

Book Review

Anju Bali Pandey, *History of Christian Missionary Schools in Doon Valley*, Image India, New Delhi, 2013, pages. 144.

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From evangelical perspective, the role of Christian missionaries in education and health care is quite significant in India. Beginning with Serampore (Bengal) they 'introduced' printing press, and also brought out vernacular primers. Even more important contribution is developing urban centres in the hill stations where the Christian missionaries also set up quality 'Public' schools. As suggested in the title itself, the 'tract' under review has explored the Doon Valley (now in Uttarakhand where some of the best of such schools are also located) besides Meerut (Uttar Pradesh). Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Discovery of India* (1946) acknowledged the contribution of the Christian missionaries in development of some of the vernacular languages of India as they had to make available translations of Bible. It also induced some of the reformist and revivalist movements of early colonial India, which took recourse to translating the Arabic and Sanskrit scriptural texts in vernaculars. This exercise helped in challenging the priestly monopoly on scriptural knowledge giving way to gradual democratisation of the Indian society. In this way, the choice of the theme is quite pertinent and really worth exploring.

Seeing such an interesting theme, a reader gets tempted to get a comparison of the missionary schools with the much renowned Doon School (established in 1935). The Christian missionaries happen to have established some of the finest colleges of India, viz., the St. Stephen's

(Delhi), St. Xaviers' (Calcutta and Bombay), Christian Medical Colleges of Vellore and Ludhiana. These institutions of extraordinary eminence have given some of the finest professionals and leaders to India.

This book under review should have engaged with a vital question as to what kind of native educational institutions existed in India prior to and side by side with the Christian Missionary schools. Jata Shankar Jha's *Education in Bihar* (Patna, 1979) is a nice example of this wherein development of modern education in the nineteenth century Bihar has been explored with impressive rigour. Jha (pp. 3-4) says "When the British acquired possession of this country they found four types of educational institutions at work, viz., Sanskrit *Chatuspathi* or *tol*, *Pathshala*, *Madrassa* and *Maktab*. The *tol* and *Madrassas* were colleges of higher studies, while *Pathshala* and *Maktab* were schools of elementary instruction... The *Chatuspathi* or *Chaupari*... signified a place where the four *Shastras*, viz., Grammar, Law, *Purana* (History?) and *Darshan* (Philosophy) were studied... later... they came to be called *tols*".

It, however, remains intriguing as to why could not the Hindu and Muslim reform movements of India come out with those kinds of quality schools. This thin small volume under review provokes us to think on this aspect. Despite the author's academic training in international studies (PhD on Tunisia) from a rigorous

university like the Jawaharlal Nehru University, this book has avoided to engage with a comparative study of the theme with other former Asian and African colonies. This is an engaging narrative, in fact it is more like cataloguing about foundation and some features of the schools. Even though it does not go into the whole process and political economy of the development of modern education in which the whole story should have been located and contextualised, it, however, opens up scopes of researches to be undertaken on the theme social history of education. The author has gone into the details pertaining to the style, method and content of the pedagogy prevalent in the Christian missionary schools even though there is no question of comparing them with Urdu *maktabs*, Sanskrit *tols* and other native educational infrastructure. She assesses the modernising impact of these missionary schools on the Indian society. Moreover, this also raises a question as to with the establishment of so many missionary schools why did not this Doon valley and the vicinities of Meerut throw up major socio-religious reform movements of nineteenth century India compared to the Presidency cities and other towns.

In the post-Independence period, the Nehruvian planning is subjected to criticism for having paid little attention to the primary education because of which the government did not establish quality schools despite having Christian Missionary schools as a model before them. This created a great hiatus even within the educated middle classes of India, *viz.*, one was vernacular intelligentsia and the other was the English speaking middle classes and professionals. On the public policies, the latter had greater influences so much so that the vernacular print media got subordinated by the English print

media, even though the latter had minority catchment. This inequality had its caste divisions also. Eventually, even in the early decades of Independence the Socialist movements of Ram Manohar Lohia (1910–67) launched a campaign of ‘banish English’ in order to challenge the hegemony of Urban upper caste elites so that new rural elites could stake their claims in the structures and processes of power. B.B. Mishra, in his *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times* (1978), gave some hint of such emerging socio-political realities. While the Europe- and America-based Church institutions monitored the management of the Christian missionary schools in India and it maintained certain kind of quality management, the Indian charitable institutions like the *Waqf* and sufi shrines (*khanqahs*) of the Muslims, and *Maths* and other such institutions of Hindus could not establish a chain of similar schools and hospitals. Rather, such charitable institutions are reportedly afflicted with irregularities, corruption, mismanagement, loot and what not. This issue needs academic explorations. The author, understandably, in order to avoid cumbersome historical details, has skipped the history of the movements of Reformation and Counter-Reformation/Calvinism, which eventually gave rise to the missionary educational institutions across the globe.

Overall, it is an interesting and ambitious project of research. It would be quite worthwhile if this work is further developed taking into account many relevant and crucial issues pertaining to the theme, some of which have been pointed out. One expects that the author will find time to re-work on it to bring out an improvised and enlarged edition of the book as it leaves readers quite tempted to know much more about the subject.