys in farming, carpentry, metalwork, shoemaking, rope-making, and tailoring.⁵⁸ And, whenever needed, especially in the initial decades, they picked up smart boys and girls to

⁵⁵ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, p. 270. See also, William Taylor, *Four Years' Campaign in India* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), pp. 158–59.

⁵⁶ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, p. 274.

⁵⁷ Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem*, p. 66.

⁵⁸ Butler, *From Boston to Bareilly*, pp. 316–337, 363.

further train them for jobs (teaching, medical, preaching) that the mission required. Out of 182 boys of the Shahjahanpore Orphanage that Butler traced in the late 1880s, 107 reported to be working as mission workers (41 as preachers, 27 as teachers, 19 as missionaries, 8 as exhorters, 4 as doctors and apothecaries), 36 as skilled artisans, servants, farmers, clerks, and 39 as miscellaneous (failures, dead, removals). And out of 124 girls passed in the same period, 8 became doctors, 5 dispensary and hospital assistants, 28 school teachers and zenana visitors, 84 wives of mission workers and converted Christians.⁵⁹ Over the years, more and more students had to settle in labouring positions. However, the framing of children's lives as labouring entities was challenged from the below. J. Blackstock, the in-charge of the Shahjahanpore Orphanage, remarked in 1892,

There seems to be very strong amount of opposition on the part of natives Christians to have their youth learn any trade or engage in any kind of manual labour. Frequently impertinent letters come to us, telling us that they did not send their brothers or cousins, as the case may be, to work, but to be taught, and if we do not do that to send them home. This prejudice is due, in part, to the low estimation in which any kind of physical labour is held by the people of India.⁶⁰

By the late 1880s, the MEC mission began mass conversion of Dalits in UP. Missionaries found that in contrast to individual conversion when a large neighbourhood/clan accepted Christianity together, the fear of persecution and reverse conversion was significantly reduced.⁶¹ Caste/clan was recognised as a powerful tool of solidarity.⁶² Chamars, Lal Begis, and Bhangis converted in hundreds. These conversions happened in the background of recurring famines, growing poverty, and a slight alleviation in the status of a few converted Dalits. The MEC Christian community in north India increased from 9226 in 1887 to 32992 in

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 367–68.

⁶⁰ *TDMC*, Vol. 2, p. 507.

⁶¹ Raj Bahadur Sharma, *History of Christian Missions: North India Perspective* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1988), pp. 129–31.

⁶² Frank W. Warne, 'India's Mass Movements in the Methodist Episcopal Church', in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 6, no. 2 (1917), pp. 193–208.

1891.⁶³ In Agra, 2000 Dalits working as leather workers (*rehgers*), street and road builders, agrarian labourers, sweepers, and scavengers converted in 1892. In Aligarh, 5751 Chamars, Muslims, and Kachis converted. In Allahabad, Dalits and low-castes who worked as servants in hotels and private homes converted. In Cawnpore, Dhanuks, Chamars, Lal Begis, Mallahs, and Kachis converted.⁶⁴ By 1895, a total of 252 stations were established in five conference zones: North India (the region between the Upper Ganges and Nepal and Tibet) with 99 stations, North–West India (the region south and west of the Ganges) with 76, South India with 27, Bengal–Burma with 25, and Bombay with 25 (Image 1). The Christian community grew from 26611 full members and 43899 probationers in 1895 to 71000 and 181000 in 1920, and 103000 and 220000 in 1939.⁶⁵

Mass conversions had posed several serious questions in front of the mission. What should be the missionary responsibility towards educating the mass of Dalit illiterates? What should be the aim of education and who should finance it?

MEC missionaries accepted that Dalits sought baptism for varied reasons. The official history books of the MEC presented that while a few groups joined to save themselves from starvation during the famine, others, the ‘less desperate’, joined because of the better economic prospects and greater comfort for themselves and their children—education, food, property, better-furnished living quarters.⁶⁶ Missionaries wrote, ‘it [Christianity] opened to them doors of opportunity that for a hundred generations had been closed. It alone offered them education, a self-respecting status, and improved condition’.⁶⁷ Yet missionaries insisted that these conversions were religiously motivated.

⁶³ J. Tremayne Coplestone, *History of Methodist Missions. Twentieth-Century Perspectives: The Methodist Episcopal Church, 1896–1939, Vol. 4* (New York: The United Methodist Church, 1973), p. 789.

⁶⁴ Warne, ‘India’s Mass Movements’, p. 195.

⁶⁵ Coplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*. pp. 788–811, 1155; Barclay, *MEC*, pp. 638–39.

⁶⁶ Barclay, *MEC*, pp. 646–48.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 646; See also, David Mosse, *The Saint in the Banyan Tree: Christianity and Caste Society in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 53–55.

For many baptism meant ostracism from those nearest and dearest, in some cases even from wife and parents. While the convert stood to gain economically, at the same time he was paying a price. Again, what might be interpreted as an economic motive may have been, and often was, accompanied by a realization of the powerlessness of his former religious faith, of the helplessness of the idols to which he paid obedience, and a disgust for practices associated with their worship.⁶⁸

MEC missionaries' simultaneous acceptance and denial of the socio-economic motives of Dalit converts and the ultimate framing of mass conversion as a religious phenomenon was also a way to limit missionary actions in the realm of social. E.W. Parker, the head missionary in Moradabad, wrote to the All-India Missionary Conference (1892-93),

Many of them [Dalits] have an idea of "moving on". Many places they have broken away from their old traditions to some extent, and are doing work their fathers did not think of ever attaining. Being thus willing to rise, they will take hold of those who may seem able to aid them; hence the way is open to teach and lead them. *While there is encouragement in this point, there is also danger to be guarded against, lest the benefits of being raised socially become the motive that draws them to Christianity.*⁶⁹

Missionaries, including Parker, agreed that converts should at least be literate to read Christian literature.⁷⁰ The reality was that many converts did not receive any education⁷¹ and there were not enough schools for new converts. Questions were raised in 1889 as to why the mission was spending large sums of money in educating non-Christians when the mission itself needed a large trained and educated workforce. For the purpose, US\$70000 were appropriated from the home office in 1891. In 1892, Bishop Thoburn started training 500 children as teachers.⁷² Fundamental changes were made in the organisation of the mission with greater powers and responsibilities being shifted to Indians. The elevation of the best Indian converts to the position of missionaries, first in 1864 as exception and then in 1882 as a policy, was a

⁶⁸ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 648.

⁶⁹ *TDMC*, Vol. 1, pp. 27-28.

⁷⁰ Barclay, *MEC*, pp. 188-89.

⁷¹ *Tenth ARMS*, 1874, p. 20, 24.

⁷² Barclay, *MEC*, p. 610, 644.

radical step in the history of foreign missions⁷³, but it was a move to make the mission a self-supporting Church. Indian missionaries got similar privileges and rights as an American missionary—the privilege of heading a mission station, voting over financial and ecclesiastical matters, and sitting in the Bishop’s councils and cabinet.⁷⁴ By 1895, the number of native Christians who were members of the central committee (the North India Conference) increased from 8 in 1877 to 62 in 1895 and of American missionaries from 24 to 25. The number of ‘native local preachers’, mainly coming from Dalit background, increased from 51 in 1877 to 231 in 1895.⁷⁵

By the late 1890s, missionaries lacked fund to finance village schools, train teachers, and provide quality education.⁷⁶ Congregations suffered from what missionaries called ‘spiritual illiteracy’.⁷⁷ Missionaries insisted that stations and circuits became self-supporting, converts paid for their education, and education get limited to providing mere religious education (skills of reading and writing).⁷⁸ Converts in powerful positions collected funds from the new poor converts and established evangelical schools. A preacher-cum-teacher alone looked after 14 *evangelistic* schools in 1888 with students distributed in 100 villages.⁷⁹ In Kasganj, about 1400 persons converted to the MEC in 1893 and gave Rs. 540 for schools to Hasan Raza Khan, the presiding elder (*chaudhari*), who could only run 15 schools with that money. He wrote,

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 611; James P. Alter, ‘American Presbyterians in North India: Missionary Motives and Social Attitudes under British Colonialism’, in *Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 53, no. 4 (1975), pp. 291–312, pp. 303–4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 611.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 611.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 644–45.

⁷⁷ Copplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*, pp. 826–28.

⁷⁸ *Reports and Minutes of the North India Conference, MEC*, (henceforth RNIC), 1903, pp. 52–53. Barclay, *MEC*, pp. 644–45.

⁷⁹ *TDMC*, Vol. 1, p. 32.

These newly baptized people entreated us very much to open small schools amongst them for the education of their children, so I opened fifteen small schools, but I could not do anything for other stations where similar help was needed.⁸⁰

The proportions of uneducated Dalit Christians increased. In 1892–93, only forty percent (3142) of 7884 children attended schools.⁸¹ Converts were asked to pay one-tenth of their earnings to the Church. Often not able to pay in cash, the poor converts paid in grain. *Kauria Paltans* (Cowrie Army) were created in Sunday schools who brought cowries, grains, and lentils to the mission.⁸² However, the crisis deepened when a series of famine, plague and cholera epidemic hit the region in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Not only was the ability of the convert to contribute financially got reduced but the mission also received a large number of converts. Concerned with limited American financial support and the prospect of baptising 10 to 15000 people at once, Hasan Raza Khan wrote to American missionaries, ‘About 40 or 50 congregations have no teachers at present and members come to us and ask for teachers. Others send similar requests, telling us that the mission has forgotten them. They cry out that they with their children are left in ignorance’.⁸³ ‘Send us teachers! Give us instruction!’ was what converted Mehtars, Chamars, and Dhanuks asked repeatedly.⁸⁴

Until the 1910s, missionaries did not establish a plan to handle the mass conversion. In 1915, a plan was drafted to secure US\$27900 from India and America, but it was only enough to educate 16000 children. The mission had 60000 children who had no access to schooling.⁸⁵ The plan was not realised. However, US\$40000 came in from America in 1916–17. In 1918, India’s Mass Movement Commission established to support mass

⁸⁰ *Annual Report and Minutes of the North-West India Conference: Methodist Episcopal Church* (henceforth RNWIC), 1894, p. 2, 25.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁸² *RNWIC*, 1898, p. 31.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *RNWIC*, 1894, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Copplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*, p. 827.

conversion decided to spend US\$137,000 for ‘30 training school teacher, 11 training school buildings, 509 training school scholarships, 70 primary school scholarships, 15 new missionaries, 188 preachers, 208 village schools, and 11 mission plants’.⁸⁶ But only US\$47000 of the promised money reached to the mission. MEC missionaries repeatedly reported that there were considerable problems in educating Christian communities located in distant rural locations.⁸⁷ Bijnor in the 1920s had 45 village schools with 408 Christian children but hardly any student could read beyond the first page of the primer. ‘Most seemed to be learning the alphabet “forever”’, reported an inspecting missionary.⁸⁸ Naturally, very few rural Christian students made to the MEC middle Anglo-vernacular schools, high schools, and colleges located in towns and cities. As early as 1903, it was reported that the MEC community was going through a process of socio-economic inequality. Two classes among the Christian community were visible—one literate, intelligent, rich class that resided in small towns and cities and had access to service class jobs and the other uneducated poor class that resided in villages and hamlets.⁸⁹ While the rural Christian community suffered from the lack of education or standard education, the urban Christian community, mainly comprising of second and third generation Christians, did not only benefit from the advance educational institutes but also usurped 95 percent of the total educational fund.⁹⁰ This was the emerging dominant picture even though a few stations like Hardoi and Bareilly–Kumaon defied these trends.⁹¹ Missionaries reported that while rural Christian continued to be engaged in caste–stigmatised ‘ancestral callings’ (as agrarian labourers, leather–workers, farmers, scavengers), the urban Christian community entered

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 831–32.

⁸⁷ *RNIC, 1921*, pp. 100–3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁸⁹ *RNIC, 1903*, p. 53.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

into ‘respectable’ professions.⁹² They got government and non–government jobs as skilled workers in the railways and printing presses, shoemakers, tailors, doctors, clerks, domestic servants of the White master. It was from the decently educated urban Christian community that the majority of teachers, pastors, preachers of the MEC were recruited.⁹³ This continued to be the case after the 1920s, and MEC authorities accepted that they did little to resolve the tension.⁹⁴

Along with reducing the extent of education for rural converts and making education limited to basic literacy, MEC missionaries embarked upon making the higher education for converts, if any, more practical and vocational that suited to their visions of keeping Dalits as wage workers. Progression of Dalits was framed within the labouring world. Thus, missionaries claimed that Christianity was pulling out Dalits from their slavery like status to better–paid manual work.⁹⁵ Mass conversion of Dalits and the custody of thousands of famine children throughout the subcontinent forced all major missionary societies to embark upon industrial missions and industrial education. Industrial missions were a strategy to make missions self–supporting and train converts in useful crafts and industries.⁹⁶ At the 1902 Madras Decennial Conference, missionary bodies unanimously agreed that industrial work should form ‘an essential element in mission enterprise’ and be considered as ‘spiritual work’.⁹⁷ The formal recognition of industrial work as a ‘spiritual work’ was a big step as it legitimised economic and industrial enterprises of missionaries, which until then were seen

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *RNIC*, 1921, pp. 57, 61, 104.

⁹⁵ *RNIC*, 1908, p. 45.

⁹⁶ I discuss industrial missions in one of my forthcoming articles. See also, Arun Kumar, *Learning to Dream: Education, Aspirations and Working Lives in Colonial India (1880s–1940s)*, PhD thesis (Germany: University of Göttingen, 2017), chap. 2.

⁹⁷ ‘Industrial Education’ in *Harvest Field*, Mar., 1903, pp. 137–144; *Report of the Fourth Decennial Indian Missionary Conference Held in Madras, Dec. 11th–18th, 1902* (London : Christian Literature Society, 1903).

with contempt and as profit-driven efforts or landlordism.⁹⁸ Three elements came to define the industrial work/mission prominently. First, to impart practical, industrial, vocational education to converts which either suited to their existing occupations or skilled them for a trade. Second, to establish industrial and agricultural establishments to provide employment to converts in a Christian environment. Third, to discourage lofty ambitions among converts and teach them the dignity of manual labour and value of a disciplined, industrious life.

The effect of these broader shifts in the missionary world was that MEC missionaries not only strengthened their existing industrial works (six orphanages with 300 boys and 350 girls in 1898),⁹⁹ but it also introduced new industrial establishments and made the curriculum of educational institutes more practical and tuned towards the occupations of converts. On the one hand, it opened new industrial and orphanage schools (Cawnpore, Aligarh, Phalera, Tilaunia) which taught trades such as carpet- and cloth-weaving, basket- and rope-making, printing-press work, carpentry, smithery, farming, housekeeping. The two orphanages in Ajmer (Phalera and Tilaunia) produced 170 farmers, 19 weavers, 54 carpet-makers, 40 lace-makers, 80 embroiders, 6 carpenters, 12 teachers, 12 servants, 10 tailors, 17 gardeners, 4 blacksmiths, 4 printers, and 2 electroplaters in 1905. The Central Day School (Holman Institute) in the Agra city trained as many as 600 children of the poor converts in industrial trades such as rug-making and soap-making by the early 1920s. A Ford bus carried girls and boys living in various working-class neighbourhoods to the mission compound where they learned new trades.¹⁰⁰ A new industrial school (Ingraham Institute) was also started in Ghaziabad in the 1930s to train Dalit Christians as peasants and tinsmiths.¹⁰¹ The timings of village schools were adjusted to the occupational needs of students. In Meerut, a school was run in the morning and the evening

⁹⁸ *TDMC*, Vol. 2, pp. 479–80.

⁹⁹ *RNWIC*, 1898, p. 29.

¹⁰⁰ *Yearbook and Official Minutes of the North-West India Conference* (henceforth *YOM-NWIC*) 1925, p. 50.

¹⁰¹ *YOM-NWIC*, 1938, p. 231

when boys got free after tending pigs.¹⁰² On the other hand, the mission retained the high caste and class character of its higher educational institutes. Out of 268 male students in the Lucknow Christian College in 1919, only 27 were Christians. The case was different with the Isabella College that had 28 Christian girls out of an attendance of 32 girls.¹⁰³ The college began as a boarding school and was established by the first radical female missionary of the MEC, Isabella Thoburn, who considered that the standards of female education should be equal to that of male education—a history to be told another time.¹⁰⁴ However, like the male college, it only catered to the educational aspirations of elite natives (Christians and non-Christians), Eurasians and Europeans who could pay a fee. The mass of poor Christian girls received an education that prepared them for housework, and if required by the mission, they were sent to the free boarding schools to be trained as teachers, preachers, medical women.¹⁰⁵

Dalit Lives and the Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj saw the success of American missionaries in converting Dalits as a threat to the Hindu society. Led by Swami Shradhanand, an Arya Samaji from Punjab and member of the nationalist party Congress, a radical group of Arya Samajis initiated the grand project of ‘reconversion’ and ‘purification’ (shuddhi) of ‘untouchables’ who had converted to Christianity, Sikhism, and Islam.¹⁰⁶ Thousands of Rahtia Sikhs, Ods, and Meghs in Punjab

¹⁰² *RNWIC*, 1898, p. 21.

¹⁰³ Coplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*, p. 858.

¹⁰⁴ Barclay, *MEC*, p. 504–05.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, pp. 369–70.

¹⁰⁶ See Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘Kindly Elders of the Hindu Biradari: The Arya Samaj’s Struggle for Influence and its Effects on Hindu-Muslim Relations, 1885–1925’ in Antony Copley, (ed.), *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000); Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); C.S. Adcock, *The Limits of Tolerance Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Satish Kumar Sharma, *Social Movements and Social Change: A Study of Arya Samaj and Untouchables in Punjab* (New Delhi: BR Pub., 1981); Kenneth W. Jones, ‘Communalism in the Punjab: The Arya Samaj Contribution’, in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 28, no. 1 (1968), pp. 39–54.

were reconverted to Hinduism by the Arya Samaj at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ Shradhanand denounced Hinduism for the ill-treatment of Dalits. His radical ideas of incorporating ‘untouchables’ into the fold of Hinduism (wearing the sacred thread, access to schools, wells, temples) were vehemently opposed in the initial years by conservative Arya Samajis and Hindus who did not consider ‘untouchables’ as a part of Hindu religion. Joel Lee argues that it was only during the 1910s and 1920s that the idea that Dalits were part of Hinduism gained larger acceptance in the light of Shradhanand’s invocation of enumerative identity politics (Hindu as a dying race) and Dalits becoming an autonomous group and posing a threat to the nation and nationalism by supporting Muslims and the British.¹⁰⁸

By the 1920s, the influence of the Arya Samaj was very much present in Delhi, UP, Punjab. Arya Samajis became active in Meerut, Bulandshahar, Aligarh, and Saharanpur, Bareilly, Oudh, Ballia—regions where MEC missionaries carried out their mass conversion. What started as counter proselytization (*prachar*) by the Arya Samaj soon turned into violent conflicts between Dalit converts and Arya Samajis, persecution of converted Christians, and systematic organisation of education and welfare work for Dalits. Arya Samajis, often upper- and middle-caste Hindus, formed alliances with landlords, businessmen, Dalit caste-leaders who wielded power over the impoverished Dalit lives. Such alliances were predicated on the fact that conversions unsettled the ‘reservoir of subservient labour’ that Dalits formed for landed elites.¹⁰⁹ Missionaries noted that landed elites in Ballia invited Arya Samajis from Benares and Mathura to mobilise Chamars and Chamar *chaudharis* (caste-leaders). Hindu cotton mill and press owners, merchants, businessmen at Hathras supported Arya Samaj financially.¹¹⁰ A ‘reign of terror’ was launched against converted Christians, noted

¹⁰⁷ Joel Lee, *Recognition and its Shadows: Dalits and the Politics of Religion in India*, PhD Thesis, (New York: Columbia University, 2015), pp. 133–34.

¹⁰⁸ Lee, *Recognition and its Shadows*, chap. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Coplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*, p. 808.

¹¹⁰ *YOM-NWIC, 1925*, pp. 38–39.

missionaries. Dalits were threatened with losing caste–leadership, lands, houses, social life and cajoled with ‘offers of schools and of social recognition’.¹¹¹ MEC preachers, colporteurs, and school teachers often gave reports of Dalit converts’ persecution and harassment by the trio of Arya Samajis–landlords–*chaudharis*.¹¹² Before the 1921 census, converts in Ballia region were so threatened that they publicly refused their Christian status.¹¹³ In Mathura where 18000 Christians lived in various villages and towns, and many more Kolis (weavers) and Chamars were about to be converted, missionaries reported that Samajis came and disrupted the ceremony. Those who converted were later persecuted, and existing converts lived ‘amid threats and abuses’.¹¹⁴ Christian colporteurs shared their stories of not being allowed to distribute and sell Christian literature in fairs and market. They told that material distributed to readers was seized and burnt in front of them.¹¹⁵ Lee’s research shows that elements of coercion and force were seen as part of the emerging militant Hindu nationalism and the Shuddhi movement.¹¹⁶ By the late 1930s, local heads of the MEC circuit stations reported that teachers’ houses were being burnt down in the night.¹¹⁷ Missionaries noted the period as a phase of defeat. They saw many of their converts returning to the fold of Hinduism.¹¹⁸ To express their strength, local Christian preachers organised *jalasas* (marches) in villages and paraded from village to village shouting ‘*yisu masih ki jai*’ (Victory to Jesus!).¹¹⁹

At the same time, Arya Samajis complained that missionaries, Christian school teachers and students harassed Dalits students of the Arya Samaji schools, spat in their mouths, and beat them. They alleged that far from converts being persecuted by landlords, Dalit Christians,

¹¹¹ Coplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*, pp. 808–09.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 809; *YOM–NWIC*, 1933, p. 27.

¹¹³ Coplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*, p. 810.

¹¹⁴ *YOM–NWIC*, 1932, p. 44.

¹¹⁵ *YOM–NWIC*, 1925, p. 50; *YOM–NWIC*, 1933, p. 36.

¹¹⁶ Lee, *Recognition and its Shadows*, 143–44.

¹¹⁷ *YOM–NWIC*, 1938, p. 221.

¹¹⁸ *YOM–NWIC*, 1925, p. 51.

¹¹⁹ *YOM–NWIC*, 1929, p. 151.

unlike non-Christian Dalits, were seen as free labourers.¹²⁰ Rawat argues that Arya Samajis' competition with Islamic and Christian organisations for Dalits gave Chamars bargaining powers to demand equal participation in the public life.¹²¹ Dalits used the power of Sabha officials to claim wages for their unpaid forced work, settle disputes with landlords, attend government schools, complain to the police about landlords' tortures, beating, and forced labour.¹²² A missionary report (1921) remarked,

Where there were almost no orphanages a generation ago, except those fostered by Christians, now there are Hindu, Mussalman, and Arya Samaj orphanages, each jealously vying with us for patronage...Where there were almost no aided schools but ours, now aided schools exist in many communities of other religions.¹²³

While the Arya Samaj had been maintaining high schools, middle schools, general primary schools for Hindu girls and boys, it also began to focus on Dalits. Like Christian missionaries, it established exclusive schools for Dalits in north India. In 1925, when the first All-India statistical report on the Arya Samaj's educational work came out, it was stressed that the Arya Samaj was one of the pioneering non-state actors after Christian missionaries in running schools.¹²⁴ It maintained 505 schools with 54886 students in 1925. Out of these 55 were depressed class schools with 1444 students. In UP, the number of all Arya Samaji schools was 121 with the highest number of schools in Bareilly (32) followed by Meerut (9) and Badaun (6).¹²⁵ However, many of these schools, as I will show later, existed only for few months or had no teachers or textbooks. Educational work of Dalits in UP was looked after by the branches of the All India Shradhanand Dalitodhar Sabha Delhi, established in 1921. It aimed

¹²⁰ *Annual Report on the Educational Work of the All India Shradhanand Dalitodhar Sabha for the Ending Mar. 1928* (henceforth EWSDS), (Delhi: Hindustan Times Press, 1928), p. 2.

¹²¹ Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability*, pp. 142–43.

¹²² *AISDS*, pp. 9–22.

¹²³ *RNIC, 1921*, p. 53.

¹²⁴ *Report of the Educational Work by the Arya Samaj in India* (Amritsar: The George Press, 1925), forward.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

to educate Dalits, form high morals among them, and keep them clean.¹²⁶ Sabha's vision of Dalit uplift was based on the understanding that landlords should learn to respect Dalits, consider them as brothers, pay them wages for their work. Samajis held conferences in Bulandshahar requesting Rajput zamindars to not ill-treat their Dalit servants and show 'leniency'.¹²⁷ In practice, the Sabha treated Dalits as unequals. It maintained that Dalits were servants of landed elites, and education given to Dalits should not disrupt the rhythms of the local political economy. In its reports, the Sabha did not refer to Dalits as Hindus. For example, it wrote, 'On 31st March last [1927] the enrolment of 821 students included 190 Hindus of higher castes and 9 Mohamadans, while on the same date of the previous year the enrolment of 959 included 73 Hindus and 7 Mohamadans'.¹²⁸ It maintained exclusive Dalit schools—where Dalits, and sometimes poor upper- and middle-castes, were educated in reading, writing, arithmetic. They taught Dalits values of cleanliness, vegetarianism, morality, nationalism, religion.

Throughout UP and Delhi, the Sabha ran 27 schools with 655 students in 1927. In 1928, 32 Arya Samaji schools in Bareilly came under its organisation. Since these schools often depended on the grant-in-aid scheme of the government, their existence was ephemeral. Once the government grant ceased, these schools also stopped.¹²⁹ Like in missionary schools, Dalits attended these schools in large number. The average daily attendance was about 73 percent. However, when schools failed to attract students, Sabha officials blamed it on Bhangis' apathy towards education.¹³⁰ Factors such as poverty (lack of proper clothing, food, and study material), the absence of leisure time, resistance by elite and landowning castes were never considered as reasons for failures. However, these issues popped up in school inspectors'

¹²⁶ *AISDS*, p. 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ *EWSDS*, pp. 3–4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

reports. The District Board inspecting member wrote the following report on the Jahangirpur school (Bulandshahar, UP),

I inspected the Achhut School [the 'untouchable school'], Jahangirpur on 6th April, 1928. Enrolment was 31 and attendance 21. Detail according to caste is 17 Chamars, 1 Koli, 5 Thakurs, 3 Vaishes and 5 Jats. Examined copy books and Takhties [slates]. Writing is generally good and reading ordinary. Writing to dictation is good...The Chamars are interested in reading. Owing to harvest attendance is poor....¹³¹

Sabha schools operated in a constrained environment both from the side of students and teachers. Teachers were hired on low salaries. Educated youth often used these teaching posts to prepare themselves for the teacher training course and matriculation examination.¹³² It was often found that teachers only taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. They neglected other subjects such as cleanliness.¹³³ School inspectors constantly reported about the lack of furniture, textbooks, good teachers, classes on arithmetic. In some schools, teachers did not even use textbooks.¹³⁴

The Sabha did help exceptional students in getting admitted to government middle schools. Six Sabha school students got access to vernacular middle schools and one each to an Anglo-vernacular school (IX class) and intermediate college (XII class).¹³⁵ Fighting for the oppressed against an oppressive system exhibited their progressive thinking. But, it did not establish any middle and high schools for Dalits. The only advanced institution that the Sabah established was an industrial school in Khurja, very similar to missionary industrial schools. It offered classes in smithery, carpentry, weaving, tailoring with an aim to train Dalits as efficient wage workers for local mills and industries.¹³⁶ Given that Dalits aspired for higher education and

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–39.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

institutions that admitted them easily were limited, the industrial school co-opted educated Dalits within the labouring frame.

Conclusion

Let me conclude this article by discussing an event that shows how converted Dalits had to operate within the limited vision of the MEC. In 1935, Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar called for Dalits to embrace non-Hindu religions. MEC missionaries got excited at the prospect of receiving millions of 'Harijans'. William W. Reid of the Mission Board in America visited Ambedkar to know his expectations. Ambedkar told the American missionary to send 'India a commission of agricultural experts and educational experts' that would map industries and educational institutions where Dalits could enter and figure out laws that would protect Dalits from the intimidation of high-castes when they would leave the oppressive agrarian world. He also asked for high scientific, technical, and management education for intelligent Dalits, a body like the American Civil Liberties Union that would protect Dalits from false court charges, and a greater politicisation of Christian community in India.¹³⁷ Accepting Ambedkar's demands was to bring a complete socio-economic revolution against what missionaries themselves stood for—a socio-economic status quo and keeping the mission limited to the realm of religion. Missionaries were willing to offer only a basic literacy programme, the abolition of untouchability, and a self-promise to study how Dalit's economic, sanitary, housing, and family conditions could be improved. Ultimately, they rejected Ambedkar's call citing that his demands were too revolutionary for the mission.¹³⁸

Through this article, I have tried to show that a focus on access and exclusion cannot alone explain the history of Dalit education. When we move beyond this frame, we find that

¹³⁷ Coplestone, *History of Methodist Missions*, pp. 1153–55.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1154–55.

schooling and its content and objectives shape the lives of students and their educational trajectory. MEC missionaries and Arya Samajis who opened schooling for Dalits had their own agendas of educating Dalits that were conservative in their outlook. Missionary education, which remained hierarchical and casteist in nature, educated Dalits so that they could read Biblical literature, become true Christian, and learn trades and farming. The limited socio-economic mobility for educated Dalits within the mission life was structured by missionaries' need of teachers, preachers, exhorters, medical staff and their prejudiced caste views, inability to convert high-castes. Arya Samaj schools for Dalits again were interested in making Dalits literate, not enabling them to become doctors, advocates, teachers, clerks, accountants. In the case of female Dalits, we do not know what Arya Samajis envisioned, but missionaries prepared them as good, productive Christian wives. While these visions, itself got shaped by missionaries' experience as landlords, labour employers (printing press, carpentry workshops) and Arya Samajis as landed elites and as collaborators of landed elites.

Dalits, who often approached the limited education provided to them with a hope to transcend their fixed labouring and caste identities, got subjected to the elite politics that maintained them as manual workers, either in their existing stations or as wage workers. They had to create a space for themselves in an educational structure that was overtly hierarchical and unfair to them. We see that higher institutions, teachers, and resources got devoted to non-Christians, high-caste Hindus, and elite Christians, while the more impoverished Dalits received no education or a basic literacy education. To move up in the socio-economic hierarchy and create a space in the hostile world, they had to prove their loyalty and intelligence to religious organisations, local teachers and get their support. H.J. Sheets, the Superintendent of the Bijnor mission station, reported in 1920 that Hindus and Muslims in government schools did not admit his bright boys. Instead, he had to send them to the MEC high schools in

Lucknow, Moradabad, and to the Girls' School in Bijnor.¹³⁹ The result was that intense competition happened among converts for the limited schools and jobs that the mission provided. Second generations Christians and converts residing in the city, close to the central mission stations, usurped the majority of resources, funds, infrastructure that was meant for the Christian community. For the remaining, labouring was the only frame in which their lives were envisioned. With financial pressures and an increasing number of converts, missionary education got subordinated to the goal of providing only religious education. At the same time, only higher educational institutes that were intended for Dalits were free boarding schools that prepared them for mission work or industrial and practical schools where they were trained as industrial wage workers and craftsmen. Opportunities for education came with exclusion, suppression of dreams, and newer forms of control.

¹³⁹ *RNIC, 1921*, p. 57.