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Missionaries and the Development of Education in the Punjab, 1849-1855

Abstract

Changes in education were one of the most far reaching, impactful and lasting legacies of the British Raj in India. In the Punjab, interventions in education were not initially led by the British but by American Presbyterian missionaries. Using the setting up of the Rang Mahal School in Lahore as a micro study, this paper assesses the early period of educational change in the Punjab by examining the role of American Presbyterian missionaries in introducing modern, as well as, English medium education in the Punjab. The paper also argues that as a result of these educational interventions the focus of missionaries shifted from conversion to the diffusion of Christian knowledge through education.

Introduction

British intervention in education remains one of the most enduring legacies of their rule in South Asia. During the centuries of British rule, the indigenous system of education in India was slowly transformed into a model which emphasised Western learning and English as a medium of instruction. While the British system of education did bring in a lot of organisation to a hitherto unorganised system of education, it created a number of issues, especially with regards to the use the vernacular languages, the place of what the British called ‘Oriental learning,’ and the creation of hierarchies of power through education.¹

The Punjab was the last major territory to be added to British rule in India. At its annexation, there were a number of indigenous schools in the province, mainly run along religious lines by the three main communities in the province—Muslim, Hindu and Sikh. Initially, the British tried to maintain and take forward the indigenous system, but soon it was abandoned in preference of government run schools which were organised at the village, tehsil and district levels. The government schools also initially focused on vernacular education, but with the growing popularity of English, began to offer it as a subject in most schools, and in a number of them it even quickly became the medium of instruction.

This paper is a micro-study of the first ‘English medium’ school in the Punjab which was set up by American Presbyterian missionaries in December 1849, just a few months after the annexation of the Punjab in March 1849. A study of this school enables us to understand the manner in which the first ‘modern’ school was set up in the Punjab, and also understand the reasons behind its popularity. It also shows how the success of this ‘English medium’ school, led the government to also increase the use of the English medium in the Punjab schools. Furthermore, this paper argues that despite the fact that the avowed aim of the missionaries was to convert the people, yet these schools, which mainly taught secular subjects, became the main vehicle of educational change in the province. This micro study solidifies the notion that by the 1850’s the main aim of the missionaries was not conversion per se but the use of these schools to diffuse Christian knowledge and ideas in India, through which they aimed to gain influence.

In the literature on missionaries and their endeavours in the Punjab, the early educational work of American Presbyterian missionaries in the Punjab and its effect has not been given adequate weightage. The works of Jeffrey Cox and John C.B. Webster do mention the setting up of the Mission School in Lahore, but its early years are lost in

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¹ For more see, for example, Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

the broad overview.² Furthermore, Tim Allender's work only succinctly refers to the American Presbyterians and their educational work, since its focus is mainly on the Church Missionary Society and their endeavours in the field of education in the Punjab.³ Hayden Bellenoit's work also captures the efforts of missionaries in education, but his primary focus is on the United Provinces and that too after the period under examination in this article.⁴

The period between 1849-55 is thus the critical phase in which the mould was cast for the progress of education in the Punjab. The role of the American Presbyterian mission in setting this mould was central and led the way in the furthering of modern, as well as, English based education in the province. This paper traces the development of such trajectory through a micro study to better understand the dynamics of the development of the educational system in the Punjab.

Education in the Punjab before the British

Since the gradual decline of the Mughal Empire after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, the Punjab had been in turmoil, with this frontier province exchanging hands, and suffering various wars and plunders. The ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799-1839) did establish peace, but the unravelling of the Kingdom of Lahore in the decade following his death weakened both state and society.⁵ Thus, it was only after the annexation of the Punjab by the British that a formal system of education was established.

While it is clear that there were certainly numerous schools in the Punjab before the British, it is unclear whether they provided any 'literacy' beyond purely religious education, which in most cases the students learnt by rote without understanding the meaning. Rev'd John Cameron Lowrie, an American Presbyterian missionary who visited Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore in 1835 with the prospect of setting up an English school, noted in his memoirs:

It is not probable that one person of every hundred is able to read. Of those who can read, four-fifths, probably, only read the Persian. A few of the Sikhs read the Gurmukhi; and a few of the Cashmerians, perhaps, read Kashmiri...Of those, who acquire a knowledge of their written language, few learn anything beyond the simplest rudiments. There are scarcely any books, and there are none adapted for purposes of instruction. The schools are very few, and under worst management. Sometimes the teachers are paid by religious persons, or else, as is most common, are themselves religious persons...Everything is learnt by rote. In the Mussulman schools, for the higher scholars, one of the first things is to teach the boy to read the Koran in Arabic, without even pretending to teach him the meaning of a single word.⁶

This assessment however sits uncomfortably with the estimation of Dr Leitner, the first Principal of Government College Lahore, and the founder of the University of the Punjab. In his monumental study, the *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab*, Dr Leitner noted that:

...there is not a mosque, a temple, a dharamsala, that had a school not attached to it...There were also thousands of secular schools, frequented alike by Muhammadans, Hindus and Sikhs...there was not a single villager who did not take pride in devoting at least a portion of his produce to a respected teacher...In short, the computation gives us 330,000 pupils...in the schools of various denominations who were acquainted in reading, writing, and some method of computation.⁷

Whatever the actual ground reality, it is patent that before the British there were certainly a large number of village schools, which were segregated along religious lines. The Muslims, Hindus and the Sikhs had their own institutions,

² Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), and John C.B. Webster, *A Social History of Christianity: North-west India Since 1800* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³ Tim Allender, *Ruling through Education: The Politics of Schooling in the Colonial Punjab* (New Delhi: New Dawn Press, 2006).

⁴ Hayden Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in late Colonial India, 1860-1920* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007).

⁵ For more details see, Rajmohan Gandhi, *Punjab: From Aurangzeb to Mountbatten* (New Delhi: Aleph, 2013).

⁶ John Lowrie, *Two Years in Upper India* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1850), 168.

⁷ G.W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab Since Annexation and in 1882* (Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1971), i. (reprint of the original published in 1883).

where the curriculum centred around religious texts with the uneven addition of other subjects. In addition, there were Persian schools, *Maktabs*, which taught the official language of the Sikh court (and the earlier Mughal one), and which were attended by students from all religions, though the teachers most often were Muslims.⁸ Edwin Arnold, who wrote an account of the Governor-Generalship of Lord Dalhousie, noted on indigenous education: 'The Punjab school-house was the town-shed, or the temple enclosure, or the shade of a tree; and its pupils were unfettered by class or order, and very free to learn or leave learning alone...In the Hindoo schools, writing in Hindi and the rudiments of arithmetic constituted the curriculum. The Mussulman scholars read the Koran in Arabic and Persian, and the Gulistan and Bostan of Saadi, nearly always assembling at the mosque. Books were not frequently found, except with the teacher...'⁹ Thus, schooling was present, but basic and without much organisation.

These indigenous schools were unstable, with little oversight and external assessment. Often these schools depended on the goodwill of the local zamindar and his largesse, or on gifts by the villagers. For example, Henry Reid, the Visitor General of Schools in the North Western provinces, noted in 1851 that '...many village schools lack permanence. Within a year of his survey he estimated 1,115 out of 3,329 village schools had been disbanded. This was due to withdrawal of support by a teacher's patron, failure of a harvest or disagreement among the local zamindars.'¹⁰ The curriculum at these schools also varied dramatically and there was no possibility of assigning or maintaining standards, or to review teacher quality. Pupils were also never segregated according to ability or learning levels, and repetition of material was common.

The haphazard organisation of indigenous schools therefore presented a challenge to the British to either consolidate and develop them further or to create a whole new system of education for the Punjab.

Development of Education in British India and the Punjab

The East India Company was not initially interested in the educational setup of India. For a long time, no intervention was made in the three presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras. It was only with the Charter Act of 1813 that a separate allocation of money was granted to the Company for education. Clause 43 of the Act noted: '...that it shall be lawful for the Governor-General-in-Council to direct that out of any surplus which may remain...a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India...'¹¹ One hundred thousand rupees was simply not enough for the vast territories under the rule of the East India Company in 1813, but it was a start and several schemes were locally initiated by provincial governments under it. Thereafter, the famous minute by Lord Macaulay in 1835 became the guiding force for all education interventions in India, which called for a wholesale change to Western education. Lord Macaulay had noted that 'the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them.'¹² Macaulay thus advocated for the creation of a class 'of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.'¹³ However, despite the above minute, and the replacement of Persian in 1835 by Governor General Lord Bentinck, no substantive decisions were taken on education policy.

By the time of the annexation of the Punjab, therefore, there was no clear educational policy in British India. In any case, in the initial few years after 1849, till at least 1854, the year when the Board of Administration was replaced by a Chief Commissioner, the focus of the government was mainly on pacification and settlement of the province. Hence, a rather *laissez faire*, attitude was adopted by the government towards education and only slowly did the government begin to establish any type of schools.

⁸ For more details see, Ibid.

⁹ Edwin Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*, (London: Saunders, Otley and Co., 1862), 346-7.

¹⁰ Allender, 21.

¹¹ Quoted in B.D. Basu, *History of Education in India under the Rule of the East India Company*, (Calcutta: The Modern Review, 1922), 6-7.

¹² H. Woodrow, *Macaulay's Minutes on Education in India* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1862), 107.

¹³ Ibid., 197.

The first government school in any part of the Punjab was the one established by Mr. Edwardes, the Superintendent, Hill States, on March 1, 1848. Colonel Abbot established another school in the same year. By the time of the annexation of the Kingdom of Lahore in 1849 another thirteen schools had been established by Edwardes in the cis-Sutlej areas of the Punjab. After the annexation, the first government school was established in May 1851, by the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, with other district level schools being established subsequently at Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Shahpur, Multan, Jhelum and Jullundur, so that by 1854 there were eight such higher level schools at the district, Zillah, level. In addition, by 1854 the local administration had also made twenty-four primary level schools below the district, at the Tehsil level. All except two of these schools were maintained by local funds, either through a government educational cess on the zamindars of the districts or through grants and benefactions.¹⁴ While these schools were certainly popular, they were piecemeal and depended upon the interests of the local Deputy Commissioner. There was no regulation, no organised scheme of studies and no common assessment.

Since there was no formal educational policy in the Punjab, the Lahore government attempted to adopt the policy of the North-Western provinces known as 'Halqabandi.' Under this scheme, which had been in operation since 1850 in eight districts of the North Western provinces: 'A parganah being chosen, it was ascertained how many children of school going age it numbered, what revenue it paid, and what expense it would therefore bear. A cluster of villages, some four or five, was then marked out and the most central of the villages fixed upon as the site of the school.'¹⁵ These schools were to be maintained by a one percent cess on the zamindars of the area. The curriculum at these schools was mainly in the vernacular, with reading and writing, emphasised. Subsequent to the adoption of this scheme by the Punjab, a plan was proposed and submitted for sanction which included the establishment of fifty schools at the tehsil level, four normal schools for teacher training, appointment of a Visitor General and several assistants, as well as a central college in Lahore. This scheme was then approved both by the Government General Lord Dalhousie and the Court of Directors in 1854.

Significantly, the curriculum in the schools already established by the local administration in the Punjab and those proposed in the new scheme were going to be based on the vernacular. The government schools taught English, mainly as a subject, primarily at the district level and very few lower level schools even had any instruction in it. In fact, the teaching of English, let alone using it as a medium of instruction, was so deficient that a government report in 1856 noted: 'It would probably be premature to direct any very strenuous efforts at present upon English Education. The trials that have heretofore been made in the Punjab have not been very successful. It may be better to rest a while until a class of youths shall have risen fit to receive the higher European learning by means of the English language.'¹⁶ However, by 1854, Christian missionaries had stolen the march on the introduction of English from the government.

Missionaries and Education

Before the arrival of the missionaries, Christianity has been almost non-existent in the Punjab for centuries. While the baptism of some local converts had initiated a Christian community in the Punjab in 1595 when the Jesuits visited the Mughal Emperor Akbar at Lahore, by 1632 the Emperor Shah Jahan even had the small church the Jesuits built destroyed.¹⁷ Thereafter there is hardly any reference to Christianity in the region beyond itinerant merchants or travellers. During the Sikh era there were a number of European soldiers and generals in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and so a Fr. Adeodatus visited Lahore in 1829 and stayed in the city for two years tending to his flock of about fifty European Christian families.¹⁸ However there is almost no reference to the existence of a local Christian community during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and thus the American Presbyterian missionaries arrived in the Punjab to a population of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, who had hardly any interaction with Christianity for a long time.

¹⁴ For details see, H.R. Mehta, *A History of the Growth and Development of Western Education in the Punjab, 1864-1884* (Lahore: Government Printing Press, 1929), Chapter 2.

¹⁵ *Report of the Indian Education Commission 1882* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1883), 106.

¹⁶ *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories from 1854-55 to 1855-56 inclusive* (Lahore: Punjabee Press, 1858), 45.

¹⁷ See, Sir Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul* (London: Burnes Oates & Washbourne, 1932), chapters 4-6.

¹⁸ See, John Rooney, *On the Heels of Battles: A History of the Catholic Church in Pakistan 1780-1886* (Rawalpindi: Christian Study Centre, 1986), 35.

The first American Presbyterian missionaries sent to India were Rev'd John C. Lowrie and the Rev'd William Reed and they landed with their wives in Calcutta in early 1834. They remained in Calcutta a few weeks and consulted widely on their choice of mission field. In the end they decided upon the North Western provinces of India—present day Indian Punjab and Haryana [Pakistani Punjab was under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh]. Lowrie noted that the reason for this choice was because the provinces ‘...contain a numerous and hardy population, with a better climate than the lower provinces, and there is a ready access to the lower ranges of the Himalaya mountains in case of the failure of health.’¹⁹ An added advantage was that there were very few Christian missionaries in the region and therefore these missionaries would be opening up an entirely new field. Thus, Lowrie arrived at Ludhiana [then spelt Lodiana] in 1834 [Mrs Lowrie had died and the Reed's had left for the US due to ill health], to singlehandedly establish a mission.²⁰

A few months before the arrival of Rev'd Lowrie, Col. Wade, the British Political Agent, had set up a school in Ludhiana. When he heard the news of an American missionary coming, Col. Wade decided to handover the school to Rev'd Lowrie so that a proper setup might be established. On the school, Lowrie noted: ‘Some fourteen or sixteen native boys had been in attendance. After a few weeks the number was increased to about fifty, of whom some were the sons of two or three native chiefs, and other respectable native gentlemen...By giving two or three hours a day to the superintendence of the school, and with the valuable service of an Indo-British teacher, the progress of the scholars was very creditable to themselves...’²¹

Meanwhile, the ruler of the Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, had heard about the arrival of Lowrie and invited him to visit his kingdom with a view towards establishing an English school for the sons of his chiefs. Lowrie visited Ranjit Singh at the beginning of 1835, and stayed with him for about a month.²² However, mainly due to Lowrie's ill health, the English school at Lahore never materialised, and Lowrie came back to Ludhiana. When Lowrie returned from Lahore, he received news that two more missionaries, the Rev'd James Wilson and Rev'd John Newton and their wives had landed in Calcutta and will soon join him. As Col. Wade heard of this development, he decided the turn over his school completely to the missionaries—and thus began the educational vocation of the missionaries in north India!

By 1849 there were eighty names on the roll of the school, with a daily average attendance of seventy. A department of Persian as well as the teaching of Hindi and Sanskrit had also commenced. As the school went from strength to strength, another missionary soon joined the group—the Rev'd Charles William Forman from Kentucky, USA, who had been ordained to the Presbyterian ministry on July 7, 1847 after completing his theological studies at Princeton. On the same day he set out for India—had thought that his mission lay overseas—and after a five month journey reached Calcutta in January, 1848.

Establishment of the Lahore Mission School

By the time Forman joined the mission at Ludhiana, the school which Col. Wade had started had expanded into a high school of seventy boys of whom forty were Hindu, nineteen Muslims and nine Christians. There was also an attached Persian and Urdu school which had a further forty boys and a Gurmukhi Punjabi school which consisted of thirty boys. There was also a girl's orphanage with nineteen girls.²³ Hence, by 1848 Ludhiana was a thriving educational endeavour of the Presbyterian missionaries.

After the annexation of the Punjab in March 1849, the annual conference of the American Presbyterian mission decided to immediately send two missionaries to the new territory. As a result, the Rev'd John Newton and the Rev'd Charles William Forman set out from Ludhiana on November 12, 1849 and reached Lahore—a journey of

¹⁹ Lowrie, 41.

²⁰ For a discussion on the reasons behind the coming of American Protestant missionaries to India and the development of their motives see, James P. Alter, “American Presbyterians in North India: Missionary Motives and Social Attitudes under British Colonialism,” *Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Winter 1975.

²¹ Lowrie, 119-20.

²² *Ibid.*, 129-63.

²³ *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, May 1849* (New York: Published for the Board, 1849), 17 and 20.

about 130 miles—on the 21st of the same month. When the two men first arrived in Lahore they lived in a tent, but after some weeks they moved to the haveli [large house] of Sardar Ajit Singh within the city walls, not far from the fort. Shortly thereafter, Mrs Newton arrived from Ludhiana with her three young children.

Newton and Forman did not lose any time and almost immediately set about establishing a school in Lahore. Thus, the Lahore Mission School was established on December 19, 1849, under a tree and its first pupils were three Kashmiri boys, out of which two had previously studied with the missionaries in Ludhiana.²⁴ The boys were even paid a pice a day to attend the school. Ten days later, the number of boys had increased to seven. Forman taught the boys for 4.5 hours a day, and Newton, 2.5 hours.

Development of the Lahore Mission School

The mission school quickly became very popular and by 1850-51 there were 36 Punjabis, 3 Kashmiris, 7 Bengali, 28 from the North Western Provinces [later the United Provinces], 3 Afghans and one Baluchi. Out of this total of 80 students, 55 were Hindu, 22 Muslims and 3 Sikh, with ages ranging from six to forty.²⁵ Forman was keen that these students receive the best education possible. In 1850, he ordered six hundred dollar's worth of scientific apparatus and told the Board Secretary that if they would not release the money, he would use his personal funds to acquire the equipment. Next year when the equipment arrived Forman exuberantly wrote to the Board Secretary: 'The apparatus has been received. I have worked with it a good deal. If you could have heard the "Wah wah!" which came from every part of the room when the pith figures commenced dancing under the influence of electricity you would have been pleased. The microscope and compass are beautiful instruments. . . Please send me the following articles at my expense: Astronomical telescope, price one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars; Globes and low stand, diameter 13 inches; Magic lantern, size, &c.'²⁶ Thus, very soon the school began to provide scientific instruction to its students, something hitherto unknown in the Punjab, and as such the remit of the school began to encompass a wide variety of subjects.

By 1852 the school had outgrown the small chapel it was housed in and therefore Forman looked for other appropriate sites to move the school. One such site was the Rang Mahal, a large palatial house of one Sadullah Khan of Chiniot who was the Prime Minister of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century. During the Sikh era Sultan Mohammad, the Commandant of the artillery had occupied it. The building was 'once unrivalled in architectural grandeur [and]...the highest house in the city furnished with 10 wells...The Haveli was divided into three parts, the Mahal Sarai or female quarters, the Court house known as the Rang Mahal and the Kalai Khana.'²⁷ At the Rang Mahal enrolment further increased, and within a year of the move it crossed two hundred. Rev'd Forman was very pleased with the rapid advancement of the school and wrote in his report: 'Considerable progress has been made by the two upper classes, containing nearly thirty scholars, in mathematics and physical geography, English grammar and arithmetic...The third class, of twelve scholars, have studied geography, arithmetic, grammar and the Bible.'²⁸ By January 1853 another missionary joined Forman, the Rev'd J.H. Morrison, who with his family had been transferred from Ambala. Morrison came to India in early 1839 and had already been a victim the harsh climate and suffered from many handicaps in health. However, he was committed to his work and Forman cherished the opportunity of a fellow worker [as the Newtons were on furlough and he was alone]. Morrison was of a strong character and Forman noted that he was: 'intensely earnest, perfectly candid and wholly devoted.'²⁹

²⁴ S.K. Datta, *The History of the Forman Christian College* (Lahore: Privately published, 1936), 13.

²⁵ *The Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: Board, 1851), 22.

²⁶ A Sketch of the Life of Dr Forman by Dr Henry Forman, *The Forman Christian College Monthly* (March–April 1921), 35.

²⁷ A Short Account of the house Rang Mahal by J.C.R. Ewing, June 28, 1909, Forman Papers, Record Group Number 110, Yale Divinity School Archives.

²⁸ *The Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: Published for the Board, 1853), 22.

²⁹ *The Enlarging Life and Influence, 1852-56*, Forman Papers, Record Group Number 110, Yale Divinity School Archives.

Support of various people was critical in the educational and evangelistic work of Forman in Lahore and he repeatedly made mention of the help and service of government officials who in their private capacity did whatever they could to support the mission. Both Sir Henry Lawrence [President of the Board of Administration of the Punjab, 1849-53] and Sir John Lawrence [Chief Commissioner and later Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab 1853-59] supported the work of Forman, with Sir Henry contributing Rs. 300 per year to the school. During the first year of the school [1849] European contribution stood at Rs. 4238, nearly two thousand dollars at that time.³⁰ Support was such that by the time the Newton's had returned to India, the Rang Mahal had been bought, the Hira Mandi school had been built, two chapels had been erected, and a large property as the Mission Compound and lodgings for the missionaries had been bought—all through local contributions and without any cost to the home board. The support the missionaries received from the European and local community in Lahore gave them the courage to continue in their work zealously.

By 1855, the numbers in the Rang Mahal School and its attached branches had reached 575, which crossed 750 a year later. By that time, the Rev'd Forman had begun to be regarded as the pioneer of modern education in the Punjab both by the people and the government. Forman's work impressed the government so much so that he was routinely asked to supervise government schools, which he did in Gujrat, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi. As recorded by his son, 'He was in reality, as one of his old pupils said, the first Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab though never a Government official.'³¹

Conclusion

In 1854 a despatch by Sir Charles Wood, the Secretary of State for India, established the educational policy for British India. Called the 'Magna Carta' of education in India, it called for, among other things, the creation of a Department of Education in all provinces, the establishment of universities in the three presidency towns, the erection of more schools, especially at the primary level, and the creation of teacher training institutions. The despatch also introduced the system of grants-in-aid to help private enterprise in the spread of education. In terms of the medium of instruction it promoted both Western knowledge 'the diffusion of the improved arts, science and philosophy and literature of Europe,' and also the study of the vernacular alongside English. It noted: 'We have always been most sensitive to the importance of the use of languages which alone are understood by the great mass of the population. These languages, and not English, have been put by us in the place of Persian in the administration of justice, and in the intercourse between the officers of Government and the people. It is indispensable, therefore, that in any general system of education the study of them should be assiduously attended to.'³² Thus, by 1855, the British government in India was just about getting theoretical clarity as to their course of action regarding education.

Amidst this unclarity of both the Government of India and the Government of the Punjab in setting up of an educational system, it was the missionaries, especially the American Presbyterian missionaries at Lahore, who led the way in the introduction of modern education, mainly through the medium of English, but not to the neglect of the vernaculars, in the Punjab. It was this form of education which by the 1860s became so popular that even government schools followed suit. Furthermore, the low rate of fees in the mission school attracted a much broader segment of the population, as compared to the government schools. No wonder then the Director of Public Instruction often commented on the low fees in the mission school, as in the 1866 report he noted: 'The rate of fees taken in this school is very small, ranging from 2 to ½ anna and considering that the rate has now been much raised in the government schools, I think that some increase might fairly be called for here.'³³ However, despite many protestations, and even later of the Principal of the Lahore Government College, the mission school did not increase its fees, making education cheaply and readily available.

The missionaries were not only pioneers in modern and English education in the Punjab, they also made significant cultural and literary contributions to the society. The missionaries produced the first Punjabi dictionary—a monumental task. Their dedication to the cause of literary work can be seen from the fact that even though the Rev'd

³⁰ Lahore in 1849 and Before, Forman Papers, Record Group Number 110, Yale Divinity School Archives.

³¹ A Sketch of the Life of Dr Forman by Dr Henry Forman, *The Forman Christian College Monthly* (March–April 1921), 36.

³² Quoted in Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (London: University of California Press, 2010), 54.

³³ *Report on Popular Education in the Punjab and its Dependencies for the Year 1866-7* (Lahore: Lawrence Press, 1867), 43.

Joseph Porter was practically on his death bed in 1853 he still did not stop working. Porter wrote to the Mission Secretary: 'at least 1/3 of the Punjabi dictionary is printed. If our workmen should remain well (which we can scarcely hope for) and my own health were equal to the labor, I think we could complete the dictionary by the time of our annual meeting but of this I have little expectation. My little stock of strength is well nigh exhausted. I feel almost daily as though I would not keep on my feet much longer...'³⁴ It was after the Rev'd Porter had passed away that in 1854 the first full dictionary in Punjabi was published by the missionaries. The missionaries were keenly interested in the vernaculars and very quickly gained enough proficiency in them to even pen articles and pamphlets in them. The Rev'd Charles Forman, for example, wrote a number of tracts in Arabic, Urdu and Hindi.³⁵ The missionaries also translated a lot of material—mainly religious texts, but others of general interest too—in Urdu, Hindi and Persian, thus again becoming one of the first people to translate material into the vernacular languages for mass dissemination.

The micro-study of the Rang Mahal Mission School detailed above also exhibits a very early departure of the missionaries from a singular focus on preaching and conversion to that of educating the masses. While Forman remained committed to converting India, and argued for an education policy which facilitated that end at the 1862 Missionary Conference, the school he ran kept broadly secular, except that Christian scripture was taught there.³⁶ Already the evangelising mission of the Presbyterians was not doing well, so much so that by 1857—twenty-three years since the start of the Ludhiana Mission, they had only manage to convert a total of forty-seven people to Christianity.³⁷ Thus, education began to be seen as a major avenue of imparting Christian values in a region where conversion was proving to be very difficult. As noted by Cox the 'notion that the physical presence of a Christian institution was a "witness in itself" an alternative form of proclamation to set beside the preaching of the Word and the printing and distribution of the Word, was deeply entrenched in the mentality of nineteenth century clergymen and church women.'³⁸ In fact, when conversion did take place it threatened to end the educational enterprise of the missionaries, as in 1866 when the conversion of three Hindu boys led to the fleeing of almost half of the student population and general unrest in the city.³⁹ Therefore, conversion increasingly went to backburner in the institutions run by the American Presbyterians so that in 1866 Sir John Lawrence, now Viceroy of India, commented that as compared to the zealous Church Missionary Society, the American Presbyterians were 'disinterested' and 'considerate' in their conversion aims.⁴⁰

The Rang Mahal school of the American Presbyterians was thus what Cox calls the 'gospel of institutional presence,' which ensured a central role for missionaries, especially American Presbyterians, in the future of the Punjab. Their schools often became the most sought after, and in some cases, became the 'elite' schools in the Punjab, while their heads often became very influential in the development of educational policy in the province.⁴¹ Furthermore, these missionaries also soon led the way in the education of women and outcasts in the latter part of the nineteenth century.⁴² The Rang Mahal school continued to expand, and in 1864 added the college section, which continued till 1869 when its principal died. Thereafter, the college was re-established in 1866, and both the school and the college continued to flourish.

³⁴ The Enlarging Life and Influence, 1852-56, Forman Papers, Record Group Number 110, Yale Divinity School Archives.

³⁵ For more details see, "Urdu Works of Dr Charles W Forman," by Dr Tahir Masood, *Pakistan Today*, March 12, 2014.

³⁶ See the discussion on missionary schools by Forman, *Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference held at Lahore in December and January 1862-63* (Lodiana: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1863), 31-54.

³⁷ Cited in John C.B. Webster. "Punjabi Christians," *Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 40.

³⁸ Cox, 70.

³⁹ See, *Report on Popular Education in the Punjab and its Dependencies for the Year 1866-67* (Lahore: Lawrence Press, 1867), 43.

⁴⁰ J. Lawrence to Viscount Cranborne 19 December 1866 J. Lawrence Coll. OIOC MSS Eur. F. 90 vol. 30 f58, quoted in Tim Allender, "Anglican evangelism in North India and the Punjab missionary classroom: the failure to educate 'the masses', 1860-77," *History of Education*, 32:3, 277.

⁴² Cited in Webster, "Punjabi Christians," 43. Webster further notes, "Mrs. Newton's was the first girl's school in the Punjab and other missions followed her lead. When the Presbyterians admitted a Dalit into their schools at Lahore, other parents withdrew their children in protest, but the mission remained firm; the Dalit student remained and the others gradually returned." *Ibid.*, 54.