The Mission of Education: A Comment From India – Where we had been, where we are, where we ought to go?

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Scottish missions and missionaries are often commended for their contribution to pioneering and promoting educational missions. Their major and pioneer fields were in India, particularly in the vicinity of Calcutta. The main focus of this paper are (a) to consider 'the continuing relevance of education as a mission methodology'; (b) to identify 'the mission of contemporary educational work' of the churches and missions; and (c) to explore the various modern and post-modern avenues of educational involvement that are open before us.

I. Where we had been?

A. The Pre-colonial Period:

EDUCATIONAL MISSION IN PREPARATORY SETTING

Formal education was of the male domain at the upper caste level in the Indian community. Others learned their trade and served those above. It was the fate of the women folk to remain subservient and silent. Even their western counterparts remained without access to higher education until—as late as- the final decades of the nineteenth century. Exceptions are quoted with pride but defensively— with no significant value. British attitudes to India were earlier built on what the Orientalists offered as their opinions.¹ New attitudes emerged with the Evangelicals and Utilitarians. Charles Grant identified the faults of the Hindu society and proceeded to 'an inquiry into the means of remedying disorders.'² He believed education was the key and argued that the government should encourage schools in which English should be the language of instruction. Claudius Buchanan held that “only through Christianity could true civilization be imparted”³ and he organized an essay competition on the topic: ‘On the best means of civilizing the subjects of the British empire in India; and of diffusing the light of the Christian religion throughout the Eastern world.’ What emerged was the thought that the most important means of propagating Christianity was education. David Brown, Henry Martyn, Charles Grant, George Udney and Sir John Shore—all believed that Britain had

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a civilizing mission in India to be achieved by replacing the values of Indian society by British ones. Their emphasis was the weakness and depravity of Indian society, the need for government intervention as a Christianizing and civilizing measure, and the political as well as social benefits that would accrue if this intervention took place.

During the time when the Charter of the East India Company was renewed in 1813, “the door to missionary activity in India was set ajar”, but the British “government avowed a specific interest in education” to introduce “useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement” to the peoples of India. Hence, it was resolved that “sufficient facilities should be afforded by law, to persons desirous of going to, and remaining in India for the purpose of accomplishing those benevolent designs.” Missionary movement took advantage of this and expanded its number from 36 missionaries in 1813 to 130 persons through 8 mission societies by the year 1830.

Early missions saw education as a major means of gospel impact on the native folk. The debate on missionary methods between the Moderated and the Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland led into a strong school planting mission method. In their committee on the propagation of the gospel among the heathen, they felt that, “Of all the auxiliary means, that we can imagine of preparing their minds for the faith of the gospel and of permanently establishing the Redeemer’s Kingdom in the Eastern world, this [education method] appears to be the most likely to prove efficient.”

For instance, the Anglicists saw their role as helping to reinvigorate and change the non-western cultures. Alexander Duff was convinced that “Western (Christian) culture was an inestimable boon which could be conferred through education on Indian society”. The way forward he felt was to replace Indian ways of thinking which was ‘based on Hinduism’ and ‘steeped in error and superstition’. He proposed higher education in English medium offering English literature and modern science founded on a Christian heritage. Thomas Babington Macaulay agreed saying that such education will eradicate idolatry altogether in a short span of thirty years. Macaulay’s Minute of 1835 envisaged the creation of ‘a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect’ who shall be the bridge between the British rulers and the ruled Indian masses. “Macaulay was not advocating the replacement of the vernaculars by English but the creation of a ‘bridge’ language.” The Anglicists were blamed as operating with a deep suspicion and hatred and contempt towards Hindu culture, but yet there was an appreciation from Indian thinkers who saw the English education as a necessary way forward on the road to social change and modernization.

Thus, in the pre-colonial period, the modern missionary movement attempted to offer education as a means of social change with the high hope that English education will explode the Hindu obscurantism and establish a bridge class influenced with Christian values. There was a strong sense of belief in divine Providence that God intended to bless India through British rule. The Vernacularist William Carey’s Enquiry had this theological bias and basis to motivate missionary involvement in changing India. The mission of his Serampore College was to form “the native brethren to usefulness, fostering every kind of genius, and cherishing every gift and grace in them.” Bishop Heber and Bishop Caldwell are quoted as affirming the resultant benefits of British rule and education all across India and especially in Bengal. In his tongue-in-cheek comment, Caldwell said, “It was not the ‘quietism’ of the Bhagavad Gita
that was covering India with a network of railways and telegraphs."\textsuperscript{13} The optimism in their involvement is seen in Robert Nesbit's words: "I have great hopes that the next thirty years...will witness a progress a thousand fold greater than the past. Probably by that time, idolatry will be abolished."\textsuperscript{14}

But this expectation and hope of Alexander Duff and his colleagues that 'education will set a dynamite that shall explode the Hindu hold on India' never really happened. Rather the education that they offered went on to lay the foundation upon which in the twentieth century the Hindu India was able to reinforce and to help rejuvenate the Hindu way of life, providing clarity of faith and a consolidation of self-identity. The major hope failed. That was perhaps because of the lack of clear self-perception and unity of purpose in the British factions. Max Muller hinted thus: "If we get such men as Ram Mohan Roy or Keshub Chunder Sen, and if we get an Archbishop of Canterbury who knows what Christianity really is, India will be christianized in all that is essential, in the twinkling of an eye."\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Preparatio Evangelica} was not the common goal of all. Divided loyalties and lack of unified vision were reasons for the failure of mission agenda in every age.

B. The Colonial Period:

EDUCATIONAL MISSION IN PROGRESSIVE SITUATION

If the above was a revolutionary period with emphasis on reform in Indian society at large, it ended with a 'hardening of the crust' as identified by Pradip Sinha in his \textit{Nineteenth Century Bengal, Aspects of Social History}.\textsuperscript{16} Judith Brown links this gradual lessening of enthusiasm and the ebbing of the tide of reform to the departure of notable reformers such as Bentinck, Trevelyan and Macaulay.\textsuperscript{17} The government became less cautious of the reformist elements, foremost of who were the missionaries. Hence, the Wood Educational Dispatch of 1854 reflected missionary ideas in many instances. It claimed that the government pursued a policy of absolute religious neutrality. There was heavy debate on the 'civilizing' and 'christianizing' impact of the British missionaries.\textsuperscript{18} At a conference of the SPCK, SPG and CMS, in 1852, resolutions following the paper by JM Strachan included that the government should not prevent scripture being taught in the schools where grants-in-aid were used. 1857 saw the Sepoy Mutiny or the First War of Independence that led in 1858 to the establishing of the British Raj. From here the British were in control of the destiny of India, controlling the political, economic and infra-structural development. Education as a government policy remained a popular option partly because the educated classes had remained loyal during the Mutiny.\textsuperscript{19}

Much of the development of education under the empire and the mission societies was studied in the popular account \textit{The Education of India: A Study of British Educational Policy 1835-1920} by Arthur Mayhew.\textsuperscript{20} M. Laird took specific look at the Bengal scene in his \textit{Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1793-1837}.\textsuperscript{21}

From nothing to a mammoth quantum, the educational work grew in India. Credit for it goes largely to the missionaries. Villages were the primary concern for missions. But Scottish missionaries specialized in starting colleges of higher education in major cities and towns. The National Christian Council and International Missionary Council organized the Lindsay
Commission to study the role and mission of the Christian Higher Education Colleges. The report of 1931 accepted the customary threefold aim of education: conversions, diffusion and the training up of Christian leadership (which widened to include the social uplift of the whole Christian population).  

When missionaries aligned with 'grants -in-aid' of the British Raj and developed a strong school method of involvement, it not only promoted the growth of a small church within the school community, but also provided for the emergence of an educated and cohesive Hindu community. Hindu community then became sensitive to organize itself over against the conversion motive of the Christian missionaries. After studying the role of missionaries in education of India, Ingleby concludes thus:

Duff's educational strategy included a strong sense of cultural imperialism. He believed that the culture of the West, its science, literature and religion, would so comment itself to Indian young men that they would happily relinquish their Hindu / Indian worldview in fave of a Western / Christian one. In practice, there were few that did. Some became ‘westernized’ in the sense that they became skeptical of their own Hindu religious heritage: others became anglicised in some of their customs and habits (including their language), but they did not on the whole become Christians.  

British government and the Christian missions succeeded in developing education of the rural boys and girls at the elementary level as well as the higher-level education at major cities and towns. A dramatic growth in literacy resulted all across India. But sadly the desired end of Christianizing did not happen to the level expected.

II. Where we are?
A. Post Colonial Period:

EDUCATIONAL MISSIONS IN PIETISTIC/PATRIOTIC IMBROGLIO

15 August 1947 saw the birth of an independent nation of India. Christian mission in India set off the colonial horse on to the soil of India to be indigenous and Indian. A major pursuit of the church in India was to discover her identity and her mission to the nation. A commendable amount of work went on for the next few decades to study the questions of Indian Christian identity, Indian Christian theology, a self understanding of the Indian church’s mission to the new nation and the way forward in contextually relevant ministerial formation. These were the areas that I undertook to investigate in my doctoral dissertation at the University of Aberdeen any my thesis provides a concise summary of my findings of the developments and my critical evaluation and suggestions.

The church in India has shown a major strength though its quest for unity within the Church of South India and the Church of North India and its further pursuit to widen its unity. It is a sad reality that the Lutheran, the American Methodist and the Mar Thoma Churches have entertained discussions but did not proceed into union on account of various reasons. Whereas the National Council of Churches provides an umbrella ecumenical structure, other forms of umbrella structures such as the Evangelical Fellowship of India for promoting certain values and India Missions Association for coordinating mission societies have come about with positive force. Beside them, further umbrella structures such as the Federation of
Evangelical Churches of India and All India Christian Council have also been formed with goals that conflict with existing larger concerns and structures. On a larger level, there appeared a parallel formation of the ecumenical and the evangelical networks not only within the country but also internationally. These proved redundant and wasteful of resources, but felt necessary by those involved in the planning of these structures. Whereas there is attempt to unify the existing churches on the one hand, there are many new denominations being formed to further divide and complicate the church and her witness. What is a sad reality is the increase of the many 'private and family owned churches, missions and institutions'. This trend needs to be studied with a view to developing suitable corrective measures.

To cope with the uniting churches and the new churches, theological education also has proliferated in the country both under the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC) as well as under the Asia Theological Association (ATA). In addition we have the National Association of Pentecostal Theological Education to further evaluate, enable and accredit colleges and Bible schools at varying levels. These prove insufficient for developing the large mission force that works under the numerous indigenous mission structures in the country. Hence, the India Missions Association (IMA) encouraged the formation of the Indian Institute of Missiology (IIM) to help shape the missionary training of the member mission staff at diploma and degree levels. Since these handle only the full-time Christian workers and there is an increase of the hunger for theological education among the lay members of the churches, external and extension study programmes have multiplied and structures have emerged to offer such courses also at various levels. Evening Bible Colleges, Saturday Bible Schools, Mobile Bible Schools and short-term courses as well have appeared all over the country.

With the increase of structures, the questions of management, administration and fund raising have become areas of significance and hence courses are organized to provide these faculties. Societal complexities due to rapid urbanization and impact on family life have necessitated courses, seminars and workshops in counseling. Eco-theology and eco-mission concerns have resulted in new types of study plans. More development and communication studies, women-dalit-tribal rights and legal perceptions are part of the new curricular developments in the contemporary church in mission.

Thus mission education has widened its orbit and has grown in its intensity and width in India. Since the nation is large with a tremendously huge population, the programs are also many and multiple. There is room for all. Thus, the concerns in mission educating in the post colonial India have shifted gears from preparatory and collegiate education to diversified levels, forms and content. In a broad way, we could say that 'education for nation building' is the emphasis of ecumenical Christians and 'education for evangelization leading to church's growth' is the passion of the evangelical Christians. While the churches are developing and strengthening in these ways, there has been a negative development in the country.

B. Hindutva Period: Rewriting of History

Through the fundamentalist and fascist leadership of Savarkar, Hedgewar, Golwalkar and Sudharshan, the Hindu cultural nationalism has been birthed and nurtured. A hundred years after the education movement had aroused an educated Hindu community, Vinayak Damodar
Savarkar, a Maharashtrian Brahmin, codified a social and political doctrine known as ‘Hindutva’ and published its essential ideas in 1923. Kesav Rao Baliram Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh in 1925 to consolidate Hindu unity in the face of the Semitic religions in India. By the year 2000, it had grown across the nation with 30,888 shakhas, 42,682 sub-branches in 18,880 cities and towns with 20 lakh swayam sevaks and 2000 pracharaks. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar reinforced the Hindutva ideology through his books *We or Our Nationhood* Defined (1938) and *Bunch of Thoughts* (1966). The eagerness for Hindu consolidation inevitably resulted in a hate campaign against the Muslims and Christians. It victimized peace loving MK Gandhi and let Nethuram Vinayak Godse to assassinate him in public. Militant tendencies continued to grow like wildfire and RSS floated over 50 frontal organizations including Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (1984), the Jana Sangh (1951), Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (1952), Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (1955), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (1964) and the Bajrang Dal (1984). The last two function as the militant arms of the Hindutva movement, whereas the Jana Sangh, in 1980, transformed itself into the political arm, namely Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Alexander Duff’s venture failed and proved counter-productive. Today, the Hindu nation has overcome its sociological hierarchical divide and has shaped itself into a cohesive and militant movement. It has consolidated power at the center and through its political arm, the BJP, it rules the nation. Through its militant wings Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal, it attacks, threatens, terrorizes the innocent victims in remote places and systematically plans to place people in difficult situations with false reports, accusations and allegations.

Thus despite all the proud claims of ‘Bharath Mahan’ (India is Great), there is communal disharmony and intense divisiveness. Indian Christian church has to develop her minority communal identity within the increasingly militant and intolerant majority communal Hindu identity. This self-identity has to be placed in the context of the sense of being the ‘People of God’ relating to the ‘peoples of God’. The kind of rejection of the Christians and the Muslims flaunted by perpetrators of Hindutva is noticeable in the harsh words of Golwalkar:

...the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu nation, i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-long traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen’s rights.

It is in the face of such rejection that the Indian Christian is called to build a nation together with the Hindu. To fight for one’s rightful place as a citizen will mean to take political action. But being a minority, there is no guarantee of winning justice for oneself. Hence, to join hands with the secular democratic others and to form a coalition government is the option. But the BJP has consolidated itself in many of the states and remains a mammoth threat, ruling the nation from the center. The need of the hour is political education.
I serve as the Dean of the Consortium for Indian Missiological Education and teach postgraduate missiology students and doctoral research scholars, I face the challenge of arousing their motivation for constructive political thought and action. Through the years, I discovered the kind of literature for such socio-political education and recommend them for study and reflection. Of great importance in this regard are the books published by the Centre for Social Action at Bangalore. It is a Roman Catholic research and publication programme mainly run by John Desroches using other social activists such as Bas Wielenga, Gabriella Dietrich, John Malliekal, etc., Titles such as The India We Want to Build, India Today, Caste in India, Political Parties and their ideologies, Social Action Movements, Social Teaching of the Church, Education for Liberation.

And several other books form a series, which I contemporary socio-political scene in India.31

III. Where We Ought to Go

EDUCATIONAL MISSION FOR PERFECTING AND SYNCHRONIZATION
-Or- EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

Contemporary mission thinking in India needs to rethink the use of education as a means of mission and identify the ways in which mission societies and churches should plan to initiate and develop educational mission activities. Several attempts are being made by agencies to think and rethink on this area. For instance, the All India Association for Christian Higher Education holds its numerous annual programs of value to bring together Christian college principals, registrars, professors and students to discover ways and means of effective accomplishment of the goals of Christian higher education.32 Individuals pursue to interpret the role of education in mission for the twenty first century. Mission and Education is the title of a book by WS Milton Jeganathan33 wherein from his doctoral study he writes chapters such as “Mission as Transforming Values”, “Mission as Pastoral Care”, “Mission as Equipping Local Congregations”, “Mission and Educational Psychology” and “Mission in religious[ly] Pluralistic Context”. He explores into relevant mission thought from educational perspective.

At Pune, the Ishvani Kendra held a National Consultation on Education as Mission and considered the challenges that we face in contemporary India as Christian missions involved in educational ministries. Noteworthy are the papers such as Jose Kuttianimattathil’s “Education is Mission: Some Considerations from the Perspective of Theology”, SM Cyril’s “Education and Transformation of Society”, Francis P Xavier’s “Future of Education” and TK Oommen’s “Citizenship Education in Indian Republic: Crisis and Contention”.

Addressing the Asia Theological Association’s leaders in India, Bruce Nicholls identified the need for new courses to be included on subjects such as:

- A theology of the Market Place.
- Christian ethics for the business and industrial world.
- Church and political power.
- Church and Religious Worldviews.
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- Christianity and Modern Sciences (alternatives to atheistic neo-Darwinian evolution).
- Christianity and Art Culture.
- Ethics in communication and Advertising.
- Writing for the secular press (articles, letters to the Editor, etc.).
- Co-operative and small-scale industries. 

In a paper that I presented at the Centre for Mission Studies consultation at the Union Biblical Seminary last year, I propose “a new emphasis in missiological training to develop a national vision for secular democracy over against the forces of Hindu tva, to build bridges between secularism and the reign of God.” TK Oommen deals with an analysis of the areas of citizenship education that we need to engage in today.

If mission should explore into relevant educational means, then we need to start with a revision of theological education in order that mission leaders shall emerge with renewed vision. This bias motivated me through my doctoral research study. I commended the American and Baptist attempts at renewing theological education.

The Church in mission has to involve in a variety of ways in educational processes for the future if she would make an impact. I shall simply identify some of those areas here with few comments. Further explorations have to happen in time.

1. Primary Education: Despite the fact that the Government of India has its own education department to take care of primary education all across the nation, but it is a sad tale that primary education does not reach the rural sector sufficiently. One teacher holds all classes within one small classroom in a village hut. Such a teacher often is absent and there is lack of supervision and control. In towns and cities, the government-employed teacher does not teach in the classroom but earns extra salary for private tuition class in the mornings and evenings. Education without quality is the bane of the society. In such a context, an editorial in India Today during 1984 stated that there was need for private initiative all across India to provide quality education. It ignored government run educational programme and invited concerned individuals and groups to provide quality education for the children. Hence the churches must get involved in primary education on a massive scale. Not only church planting mission, but also school planting missions must become our agenda in mission.

2. Value Education: I once read an article in an Indian magazine titled “Corruption is as sweet as laddoos in India”. Without handing a bribe nothing seems to move in this country, whether in the sub-registrar’s office or at the RTO or at the police station or railways. Money speaks. Money appears as chief value. Even within the Christian community money is enthroned as the chief factor. Education is for the sake of money and is commercialized. Urgent need for Value Based Education. 

3. Health Education: Nursing, Medicine, and Psychological Counselling: Large areas of the rural sector and urban slums suffer from lack of medical care. Hence, the church shall have to involve in health education by providing clinics, nursing and midwifery courses, counseling
services and training in counselling and offer rehabilitation services for addicts, aids patients and victims of drugs. 

4. **Environmental Education**: Ecological crisis is an issue of tremendous importance and the church in mission is increasingly involved in eco-mission projects. Proper environmental education should be organized and offered by the church to the members of the church and neighbouring community.

5. **Computer Education**: Electronic Communication Media Education: Rapid change has come about in our world in the last three decades with the spread of computers and electronic communication tactics. Contemporary educational mission should open the prospect of computer education and offer it as a part of the services to the poor and under privileged youth.

6. **Economics and Development Education**: The church is already involved in development projects. But it now needs to offer courses in economics and in development thought. On a massive scale the church members ought to get involved in development activities with an economic sense.

7. **Management Studies**: Today the complexity of the world order demands upon us to learn to manage our time, money, resources and people. Management studies are not popular but inevitable process of modern life.

8. **International Relations/International Politics**: Youth of today are already living in a global village and will need to work in a multinational situation. To prepare them for it, teaching in the areas of international politics, diplomacy and relations should be included in our list of concerns.

9. **Technological Education**: Contemporary world has been modernized as a result of industrialization and technological revolution. It is high time to use technology for development. Technical institutes to help train youth for agriculture, livelihood through electronics, carpentry etc., [plus medical technology, computer technology and media education should be introduced in our mission education programmes.

The last point needs elaboration. During the fifties and sixties, we talked about 'nation building' and this talks slowly turned into development talk. But at the Wheaton 1983 Conference, the term development was counted as limited meaning and replaced with the term 'transformation' as more communicative of the intent of the gospel. This term 'transformation' has grown in its significance. David Bosch's Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission became a classic textbook for Missiology around the world with this potent of transformation. Another book, which attracted my attention was 'Envisioning as Empowered Nation: Technology for Societal Transformation' written by the Honourable President of India APJ Abdul Kalam with A. Sivathanu Pillai. As a Tamil Muslim scientist raised to this height of excellence, he expresses a deep vision for the transformation of the society and the empowerment of the nation. As a scientist, he proposes the use of technology in accomplishing this. I was impressed with his concern for the 26% of the nation who live below poverty line and the need to raise their status. This will mean increase of the production of commodities, distribution of the products and ensuring of social justice. His agenda for the
eradication of poverty is impressive. His vision parallels the vision of Christian mission such as Gustavo Gutierrez’s dream that everyone should *Drink from Own Wells*. With statistical charts, colourful sketches, graphs and authentic information, the book spreads out a scholarly appraisal of the economic issues, the corrective possibilities, the governmental role, the use of technology to enable the process of change, etc.

Hence, Indian Christian mission does not have a solo ride into transformational mission. There is all the room for marching in steps with the nation and structures, secular and religious, governmental and non-governmental. Education for transformation should become the agenda for the tomorrows in Christian Mission.

Innovative boldness should lead us to

Creative intervention into the bleak settings in which people languish

Constructive action with worthy enough agenda and

Cumulative partnerships wherein we are not in isolation.

The reign of God would then expand in gentle ways
At a speed in proportion to our faithful activism.

NOTES

20. London, 1926
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23. See Ingleby, op.cit., p.374
26. See VD Savarkar, Hindutva: Who is a Hindu? 1923
30. See M.S. Golwalkar, We or Our Nationhood Defined, Nagpur, 1936, p.27
31. There is presently a set of 24 books in this series available from the Centre for Social Action, Kacharakkanahalli, Bangalore 560084 at a very highly subsidized rate.
32. Under the leadership of its General Secretary Dr. Mani Jacob, AIACHE operates from Delhi and incorporates the Catholic Protestant and Orthodox colleges all across India. Their newsletter report on the various activities and accomplishments.
38. 3 JTK Daniel in collaboration with Madras Christian College, the AIACHE (All India Association for Christian Higher Education) and Serampore College has done some work in this line. See his book on Value Based Education, Chennai: MCC, 1990.
39. Efforts in this regard were pioneered at Vellore through the Christian Medical College and Hospital and the Christian Counselling Centre. These were furthered at Ludhiana and various other places. The United Theological College at Bangalore explores into contemporary counseling and offers higher level (BD, M.Th and D.Th) academic training through the Senate of Serampore College.
41. See the aspirations of this Latin American Catholic theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, Drink from Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984.