Chapter 4

Schooling, Culture, and Modernity

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The advent of the modern schooling system in India marks the consolidation of an educational regime which focuses on the 'native' personality and its shortcomings which are seen to be obstacles in the way of 'development' (in whatever form); further, this process is coterminous with the ascendance of the 'sciences' of psychiatry and psychology as important elements of the western knowledge regimes. Finally in this context, the consolidation of this schooling regime also inaugurates that elision so peculiar to standpoints aligned with nationalist discourses and projects: the marginalization of sociological and historical perspectives on society, and the exploration of *social* subjectivity. This, I think, is a crucial point: that modern schooling in India is firmly rooted in a 'science' of the native personality and the native body and ('modern') schools were to be the sites where 'lacks' and 'absences' could be analysed and rectified [… .]

Rectifying Frivolity and Mischief: Natives and Education in the Nineteenth Century

The complicated history of elementary education in nineteenth-century India—the 'modern' period of Indian history—is made particularly prolix by the peculiarity of a society whose decentring tendencies have ensured that a wide variety of human endeavour has always lain outside the grids of bureaucracy and 'official' policy. Hence, through the greater part of the previous century, a wide variety of educational schemes and practices—influenced variously by a melange of sympathies and traditions—seemed to have found expression. What can be said with some confidence, however, is that as the century progressed there emerged a hegemonic discourse around the idea of—to quote the title of Charles Trevelyan's (1838) influential book—*Education and the People of India.* In another context, Connell has described 'hegemonic masculinity' as one 'constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities' (Connell 1995: 183). We can say then that the hegemonic nineteenth-century educational discourse in India was one that defined itself through marginalizing a variety of other expressions and practices. This is not to say that forms of hegemony are always complete and look with satisfaction upon mute protests; they do, however, manage to dim other-voices, suppressing their possibilities through processes of hierarchical classification.

Nurullah and Naik (1974) have noted that one of the greatest problems for a history of indigenous education at the beginning of the nineteenth century is the inadequacy of data, even for areas ruled by the British, notwithstanding the fact that surveys were commissioned to gather information on the extent and nature of the same. In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, surveys were carried out in the provinces of Madras, Bombay, and Bengal. In the Madras survey (1822), Thomas Munro estimated

that there was 'one school to every 500 of the [male] population' (Nurullah and Naik 1974: 4). Munro also pointed out that to arrive at a more useful conclusion, one must also take account of the number of students given instruction in an informal setting, that is the home. This is an important point, one that may keep us from the historical reductionism that attributes learning to the existence of bureaucratic institutions. Indeed the prevalence of informal educational processes has also been a feature of our own time. In his autobiography ([1969] 1993) the poet Hariwanshrai Bacchhan, who was born in Allahabad in 1907, recalls that he received his first lesson in formal learning in the Urdu alphabet from his mother; and that for hours on end he would trace the letters of the alphabet she had written for him on a slate (Bacchhan [1969] 1993: 76). It is poignant that in a world where the figure of the mother was an important cultural icon as the transmitter of one**'s** 'own' culture—a world where women were constructed as the custodians of 'tradition' (Chatterjee 1993a; Das 1996; Mani 1993)—Bacchhan's version of 'our (Indian) culture' un-self-consciously eschews any notion of allegiance to a single religion.

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the situation with regard to indigenous educational systems can be characterized without exaggeration (*or* romanticization) as approximating a limited system of mass education; limited in that in most accounts there is no mention of girl students being given any kind of formal schooling, and, in general, educational opportunities were also denied to members of the lower castes. However, as observers such as the missionary William Adam pointed out, there did appear to be an extensive system of elementary schooling encompassing both institutions specifically established and maintained for the purpose, as well as domestic education through privately employed tutors. And, further, that whilst there existed separate institutions for Hindus and Muslims offering different levels of education (the distinction between 'schools of learning' and 'elementary schools' made by Nurullah and Naik [1974], for example), there often existed a significant overlap between their respective clientele. So a mid-nineteenth-century report by a British official noted the presence of 'Persian schools' which 'were attended by a greater number of Hindus (Khatris) than Muslims' (Kumar 1991: 54). My reading of the situation does not purport to suggest a pre-colonial utopia of Hindu-Muslim relations, rather, only that we have yet to adequately capture the nature of intercommunal (and interpersonal across communities) relations that characterized pre-colonial and non-official contexts, but that this in itself is inadequate for *not* characterizing these situations as different (cf. van der Veer 1994).

The *formal* history—reports, surveys, acts, and schemes—of the establishment and consolidation of what I have referred to as the hegemonic educational discourse **is,** by now, of routine familiarity to most scholars of India. And whilst—for the sake of providing a context—I will go over this familiar territory, I should emphasize that my main purpose is to explore the nature of the discursive formation to which these elements belonged.

Missionary activity provided the earliest European contribution to schooling in India and the beginnings of the official system of education are generally attributed to the Charter Act of 1813 which

expanded the inventory of duties of the Company to include responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of educational institutions. Between 1813 and 1854 debate raged over the object of educational policy, the medium of instruction, agency for its spread, and the method of its promulgation. The Wood's Education Despatch of 1854, formulated *on* the occasion of the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company, attempted to address some of these issues by declaring that official educational policy must concentrate on the promulgation of western knowledge and science among Indians.

The Despatch was wide-ranging in its review and recommendations with respect to Indian education. However, whilst it had the apparent effect of stimulating activity in various fields of educational policy, it is important also to remember its location within the colonial context; such contexts, no matter what their geographical occurrence, are hardly conducive to the unfettered welfare of the majority of the colonized population. It was thus in keeping with the imperatives of the colonized milieu—one where knowledge regimes which have the potential to compete with those of the colonizers are progressively marginalized—that in the period immediately following the issue of the Despatch, the vast and functional network of indigenous educational institutions was almost completely obliterated. And, in instances where such institutions continued to function, they became fossilized remnants of a discrete past, condemning their students to a marginalized existence in the realm of colonized (and, subsequently, post-colonial) existence.

The educational regime during the period following the 1854 Despatch was one marked by the neglect of indigenous educational institutions and traditions. Further, there appeared to be a consensus in both official and non-official circles that private Indian effort in the dissemination of education ought to be encouraged. Around this time there appear to have existed three schools of thought on educational matters: those followers of Hastings and Minto who believed in the encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic studies; another group which wanted the progressive use of modern Indian languages as a vehicle for imparting 'western' knowledge; and those who took their cue from Charles Grant's thinking and 'advocated the spread of western knowledge through the medium of English' (Nuruilah and Naik 1974: 61). It is important to remember, however, that most of these debates tended to be conducted among the British and 'Indian opinion' (or the class whose opinions passed as 'Indian') was largely absent from them. As has been copiously recorded by historians, these positions devolved into two broad oppositional stances, that of the Orientalists and that of those who decried the former stance as encouraging 'a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was purely mischievous and a small remainder indeed in which utility was in any way concerned' (Despatch from the Court of Directors, 1824, quoted in Nurullah and Naik 1974: 65). The latter position was, of course, to be forcefully elaborated by Macaulay.

We should also remember that whilst official opinion in favour of disseminating western learning and the English language was gaining ground, there continued to exist a school of official opinion, which argued that 'every Native who possesses a good knowledge of his own mother-tongue, of Sanskrit and of English (possesses] the power of rendering incalculable benefit to his countrymen'

(*Report of the Board of Education,* 1840–1: 35, quoted in Nurullah and Naik 1974: 83.) The nature of the debate differed across provinces. So while in Bengal the medium-of-instruction argument was carried out mainly in terms of the choice between classical languages and English, in Bombay it seems to have been well accepted that public instruction should primarily be imparted through the vernaculars. This position was only challenged during the 1840s. However, it is generally true that by the middle of the nineteenth century the opinions of those who argued for continued support to indigenous systems and methods of learning had been substantially marginalized. Along with this any possibility of a viable system of *mass* education was also undermined.

One of the strongest linkages between the marginalized condition of modern Indian languages within the educational system and the manoeuvres of a colonized polity can be traced to events in the late nineteenth century for this was the period during which the excoriation of the vernaculars was not effectively achieved through a combination of government policy and the perceptions of social advancement open to those with effective command of the English language. It is important to remember that whilst the general climate towards the use of the vernaculars as a medium of instruction may have been unfavourable, there nevertheless existed private efforts to the contrary. So in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal, a limited amount of medical education was sought to be provided in the vernacular. And whilst this education was chiefly designed for 'officers for the subordinate rank of the medical department' (ibid. 191), it resulted in an activity which carried the potential of radical reform in, and problematization of, existent educational philosophy regarding the 'suitability' of non-European languages for 'scientific' learning. Eminent doctors of Bombay's Grant Medical college 'wrote books in Marathi on all medical subjects' (ibid.) thus showing that vernacular languages were capable of communicating scientific thought.

The force of opinion against the use of vernaculars as a medium of instruction at all but the primary level of education was, however, during the second half of the nineteenth century, so strong, and the resources and rewards for committing energies towards this end so meagre, that these efforts met the terminal fate of all heroic efforts which do not—in a colonized society—have official sanction. So, whilst the Despatch of 1854 had recommended favourably on the encouragement of the vernaculars as a medium of instruction, by the closing decades of the century, the Indian Educational Commission (1882) came down in favour of English (Nurullah and Naik 1974: 190–9). By the turn of the twentieth century the idea of the use of vernaculars as a medium of teaching had been effectively effaced from the processes of policy formulation (ibid.). 'Progress' and 'civilization' required a cache of tools—the English language and western knowledge among these—that would enable all those were who wished to 'better' themselves to do so; those tools, to quote Foucault from a different context, which had ostensibly enabled historians to uncover the 'unmoving histories' concealed 'beneath the rapidly changing history of governments, wars, and famines' (Foucault 1982: 3)

[….]

Recovering the Subject: The New Man of Post-coloniality

Though something akin to a nationalist sentiment had been gathering momentum in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, it was really during the first two decades of the twentieth century that what could be termed a nationalist educational agenda began to emerge. It is no coincidence that this period also witnessed the intensification of Gandhi's involvement in the national movement. It is not always clear that Gandhi's thought on education—as on many other matters—can be neatly categorized as part of a nationalist world-view. For on many points—such as the masculinity of the state and on the stubborn, though often implicit, questioning of the dichotomy between the 'manual' and the 'mental'—the complexity of his philosophy can be seen to problematize nationalist thought. This section is divided into two parts, and explores two different types of nationalist and modernist agendas. The first of these was formulated in the second half of the nineteenth century and found currency till the third decade of the twentieth, after which it was absorbed into a—second phase—modernist discourse that holds sway to the present. In addition to outlining current government initiatives, I will discuss:" the latter with reference to the establishment and functioning of the Doon School in Dehradun.

National histories in general seem to be informed by a millenarianism that foreshadows a new future through the means of an anthropomorphic promise. It is the promise of the 'coming man' (White 1992) whose character—ostensibly moulded at the intersection of 'rational' and 'modern' thinking—carries the key to a more 'progressive' thinking. In the Indian case, post-coloniality as a rupture upon the surface of an oppressive present unfolds through a dialogue of concurrence between colonial regimes of knowledge and their antagonists, the agitators for national Independence. The contemporary state of Indian education can, in turn, be linked to the nature of the latter group whose philosophical and material hegemony established very specific patterns of activity and development.

The history of Indian modernity and post-coloniality as a collaborative treatise—traces of which lie buried under the 'joyfulness' of its narrative of progress and 'national' good—can be found then in attempts to constitute modernist subjectivities.

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One of the most fruitful threads in contemporary theorizing on gender and sexuality can be summarized by the assertion that gender 'is a ... practical accomplishment—something accomplished by social practice' (Council 1995: 76). Ironically, the colonial sphere appears to have provided particularly fertile grounds for the elaboration of this proposition. The 'social reformer' and associate of Swami Vivekanand, Margaret Noble, or Sister Nivedita as she came to be known, is a case in point. Though concerned with 'women's issues' Sister Nivedita spoke, above all, as an upper-caste male reformer of a fallen—'effeminized'—society.

[….]

Sister Nivedita's thoughts on education drew upon an idealized and masculinized Hindu construction of a 'glorious' past that could be drawn upon as a resource for improving the present. The most important attribute of this ancient glory towards the rejuvenation of the Indian present lay in Nivedita's depiction of an undiluted antique essence whose traces could still be detected; further, it merely needed to be harnessed in the proper direction. This concerned the exceptional quality of the ancient Hindu mind, and the task of the present was to concentrate 'the Indian mind on the Indian problem' (Sister Nivedita 1923: 13). The slippages between 'Hindu' and 'Indian', male and female, and between Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical traditions were to become a regular part of the Indian nationalist discourse. Colonialism was marked by a convergence between ideas on the 'scientific temper', and the innate rationality of the 'industrial group'. 'Economic evolution', the economist Alfred Marshall was to assert, implied a movement towards the industrialized state. This was a movement away from 'savagery', a condition where humans exist 'under the dominion of custom and impulse; scarcely ever striking out new lines for themselves; never forecasting the distant future, ... governed by the fancy of the moment ...' (Marshall 1938: vii). This epistemological intersection was well represented in Sister Nivedita**'s** thinking. A fundamental aspect of women's education in India, she said, must lie in making women more 'efficient' (Sister Nivedita 1923: 59). For, like 'Sita and Savitri', the modern Indian woman must acquire the skills of being 'at once queen and housewife, saint and citizen, submissive wife and solitary nun ... daughters, sisters and disciples' (Sister Nivediter 1923: 57). Efficiency, then, was Sister Nivedita's masculinist trope towards the reformation of Indian womanhood, 'In order to achieve efficiency for the exigencies of the twentieth century', she went on to say, 'a characteristic synthesis has to be acquired' (Sister Nivediter 1923: 58). And as part of this 'efficiency drive' towards a new society, the nation, women must be imparted a geographical sensibility for geographical knowledge. The latter, she said, constitutes the fundamental building block of the consciousness of national feeling (Sister Nivediter 1923: 59). This might be achieved through resources already at 'our' disposal: 'the wandering *Bhagabatas* or *Katbakas,* with the magic lantern, may popularise geography, by showing slides illustrative of various pilgrimages' (Sister Nivedita 1923: 61)

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The education of Indian men, on the other hand, must ensure obliteration of the dangers of effeminacy, and colonialism was a catastrophe only in as much it has brought on modernity too suddenly (Sister Nivedita 1923: 66–7). The capacity to comprehend the changed situation brought about by compressed modernity could, however, be developed through initiating strategies for the restoration and reformation of Indian masculinity. Indeed the 'uplift' of women was inextricably linked to the 'proper' education of men and the ability to interest them in women's issues: 'Hundreds of young men are necessary, to league themselves together for the deepening of education in the best way amongst women' (Sister Nivedita 1923: 62); further, Indian history-provided ample evidence that men will work towards improving the educational status of women: after all, Rammohun Roy provided the lead in the

abolition of *Sati,* and Ishwarchand Vidyasagar was instrumental in promoting monogamy 'as the ideal of marriage' (Sister Nivedita 1923: 63).

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The 'mind' as the object of educational reform, is also the focus of Aurobindo Ghose's recommendations in his *A System of National Education* (1924). As is common in such perspectives, the social and political contexts of educational projects come to be expressed in the conjunctional vocabulary of biology and masculinity. Appropriately, then, the opening chapter is entitled 'The Human Mind' and opens with the words that 'the true basis of Education is the study of the human mind'. Ghose then goes on to assert that 'the muscles of the mind must be trained by simple and easy means; then, and not till then, great feats of intellectual strength can be required of them' (Ghose 1924: 3). Perspectives which proceed from a philosophical commitment to the 'human mind' also carry within them (and are informed by) a deep commitment to individualism. In the Indian context this also becomes enmeshed with the broader context of the discourses of colonialism that justified imperialism through appeal to the *personal* qualities of the colonizing 'race' in comparison to the colonized. The response by Indians was usually m a similar currency, modified to insert the 'spiritual' integrity of the East where individualism was poured through the sieve of 'divine gift' to achieve perfection: 'Every one has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse' (Ghose 1924: 5).

Perhaps the most elaborate discourse on early education as foundational of the future national community can be found in the praxis of the nineteenth-century social reform movement known as the Arya Samaj. Founded in 1875 by Dayanand Saraswati (1824–83), the Samaj sought to reform a 'decaying' Hindu society and invigorate it through a return to the principles of the 'golden age' of a Vedic culture which through the centuries had been debased through practices such as idol worship and the caste system. As part of its 'reform' movement, the Samaj established a series of Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) colleges, the first of which was founded in Lahore in 1886. Several institutions for the education of girls were also established (the so-called Arya Kanya Gurukuls). The establishment of separate schools for boys and girls was in keeping with Dayanand's emphasis on celibacy of students, an attitude strongly redolent of British public school attitudes towards sexual and other 'degenerate' desires which stalked the young, though presented by the Samaj as a 'Vedic' principle. Female educational practice within the Arya Samaj, as others have pointed out (see Kishwar 1986), has followed the well-worn path of making strident demands for women's education in order to prepare wives who 'know how to manage home, rear children and at the same time participate in public social [sic], and even political life' (Pandit 1974: 197).

Primarily, the Samaj sought to revivify a 'fallen' society through the task of forming 'a sound, active and decisive character in students' (Pandit 1974: 193), a perceived 'drawback' of other nineteenth-century educational systems. The conjunctional site of the Arya Samaj discourses of a Hinduized past and present, of the centrality of the male citizen, of the male sexual regimen, and of national greatness

through the development of 'personality' and 'character' was the Gurukul educational movement. The first of the Gurukuls was established in 1902 'in the Kangadi valley [Haridwar] on the banks of the river Ganges' (Pandit 1974: 211) and manifested a dissatisfaction within the Samaj with the direction of the DAV curricula which was seen to be taking *on* a 'foreign' character. This was sought to be stemmed through the propagation of the Gurukul movement—of 'ancient' and Vedic origin—within which 'the students were called *Brhamacharis* on the pattern of the Ancient Gurukulas' (Pandit 1974: 210).

Arya Samajis strongly emphasize that the founder of their creed held views which have since been validated 'scientific' method, 'Swamiji [touched] upon what can be some of the vital aspects of and components of early childhood education which the modern child psychologists and educationists have priced highly' (Pandit 1974: 156). Thus, on the one hand, the Samaj was seen to be countering the 'degenerate' effects of westernization (and of missionary activity), while on the other hand the ultimate validation of its philosophy could only come from the knowledge regimes of the West. This is the well-known double bind of colonial cultural practice of 'wanting and not wanting a relation' (Metcalfe 1988: 197).

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The mysticism that pervades much of Tagore's educational philosophy does, however, appear to seek to engage with an external reality which, though not fixed or objectively established, does have consequences for one's being in the world. Hence Tagore appeared to grant that the philosophy of 'inner transformation' may be inadequate strategy for societal transformation and that it may merely lead to the cul-de-sac of individualism. Hence he suggested that 'the twofold aim of education is first to help the individual consciousness to enter into and grow under the direct influence of the higher consciousness and secondly to externalise the inner change in life outside, in action; life and activities therefore are as important and indispensable as inner growth' (Sarkar 1961: 35).

We must also recognize Tagore's contribution to educational thought in his challenge to instrumental knowledge. His emphasis on the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of learning constituted a dissenting opinion on the Enlightenment rationality that had become such an integral aspect of the discourse of the 'modern' Indian intelligentsia. However, the chronoptope of 'ancient India' was never really far from Tagore's thoughts, and its 'Tapovana ideal and Upanashadic culture' (Sarkar 1961: 145) informed his notion of the post-colonized renaissance in which his educational experiments would play a part.

Of all the contributors to the debate on educational matters, it is perhaps only Gandhi who manages to question the authoritarian *guru-shishya* model which recommended itself to various thinkers primarily, it would seem, on the grounds of its supposed universality and antiquity. For the unquestioning deference to the *guru* as mode of transmission of learning and self-development, Gandhi substituted the dynamic of a physical relationship with materiality of the social world as the act of learning. The task of learning, Gandhi could be said to be suggesting, lies not in the phenomenological surrender to an (all-) knowing subject—the *guru*—but, rather, it must be constituted as an entirely

decentred technology; here, there are no comforts of a 'truth' which is the 'reward' of sublimation in this philosophy, but only a complex learning and unlearning which mimic the warps and woofs of the products of the *charkha* (spinning wheel), in this way, his educational model also offered a way to engage w:ith an Indian society which needed models of practice other than those drawn from a Hindu milieu.

However, in the wider context of the predominance of the Hindu viewpoint in public life, the liberal Bengali Muslim opinion seems to have been quite suspicious of the Wardha scheme of Basic Education.

> The main objection of the Bengali Muslims, it appears, was that the schools under the scheme would turn into *Ashram-schools* like *Vidya Mandir* and preach Hinduised Congress cult in the form of *Bharatmata*, *Bande Mataram,* non-violence and Gandhi cap. It was also feared that a reformed Hindustani would be forced upon the Muslims and this would drive out Urdu. ... not only the scheme but the bonafide of those who would be entrusted to implement the scheme was also in question [Acharya 1994: 174–5],

However, given Gandhi's own conception of Basic Education, it is not clear that these fears would have emanated *solely* from an engagement with the Gandhian educational philosophy. For example, with respect to religious training under his scheme, Gandhi noted that there would be 'no room for giving sectional religious training'. Instead he said that 'fundamental universal ethics will have full scope' (Gandhi 1951: 53). Further, though Gandhi was insistent that the unifying national language be Hindustani, he was just as clear that 'this common inter-provincial language can only be Hindustani written in Nagari or Urdu script. Therefore, pupils will have to master both the scripts' (Gandhi 1951: 53). It is, however, possible to understand Muslim fears in the context of non-Gandhian Hinduism that was, and continues to be, an important strain of Indian nationalism. Though Gandhi was a deeply religions Hindu, he was careful not to equate India with Hinduism. In the wake of early-twentieth-century Indian nationalism, however, the cultural discourse which came to dominate was the one that emphasized an exclusive Indian identity, an identity shorn of the cultural complexity of life among contiguous and overlapping communities, in the flux of difference and commonality. The Wardha programme may not have had much in common with other contemporaneous schemes, but it could not escape the suspicions of those who were not Hindus. The exclusivist tendencies of other schemes were evident even in the 'enlightened' Tagore's *Santiniketan* experiment which made no attempt to investigate the possibilities of a more syncretic and inclusive educational philosophy.

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The Modern Regime

It is possible to argue that Gandhi's educational philosophy was part of a contradictory complex of ideas. Whilst it sought to disrupt the existing relations of power (his championing of the vernaculars as an educational medium is an example) he did not distance himself from rich and powerful in his public life (Sarkar 1983). Gandhi's scheme was really about the method of education rather than its substantive

content, though it was through the latter that the former was formulated. However, the content through which 'education' could be achieved was not of an exclusionary kind and in this sense, his scheme was not about a concrete list of subjects. He argued, for example, that he was in no way opposed to 'literary' education. Rather, his concern was with the manner of its acquisition for he argued that literary education could not be separated from other kinds of learning, for to do so would be to resort to a disembodied sense of the self, one where the word and the world—sensuality and tactility—come to be seen as separable. Gandhi was to insist, that these were inextricably intertwined.

Despite the wide range of emotions aroused by Gandhi's thought, his educational scheme found few takers among the indigenous metropolitan post-colonial intelligentsia. One of the earliest pointers to the specificity of interests and ideologies which would come to dominate post-Independence educational thinking in India is contained in an incidental remark by Sir John Sargent, chief author of the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) on *Post-War Educational Development in India,* published in 1944. Writing in the 1960s of the process leading up to the publication of the so-called Sargent Report, he noted that 'when we had got all our financial and other statistics checked by experts, and gazed at the result, we felt rather like "stout Cortez and his men", only our peak was in Simla and we had a woman in our company' (Sargent 1968: xxii). The ideological topography of this observation—masculinist identity, proximity to centralized power, the civilizing mission—constitute also the landscape of the hegemonic schooling system of post-Independence India. In this section I will reflect upon these ideologies and discourses and conclude by pausing at a specific site, the Doon School, where these have been put into practice.

The legacy of colonialism, with its preoccupation with explaining differences between British and 'Oriental' societies grounded in a discourse of personality, gave way to a post-colonized educational philosophy similarly concerned with removing the perceived 'imperfections' of the native personality. The Zakir Hussain Committee Report (ZHC) of 1937 that evaluated Gandhi's Basic Education Scheme is a case in point. An indispensable aspect of Gandhi's scheme was its focus on the *social* process of the creation of privilege and the *historical* process of the creation of the mental/manual (or mind/body) dualism. Hence Gandhi considered it fundamental that all students undertake some kind of manual training as part of the schooling process. This *socio-historical* problematization of the very basis of knowledge formation—'instrumental rationalism' (Turner 1996: 10)—which held sway amongst the Indian intelligentsia offered a challenge that seemed just too frightening to engage with. The ZHC responded to Gandhi's disorientating ideas from within the fortified walls of a knowledge regime that fixed the shifting parameters of historical and social murk with a firm and classifying gaze, reducing structures and their historical dynamics to the vagaries of agency: it merely 'explained the principles and objectives of the scheme in terms of recognised doctrines of education and psychology' (ibid.).

The Sargent Report was also asked to evaluate the possibilities of educational development in India in the post-War period. In keeping with the, by then, deeply embedded world-view that explained 'success' and 'failure' in terms of the capacities of 'personality to the exclusion of social factors', the

Board's report offered the following suggestion on school planning. Secondary education, it said, should be made selective and 'a pupil who does not happen to be selected shall not ordinarily be allowed to enter a High School' (Nurullah and Naik 1974: 395). For, it noted, 'The function of the High School is to cater for those children who are well above the average in ability' (ibid.). The social circumstance and specific histories of individuals—the sites of interaction between agency and structure, seem largely to have been submerged under the weight of a colonial epistemology. The report could be read to say that colonialism—the 'success' of one people over another—could itself be explained through the psychologized lexicon of innate ability and intrinsic traits. Of course, this aspect of the report also articulated an attitude implicit in much of post-colonized educational thinking that 'the duty of higher education [is] to produce an elite' (Sargent 1968: 87), and this was usually contextualized through stating that this elite was needed 'not for its own sake, but for that of the community' (ibid.).

The continuities between the classificatory regime of colonial rule, its naturalization of 'ability' through the psychologization of historically evolved positions of power, and post-colonized thinking are also starkly illustrated by some further recommendations of the Sargent Report. In a most remarkable discussion—chilling in its authoritarian ambitions—the report noted that special attention had to be paid towards training workers for the industrial life of the nation-to-be. With this in mind, it suggested a fourfold division of such workers, each category marked by special selection and training procedures. These categories were 'Chief Executives and Research Workers of the Future'; 'Minor Executives, Foremen, Charge Hands, etc.'; 'Skilled Craftsmen'; and 'Semi-skilled and Unskilled Labour' (Nurullah and Naik 1974: 398–9; Sargent 1968: 96–8).

These techno-bureaucratic gestures, born of a milieu where the imperatives of governmentality strained against the recalcitrance of diffuse practices of existence, also find constant play in our time; for in the post-colonized situation, 'instrumental-rationalism' has become a corner-stone of the 'nation-building' project, and, in its local recensions, has developed a most complex set of practices of policy. These, in the main, refer to themselves as touchstone and hence come to us as a pithy illustration of the Baudrillarian simulacra (Baudrillard 1994).

Situating Modernity[1]

As Lefebvre (1994) points out, ideologies need spaces to anchor their abstractions: to ground the fleeting figures of speech in an artefactual configuration that might, perhaps, be made to speak the self-referential language of proof and permanence. In the following section I wish to situate some of the issues raised in the preceding pages in a concrete context of practice, the Doon School. I will treat the Doon School as a historically significant site for the production and elaboration of a very specific discourse on Indian modernity and post-coloniality.

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My treatment of the Doon School[2] parallels Michel Foucault's (1979) use of the Panopticon as a model for investigating the relationship between people and institutions that may throw light on the Indian project of modernity and nationhood.

The relevance of the Doon School in the context of Indian modernity is manifold. The School's foundation (in 1935) coincides with what Pandey (1994) has called 'second-phase' nationalism marked by 'the dissociation of "nation" from any pre-existing communities and the construction of the purely national unambiguously, in terms of a new kind of community—the "India of our dreams"' (Pandy 1994: 239). Throughout its history the School has engaged actively with the wider discourses on modernity and citizenship in India. During this period it has also produced an intelligentsia (writers, academics, journalists, newspaper editors, social workers, corporate chiefs, etc.) whose influence on the public debate on nationalism and citizenship has been substantial. One could argue therefore that there exists a public space of debate and discourse on the nation, modernity, rationality, etc. which can be usefully examined through a historical, anthropological, and sociological study of the Doon School.

Fin de siecle debates on the future—post-colonial—Indian society seemed to have arrived at a consensus with respect to the 'attributes' required of the 'modern' personality of the citizen-to-be. Established by a coalition of interests which included members of the Indian Civil Service, the professional classes, and men of feudal background, the School's involvement in discourses of national identity had begun from its earliest days. Indeed, its founder S.R. Das, a barrister and cousin of the nationalist C.R. Das, was quite clear about the objectives of the 'Indian public school' he had decided to found ever since his return to India upon completing his education in England; in 1927, in a letter to one of his sons, Das despaired at what appeared to him a fractured sense of Indian identity and expressed his firm belief that 'his' school was 'going to be the real, though a very slow solution, of the problem of the nationality of Indians'. The School's educational and (one might say) philosophical agenda has also attracted wide support, some indication of which can be gained from the fact that the guest list for its opening-day ceremony in 1935 included representatives from the civil services, the defence forces, the landed classes, *as well as* a leading light in the cause of Hindu nationalism, Madan Mohan Malviya, and a member of the Muslim league, Chaudhri Zafarullah Khan (Srivastava 1998). Further, in 1952, the government appointed the Mudaliar Commission 'to survey the whole field of secondary education' (Sargent 1968: 85), and the Commission strongly supported the idea of private schools such as Doon (ibid.).

One of the moulds into which the School sought to cast the 'new' Indian personality was that of the rational, scientific subject. These were attributes specifically denied the 'natives' by the British who had commandeered the nineteenth century ontological space which conducted its business in vectors of 'objectivity', 'scientificity', and the critical 'this worldly' consciousness. The ability to lead a life of the mind was what set, so the argument went, the British apart from their subject races. The Doon School represented both an acceptance of this doctrine and an attempt to overcome it. The efforts of the School's founders were also informed by the philosophical deliberations of the age of capital and the

ostensible requirements for participation in its enterprise. As the collective action of a class of men, the establishment of the School also represented the elevation of the individual as both a 'method' for understanding social predicament and a tool for the amelioration of the 'misfortunes' besetting a colonized society. An important context of the modernizing philosophy that marked the foundation of the School was that of the 'reformist' Brahmo Samaj. The School's founder S.R. Das (1872–1928) was an active member of the faith which advocated 'the substitution of a rational faith for the prevailing popular religions of the world, which, [the Samajis] thought, increasingly curtailed the freedom of human beings by enslaving them to mechanical rituals, irrational myths, meaningless superstitions and other worldly beliefs and values' (Kopf 1979: 1).

An important aspect of this dialogue in the colonial context was the manner in which social and economic stasis came to be represented as consequence of a 'lack' in the native body and mind. It was this 'lack'—one of which was the absence of the 'scientific temper'—that the Doon School set out to remedy. 'Personality' could now be seen as removed from the grasp of history: timeless, transcendent, and able at any time to be instantly transformed. It is only by situating the dialogue of Doon—the dialogue on 'nation building', the debates on the Doon man, the new Indian—within the universe of an ahistoricized present animated by the transubstantiative embrace of science and rationality, that we can fully understand its role as the propagator of a very specific kind of post-colonial world-view.

There were several ways in which the School sought to incorporate a 'scientific' world-view into its representational and educational practices. For a start, its founders decided upon the erstwhile campus of the Forest Research Institute (FRI; established 1906), one of the many colonial organizations concerned with 'scientific' mapping, classifying, and surveying, as the site for their institution. This decision sought to align the project of Indian modernity with that of the global Linnean enterprise (Pratt 1993) which was also a discourse of European identity, because organizations such as the FRI were also sites of self-representation by the British of their own subjectivity as ordered, rational, etc. It was entirely appropriate, then, that the search for a site for the birth and nurture of a new Indian identity should be a garden with flowers and laboratories—the garden of rational delights.

Several aspects of school life came to be viewed through the prism of 'rationality', and each of these constituted a procedure towards the construction of the scientific chronotope. In a 1947 edition of the *Doon School Weekly,* a popular forum for debates on 'national identity'. Headmaster-designate John Martyn noted that 'Indian culture seems to me to be vast, unwieldy and diffuse', and that this 'diffuseness' was not suitable as ornamentation of a 'modern' nation. The 'problem' of Indian culture (its 'appropriateness' for the age of modernity), Martyn, an Englishman who had chosen to 'stay on', noted, 'concerns all those of us who are connected with education: It needs to be edited, clipped, trimmed, reduced to manageable proportions'. Ordinality—the fervour that reduces human endeavour to quantifiable units—was reflected in other areas as well. On 29 March 1943, the *Doon School Weekly* published results of 'Matrix' tests designed to measure the intelligence of the students divided into age, religious, caste, and regional categories. Percentiles were provided under the headings 'superior

intellectual ability', 'above average', 'average', 'below average', and 'underdeveloped'. The students were further categorized according to whether they were 'Moslems', 'Brahmins', 'Kshatriyas', or 'other Hindu Castes', and according to the professional background of their fathers and their region of origin. The Matrix test was, of course, only one of the many ways through which the urge towards re-figuring the nation-state as an ordinal entity was made manifest. What is of greater interest is the institutionalization of these procedures in the wider processes of the nation-state, where well-being became a technocratic—the application of the 'right' procedures—rather than a complex social issue (see the discussion on the World Bank and mass education later).

We can say that the project of producing this new subjectivity took the form of a compact between men, since the young citizen in the making was now delivered from maternal care through the father's authority to the charge of other men, those in charge of the modern schooling system. This, in many ways, echoes the 'fraternal contract' (Pateman 1980) of the national project itself. However, it is important to understand that the post-colonized regime of modern educational thought is structured around a very specific notion of masculinity,[3] and that it came to be expressed in terms of the 'new' knowledges rather than through indices of corporeality; not for an ascendant Indian middle class the stereotypes of 'martial races' (Omissi 1991). Modern schooling in India is based, then, on a model of masculinity whose antecedents lie in the colonial experience. This model of education has also helped sustain a view of society where a certain ('modern') section of the population has come to represent itself as the harbinger of 'progressive' ideas, but has to constantly struggle against the atavistic recalcitrance of its 'primitive' populations. These national Others have come in the form of the 'unscientific' (and hence 'feminine'), the 'fundamentalists', the 'provincials', etc.

The system of schooling represented by the Doon School has recently received unprecedented homage from the nation-state via the establishment of Navodaya Vidyalyas (NVs) based on the Doon (boarding school) model. The NVs aim to make available 'good quality' school education to children 'irrespective of their capacity to pay for it'.[4] Children from rural backgrounds will particularly be encouraged to seek admission in the Vidyalayas, and the government will meet the educational costs of all students who qualify for study within a curriculum which borrows heavily from the Doon model of education (see also Scrase 1993).

Another important aspect of the modern schooling regime is connected with the issue of religion and how to deal with the multiplicity of religious voices that characterize Indian society. At Doon, it was most often manifested in the question of whether the curriculum should include religious instruction and whether it should arrange for (or encourage) religious worship. The search for the 'correct' religious attitude, and indeed the problematic of faith—interpreted primarily in terms of its perceived movement from the private to the public sphere—was (and continues to be) part of a wider, national, dialogue on the post-colonial 'modern' mind.

In English-speaking (and writing) circles in India, the realm of religion has increasingly come to be accompanied by a gloss on what is seen as its polar opposite, secularism. Secularism became an

important part of the School's dialogue of self-representation and the various rituals of school life were, its proponents insisted, to be strictly organized around 'secular principles'. For many who were at the Doon School in the opening decades of its existence, and who were later to play important roles in the public life of the nation as part of the post-colonial intelligentsia—journalists, editors, novelists, social scientists, cultural functionaries of the state—secularism became a personal creed (Srivastava 1998). The School's policy on religion was expressed through a combination of textual practice and daily routine. So, while on the one hand, School magazines, newspapers, and other publications constantly reiterated—participating in the creation of the secular chronotope—its stand on religious matters, public rituals of the school such as the morning assembly were organized around the principle of religious syncretism. The latter procedure is particularly relevant to the creation of the School's secular chronotope, constituting as it does a graphic (ocular) demonstration of the organization of School space and time as the space and time of secularism; as a dramatization of the ethic of secularism, the assembly powerfully expressed and established the public face of the School.

It is possible to argue, however, that the Indian modernist dialogue on secularism is itself ensconced within a silent space of Hindu symbols and rituals. And that, in this manner, the Indian liberal-bourgeois discourse, of which the School is an important adjunct, speaks, unselfconsciously, through the vocabulary of majority opinion, with the gestures of that majority's cultural and religious universe. This is a situation that may be referred to as 'Hindu contextualism' and its form in the modern education system can be briefly outlined through reference to the Doon School. So, the representational space of the School—that occupied by the crest, the motto, special ceremonies, the field of visible impact, in other words—is, in fact, embedded within a very specific but *silent* configuration of signs. This is a configuration that belongs to the Hindu sacral cache of gestures, colours, and sounds. This silent space envelopes, so to say, the presence of the School, saturating the grounds of both its routine and non-routine existence. It also encompasses, and is encompassed by, the public voice of the School, the ethos of secularism. The School's crest is a long-stemmed oil lamp designated the 'lamp of learning'. The most immediate visible impact of the crest is to evoke the specific world of Hindu worship. The significance of oil lamps of various shapes and sizes in the Hindu ritual and cultural world—inaugurating a Kathakali performance, the *arati* ceremony during worship, and the symbolism of fire, *agni,* itself—need hardly be laboured (see, for example, Coomaraswamy 1964). I am not suggesting that those associated with the school consciously refer to the School's crest as an emblem drawn from the world of Hindu existence. On the contrary, one could speculate that such a consciousness is, in fact, absent. In this manner, one might say, what passes for a multi-religious or anti-religious environment is in fact lodged within a very specific universe, one evocative of the sights and sounds of the Hindu existence.

A similar argument can be mounted in the case of the *process* of selection of the School crest. Before the 'lamp of learning' was adopted in November 1937, several other designs had been submitted by students for consideration. All of the designs suggested by students incorporated motifs— or

fragments—expressive of a Hindu aesthetic: the lamp, the sun, and the lotus (Singh 1985). These motifs, though removed from their original context, that is their specific role in Hindu life, nevertheless carry, to return to Bakhtin, 'a certain chronotopic aura', a memory of their time and place: they 'remember' and resonate their past. It is not surprising, therefore, the political party with a public manifesto on Hindutva, the Bharatiya Janata Party, uses for its symbol the lotus flower (again, see Coomaraswamy 1964). Further, when, in 1953, Headmaster John Martyn put forward a selection of verses and aphorisms as possible options for a motto to accompany the crest, the entire selection was drawn from Sanskrit and Pali sources. The incorporation of the paraphernalia of the Hindu 'Great Tradition' (Singer 1972) at strategic intersections of visibility and permanence, is also apparent in other, more concrete ways: carvings and friezes depicting scenes from Hindu cosmology, and life-size statues of, among others, Mahavir, Buddha, Vivekananda, the torch-bearer of 'muscular-Hinduism', and the poet Tagore.

The point of the above discussion is not to censure efforts towards facilitating awareness of religious world-views. Rather, it is to problematize secularism as practice, for the modern system of education in India has played a considerable role in producing an intelligentsia which perceives Hindu contexts as synonymous with multi-religious ones.[5] Whilst there is a persistent tendency to ascribe 'fundamentalist' inclinations to those without access to 'modern secular historiography, still composed mainly in English' (Basu et al. 1993), 'we' have much to learn by turning 'our' attention to those processes and methods through which we have been produced as the avenging lights of secularism and the active subjects of modernity. It would appear to be of great importance to pay critical attention to the manner in which Aurobindo Ghose's (1924: 21) definition of the 'spirit of Hinduism' as the commitment to 'God . . . , humanity . . . , [and] country', and his observation that 'it is this spirit of Hinduism pervading our schools which ... should be the essence of Nationalism in our schools distinguishing them from all others', may indeed have come to fruition.

Official Policies and their Implementation

'The most unpardonable failure of our educational system', it has been suggested, 'is evidenced by the pathetic literacy rates'. And that, 'while the percentage of literates has increased at a snail's pace from 16.67 in 1951 to 36.23 in 1981, the number of illiterates has shot up from approximately 300 million to 437 million in the same period, and is expected to cross the 500 million mark by AD 2000' (Jayaram 1994: 210). As several studies have pointed out, parental reluctance is no longer an acceptable explanation—if it ever was—for this state of affairs (see Dreze this volume; Saldanha 1994).

Official figures for 'Recognised Educational Institutions' indicate that between 1950–1 and 1993–4, the number of primary schools grew from 209,671 to 572,923 (that is slightly less than threefold increase), whilst the number of universities ballooned from 27 to 213, amounting to an eightfold increase (*Annual Report of the Ministry of Education* 1994 [ARE94]: 209). This phenomenal increase in the number of tertiary institutions did not, however, lead to (or was a reflection of) successes in the primary and tertiary sector whose graduates then created an overwhelming demand for higher study.

On the contrary, data for the same period show sharp declines in stagewise enrolment, that is the numbers enrolling at primary, upper primary, and higher secondary levels (in any one year) follow a markedly downward trend (the phenomenon somewhat economistically referred to as 'wastage'). The corresponding declines for girls, and for students of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe backgrounds are greater at each stage. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this is that as students progress from grade to grade, schooling becomes a luxury for the vast majority of parents (or those in charge), and only those whose education does not impinge upon the family's ability to earn a subsistence are able to continue with it. In the Indian case, female children and those from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe backgrounds would seem to be the first affected by the strategies of survival. This is not, however, an assertion of a simplistic lack-of-demand hypothesis but points to the complexity of the nature of 'demand' for education For example, the symptoms of Adivasi non-enrolment and drop out from educational institutions, cumulatively manifested in illiteracy, might be more meaningfully explained by reference to a wider context of deprivation where the choice between educating a child or putting him/her to work can present itself as a choice between bare subsistence or a calamitous effect upon that subsistence (Saldanha 1994: 90).

Census figures reported Indian literacy rate for 1991 ('for population aged seven years and above') at 52.21, that for males being 64.13 and for females 39.29 (ARE94: 203). Further disaggregation reveals that the proportion of literate to illiterate population is significantly higher in urban areas, and that the numbers for female literacy, both urban and rural, compare unfavourably with those for male literacy. It is also worth noting that certain states have shown stubbornly poor figures over the last forty years or so in all the categories of educational statistics mentioned above. These include, in descending order of literacy rate, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar. The situation of female education and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe education is particularly sorrowful in these states. For 1991, Bihar recorded a female literacy rate of 22.89 per cent, that of Scheduled Castes at 19.49 and that of Scheduled Tribes at 26.78 per cent; the corresponding figures for Rajasthan were 20.44, 26.29, and 19.44 per cent respectively (ARE94: 205–8). There is ample evidence to show that this state of affairs cannot be attributed to any inherent resistance or obduracy towards educational acquisition on the part of the above groups. For example, it has been pointed out that in certain districts of Maharashtra, these very groups have made substantial contributions to literacy campaigns, and that as many as 68 per cent of learners belonged to the weaker section of society (Saldanha 1995: 1175).

The background to this situation is a slew of official policies and initiatives whose fulfilment (or, rather, lack of) becomes a variable of bureaucratic machinations and the casting of educational discourse in terms of the needs of the tertiary sector. The Operation Blackboard (OB) scheme of the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, was started in 1987-88 to bring all existing primary schools in the country to a minimum standard of physical facilities (ARE94: 35) which included buildings, teachers, as well as classroom equipment. Under the revised OB scheme launched in March 1994, girls'

schools and 'SC/ST areas' are to be given high priority (ARE94: 35). Further, 'it has been made mandatory to the State Govts. that at least 50 per cent of the teachers appointed in future should be women' (ibid.). Historically, primary education, which ought to have been the most carefully planned and funded, has been a particularly neglected field. So, for example, Dreze and Loh point out that

> educational policy in China has given overwhelming priority to the expansion of primary education, and this contrasts with the elitist bias of India's educational system, which combines a resilient neglect of primary education with enormous public investments in higher education. Educational achievements are not only much lower in India than in China, they are also much less equitably distributed [Dreze and Loh 1995: 2870].

Reviews and Commissions at various times have emphasized that official energies should be particularly directed towards the effective dissemination of *primary education* at a mass level. Yet reality has usually been quite different. Historians and sociologists of education continue to record the sorry state of affairs in a sector that has the potential to benefit and empower the most marginalized groups in society.

[….]

It is generally true to say, then, that the colonial tendency that favoured collegiate and secondary education (Viswanathan 1989) has tended to persist in the post-colonial period. And yet, just below the surface of a seemingly monolithic and intractable situation, there appear to have been gaps and fissures which, suitably exploited, may have led to quite a different scenario in terms of the development of a more effective system of mass education. So available evidence suggests that 'the adult literacy situation in (India and China] ... was very similar in the late 1940's. [And that] by 1981–82, there was virtually no difference between China and Kerala for the younger age group, while India was left far behind' (Dreze and Loh 1995: 2872). Dreze and Loh also point to the important role of the state in promoting educational activity in China and suggest that in regions of the country where such commitment has been lacking—such as Tibet—educational trends have been poor. The discussion in this chapter should make clear there is no dearth of official statements of intent in the sphere of mass education. However, it would appear that 'pious statements [regarding the need to promote a more equitable policy of basic education] are still to be matched with bold measures to ensure the universalization of primary education in the near future' (Dreze and Loh 1995: 2877). And yet it is important to remember that, quite often, local conditions play an important role in the unfolding of centrally developed plans, and that the impact of official policies need not be undifferentiated. [….]

A considerable part of the problem may seem to lie in the fact that education planning and initiatives in India are often dissipated through their linkages to a plethora of non-educational bureaucracies and programmes. So,

> construction of school buildings is the major problem that State Govt. has been facing. This problem has, however, been sorted out with the Ministry of Rural Development, who have agreed not only

> to continue central funding for construction of school buildings under Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY), but also make it a high priority item under newly introduced Employment Assurance scheme and the 120 backward districts identified under the intensive JRY [ARE94: 35–6].

In this way, the failures to achieve 'targets' can then be explained away in terms of the failures originating in the sectors with which educational plans have been crucially linked. This is the functioning of a bureaucratic simulacrum where it becomes impossible to say where responsibility for any failure lies, and explanations and refutations circulate in the form of cross-cutting concentric circles.

It is pointless, however, to view the career of the modernist schooling regime in isolation from the enmeshment of Indian society in a global configuration of knowledge whose worth is expressed through the index of 'usefulness', and through their 'inherent' propensity to 'normalize' human behaviour. An important aspect of this concerns the funding of mass-education schemes in India by international bodies such as the World Bank. This, as has recently been pointed out, has had the effect of establishing a clear nexus between the imperatives of global capital—the will to 'profitability'—and the conduct of educational practice in the Third World. This, in turn, carries within the possibility of submerging dissenting voices on educational practice in order to 'bring it in line with a homogeneous and globalised world propelled by the market' (Raina quoted in Kumar 1995: 2720). Such fears take on a concrete form as we learn more of the details of the strategy through which global capital seeks to 'normalize' backwardness, and quantify its efforts. The following excerpt comes from a World Bank office memorandum and needs little further gloss:

> Modern psychometric techniques will be applied to student learning achievement data and each country will produce a national report describing achievement levels and the distribution of school resources by geographical areas, and types of schools and students, provide an analysis of the determinants of student achievement, analyse the effects of any policy changes on learning achievement changes over time and draw overall conclusions [quoted in Kumar 1995].

What ought to be of concern is the manner in which such knowledge regimes find little contestation as they become institutionalized in official policy. So government documents are replete with information on 'microplanning' strategies for primary education, 'Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education', and on the Rajasthan Shiksha Karmi Project aimed at 'universalisation and qualitative improvement of primary education in remote and socio-economically backward villages in Rajasthan with primary attention given to girls' (ARE94: 35–9). Studies in the field seem to indicate that, more often than not, these pronouncements of policy are dissipated at various levels of bureaucracy; notwithstanding the fact of decentralization of administrative procedures at village level.[8]

In recent times, 'vocationalization of Higher Secondary education' has emerged as an important plank in contemporary educational policy. This aims to 'provide an alternative for those pursuing higher education without particular interest or purpose' (ARE94: 48). However, the NPE does not appear to be concerned with altering the fundamental character of an educational system that, in Indian society,

plays a fundamental role in *legitimating* inequality. A more serious reform might haw been to consider introducing *all* students to aspects of 'vocationalization' such that entrenched hierarchical differentiation between 'manual' (or bodily) labour and 'intellectual' (or non-corporeal) work might itself have been problematized. This was, of course, one of the great insights of Gandhi's educational philosophy.

Under the present circumstances, the most likely result of this compartmentalized 'vocationalization of Higher Secondary education' will be the continued institutionalization of a two-tier educational system which seems inerasably inscribed with the philosophies of both colonialism (or perhaps merely the Enlightenment) and capitalism; these legacies are reflected in the mind-body split inherent in the vocational-intellectual formulations, and in the educational Taylorism which continues to champion the 'conceivers and executants' (Preston and Symes 1992: 130) model of schooling. So, rather than arguing for problematizing the thinking–doing split, Indian educational planners merely proceed from the premise that there are indeed two different classes of human beings, those who must do the thinking and others who will act as the mechanical executors, 'a mere conduit for predetermined actions which have been timed and organised' (Preston and Symes 1992: 130). The *caveat* that vocational education 'is education which accommodates technocratic values and, insofar as it uncritically accepts society's hierarchies, it may perpetuate injustice, elitism and class and gender inequities' (Preston and Symes 1992: 135) would seem to be particularly germane in the Indian context.

The Future: Schooling 'Against the Grain'

One clear trend in the Indian educational milieu is the rapid proliferation of private schools to cater for the demand for public-school-type education by an emerging middle class. Many of these new schools are, in fact, boarding schools and use English as the medium; several of these have been established by corporate houses (the Goenkas, Living Media, the Shriram Group, and Magor and Macneill among them) as profitable business ventures in an era of the proliferation of global 'scapes' (Appadurai 1990), when the demand for the cultural capital they offer is particularly high. A recent report suggests that one of the entrants into the schooling-as-business sphere, die consumer-products giant Hindustan Lever (HL), hopes that its educational activities will, in fact, lead to greater demand for its products among previously 'resistant' market segments.[9] The rationale for opening a primary school in a rural area of Khamgaon district of Maharashtra (with others to follow) appears to be derived from the company's understanding of the link between education and the demand for consumer products as experienced in China. Hence a senior HL executive was quoted as saying that 'wherever the level of education is high, more people use products like soaps'. And, whilst the company does not intend to directly market its products through its schools, 'it is hoping the awareness brought by education [sic] would make people choose its products' both against those of its competitors and over traditional alternatives such as *sheekakai* (a plant variety used in powder form for washing clothes and hair) and coal powder. We may

now truly be entering an era where certain forms of schooling may be directly implicated in producing 'ideal' consumers for late-twentieth-century capitalism.

In a time of continuing decline of the government-run schooling regime and the consolidation of a two-tier schooling system, perhaps the most innovative and cutting-edge education will originate from the nongovernment organization (NGO) sector. For there are indications that out of the struggle to come to grips with state hostility towards the marginalized, the institutionalization of statist, technocratic and authoritarian educational philosophies, and the proliferation of a corporatist ethos which whilst paying lip-service to progressive measures only serves to install a conservative agenda, an alternative educational agenda is emerging.

One of the most salient features of the private schooling system outlined above is the lack of commitment to mass education. With the exception of Gandhi's Basic Education Scheme, the various non-governmental philosophical debates and organizational efforts surrounding schooling were carried out—in addition to their Hindu and masculinist bias—within the quite explicit matrices of upper-caste and middle-class identities. This educational discourse maintained its contiguity with Indian nationalism in general through the shared hostility to non-upper-caste and non-middle-class milieux, representing conditions in the latter as a consequence of personality and character defects; among Hindus 'philosopher-statesman' Radhakrishnan (1975) was to note, there exist populations 'professing crude thoughts and submerged thoughts civilization has not had time to eradicate'. Whilst it is true that treatments of the past should avoid the twin pitfalls of glorification and condemnation, it is nevertheless reasonable to characterize recent NGO efforts in the educational field as a radical break from, and a problematization of, past positions.

Speaking of NGO efforts in Maharashtra, Saldanha (1994) notes that 'in contrast to the social welfarist approach to education, one sees the education efforts of the non-party political groups in the region focusing on "social awareness"' (1994: 105). He also points out that the approach of the political activists 'offers a perspective for resolving some of [the] contradictions which are confronted by the more institutionalised formal educational process at the cultural and economic levels of *adivasi* existence by linking education to the political act of social transformation along the lines of an alternate development strategy' (ibid.). Further, the educational philosophy of organizations such as the *Kahstkari Sangathana* and the *Shramik Mukti Sangathan* (which works with *adivasi* children in Thane district) has provided radical reinterpretations of the existent educational discourses through treating 'the generation of a critical social awareness' (Saldanha 1994: 96) as an indispensable element of their activism. Indeed, whatever little change there has been in official educational thought appears to have come about as a result of NGO activism and pressure. An instance of this may be cited in the formulation of the *Vigyan Shikshan Karyakram* (Vishika), 'embodying [an] attempt to forge compatibility between intellectual creditability and utility' (Rampal 1994), which was initiated in 1972 by a fortuitous collaboration between voluntary activists, professional scientists and school teachers' (ibid.). Though critics have pointed out that 'Vishika' also bases itself on models of science education which have

proved inadequate as modes of critical learning, it is nevertheless an important marker towards the problematization of dominant knowledge regimes. It can be said in this context that the most valuable contribution of the NGO sector—one informed by the commitment to a critical pedagogy which struggles against the statist and corporatist tendencies of the 'modern' schooling regime—has been to emphasize the constructed—rather than 'objective' and immutable—nature of knowledge and 'truth'.[10]

ENDNOTES

1. This section of the chapter is adapted from Srivastava 1998.
2. Henceforth also referred to as the School.
3. Writing generally of gender issues in the context of schooling, Scrase (1993) notes that contemporary textbooks continue to reproduce sexist and stereotypic images of women, with the majority representing gender issues in a manner which derives from patriarchal ideologies of motherhood, the good wife, the pure and deferential sister, etc. And, as he points out, 'the textbook image of the happy and dutiful wife contests the notion that her position in that role results more from her exploitation as a woman than from any desire to be a good wife and mother—unemployed and confined to the home' (ibid.).
4. Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti Annual Report, 1989: 63.
5. This conclusion derives from my fieldwork. Students' responses to the public symbols of school life almost exclusively identified them as 'Indian' and 'secular' rather than as Hindu or an allied religious content (see Srivastava 1998).
6. The concern with producing primers that pay attention to the specificity of local conditions has also been noted in another context. In the Dungarpur district of Rajasthan, an area with a large tribal population, two categories of primers were produced after consultation with the local people. The first of these utilized a local dialect and 'the second primer switches over to Hindi gradually' (Chandran 1994: 516).
7. The accuracy or otherwise of such a declaration is not as important as the fact that its claims have been modified rather than rejected by most independent scholars.
8. Dreze (this collection) provides an instructive—and depressing—account of the situation of female literacy in the post-Independence period (see also Karlekar 1994). For a discussion of government-backed initiatives which have succeeded, and of the conditions of possibility for such success, see Chandran (1994).
9. Lever to Open School; Pupils Potential Buyers', *The Indian Express,* 3 April 1998.
10. See Scrase (1993) for an interesting case study of an alternative schooling effort in a slum area on the outskirts of Calcutta.

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