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**Children and Childhood
in the Madras Presidency, 1919-1943**

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Abstract

This thesis interrogates the emergence of a universal modern idea of childhood in the Madras Presidency between 1920 and 1942. It considers the construction and uses of 'childhood' as a conceptual category and the ways in which this informed intervention in the lives of children, particularly in the spheres of education and juvenile justice. Against a background of calls for national self-determination, the thesis considers elite debates about childhood as specifically 'Indian', examining the ways in which 'the child' emerged in late colonial South India as an object to be reformed and as a 'human becoming' or future citizen of an independent nation.

Social reform in late colonial India is often assumed to be an area of conflict, particularly informed by racial difference. Children are seen as key targets in the competition between the colonial state and Indian politicians and professionals. However, a detailed study of the 1920 Madras Children Act and 1920 Elementary Education Act reveals the development of consensual decisions in regard to child welfare and the expansion of a 'social' realm, which existed outside the political. Dyarchy profoundly changed the nature of government and in policy areas related to children the 'state' was Indian in character, action and personnel. This thesis contends that the discursive emergence of 'the child' was complicated when legislation was implemented. By tracing implementation it demonstrates the extent to which modern childhood was a symbolic claim, rather than political commitment to children. Tracing the interactions between adults in authority - whether as parents, teachers, politicians or civil society activists - the thesis explores the extent to which the avowedly universal category of childhood was subsumed beneath other identities based on class, caste and gender.

Understanding childhood through a variety of administration reports, political debates and pedagogical journals reflects the views and actions of adults. By utilising the remembered experience of middle-class children in autobiographies and the layered archival evidence of aristocratic children under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards, the thesis balances adult discourses with an awareness of children as historical agents. It considers the ways in which children learned, played and interacted with each other. Finally, therefore, it charts the limits of adult authority and the ways differing identities were experienced in the lives of children in southern India in the early twentieth century.

Lay Summary

This thesis considers ideas about childhood in the Madras Presidency between 1920 and 1942. It considers the way people thought about childhood as a category, and the ways in which this informed intervention in the lives of children, particularly in the spheres of education and juvenile justice. Against a background of an increasingly strong nationalist movement, the thesis considers elite debates about childhood as being specifically 'Indian', examining the ways in which 'the child' became an object to be reformed by adults and was awarded special status as future citizen of an independent nation.

Social reform in late colonial India is often assumed to be an area of racial conflict and children are usually seen as targets in the competition for power between the colonial state and Indian politicians and professionals. However, a detailed study of the 1920 Madras Children Act and 1920 Elementary Education Act reveals the development of consensual decisions in regard to child welfare. After the political reforms of 1919, Indians were given control over a number of policy areas, and so in relation to children the 'state' was Indian in character, action and personnel. This thesis contends that there was a difference between ideas about childhood, and then the way that legislation was implemented. This demonstrates the extent to which modern childhood was a symbolic claim, rather than a political commitment to children. Tracing the interactions between adults in authority - whether as parents, teachers, politicians or civil society activists - the thesis explores the extent to which the category of childhood was less important than other identities based on class, caste and gender.

Understanding childhood through a variety of administration reports, political debates and pedagogical journals reflects the views and actions of adults. By using autobiographical experiences of children and the evidence of aristocratic children under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards, the thesis balances adult ideas with an awareness of children as historical agents. It considers the ways in which children learned, played and interacted with each other. Finally, therefore, it charts the limits of adult authority and the ways differing identities were experienced in the lives of children in southern India in the early twentieth century.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by me, that it is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Catriona Ellis

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– and thereby prevented my over-glorifying the subaltern experience. The only person who really understands is Tim, and I can only thank him for his love, his respect, his practical and emotional support and his integrity in this, as in so many other areas of our lives together.

Glossary

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Annas | Indian coin, 16 annas = 1 Rupee |
| Badam | Almonds |
| Badga | Tribal caste from South India |
| Beedi | India cigarette |
| Bhadralok | Bengali educated classes |
| Bhagavata | Hindu religious text, part of the Hindu epic Mahabharata |
| Brahmin | Member of the priest caste |
| Chacha | Uncle |
| Chinni Dandu (or Gilli-Danda) | Indian sport played with two sticks (similar to cricket) |
| Dalit | Name of choice for non-caste communities variously known as Scheduled Castes, Adi-Dravida, Adi-Andhra, Depressed Classes, Untouchables, Harijan, Panchama |
| Devadasi | Girl dedicated to worship and service of a deity or a temple |
| Dorai | Name for teachers, appears to come from Durai, which means chief. |
| Gosha | South Indian word for purdah/veiling for Muslim women |
| Gotti | Marbles |
| Guru-sishya | Teacher-pupil |
| Gurukala | Residential school, where the pupils live with the teacher (guru) |
| Halwa | A sweet dessert |
| Jaggery | Sugar, made from sugar cane and palm trees |
| Kummi | Folk dance from Tamil Nadu |
| Lakhs | Unit equal to one hundred thousand (100,000). |
| Pandit | Hindu religious teacher |
| Pial school | South Indian village school (one teacher) which often met on the pial (verandah) of houses |
| Ragi | A form of millet widely consumed in Karnataka |
| Rupees (Rs) | Indian currency |
| Ryotwari | System of land tax, collected directly from the peasant |
| Sambhar | Lentil-based curry dish |
| Sharia | Muslim religious law |

| | |
|----------|--|
| Sudra | Lowest varna in the Hindu caste system |
| Zamindar | Hereditary landowner |

Tamil Family Relationships

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------|
| <i>Aththai</i> | Father's | Sister | (aunt) |
| <i>Chinnamma</i> | Mother's younger brother (uncle) | | |
| <i>Chiththappa</i> | Father's | younger brother | (uncle) |
| <i>Mama</i> | Mother's | Brother | (uncle) |
| <i>Periyamma</i> | Mother's | elder sister | (aunt) |
| <i>Periyappa</i> | Father's | elder brother | (uncle) |

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| CPM | Chief Presidency Magistrate |
| COW | Court of Wards |
| DEC | District Educational Council |
| DPAS | Discharged Prisoner's Aid Society |
| DPH | Director of Public Health, Madras Presidency |
| DPI | Director of Public Instruction, Madras Presidency |
| EEF | Elementary Education Fund |
| Geneva Declaration | Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1924 |
| GWA | Guardians and Wards Act (Act VIII) 1890 |
| ICS | Indian Civil Service |
| IJC | Indian Jails Committee 1919-1920 |
| MCA | Madras Children's Act 1920 |
| MCAS | Madras Children's Aid Society |
| MSPC | Madras Society for the Protection of Children |
| MLC | Madras Legislative Council |
| UNCRC | United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 |
| WIA | Women's India Association |

Introduction

The emergence of modern Indian childhoods in the years before political independence has received little attention by historians, but has profoundly influenced our understanding of the relationship between the child and the state in India today. Accordingly, this thesis considers three themes: how childhood was constructed or imagined in the Madras Presidency; how these new ideas were translated into policy and then implemented; and how these new ideas related to the lived experience of children. Although not generally recognised, the period between the constitutional reforms of 1919 and the abandonment of compulsory education under threat of Japanese invasion in 1943 marked a decisive shift in the ways in which childhood was imagined. Influenced by emerging global ideas and child saving networks, new legislation was introduced and then implemented through a number of state, municipal and civil society initiatives. This was specifically linked to new forms of governance which emerged from dyarchy, and the process of the devolution of power to the provinces after 1920. Against the backdrop of rising calls for self-determination, this thesis will consider elite debates about childhood as a universal and modern social category and the conception of the child as specifically ‘Indian’. It will examine the ways in which ‘the child’ emerged in late colonial South India as an object to be reformed and as ‘human becoming’, or as a future citizen of an independent nation. Finally, this thesis will consider the child as an historical actor, using the mediated views of Indian children to inform and nuance our understanding of how childhood was experienced and remembered. This introduction sets out the key research themes, the structure and the sources and methods used.

Historiographical background

The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides the most widely accepted global definition of modern childhood. It defines the universal needs and rights of children, and provides the conceptual and legal basis for state, provincial government and voluntary sector intervention in contemporary children’s lives. India is a signatory to the Convention, despite criticism that the Convention prioritises a modern universal view of childhood which is not always

appropriate in the subcontinent and which characterises Indian childhoods in terms of 'lack' and 'otherness'.¹ It is now widely recognised that a perception of childhood has emerged from the historical circumstances of the West to become the global norm.² My aim is to investigate how and when such a view of the child as vulnerable, sexually innocent, playful and 'economically worthless though emotionally priceless' came to be widely accepted in state policy and among the professional elites in India.³ This is not merely a further example of the continuing 'colonisation of the mind' and slavish adherence of elite discourse to Western modernity.⁴ Rather, the specific circumstances of the 1920s and 1930s were crucial in order to understand the 'specific Indian model of modern childhood [which] emerged among the elite during the colonial encounter'.⁵ The 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Geneva Declaration) issued by the League of Nations expanded the aspiration that 'mankind owes the child the best it has to give' into global discourse, perhaps articulating an emerging normative assumption but radically expanding its discursive power and establishing children as 'an official object of international relations'.⁶ By looking at specific policy initiatives, this thesis uncovers the relationship between the universalising constructions of modern childhood, and the participation of Indians in these globally entangled projects. Of

¹ Sarada Balagopalan, 'Introduction: Children's Lives and the Indian context' in *Childhood*, 18:3 (2011) pp.291-291, Ali Khan *Representing Children: Power, Policy and the Discourse on Child Labour in the Football Manufacturing Industry of Pakistan* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), Olga Nieuwenhuys, 'Global Childhood and the Politics of Contempt', *Alternatives*, 23:3 (1998), David Pomfret, 'World Contexts' in Colin Heywood, Elizabeth Foyster, and James Marten *A cultural history of childhood and family in the Age of Empire*, (Oxford: OUP, 2010) p.202

² Michael Freeman 'Children's Rights as Human Rights: Reading the UNCRC' and Olga Nieuwenhuys 'From Child Labour to Working Children's Movements' Jens Qvortrup, William A Corsarao, Michael-Sebastian Honig (ed.) *Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Krishna Kumar, 'Childhood in a Globalising World' *Economic and Political Weekly*, (23 Sep 2006)

³ Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) Deepak Kumar Behera (ed.) *Childhoods in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2007) p.151

⁴ Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi: OUP, 1993), Partha Chatterjee *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed books, 1986), Bowen and Hinchy 'Introduction: children and knowledge in India' *South Asian History and Culture*, 6:3, (2015) p.318

⁵ Olga Nieuwenhuys, 'Editorial: Is there an Indian childhood?' *Childhood* (2009) p.151

⁶ Quote from Dominique Marshall, 'The construction of children as an object of international relations' *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 7 (1999) pp.103-147. See also Linda Mahood, *Feminism and Voluntary Action: Eglantyne Jebb and Save the Children 1876-1928* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p.199, Daniel Gorman, 'Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children in the 1920s' *Twentieth Century British History* 19:2 (2008) p.188, Ashwini Tambe, 'The State as surrogate parent: Legislating non-marital sex in Colonial India, 1911-1929' *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 23 (2009)

particular interest are the discursive relationships between that universal ideal and the cultural specificity of the Indian child, in order to explore when and why these differing constructions of childhood became important as rhetorical and practical tools.

In the current historiography surrounding children in late colonial India, childhood is portrayed as a 'juvenile periphery' or 'contested terrain'.⁷ Children are viewed as 'vehicles of competition, mobility and resistance' for the ideas and actions of competing groups of adults, both British and Indian.⁸ This 'fault-line' is assumed to be particularly informed by racial difference, although David Pomfret acknowledges that this rarely reflected the 'messy reality on the ground'.⁹ White children embodied anxieties about racial purity and innocence, while Indian children were used to justify imperial benevolence, with intervention in children's lives seen as, what Karen Vallgård calls, a 'project of white adults saving brown children from brown adults'.¹⁰ Increasingly from the late nineteenth century Indian experts used their own involvements in children's lives to demonstrate their own modernity, and thereby contest British rule.¹¹ At both imperial and local levels, children's bodies became the site of 'material and symbolic battles over social hierarchies and identities' within

⁷ Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: the Juvenile Periphery of India 1850-1945*, (London: Anthem, 2005), Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, (ed.) *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India* (London: Sangam Books, 1998)

⁸ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, p.5

⁹ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, David Pomfret *Youth and Empire: trans-colonial Childhoods in British and French Asia*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015) p.145

¹⁰ Quotation from Karen Vallgård *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan, 2015) p.2. Further reading: for white children in empire: EM Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: the Physical Experience of the Raj 1800-194*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India*, (Oxford: Stanford University Press, 2004), , Ellen Boucher *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare and the Decline of the British World, 1869-1967* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), Shurlee Swain & Margot Hillel *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: child rescue discourse England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), Shirleen Robinson & Simon Sleight *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Pomfret *Youth and Empire*., Ann L Stoler *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), Ann L Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002). For Indian children: Satadru Sen, 'The orphaned colony: Orphanage, child and authority in British India' *Indian Economic Social History Review* 44 (2007) pp.463-488, Karen Vallgård, 'Between Consent and Coercion: Danish Missionaries and Tamil Parents in late nineteenth century South India' *Review of Development and Change*, XIV:1&2. Satadru Sen, 'Domesticated Convicts: Producing Families in the Andaman Islands' in Indrani Chatterjee (ed.) *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004)

¹¹ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods* p.10, 137, Sen 'The orphaned colony', Phillipe Aries *Centuries of Childhood*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962)

‘enclaves’ of modern disciplinary power.¹² Satadru Sen argues that the claim to scientific modernity as western educated, middle-class and non-kin was defined in opposition not only to the ‘fake modernity of colonial rule’ but also ‘the non-modernity of subaltern parents’, reflecting anxieties surrounding the formation of the new nation and a complicated relationship with the Indian home and family.¹³ This thesis critiques the notion that racial conflict continued to be a dominating idea in the context of childhood in the 1920s and 1930s, and argues that dyarchy fundamentally changed the nature of both state intervention and the ways in which children were constructed.

In 1920, the Madras Presidency underwent a decisive shift in relation to children with the introduction of the Madras Children Act and the Madras Elementary Education Act. These Acts, largely based on earlier British legislation, fundamentally altered the way in which the state imagined its relationship with children in education, juvenile justice and child health policy. New claims were made to authority, and a right to intervene in children’s lives and within the family. In the late nineteenth century European context, there is broad consensus among historians surrounding the emergence of ‘the social’ as a depoliticised arena of expert intervention. This linked to the wider expansion of the welfare state, which functioned through discourse and networks outside the sphere of direct political contest.¹⁴ In nineteenth century South Asia, the social was an arena guarded by nationalists as outside British control and often constructed in terms of the private and public spheres.¹⁵ While this remained true at an all-Indian level in relation to the Age of Consent debates in 1929, dyarchy radically changed this division between the political and the social, the private and the

¹² Vallgård, ‘Between Consent and Coercion:’ p100, Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India* (New Delhi: OUP, 2003)

¹³ Sen *Colonial Childhoods* p49. See also Sudipa Topdar ‘Duties of a ‘good citizen’: colonial secondary school textbook policies in late nineteenth-century India,’ *South Asian History and Culture* 6:3,(2015) p.430, Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), Patricia Uberoi, *Freedom and Destiny: Gender, Family and Popular Culture in India* (New Delhi: OUP, 2006) p103-104, Vallgård, K, Alexander K, Olsen S ‘Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood’, in Stephanie Olsen(eds.) *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History, National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

¹⁴ Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families: welfare versus the State* (London: Hutchison, 1979), Victor Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship: reclaiming the Young Offenders, 1914-18* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) David Garland, *Punishment and Welfare*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1985)

¹⁵ Partha Chatterjee *Nation and its Fragments*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

public.¹⁶ For most historians of South Asia, social policy in the 1920s and 1930s has been seen through the lens of political turmoil and the rising nationalist movement, or by a study of ‘colonial’ or ‘authoritarian’ governmentality and the expansion of disciplinary power negotiated through discourse, but ultimately underpinned by force.¹⁷ By contrast, the analysis here centres on the complexities of exchanges between provincial and central government and municipal corporations, and between a variety of actors including urban professionals, political, religious and caste representatives and civil society organisations, as well as parents, family members and children themselves.¹⁸ These ‘countless fine negotiations, exchanges, entanglements, and mutual accommodations’ contributed to the rhetoric surrounding childhood and informed the ways in which new legislation was implemented, highlighting the almost simultaneous desires of adults to protect, to control and to coexist with Indian children within the particular circumstances of dyarchy.¹⁹

The disjunction between formulating state policy for children and putting it into practice is a serious cause for concern in contemporary India.²⁰ The historical manifestations of this disconnection can be traced not merely to colonialism but to Indian decisions in the pre-independence period. By looking at the implementation of these discourses, this thesis traces the relationships between state and non-state actors, and highlights the consistent gap between rhetorical commitments to the child as vulnerable and the lack of political commitment to funding intervention. The focus on

¹⁶ Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (New Delhi: PaulsPauls Press, 2001), Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: the Global Restructuring of an Empire*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)

¹⁷ Louise Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) p10, U. Kalpagam ‘Colonial Governmentality and the Public Sphere in India’ *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 15: 1 (March 2002); Sarah Hodges, ‘Looting’ the Lock Hospital in Colonial Madras during the Famine Years of the 1870s’ *Social History of Medicine* 18:3 (2005) p.381,

¹⁸ Hodges, ‘Looting’ the Lock Hospital,’ p.380, 397, David Arnold, ‘The medicalisation of poverty in colonial India’ *Historical Research*, 85:229 (Aug 2012) p.126, Samiksha Sehrawat, *Colonial Medical Care in North India: Gender, State, and Society c1830-1920* (Oxford: OUP, 2013) pp.xlix, xlviii,

¹⁹ Kim Wagner, and Ricardo Roque, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p.25. See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002) p.13, Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014)

²⁰ Myron Weiner, *The Child and the State in India*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), Kalpana Kannabiran and Ranbir Singh (ed.) *Challenging the Rule(s) of Law: Colonialism, Criminology and Human Rights in India*, (London: Sage, 2008) p.183, 191

implementation highlights the extent to which the category of childhood was only one form of social identity.²¹ The political importance of children as part of a community identified by class, race, language, gender and provinciality, rather than a shared experience of age warrants further investigation. Underpinning this is the relationship between identity, family and state authority.²² By looking at the state's claim to care and power and remaining mindful of the different state actors at provincial and municipal level, this research explores the relationship between the state and parents.

The role of the child as an adjunct of the family and the state's paternalistic claims to care and power in post-independence India has recently emerged as a new field of study.²³ Vijayalakshmi Balakrishnan argues that Nehru, Prime Minister after 1947, conceptualised his own relationship with the nation's children as that of *chacha* or uncle. Operating within the boundaries of familial trust, he avoided challenging the rule of the family patriarch and only proposed action in a crisis.²⁴ Balakrishnan argues that this gave legitimacy to intervention, but also honoured the cultural allegiances of both nuclear and extended families.²⁵ This thesis investigates the various roles of the uncle or aunt in the Tamil extended family and the ways in which state intervention was couched as semi-familial. Indians did not formally conceptualise their own role in familial terms. However, understanding the self-construction of interventionist adults - as professional, modern experts and civic activists, but also within more traditional forms of legitimacy as 'avuncular' - facilitates our understanding of how Indians characterised their roles when operating as state actors under dyarchy.

²¹ Sarada Balagopalan, *Inhabiting Childhood: children, labour and schooling in postcolonial India*, (Basingstoke: PalgraveMacMillan, 2014) p.184

²² Heidi Morrison *Childhood and colonial modernity*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) p.44

²³ See Vijayalakshmi Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away: Narratives of Indian Childhoods, Memory, History and Identity* (Delhi: OUP, 2011) p.13, Neera Burra, *Born Unfree: Child labour, Education and the State in India*, (Oxford: OUP, 2006), Leigh Denault 'The Home and the World: New Directions in the History of the Family in South Asia' *History Compass*, 12:2 (2014) pp.101-111, Satadru Sen 'Health, Race and Family in Colonial Bengal' in Robinson & Sleight *Children, Childhood and Youth* p.155, Ritu Menon 'Parens Patriae: Exercising Patriarchal Prerogative in Post-Partition India' in Kannabiran and Singh (ed.) *Challenging the Rule(s) of Law*

²⁴ Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away* p.82-99

²⁵ Balakrishnan *Growing Up and Away* p.209

Dyarchy and the state as Indian

Central to this research is a new understanding of the state and the impact of constitutional reform on children. Following the 1919 Government of India Act, the powers of politically unimportant departments - education, justice, local government, public health – were devolved to the provincial assemblies, which were now majority Indian and had some limited tax-raising powers. A further devolution of political power happened in 1935.²⁶ Judith Brown characterises this new relationship between Indians and the colonial state as a ‘ritual dance’; it forced Indians to both collaborate as government in some institutions and policy areas, thereby demonstrating themselves ‘fit’ for governance, while opposing the British Raj in others.²⁷ The focus on ultimate independence and twists of political manoeuvring has meant that few contemporaries or historians have provided thoughtful, political theorisation about the nature of dyarchy as anything more than a state of transition. Perhaps the most obvious parallels are the princely states, where Indians ‘struggled with complex and competing agendas of both domination and resistance’.²⁸ Importantly, historians have rarely engaged with the achievements of Indians as a welfare state or the impact on social policy of the specific historical circumstances of the political economy of devolution.²⁹ This thesis contends that in regard to children, and the realm of the social, the state was Indian in character and in personnel. Legislation regarding children was discussed by Indians, enforced in departments led and staffed by Indians, and the authority figures – jailors, teachers, administrators – were also Indians. This represented a ‘decisive shift’ in power to Indians but also a growing awareness of themselves as fulfilling the functions of the state.³⁰

²⁶ For a wider analysis of dyarchy: Judith M Brown, *Modern India: the origins of an Asian Democracy*, (Oxford: OUP, 1985), Eleanor Newbiggin *The Hindu Family and the Emergence of Modern India: Law, Citizenship and Community*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), James Chiriyankandath ‘‘democracy’ under the Raj: Elections and Separate Representation in British India’ in Niraja Gopal Jayal, *Democracy in India* (Oxford: OUP, 2001) p.59, Crispin Bates, *Subalterns and Raj* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), Sehrawat, *Colonial Medical Care* pp.49-51

²⁷ Judith Brown *Modern India* p.234

²⁸ Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres* p.181

²⁹ The most prominent exception is Newbiggin, *The Hindu Family* p.9

³⁰ Sehrawat, *Colonial Medical Care* p.49-51, 61, 112, Roger Jeffery, *The Politics of Health in India*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) p.18, Pratik Chakrabarti, ‘Signs of the Times’ *Medicine and Nationhood in British India*, *OSIRIS* 24 (2009) pp.188–211, Brown, *Modern India* p.293

Dyarchy fundamentally changed how Indians, acting as part of the state, both conceived of childhood and their responsibility towards the child, and then intervened in the bodies and minds of individual children. Considering children as future citizens raises wider questions about how the relationship between citizens and the state was conceptualised and performed in distinctively Indian terms. Children were not merely socialised into a relationship with the British crown as imperial subjects, as had previously been the case.³¹ Rather, under dyarchy, children were imagined as future citizens of an Indian welfare state, and recipient of the state's 'official love' long before political independence.³² The child became the centre of new articulations of citizenship, reflecting wider 'tensions between citizenship-as-rights and citizenship-as-national identity'.³³ By giving agency to Indian adults, this research traces the emergence of a consensual discourse of childhood and rights, and the interactions between state and civil society concerning implementation in ways which go beyond the outdated binaries of colonialism and race.

Understanding the context of the Madras Presidency

The analysis is embedded in the broader cultural, societal and intellectual trends of the Madras Presidency.³⁴ It reflects the need to decentre or 'provincialise Bengal' within the history of Indian modernity and social policy.³⁵ The emergence of the middle classes in Madras reflected its distinctive history, its unique Dravidian literary and linguistic heritage, local cultural concepts of religiosity and education and the presence of both economic and intellectual transnational forces, such as trading links and the Theosophy movement. The Presidency was also distinct in its experience of colonial social, economic and administrative structures, such as the *ryotwari* land revenue

³¹ Shurlee Swain 'A motherly concern for children: Invocations of Queen Victoria in Imperial Child Rescue Literature' in Robinson & Sleight *Children, Childhood and Youth*, Sukanya Banerjee *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire*, (Durham: Duke, 2010),

³² Upendra Baxi, introduction in Ved Kumari *The Juvenile Justice System in India: From Welfare to Rights*, (Oxford: OUP, 2004) p.xiv-xv

³³ Sarada Balagopalan 'Rationalising seclusion: A preliminary analysis of a residential schooling scheme for poor girls in India' *Feminist Theory*, 11,3(2010) p.304

³⁴ David Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: the Madras Presidency 1870-1920* (Cambridge: CUP,1976) p.14

³⁵ CA Bayly 'Afterword' in Michael Dodson, & Brian Hatcher *Trans-colonial modernities in South Asia*, (London: Routledge, 2012). By contrast, when Bengal is taken to represent the whole, see Swapna Banerjee, 'Blurring boundaries, distant companions: non-kin female caregivers for children in colonial India' *Paedagogica Historica*, 46:6 (2010) pp.775-688

system.³⁶ The Presidency was divided into three areas, whose economic character was reflected by the 1920s in their political systems. The dry areas with limited irrigation (North Arcot, South Arcot, Salem, Coimbatore, Madura, Trichinopoly, Tinnevely) and the Ceded Districts (Anantapur, Bellary, Kurnool, Cudapah) had large peasant populations living at subsistence level, which contributed to a political system based on patronage, reflecting the economic wealth and political power of local headmen.³⁷ By contrast, the wet areas of the Cauveri and Kistna-Godaveri Deltas were characterised by intensive rice cultivation, a larger class of wealthy, educated peasants, and a much more vibrant engagement with new administrative structures and political movements. Madras city, and to a lesser extent the urban centres of Madura and Coimbatore, were thriving centres of commerce and cultural exchange, and home to a significant Western-educated elite.³⁸

Seen as a provincial backwater, the ‘gentlemanly façade’ of Madras politics changed significantly between 1920 and 1940.³⁹ It was also a period of significant socio-economic change, reflecting the impact of the Great Depression, the collapse of rural land-holding systems, urbanisation and the rise of political caste associations.⁴⁰ Politics was dominated until 1935 by the Justice or Non-Brahmin Party, a loose coalition of interests which emerged in 1916 to contest the domination of the Indian National Congress by the Mylapore Brahmin elite. It followed a ‘tradition of stable and secure governance’ and a pragmatic relationship of cooperation with the British to increase non-Brahmin access to state power, rather than a radical ideology of egalitarianism.⁴¹ The local Indian National Congress Party was bitterly divided. The moderate Swarajists led by Satyamurthi participated in government at both provincial

³⁶ Washbrook, *Emergence of Provincial Politics* p.7, Eugene Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795-1895*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1994) p.10, 200

³⁷ Washbrook, *Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p.12, Mattison Mines *Public Faces, Private Voices: Community and Individuality in South India*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1994), CJ Baker and DA Washbrook *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change 1880-1940*, (Delhi: Macmillan, 1975) pp.18, 212, 217, Christopher Baker *Politics of South India 1920-1937* (Cambridge: CUP, 1976) pp.312, 324

³⁸ Washbrook, *Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p.11

³⁹ Baker, *Politics of South India* p.ix

⁴⁰ Baker, *Politics of South India* Chapter 3

⁴¹ Baker, *Politics of South India* p.155, Washbrook, *Emergence of Provincial Politics* p.206, Eugene Irschick, *Politics of Tamil Revivalism in the 1930s*, (Madras: Cre-A, 1986), Marguerite Barnett, *Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976)

and municipal level, but it was the more radically Gandhian wing led by Rajajopalachariar which took power in the new Legislative Assembly in 1937.⁴² While the details are inconsequential, it evidences the impact of dyarchy on the formation and changing position of a political elite - both urban and rural, Brahmin and non-Brahmin, propertied and professional. This elite's shared claim to educated modernity informed many aspects of their intervention in the lives of children, and contributed to an emerging discourse surrounding state welfare and the child that transcended the divisions of politics.

The distinctive nature of South Indian politics mirrored the growth of a specifically Dravidian identity linked to the Tamil (41% of population), and later Telegu (38%), languages, and the development of a cultural nationalism based on a distinctive literary, caste and religious (Shaivite) heritage.⁴³ In 1921 the Presidency had a population of 41 million, of which 3% were Christian, 7% Muslim and the rest Hindu.⁴⁴ The twin fear of the domination by the Brahmin 3% and by North India increasingly took political form in the 1930s most clearly articulated by the Self-Respect Movement.⁴⁵ The ways in which childhood was understood as Indian, Tamil or 'universal' informed the construction and impact of interventions in social welfare.⁴⁶ Caste identities remained significant, despite the disjunction between caste as a 'meaningful social institution' and bureaucratic understandings of caste

⁴² Irschick, *Politics of Tamil Revivalism* pp.141, 157, 218, Baker, *Politics of South India* pp.246, 255

⁴³ Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Development in Tamil India, 1891-1970* (Berkeley: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shuman, & Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), Irschick, *Dialogue and History* p.4

⁴⁴ Baker, *Politics of South India*, p.6. By comparison, the population of Great Britain in the 1921 Census was 42.8million.

⁴⁵ Sarah Hodges, 'Revolutionary family life and the Self Respect movement in Tamil south India, 1926-49' *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 39 (2006) pp.252-8, Eliza Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*, (Oxford: OUP, 2004), Sarah Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce: Birth Control in South India 1920-1940* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2008), S. Anandhi in 'Women's Question in the Dravidian Movement c 1925-1948' in Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (ed.) *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, Vol 2 (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), Jane Haggis 'Good Wives and mothers' or 'dedicated workers'? Contradictions of domesticity in the 'mission of sisterhood' in Kalpna Ram and Margaret Jolly *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial experiences in Asia and the Pacific*(Cambridge: CUP, 1998)

⁴⁶ MSS Pandian 'Stepping Outside History? New Dalit Writings from Tamil Nadu' in Partha Chatterjee (ed.) *Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State* (New Delhi: OUP, 1998)

governance.⁴⁷ After 1919 the Dalit community became the responsibility of a British Commissioner of Labour, charged with improving their material situation with a particular focus on property ownership and educational provision.⁴⁸ Muslims were viewed as a distinct religious community, although their changing relationship with the main political parties often reflected the socio-economic and linguistic divisions with the community.⁴⁹ The ways in which intervention targeted at children was framed - according to class, caste, religion and poverty - played into these wider identity politics. Age categories were 'enmeshed' with understandings of the child as gendered, but also as Indian, Tamil, modern, Dalit, Muslim or poor.⁵⁰

Sources and methods

This research uses a wide variety of previously untapped source material to combine both the political and administrative with the personal. This means complicating earlier works on education which concentrate on education through a study of legislative debate, textbooks and curriculum reform.⁵¹ By contrast, this thesis situates implementation at the core of understanding discourse. This not only nuances our understanding of policy intention, but also places children at the centre as historical agents themselves.

⁴⁷ Baker and Washbrook, *South India* p.224, Seth, *Subject Lessons* p.125, Rupa Viswanath, 'Spiritual slavery, material malaise: 'untouchables' and religious neutrality in colonial south India' *Historical Research* 83:219 (February 2010)

⁴⁸ Rupa Viswanath, 'Rethinking Caste and Class: ' "Labour", the "Depressed Classes", and the Politics of Distinctions, Madras 1918–1924' *International Review of Social History* 59 (2014) pp.1—37. Within this thesis the classification 'Dalit' will be used in all but primary source quotations, because of the political connotations of classifications Adi-Dravida, Adi-Andhra, Backward Castes, Harijans, Untouchables or Pariahs.

⁴⁹ Kenneth McPherson 'How best do we survive?' *A Modern Political History of the Tamil Muslims*, (London: Routledge, 2010)

⁵⁰ Veena Das, 'Voices of Children' *Daedalus*, 118:4 (Fall, 1989) p.285, Pomfret *Youth and Empire* pp.6, 242, Urvashi Misri, 'Child and childhood: a conceptual construction' in Veena Das (ed.) *The Word and the World: Fantasy, Symbol and Record*, (New Delhi: Sage, 1986) p.131, Balagopalan *Inhabiting Childhoods* pp.56, 83, Ruby Lal, *Coming of Age in C19 India: the girl-child and the Art of Playfulness* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013)

⁵¹ Seth, *Subject Lessons*, Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), Krishna Kumar *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist ideas* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991). Shalini Advani, *Schooling the National Imagination: Education, English and the Indian Modern*, (New Delhi: OUP, 2009)

The sources are intrinsically linked to the institutional and cultural practices of colonial rule.⁵² The Verbatim Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council/Assembly and Madras Municipal Corporation and administration records of the Education, Home and Public Health Departments largely reflect the speech, anxieties and actions of Indians, particularly English-educated middle-class Tamil males.⁵³ However, the retention, collection and categorisation of particular records in the Indian Office Records in London, the Tamil Nadu State Archives and Ripon Building, Chennai, reflects white, middle class and male categories of governmentality, and the operation of new practices of control through the knowledge of populations, making the colonial archive itself an ‘active force with violent effect’.⁵⁴ Additionally, the records of non-governmental expert organisations, such as professional journals like *Educational India*, or the reports and correspondence of civil society organisations such as the Madras Children’s Aid Society (MCAS) or teacher training colleges, are written in English by those intrinsically tied to the colonial education system and have been catalogued within these same archives. The only exceptions are the records of the Children’s Garden School, maintained by the school itself and used for publicity purposes.

The sources produced by colonial institutions are analysed here both ‘along as well as against the grain.’⁵⁵ While the sources can be used in a postcolonial framework to provide an insight into the discursive governmentality of colonialism, they also provide some limited indications of children’s lives. The aim is not just to interrogate the ‘pregnant silence’ of the archive as has been done recently, but to engage again

⁵² Antoinette Burton ‘Thinking beyond the boundaries: Empire, feminism and the domains of history’ *Social History* 26:1 (2001) p.68

⁵³ Douglas Haynes, and Gyan Prakash (ed) *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia*, (Delhi: OUP, 1991), Shahid Amin, ‘Approver’s Testimony, Judicial Discourse: The Case of Chauri Chaura’ in *Subaltern Studies* 5 (1987) p.167-202, Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*

⁵⁴ Ann Laura Stoler *Along the Archival Grain: epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: science and the imagination of modern India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) p.157, Carol Breckenridge and Peter Van Der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1993) p.6, Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31:1 (1989) pp.134-161, Frederick Cooper, and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial cultures in a Bourgeois World*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) pp.18, 138

⁵⁵ Stoler *Along the Archival Grain*:

with the ‘noise’ of the archive in more empirical ways.⁵⁶ Malnutrition statistics, for example, both indicate the governmentality of colonial public health, and suggest that children came to school hungry. Tracing the complex history of a young Dalit woman trying to escape from Danish missionaries, Vallgård argues that historians must both acknowledge the ways in which the subaltern woman’s agency has been simultaneously recorded and denied *and* must probe both the possibilities and impossibilities presented by this type of a source.⁵⁷ There is a danger that considering statist and civil society discourses of childhood obscures children as distinct historical actors, making them merely the object of adult actions. Considering the reactions of children to the policies imposed on them highlights their contribution as ‘living beings’ in significant historical processes such as empire or dyarchy.⁵⁸ Wherever possible in Chapters One to Six, evidence is highlighted which indicates the reactions of adults to children’s agency, either as individuals or in a group, even if the children’s voices themselves are absent.

David Pomfret has argued that the ‘voices of children have been generally neglected in discussions of empire, partly because what they actually had to say was often less important than their racial visibility, but also because only fragments of children’s historical subjectivities remain.’⁵⁹ While the first five chapters reveal the symbolic potential of children, albeit not in the racial terms used by Pomfret, the final two chapters focus on the fragmentary sources that foreground individual children, allowing them to ‘inhabit their own histories’.⁶⁰ Recognising children as historical actors is different from hearing the voices of children in the past. As demonstrated so decisively by Spivak ‘even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak

⁵⁶ Gyan Prakash ‘Can the subaltern ride?’ in Vinyak Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000) p.227

⁵⁷ Karen Vallgård ‘Can the Subaltern Woman Run? Gender, race and agency in colonial missionary texts’ *Scandinavian Journal of History* 39:4 (2014) pp.472-486

⁵⁸ Jane Humphries, ‘Childhood and child labour in the British industrial revolution’ *The Economic History Review* (2012) Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods* p.32, Stearns ‘Globalisation and childhoods’, Nita Kumar, *Lessons from Schools: The History of Education in Banaras* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000) pp.105, 186,

⁵⁹ Pomfret *Youth and Empire*: p.280

⁶⁰ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2006) p.22

she is not able to be heard.’⁶¹ Few direct sources exist and even the fragmentary evidence that survives is structured by adult decisions around the collection and organisation of archives, and usually ‘mediated through adult authorship’.⁶² Children’s experiences need to be analysed in a framework which both avoids representations laden with sentimentality which see the child, particularly the non-Western child, as an ‘object of compassion’ or which ‘construes’ subaltern voices ‘in the image of our own’, that is in the image of the rational, autonomous individual, who has since ‘progressed’ to adulthood.⁶³ Morrison has demonstrated in the Egyptian context that the ways in which autobiographical memories are organised, chosen, and represented is often more reflective of the contemporary political and social concerns of the authors than with memories of childhood itself.⁶⁴

However, the twenty-first century historian is also vulnerable to ‘shunning the child’s experience completely in the name of methodological sophistication’.⁶⁵ Although it is clear that, as with other subaltern groups, evidence of individual children is ‘necessarily frustrated and episodic’ and subaltern accounts may be ‘truncated, fragmentary and often self-contradictory’, it is important that these accounts still represent the ‘possibility of another perspective’ that in turn emphasises ‘the fragility and instability’ of acknowledged categories and frameworks.⁶⁶ Accordingly, any work on historical childhoods must balance a recognition of the ‘fundamental humility’, which Burton argues is central to all intellectual work and ‘recognizes the unknowability of history’ with Chakrabarty’s argument that ‘the very act of listening

⁶¹ Gayatri Spivak, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (London: Macmillan, 1988), Gayatri Spivak ‘interview’ in Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (ed) *The Spivak Reader: selected works*. (London: Routledge, 1996) p.292

⁶² Bowen and Hinchy ‘Introduction’, Stargardt, Nicholas ‘German Childhoods: The Making of a Historiography,’ *German History* 16:1 (1998) p.12, Behera, *Childhoods in South Asia*, Dipesh Chakrabarty ‘Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for “Indian” Pasts?’ *Representations*, 37 (Winter, 1992) pp.1-26

⁶³ O’Hanlon in Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies* p.104-106, Kaisa Vehkalahti ‘Sentimental Histories: Emotions in the Historical Representation of Childhood’ *European Social Science History Conference* 2008, Balagopalan, *Inhabiting Childhood* p.8, Hugh Cunningham *Children and childhood in Western society since 1500* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005) p.608

⁶⁴ Morrison *Childhood and colonial modernity*,

⁶⁵ Stargardt ‘German Childhoods’ p.12

⁶⁶ Gyandendra Pandey, ‘Voices from the Edge: the Struggle to Write Subaltern Histories’ in Chaturvedi *Mapping Subaltern Studies* pp.281-288, 296. Urvashi Butalia, *The other side of silence: Voices from the partition of India* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000)

to people orients us – opens us up – to their presence, however elusive the matter of *presence* may be'.⁶⁷ Furthermore, as Vallgård argues, 'even if searching for authentic, autonomous agency is a highly dubious endeavour, relinquishing attempts to recover the acts and interventions of persons at the bottom of social hierarchies is equally problematic.'⁶⁸ The gesture of listening is politically significant in the context of children: it involves re-focussing on a group often ignored within the historical record despite their numerical dominance, but also reflects the very recent emphasis on children's participation rights within the UNCRC.⁶⁹ Children's historians, similar to women's historians, need to use the archives of the mundane to 'conceptualize children's agency in a nuanced manner, highlighting forms of agency that do not directly resist figures of authority or explicitly subvert hegemonic ideas about childhood' but operate on a 'humbler scale'.⁷⁰ The historian must therefore act in dialogue with the subaltern, rather than speaking for her, and must see how these everyday acts or words are performed in relation to a variety of power relations, rather than in dramatic confrontation.⁷¹

Children and childhood as a category of analysis

Childhood is demonstrably not a self-evident category; it is socially constructed and therefore varies according to time and space. Since Philip Aries argued that the recognition of childhood as a life stage separate from adulthood emerged in the post-medieval European world, and was particularly tied to European ideas of modernity

⁶⁷ Burton, 'Thinking beyond the boundaries' p.67, Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*: p.105, Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism' in Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies* p.275, Guha, Ranajit 'Chandra's Death' *Subaltern Studies* 5 (Oxford, 1987) pp.167-202

⁶⁸ Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods* p.475, Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Margaret Lock, Margaret Ramphel, Pamela Reynolds, *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering and Recovery*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) esp. pp.20-21, Urvashi Butalia, *The other side of silence*, Das, 'Voices of Children'

⁶⁹ Bowen and Hinchy 'Introduction:', Olga Nieuwenhuys 'Keeping asking: why childhood? Why children? Why global?' *Childhood* 17 (2010), Balagopalan, 'Introduction: Children's Lives', Deepa Sreenivas, 'Forging new communities: Gendered childhood through the lens of caste' *Feminist Theory*, 11 (2010) p.271, Colin Heywood, *Children and childhood in the West from medieval to modern times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001) p.171

⁷⁰ Veena Das *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) p.6, Nandy, *Intimate Enemy* p.xiv, O'Hanlon in Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies* p.110, Bowen and Hinchy, 'Introduction: children' p.16, Sharmila Rege, *Sociology of Gender: the Challenge of Feminist Sociological knowledge* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003) p.10

⁷¹ Spivak, Interview p.293, Haynes and Prakash *Contesting Power*: pp.11-19

and corresponding educational and industrial socio-economic change, scholars have come to recognise that a particular view of childhood ‘is not a natural but a social construct and as such its status is constituted in particular socially located forms of discourse’.⁷² The ways in which childhood is imagined is both culturally, geographically and historically determined. It reflects societal boundaries, representations and typical forms of conduct, in areas as diverse as ‘political engagement, moral and criminal responsibility, sexual consent and patterns of consumption’.⁷³ Historians and social scientists both acknowledge the existence of ‘multiple childhoods’, constructed by and for children. This understanding has contributed to a narrative resisting the normative power-knowledge constructions about modern childhood encapsulated in the UNCRC. At the same time, this narrative remains dominant and historians from South Asia continue to search for a moment of the ‘emergence’ of modern childhood, in ways which continue to privilege the experience of the West.⁷⁴

The concept of ‘multiple childhoods’ rejects the ‘derivative discourse’ that normalises a particular form of childhood, and renders divergence from this as victimhood or lack.⁷⁵ Rather than reifying a normative ‘Indian childhood’ based on high caste Hindu mythology, recent work has traced the emergence of multiple childhoods within contemporary India, interrogating hierarchies of caste, class, region and gender as well as normative concepts such as childcare, child labour and education.⁷⁶ There remains concerns, however, that the focus on a reading of ‘cultural’ difference has ‘unwittingly’ reinforced childhoods in the Non-West as ‘non-modern’ and therefore ‘effectively de-historicised’ the child in India in very orientalist ways.⁷⁷ By contrast,

⁷² Quote from Chris Jenks, *Childhood*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1996) p.23. See also Cunningham *Children and childhood in Western society*.

⁷³ Jenks, *Childhood* p.39

⁷⁴ Balagopalan, *Inhabiting Childhood*: p.77, Ishita Pande ‘Coming of Age: Law, Sex and Childhood in Late Colonial India’ *Gender & History* 24:1 (April 2012) pp.205–230

⁷⁵ Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy* p.xi, Nieuwenhuys, ‘Editorial’ pp.151-2, Nieuwenhuys, ‘Global Childhood’ p.266

⁷⁶ Balagopalan, ‘Introduction:’ Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, (Delhi: OUP, 1981), Urvashi Misri, ‘Child and childhood’, Nieuwenhuys, ‘Editorial’ p.152, Amita Gupta *Early Childhood Education, Postcolonial theory, and teaching practices in India: Balancing Vygotsky and the Veda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

⁷⁷ Uberoi, *Freedom and Destiny* p.93, Balagopalan, *Inhabiting Childhood*: pp.7, 50, 57, Breckenridge and Van Der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*: p.25

this research situates an understanding of childhood in India within the specific historical timeframe of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the spatial limitations of the Madras Presidency. Similarly, Balakrishnan's path-breaking work traces the relationship between the changing socio-political context and evolving constructions of childhood in the post-independence period.⁷⁸ In the history of education, Nita Kumar has detailed different experiences of education in Benares according to caste and community, mirrored by a recent volume edited by Bowen and Hinchey.⁷⁹

The emphasis on the multiplicity of childhoods and the specificity of children's experiences questions whether the historian can still usefully think about children as an analytical social grouping based entirely on age. While childhood is demarcated by boundaries which vary across space, time and cultural norms, Jenks argues that in all societies childhood is characterised by futurity and becoming.⁸⁰ Childhood is conceptualised in relation to a desirable but different adult world, and often contrasted as inferior with the rational masculine, adult Other.⁸¹ Whether historical or contemporary, across social groups and geographical sites, all children as emerging beings are subject to the strategies of adults, who try to mould them into particular pre-determined forms, often in the name of protection or development.⁸² The modern institutions of childhood are the reformatory, the orphanage, the school, the clinic, and the playground. In all of these, children remain subordinated to forms of differing adult power and subject to changing adult discourses, reflecting 'the subaltern status of *all* children'.⁸³

⁷⁸ Balakrishnan *Growing Up and Away*

⁷⁹ Kumar *Lessons from Schools*; Bowen & Hinchey, 'Introduction', Special issue 'Children and knowledge in India'

⁸⁰ Jenks, *Childhood* pp.7,12, Qvortrup 'Childhood as a Structural Form', James, 'Children's Voices' in Qvortrup (et al) *Palgrave Handbook*

⁸¹ Nandy, *Intimate Enemy* p.15

⁸² Heywood, *Children and childhood in the West* p.16, Michael-Sebastian Honig 'How Is the child constituted in childhood studies?' in Qvortrup (et al) *Palgrave Handbook* p.74, Linda Gordon, 'The Perils of Innocence, or What's Wrong with Putting Children First' *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1:3 (Fall 2008) pp.331-350

⁸³ Satadru Sen 'Notes on Juvenilia' in *Traces of Empire: India, America and PostColonial Cultures*, (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2014)

Children's history thus mirrors wider historiographical concerns surrounding the representation of subaltern groups.⁸⁴ This thesis uses subalternity as 'a socially contingent process rather than a category of identity' which recognises 'the historical reality of multiple and changing social identities and the significance of context in shaping status and liminality.'⁸⁵ Childhood is transitional with an inherent promise of a future assumption of power in adulthood and therefore children have a distinct place as subaltern, even alongside other experiences of subalternity, based on other social relationships.⁸⁶ That is not to underestimate, or romanticise, the actions of children as they 'threaten to unravel the strategies of domination' or to undervalue the ways in which children themselves use power.⁸⁷ The analysis here works within the conceptual frame set out by Adrian James that acknowledges the 'commonalities of childhood' in terms of social stratification, culture, and generational relations and 'the diversity of their [children's] daily lives in different social, cultural, religious, political or economic contexts'. It also recognises the ways in 'which children's agency is not only constrained but...enabled by structural and other influences.'⁸⁸ This situates childhood both as constantly changing and a permanent structural form - as well as promoting consideration of age as a method of understanding power in Madras society.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis considers a number of these issues in detail:

Chapter One considers the introduction of compulsory education within the Presidency as a result of the Madras Elementary Education Act 1920. The chapter interrogates both the official debates in the Madras Legislative Council (MLC) and the administration reports of the Public Instruction and Education Departments, looking particularly at the new normative characterisation of the child as learner and at school. By considering the attempts to use the legislation through a variety of organisations,

⁸⁴ Ranajit Guha, 'The Small Voice of History' in Amin & Chakrabarty (ed.) *Subaltern Studies IX*:

⁸⁵ Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World 1780-1920*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), Majid Siddiqi quoted in O'Hanlon in Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies* p.87

⁸⁶ Sally Crawford and Carenza Lewis 'Childhood Studies and the Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past' *Childhood in the Past* 1 (2008) pp.5-16, Qvortrup 'childhood' in Qvortrup (et al) *Palgrave Handbook*, p.28

⁸⁷ Haynes and Prakash, *Contesting Power* p.3

⁸⁸ Adrian James, 'Competition or integration? The next step in childhood studies?' in *Childhood*, 17 (2010) p.496

such as District Educational Councils, the chapter considers the correlation between responsibility and authority in relation to children, and assesses the relationship between an emerging rhetoric of childhood and the other ways in which children were imagined within the identity politics of the Presidency, including as members of educational communities based on social categories such as caste, class, religion or gender.

Chapter Two considers the response of Madras City Corporation to the Education Act and the introduction of compulsory education for all children within the city. Based primarily on the verbatim Proceedings of the Corporation, the chapter considers the changing ways in which children were constructed in terms of biological age, physical vulnerability and intellectual malleability. This chapter traces the changing ways in which children were perceived; initially they were considered an investment as future citizen, but by the end of the 1930s there was an increased emphasis on the agency of children themselves. The Corporation schools were specifically for the poorest section of the population, and Chapter Two considers the designation of ‘the poor’ as a key defining feature in the experience and the identity of the child.

Chapter Three explores the way the child was imagined as a learner by considering three areas of educational concern. Firstly, it analyses the journal *Educational India*, a key advocate for the introduction of progressive pedagogy within India. Its contributors imagined children as sharing certain universal characteristics, especially learning through activity. This chapter studies both the pedagogical theory and its impact on constructions of childhood among the elite, addressing attempts to make the curriculum more culturally specific and suited to the Indian subcontinent. Secondly, the chapter examines the engagement with these ideas in two women’s teacher training colleges: the government funded Lady Willingdon College and mission-based St Christopher’s College. This is followed by a case study based on the archives of the Children’s Garden School, Madras. Again, it looks at practical efforts to implement progressive pedagogical ideas in the context of Madras, and the school’s engagement with the other identities and sites of authority within the children’s lives.

Chapter Four analyses the way the Madras Corporation as a municipal authority attempted to extend its authority over the body of the schoolchild by introducing the medical inspection of children in schools, allowing policy makers to chart the health of the school population. The chapter examines the expansion of governmentality through the collection of health statistics, which in turn facilitated a number of interventions, namely the introduction of a Scheme to provide free Midday Meals for poor students. A detailed consideration of the complexity of the negotiations between councillors regarding children's eligibility, nutritional needs and the cost and organisation of provision reveals the competing claims to authority and responsibility by the state, the expert and the parents.

Chapter Five examines the Madras Children Act 1920 (MCA) and the beginnings of a juvenile justice system. It investigates the discourses surrounding juvenile justice, for example in the Jails Committee 1919-20, and in the MLC debates surrounding the introduction of the Act itself. There is a consideration of the impact of global understandings of childhood and their relevance in the Madras context. These ideas are set beside a profiling of juvenile crime in court and administration records and a detailed study of the implementation of legislation with the expansion of Certified School provision. Chapter Five assesses the way in which state intervention changed the ways both the child and the family were constructed in statist discourse.

By contrast, Chapter Six considers the practical expansion of juvenile justice by civil society organisations such as the Madras Society for the Protection of Children (MSPC) and Madras Children's Aid Society (MCAS). Examining the reports and correspondence of a number of philanthropic societies, this chapter details the establishment of these social reform organisations, as well as their actions to enforce the Children's Act, particularly in the juvenile court system and probation service. This contributes to our understanding of both the priorities behind implementing the legislation and the ways in which children were constructed as in need of 'care' or 'control'. Additionally, it interrogates middle-class philanthropic intervention, and the changing relationships between the state, the family and civil society intermediaries.

The last two chapters change the focus by moving away from adult discourse and emphasising the experiences of children. Chapter Seven considers aristocratic children under the Court of Wards, especially those in residence at the Newington school for young zamindars. It focuses on the 1920 trial of a pupil accused of murdering his British headmaster, and the ways in which constructions of Indian and princely childhoods were used in court. By setting children's evidence in the heavily mediated court records beside the colonial administration reports, this chapter demonstrates that children's voices substantially complicate our understandings of how childhood was experienced by the adolescent wards. Although significantly older than the schoolchildren in the rest of the thesis, they were legally and discursively constructed as both minors and children. The records of this specific encounter deepen our awareness of the commonplace and allow a greater insight into the social hierarchies of class, caste and race operating at Newington.

Finally, Chapter Eight looks at memories of middle-class childhoods in autobiographies. It considers the way that discourses of childhood were constructed through the memories of adults, but also reads along the grain for evidence of children's lives in the 1920s and 1930s. The autobiographical memory thus provides fragmentary evidence of family relationships, of toys and play, of school and learning and of experiences of childhood emotion firmly situated in the everyday. These contribute to an understanding of how childhood was experienced and imagined by children themselves. In addition, the chapter considers the ways in which adults remember identity and difference in childhood, and the ways in which childhood competed with other social identities.

(Chapter One) The child at school: compulsory education in the Madras Presidency

The Madras Elementary Education Act, passed in 1920, facilitated the introduction of compulsory education in local authority areas throughout the Madras Presidency. Previous histories of education in India, with their, often politicised, focus on curriculum, funding and knowledge transmission, have ignored the schoolchild at the centre of the educational process. The Act and its implementation reveal emerging discursive constructions of the Indian child. With consistent support for compulsory education in the MLC, the 1920s -30s became the era of the institutionalisation of children and contributed to a new normative characterisation within political circles of the child as learner and at school. Vallgård argues that the universalising trend of perceiving the child within an educational setting, and as malleable and vulnerable, characterised missionary discourse in the South of India by the beginning of the twentieth century.¹ The extent to which this universal idea had gained influence more widely by the 1920s and the ways in which Indian politicians and officials conceived of children as defined by age is central to this study. Running parallel to this, there is a consideration of the other ways in which children were imagined within the identity politics of the Presidency: through educational communities based on social categories of caste, class, religion or gender. The aim is not to replicate studies which demonstrate the ways in which social hierarchies informed children's access to education and were used to maintain an elite's access to power, or the ways in which the diversity of communities in South India impeded the expansion of education.² Rather, the chapter explores the tensions between an emerging discursive category of childhood and the ways in which other social identities informed children's discursive and practical interactions with the state.

The possibility of compulsory education transformed the legislative responsibility of the state to provide education for the child, and in doing so re-defined the relationship

¹ Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods*

² Bamita Bagchi 'Connected and entangled histories: writing histories of education in the Indian Context' *Paedagogica Historica*, 50:6 (2014) p.817, Bara, Joseph 'Colonialism and Educational Fragmentation in India' in Bhattacharya, *Contested Terrain*, Latika Chaudhary, 'Determinants of Primary Schooling in British India' *The Journal of Economic History* 69:1 (2009) p.272

between the child, the family and the state. Education in British India was a ‘contested terrain’ and an important site for the production and preservation of colonial authority and imperial subjects, but also a focus for Indian opposition.³ Research has focussed on whether the lack of progress in elementary education provision was due to ‘the attitude of the governed’, to competition between groups of Indians or the inadequacies of the education provided.⁴ The Constitution of 1950 is assumed to evidence a radical shift in the state’s relationship with the child, with Article 45 establishing state provision of free and compulsory education.⁵ However, there is clear evidence that this was part of a longer trajectory. In the 1920s Indians, operating under the Government of India Act 1919, had responsibility for education policy and budgeting as a transferred subject and Indians effectively became ‘the state’ in matters of education. ‘Plodding’ in the archives, and considering the compulsory aspects of the Education Act and its implementation at a provincial and municipal level in the Madras Presidency, provides an insight into the twin strands of authority and responsibility in this new relationship between the state and the child.⁶ Diverse institutions represented ‘the state’ and while a number of government bodies claimed the authority to both legislate and intervene in the lives of children, underpinning the discussions was a broad consensus on the modern responsibility to care for the vulnerable and to interact directly with the child. A focus on elementary education uncovers those who claimed to make administrative and political decisions on behalf of the child, and the way these claims were framed. In particular, if the child was to be in school, the question of who was financially responsible was contested. Finally, the impact on parents and family of a ‘state’ which now claimed a duty or responsibility for their children requires

³ Deepak Kumar, Joseph Bara, Nadita Khadria, Radha Gayathri, (ed.) *Education in Colonial India: Historical Insights* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013), Nigel Crook, *Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia* (Delhi: OUP, 1996) p.19, Bhattacharya, *Contested Terrain* esp. chapter Poromesh Acharya, ‘Law and Politics of Primary Education in Bengal’

⁴ Quote from Clive Whitehead ‘The historiography of British imperial education policy, Part I: India’ *History of Education* 34:3, (2005) p.321. See also Rao, *New Perspectives*, Latika Chaudhary ‘Land revenues, schools and literacy: a historical examination of public and private funding of education’ *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 47 (2010) pp.179-204, Aparna Basu *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920* (Delhi: OUP, 1974)

⁵ Post-independence context: Sureshchandra Shukla ‘Nationalist Educational Thought: Continuity and Change’ in Bhattacharya, *Contested Terrain*, Kannabiran and Singh (ed.) *Challenging the Rule(s) of Law*

⁶ Rao *New Perspectives* p.30. In Rao’s introduction she argues that the history of education in India requires extensive archival work and should be based on ‘factually accurate, chronologically documented historical events’ rather than pre-determined ideological perspectives.

discussion. Consideration will therefore be given to the effect of compulsion on the authority of the family, and the sites, particularly in the arena of religious education, where the authority of the family remained paramount.

Madras Elementary Education Act 1920

A Bill for the expansion of elementary education was introduced in 1918 ‘as an essential accompaniment of all large measures of social, political or economic reform.’⁷ The Bill was presented later as a ‘working compromise’ mediating between a number of educational interests, but quite different from the education bills of other Presidencies which were more explicitly based on Gokhale’s defeated all-India Elementary Act of 1911.⁸ An earlier bill, much closer in tone to Gokhale’s, had been defeated in 1915 but began the process of establishing that it ‘shall be the duty of the parent of every child’ between five and ten years to send their child to school as ‘adequate fulfilment of parental responsibility’, with penalties for non-compliance.⁹ In 1918 the Education Department claimed that the colonial government in Madras had made ‘sustained efforts’ to ‘stimulate and assist’ elementary education but, for progress to continue, education had to be placed on a statutory level as the direct responsibility of the state. Of the approximately 2.7 million boys in the Presidency on 31 March 1918, around 1.2 million were in recognised elementary schools for non-Europeans.¹⁰ This included 11,358 (1%) in Government Institutions, 47,822 (4%) in schools run by Municipal Boards, 363,490 (29%) in Local Board institutions, 735,608 (58%) in private aided schools, 100,763 (8%) in unaided schools, with a further 167,143 girls studying in designated boys’ schools. The vast majority of schools were run by private agencies but received financial support from the government, as a result of a Grant-in-Aid scheme introduced in 1906. The scheme provided financial assistance to institutions based on the standard and number of teachers, average attendance and the general efficiency of the school.¹¹ After 1911, the provincial

⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. D Swamikannu Pillai, 19/12/1918

⁸ TNSA: GO644 Home (Education) Department 31/5/1920, 16/4/1919

⁹ BL: V10750 Madras Parliament Transactions: Compulsory Elementary Education Act, 2nd Reading of Bill 17/04/1915

¹⁰ Schools: total 29,848, Government 208, Municipal Boards 564, Local Board institutions 6,330, Private aided 19,072, Unaided 3,674. IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Swamikannu Pillai 19/12/1918

¹¹ IOR: V/27/862/4 Educational Survey Madras Presidency 1924

government also subsidised the opening of elementary schools in villages with more than 500 inhabitants. While a further resolution in 1913 by the Government of India encouraged District Boards to spend ‘not less than 15% of their income from taxation’ on schools, this rarely happened in practice.¹²

The primary aim of the new legislation in Madras was to introduce a ‘central co-ordinating authority’ in the form of the District Educational Council (DEC). This would serve as a regulatory body, facilitating the expansion of elementary education in each local area. The DEC was charged with doubling provision in ten years, having the power to decide local education grants and raise additional local taxation, explicitly modelled on the English Education Act 1902 (Balfour Act). Taluk boards and municipalities were to manage both the schools and new tax, supervised by the DEC, but funded by an additional two lakhs a year from the provincial Government budget. After detailed negotiations, the Act received assent from the Viceroy in November 1920, being explicitly formulated not to embarrass or curb the future Indian Minister of Education after constitutional reforms were enacted.¹³ By the time the Act came into force on 1 April 1921 the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms had significantly altered the MLC, which became predominantly Indian, elected on a small franchise with responsibility for transferred areas such as education and health.

One of the most important innovations of the Education Act was the possibility of compulsory education, dealt with in Chapter Five, Clauses 44-52. Under Clause 44, compulsion could be introduced at a meeting of the Local Authority expressly convened for the purpose, for the whole or just part of the local area, and specified according to specific categories of religion and sex. In order to gain government consent (Clause 45) the local board had to submit, to the DEC and Governor in Council, a declaration of ‘its readiness to levy tax’ at ‘such rates as may be necessary to meet the expenditure involved.’ They also had to provide ‘sufficient’ school places. The aim was explicitly ‘to banish illiteracy from the land’ through a basic education and, following that, to improve the quality of the education provided.¹⁴ The resolution

¹² IOR: V/27/862/4

¹³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, file 2941. TNSAL: MLA Debates 29/3/1920 p.690

¹⁴ TNSAL: MLA Debates 29/3/1920 p.698

received widespread support across the Advisory Council - from the Dalit representative M.C. Rajah to the Brahmin lawyer T.R. Ramachandra Iyer - amid fears for the social consequences of illiteracy.¹⁵ Compulsion was perceived to be necessary for the expansion of mass education both to attract children to school and to ensure their attendance for longer than the current average duration of just over two years.¹⁶ The decision to leave the initiative with local bodies but the ultimate financial control to the provincial government was undisputed.

The Act allowed for exemptions to compulsion under Clause 50 for children with no school within one mile from their residence; children suffering from infirmity; children receiving instruction at home 'declared to be satisfactory to the prescribed officer'; and children contributing to the household income. This was to be monitored by Attendance Committees (Clause 51), and ultimately magistrates were expected to enforce school attendance. Parents were liable to a Rs 5 fine rising to Rs 50 after more than two offences, although revised from the original figure of Rs 100.¹⁷ There was a general consensus that 'a good deal of coaxing should proceed' any penal action, and a manifest reluctance to intervene in opposition to parental authority.¹⁸ Consistently, legislators recognised that they were introducing only a 'modified form of compulsion calculated not so much to ensure that every child entered a school as to prevent the child who had entered a school from being removed from it within the period of school-age.'¹⁹ At the same time, the rhetoric of compulsion indicated a new departure, emphasising that the normative place for childhood learning was within school and the school was under the control of the state, either directly or financially. By 1925, 18 mufassal municipalities had introduced some form of compulsion including Chingleput, Conjeeveram and Vellore.²⁰ In 1926 the Education Department initiated a compulsory education scheme in Saidapet as an 'experimental measure', which ran from 1928-31 to examine the functioning of compulsory schooling in rural areas.²¹ As

¹⁵ TNSAL: MLA Debates 29/3/1920 p.700

¹⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Minute of Dissent 28/5/1920

¹⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, file 2941. Select Committee 21/7/1920

¹⁸ TNSAL: MLA Debates 15/11/1921 p.1387

¹⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1934-35 p.1

²⁰ TNSA: GO1951 LE 8/6/1925

²¹ TNSA: GO882 LE 17/5/1926

Hendrick argues in the British context, the regulatory impact of this was that children could be ‘monitored, surveyed, calculated’ to indicate ‘the broader political health of the nation’ and brought into direct relationship with the state outside the mediation of the family.²² The school became institutionalised as the site of childhood, which delegitimised other sites of learning and the acquisition of other knowledges and skills, particularly those associated with the lower classes and girls.

Enforcing compulsion for children designated ‘school-age’ was difficult, for the definition of school-age remained contested. In the original debate the Indian representatives agreed that school age should be specified between five and eleven years.²³ In contrast, at a later debate the British official responsible, Lionel Davidson, argued that it was ‘unwise to attempt to define school-age by hard-and-fast rules’ because of ‘the need for elasticity’ based on sex and community.²⁴ This became the cause of frequent and recurring debate. There was widespread agreement between both Indian politicians and British officials that ‘age will vary with localities with sex and with communities’ although within the broad parameters of ‘not less than five and not more than twelve years’.²⁵ More contested was whether and how age should be specified in the legal context of compulsory schooling, reflecting the policies of other provinces such as Bombay which specified between six and eleven years, although an educational conference in Ootacamund had made clear there was no consistent pattern across the sub-continent.²⁶ The recognised inability of many children to self-define their ages, due to lack of birth registration, was not even considered.²⁷ Handing the power of definition back to the British, the Indians appointed to the Advisory Council eventually agreed that the schoolchild was defined by ‘such age as the Governor in Council may prescribe in respect of children of either sex in any local area of any particular community.’²⁸

²² Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880-1990* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997) p.5

²³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, file 2941. p.22

²⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, file 2941. 28/9/1920 p.22

²⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, file 2941. 26/7/1920, 28/9/1920 p.23

²⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, file 2941. 28/9/1920 p.22-23

²⁷ This was recognised in other reports. IOR: V/24/3705 Report of the Director of Public Health (DPH), Madras, 1921 p.1. Timothy Alborn, ‘Age and Empire in the Indian Census, 1871-1931’ *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxx:I (Summer 1999) pp.61-89

²⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, file 2941. Madras Elementary Education Act 1920 Chapter 1, section xiii.

The lack of clear numerical boundaries meant it was very difficult to enforce compulsion. In Erode for example, the 1921 census suggested that there were 1,366 boys between the ages of five and ten years, of which 152 were Muslim. When Muslim boys were counted later in 1922 in preparation for compulsion, the enumerators found only 61 between the ages of eight and thirteen years.²⁹ In Negapatam the estimated pupil numbers and then later surveys differed radically.³⁰ In Madras City compulsion was enforced for boys aged between six and eleven years, Muslim boys aged between eight and thirteen years and girls aged between five and ten years.³¹ This variation was even more significant in rural areas, and the intensive survey of Saidapet in 1924 included a variety of contradictory estimates on school population and attendance, but no clear specification of the age boundaries.³² This made it almost impossible to accurately assess numbers, which had a significant impact on the provision of adequate accommodation and teachers. The definition of the child by age remained fluid and contested, hampering the expansion of educational provision.

The development of educational communities: sex

Support for compulsory education suggested that most politicians accepted the normative idea of the child identified primarily as learner and as in school, in stark contrast to the opposition within the Congress party at the all-India level.³³ Within the Madras discourses, and in their practical implementation, a number of identities emerge which indicate that children were categorised in different ways, not merely by the, already unstable, boundary of age. The clearest distinction was sex, and the Act explicitly allowed differentiation in the schooling of girls and boys. In the extensive discussions about the introduction of compulsion in Conjeeveram or Saidapet all reference to 'the child' was male.³⁴ This was particularly exclusionary, given that in the Madras Presidency there were consistently more girls in mixed schools than in

²⁹ TNSA: GO1193 LE 7/10/1922. DPI 9/9/1922

³⁰ TNSA: GO1440 LE 28/11/1922. DPI 27/10/1922

³¹ TNSA: GO1951 LE 8/6/1925

³² TNSA: GO882 LE 17/5/1926

³³ Rao in Rao, *New Perspectives*

³⁴ TNSA: GO2070 LE 17/6/1922, GO 882 LE 17/5/1926

single-sex schools.³⁵ This is important, for the focus in the historiographical literature on the specifics of girls' schooling and curriculum has often obscured the experience of the majority within mainstream co-educational schools.³⁶ However, in 1919-20 94% of girls had dropped out by Third Standard, suggesting that girls attending single-sex schools had a longer experience of formal education.³⁷ By 1921-22, there were 2,631 registered elementary girls' schools within the Presidency, of which 64% were in public management, 21% run by missions and only 15% aided non-mission, in stark contrast to the overall picture.³⁸ Five years later, there was a further 28% increase in the number of schools, with a 38% increase in the number of girls attending, and a further 54% increase in the number of girls in co-educational schools.³⁹ The impact of differences in urban and rural provision and opportunity are difficult to assess, but the 1924 Educational Survey revealed broad correspondence in rural areas between the presence of mission schools and girls' education. Ramnad, for example, was 'backwards' in respect of both boy's (30%) and girl's (7%) education, while Tinnevely and South Kanara were known both for 'well conducted Mission schools' and the particularly high rate of education for girls (still only 13%).⁴⁰

Official support for girls' education varied between areas, and there was little appetite to make it compulsory particularly given the *gosha* restrictions on Muslim girls and the cost of employing additional female staff.⁴¹ The Municipal Council in Erode requested additional government funding, matched at 125% of the Education Tax, because they were the first area in the Presidency to advocate compulsion for both sexes, although the proposals contained a specific exemption for Muslim girls.⁴² The Chairman of the Erode Municipal Council claimed this demonstrated that Erode was 'educationally already much advanced than the great majority of municipalities' and the proposed financial burden which was 'light compared with the great step forward

³⁵ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1919-20

³⁶ Sita Anantha Raman, *Getting Girls to School: social reform in the Tamil Districts, 1870-1930*, (Chennai: Stree, 1996), Rao New *Perspectives*, Kumar, Nita *The Politics of Gender, Community and Modernity: Essays on Education in India*, (New Delhi: OUP, 2007)

³⁷ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1919-20 p.9

³⁸ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1921-22 p.59

³⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1926-27 p.113

⁴⁰ TNSA: GO1901 LE 3/11/1925 Elementary Education Survey Report 1924-25

⁴¹ TNSAL: MLA Debates 29/3/1920 p.692

⁴² TNSA:GO1193 LE 7/10/1922 Memo 8/7/1922

that the municipality will be taking.’⁴³ This reflected wider politics in the Presidency: the Erode Municipal Council was dominated by the Swaraj wing of the Congress Party, increasingly keen to oppose the Justice Party in the MLC, but also contest the dominance of Madras City within the Congress party itself.⁴⁴ The Education Department cautiously supported the move as ‘highly praiseworthy’ and ‘heartily approved’ in principle, and all the educational officials - the Education Department, DPI and Inspector of Municipal Councils – urged caution and highlighted the financial burden.⁴⁵ While the popularity of education for girls was undoubtedly growing, as evidenced in the Madras witnesses to the Hartog Commission on Education in 1929, the extent to which support had spread beyond the educated middle classes is unclear.⁴⁶ Social reformers, such as the Madras-based Women’s Indian Association (WIA), worked for the establishment of girls’ schools, but their class-based assumptions regarding single sex schooling helped to delegitimise the experience of the lower-class girls briefly educated in co-educational schools.⁴⁷ As Nita Kumar has so convincingly argued, and as displayed in the memories in Chapter Eight, the assumption that the normative site of childhood learning was within a formal institution included a gendered preconception concerning what constituted both legitimate knowledge and a legitimate childhood experience.⁴⁸ Despite slowly changing attitudes, poor girls were discursively and practically Othered away from the normative experience of schooling and childhood.

Religion and the development of educational communities

By the 1920s religion and community had become key signifiers of the child. The DPI reports consistently categorised children by sex and by community as non-Brahmin, Depressed Classes (Dalit), Christian, Muhammadan and Brahmin, in order to trace the educational progress of each community. Alongside this, they referred to particular ‘exceptional’ groups such as Europeans, Indian Princes and Criminal Tribes, reflecting

⁴³ TNSA: GO1193 LE 7/10/1922

⁴⁴ CJ Baker ‘Leading up to Periyar: the early career of EV Ramaswami Naicker’ BN Pandey (ed.) *Leadership in South Asia* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1977) pp.501-524

⁴⁵ TNSA: GO1193 LE 7/10/1922

⁴⁶ BL: MssEur E221/44 Evidence to the Hartog Commission: RS Subbalkshmi Ammal; Dr Muthulaksmi Reddi

⁴⁷ Seth, *Subject Lessons*: p.129

⁴⁸ Kumar *Politics of Gender, Community and Modernity*

the categorisation and reification of social groups within the census.⁴⁹ Education became a way of ‘perceiving difference’ and facilitating comparison, and Sanjay Seth argues that the ‘educational backwardness’ of the Muslim community was ‘discovered’ as figures for educational achievement provided a way to compare populations.⁵⁰

By the twentieth century Muslims were established as a distinct educational community within the Presidency, although their position as a minority varied considerably between the Mapillas in Malabar where they formed 35% of the population, to Ramnad (7%) or Trichinopoly (3%).⁵¹ The focus on religious education in the early years, and training in the Qur’an before entering secular education, meant that the numerical definition of school-age was often different for Muslim boys, which again set them apart as a distinctive educational community. Although these differences were framed in religious terms, the linguistic divisions within the community were also important. The Education Act guaranteed elementary education in the vernacular, and a suggestion by the Congress Mayor of Madras that elementary schools were linguistically, rather than communally, divided was strongly rejected as politically motivated.⁵² However, recent research has queried the homogeneity of Muslims in the Presidency, highlighting the high levels of integration of Muslim Tamil and Telegu speakers with wider rural communities.⁵³ The Educational Association as the mouthpiece of the Muslim community appears more closely linked to a particularly vocal Urdu-speaking urban educated Muslim elite than to the rest of the Muslim population, and contributed to the over-simplification of religious and linguistic identities within the Presidency.⁵⁴ For Muslim girls, access to formal schooling was particularly limited and of peripheral concern to most in the MLC. While the commitment to education remained, it was left in the hands of philanthropic lady

⁴⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1936-37, Quinquennium 1932-33 – 1936-37 p.88, 1927-28 to 1931-32 p.83. Nicholas Dirks *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000)

⁵⁰ Seth, *Subject Lessons*: pp.119-125; Sengupta ‘An Object Lesson’

⁵¹ TNSA: GO1938 LE10/11/1925 Malabar, GO 1901 LE 3/11/1925 Trichinopolopoly, Ramnad District

⁵² TNSA: GO1901 LE 3/11/1925 Tinnevely, MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1938 p.22

⁵³ McPherson, ‘How best do we survive?’ p.5

⁵⁴ McPherson, ‘How best do we survive?’ p.140

experts, such as Advisory Boards of local Muslim ladies or Madras Muslim Ladies Association. In practice, this meant that Muslim girls were the responsibility of no-one, and received little attention at provincial level, in contrast to the approach of the Madras Corporation (see Chapter Two), although they were still a clearly defined educational grouping.⁵⁵

A 'conscience clause' (Clause 53) was added in the later stages of the Act in an attempt to counter the perceived threat of proselytisation by Christian missionaries. The Clause included a provision to cut grant-aided funding for all schools that refused to offer exemptions to religious instruction. This was resisted; the missionary E.M. Macphail arguing that the Government should 'withdraw grants from aided schools into which *Panchamas* [dalits] are not allowed to go,' such as Pachaiyappa's College Madras, which excluded 'non-Caste Hindus, Muslims and Christians'.⁵⁶ The debate focussed not on the pedagogical impact of religious education or susceptibility of children to conversion, but was rather used to strengthen the claims of the Muslim community and British officials for the 'peculiar position' of the Muslim child.⁵⁷ Lone voices, such as B.V. Narasimha Iyer, a Salem-based pro-Home Rule lawyer, rejected this, stating that the Government should enforce 'equal access to all buildings and institutions' because a 'water-tight community' did not exist. However, his warnings went largely unheeded, and increasingly children from minority groups were seen as members of a distinct educational community.⁵⁸

Caste as an educational identity

The claim of the Christian community to a separate educational identity was complicated by the lower-caste position of many Christians in the social hierarchy of the Presidency. It was 'the declared policy of Government that no boy should be refused admission to a Government education institution merely on the ground of caste.'⁵⁹ A debate in 1921 on government funding for mission schools highlighted the

⁵⁵ BL MssEur E221/44 Hartog Evidence: Mrs Muzeruddin

⁵⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. 30/9/1920 p.87

⁵⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. 28/9/1920 p.76

⁵⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. 30/9/1920 p.85

⁵⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1916-17 to 1921-22 p35, 66. Mentions GO 329 Home (Education) 17/03/1919, GO 886 Home (Education) 07/08/1920, GO28 LE 06/01/1922

concern, particularly proffered by Dalit representative M.C. Rajah, that publically funded institutions ‘still shut their doors against particular classes and communities of the land’.⁶⁰ At a discursive level, the division of education by caste was opposed by the educated middle-class majority of MLC members and Dalits were perceived within the context of the wider Hindu community. Congress party members cautiously supported integration, and viewed caste and communalism as ‘obstacles to a healthy nationalism’, which ‘could only be annihilated only through the recognition of common ideals and interests, through common faith, through the development of a cooperative spirit among our younger generation.’⁶¹ The suggestion that children were uniquely able to transcend social boundaries stood in stark contrast to the practical realities of schooling. The Justice Party, on the other hand, used the democratisation of educational provision as an important tactic in their opposition to Brahmin domination. The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills strikes, however, had emphasised the difference between Dalits and the caste working classes, and the relationship was characterised by ‘serious political animosity.’⁶² Neither the Justice Party in the 1920s, nor later the Congress party, were interested in Untouchability as an educational problem. They evidenced very little interest in the systematic discrimination against Dalits, other than a concern about the economic impact of compulsion on the poor.⁶³

In direct contrast to the political discourse, the administration of the Education Department was premised on identification by caste. Caste statistics featured heavily in administration reports, perpetuating a ‘colonial rule of difference’ through strategies which facilitated the division of the population, alongside the claim of benevolence towards disadvantaged groups such as Dalits.⁶⁴ The Madras Educational Rules, whose implementation was a guarantee of Grant-in-Aid funding, specified castes eligible for preferential treatment, including Christian converts.⁶⁵ The 1920s saw a rapid increase in the number of Dalits enrolling in school: in 1922 12% of the 1.4 million pupils in

⁶⁰ TNSAL: MLC Debate 16/11/1921 p.1457-8

⁶¹ BL V 12547 Hartog Commission on Education (Interim Report of Indian Statutory Commission) p.377

⁶² Viswanath ‘Rethinking Caste and Class’ p.29

⁶³ TNSAL: Debate 30/10/1931 p.130

⁶⁴ BL: MssEur E221/44 Hartog Evidence

⁶⁵ IOR: V/27/860/88-/97 1892-1940 amendments. Appendix 17

schools were designated ‘Adi-Dravida’ or Dalit, rising to 13% of 2.5 million pupils at school in 1935-36.⁶⁶ Retaining these pupils proved difficult, and a quantitative analysis provides little reflection of the qualitative consequences of systematic marginalisation reflected in teacher attitudes, in access to learning materials and in the Brahminical teaching content.⁶⁷ When the compulsory education experiment in Saidapet was abandoned in 1931, the DPI argued that enforcing attendance of Dalit pupils in caste schools had caused ‘serious consequences’ through the organisation of ‘a complete and successful economic boycott of the Adi-Dravida population’ by caste neighbours.⁶⁸ Similarly, in 1933-34 twenty panchayat schools were closed because they refused to admit Dalit pupils.⁶⁹ Caste remained important in determining access to, and success in, education.

A measure of success in promoting Dalit schooling meant that by 1937 there were over 400,000 Dalit pupils attending school, 81% within government institutions.⁷⁰ Given the strength of the private aided schools as a proportion of educational provision, the preponderance of Dalits in government institutions reflects the reluctance of many aided institutions to accept Dalit pupils. By the 1930s, schools run by mission societies or philanthropists, such as the Poor Schools Society or Social Service League, continued to educate Dalits, but their contribution was much smaller than usually reflected in the historiographical literature.⁷¹ Most of these ‘government institutions’ were under minimal control from the Education Department.⁷² The Educational Survey of 1924 revealed the regional disparities in education provision, and by 1926-27 the Labour, Jail, Fisheries, Police, Salt and Forest Departments and Registrar General of Panchayats were also running schools designated as ‘government’.⁷³

⁶⁶ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1916-17 - 1921-22 p.35, DPI 1935-36 p.18, 29

⁶⁷ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1916-17 to 1921-22 p.67. Sreenivas, ‘Telling different tales’, Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education*:

⁶⁸ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1930-31 p.19

⁶⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1933-34 p.15

⁷⁰ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1932-33 – 1936-37 p.139

⁷¹ Eliza Kent, *Converting Women*: Kumar *Political Agenda of Education*

⁷² NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1921-22 p.65

⁷³ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1921-22 to 1926-27 p.127.

The Labour Department was a particularly significant provider of education for Dalits. In response to the Gray Commission on Panchamas, a Commissioner of Labour was appointed in 1919 as ‘protector’ of the Depressed Classes. His duties included the provision of education in Tanjore, Godavari, Chingleput and Chindambaram taluk of South Arcot, extended to cover the whole Presidency by 1923.⁷⁴ The Commissioner had the authority to provide additional resources to facilitate school attendance, such as books, scholarships, clothing, and even midday meals.⁷⁵ As early as 1922 the Labour Department was opposed by both the Justice and Congress Parties, and its funding severely curtailed.⁷⁶ The Department was commended by the 1928 Hartog Commission on Education for its work to ‘establish and maintain free elementary education’ despite the lack of support from ‘the usual agencies’ for public education, yet even the Commissioner of Labour, S.H. Slater, accepted that his position was ‘an anomaly’.⁷⁷ Slater regarded himself as ‘largely responsible’ for Dalit education, providing around 1,200 schools at elementary level, with occasional supervision from the Education Department. The focus within these schools was on vocational training, either agricultural or industrial according to area, and on basic literacy and personal hygiene. Slater also suggested schemes to ‘subsidize school attendance’ through financial incentives to parents.⁷⁸ This contributed significantly to the formation of a distinct educational community for Dalits, in which caste status determined educational provision and access. Despite the emergence of a discourse in which the normative site of childhood was the school, for children from marginalised groups other identities based in religion, gender and caste remained a significant determinant of their educational opportunities.

State responsibility for education

The Madras Elementary Education Act of 1920 posited that the State had ‘ultimate responsibility’ for education and it was ‘the primary duty’ of government to ‘devote all their energies towards the expansion of elementary education.’⁷⁹ The Act

⁷⁴ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1916-17 - 1921-22 p.35, 67

⁷⁵ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1919-20 p.66

⁷⁶ Viswanath ‘Rethinking Caste and Class:’ pp.29-35

⁷⁷ BL: V12547, MssEur E221/44 Hartog Evidence: SH Slater

⁷⁸ BL MssEur E221/44 Hartog Evidence: Slater p.44

⁷⁹ TNSAL: Debate19/3/1923 pp.2585 – 2592

facilitated the creation of DECAs as independent bodies who were to have ‘the principal responsibility for ascertaining the educational needs of an area’ and for ‘stimulating such expansion as may be necessary.’⁸⁰ Decentralised from direct government control and situated in each local area, the Councils were to be a body of ‘broad-minded men who have really the interests of the young people at heart’.⁸¹ The DECAs could recognise new elementary schools and supervise the distribution of Grant-in-Aid funding. They comprised local experts, including heads of private institutions and members of the municipal authority, headed by the District Collector.⁸² Based on the 1902 English Balfour Act, the DECAs were to include ‘self-respecting’ or ‘high-souled men’ who had shunned overt political office, but as ‘persons of local knowledge and experience’ would contribute to ‘a healthy civic life’ in the local areas.⁸³ In addition, the Council provided an opportunity for groups usually marginalised in the political process to participate in government, including both representatives of the Dalit community and educated women.⁸⁴ The DEC became one aspect of the avuncular state characterised by ‘civic activism’ in which local activists and local Indian officials could be responsible for the education of the children in their area, and hold significant influence over local educational organisation.⁸⁵

The provisions governing the DECAs were broadly agreed at the Select Committee stage. A number of members attached minutes of dissent, arguing that DECAs merely increased ‘the bewildering array’ of local government bodies, subverting ‘the average citizen’s capacity’ to interact with government, and produced ‘mere managers’ for discharging government functions, rather than a clear responsibility for changing policy.⁸⁶ Privately, the Education Department reassured the government in Delhi that despite the introduction of dyarchy ‘the controlling powers’ remained with the Government of Madras.⁸⁷ This created a system whereby ultimate financial power

⁸⁰ TNSAL: MLA Debate 29/3/1920 p.688

⁸¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. 28/9/1920 p.21

⁸² IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941.

⁸³ BL: AP Patro *Studies in Local Self-Government, Education and Sanitation*, (Madras, 1910) pp.5, 138-140, IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLA Debates 19/3/1920 p.695

⁸⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. pp.701-2

⁸⁵ Prashant Kidami, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis*, (Ashgate, 2007)

⁸⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Select Committee Evidence p.8-9

⁸⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Letter 16/4/1919

remained with the provincial government, but difficult and potentially unpopular budgetary and organisational decisions were to be made by Indians at a local level, blurring the lines of responsibility and authority.⁸⁸ There remained some concern from the elected legislators in 1924 that the DEC's lacked 'popular control' and were used by political parties as a form of patronage.⁸⁹ Ultimately abolished with little opposition in 1939, the councils were an experiment in civic activism by local educated elites that was intended to make local state intervention in families more acceptable by giving it a familiar face.⁹⁰

The new DEC's were only one level of the variety of educational institutions facilitating the expansion of elementary education. Conjeeveram claimed the 'privilege' of being the first municipality to introduce compulsion from 1 September 1922, and the development of the scheme demonstrates the variety of institutions involved.⁹¹ According to the 1921 Census, 1,800 (39%) of Conjeeveram's 4,600 boys received no elementary education. In April 1922 the municipal council voted to introduce an Education Tax raised from 2% property tax and 12.5% professional tax in the budget of 1922-23, along with an equivalent contribution from Government under section 37 of Education Act, with the hope of making education compulsory for 'all boys of school-going age'.⁹² The details were worked out after extensive correspondence between the Chairman of the Conjeeveram Municipal Council; the President of the Saidapet DEC; the DPI and the Education Department regarding pupil numbers, school facilities and tax changes.⁹³ Interventions were received from the Chingleput DEC, local Sub-Assistant Inspectors of Schools, officials from the Education Department, the Inspector of Municipal Councils and even a visit from the Minister for Education, A.P. Patro himself.⁹⁴ A similar resolution in Madras Municipal Corporation in March 1924 included a comparable set of negotiations involving municipal and provincial political representatives, the DEC and officials from Education Department, Inspectors

⁸⁸ Baker, *Politics of South India*

⁸⁹ TNSAL: MLA Debate 28/1/1939 p.76-78; Irschick, *Politics of Tamil Revivalism* p.230

⁹⁰ TNSAL: MLA Debate 28/1/1939 p.71

⁹¹ TNSA: GO868 LE 21/7/1922 Note 20/6/1922

⁹² TNSA: GO868 LE 21/7/1922 District Educational Officer 24/5/1925

⁹³ TNSA: GO868 LE 21/7/1922. Correspondence: 23/5/1922, 19/5/1922, 5/6/1922, 30/6/1922, 15/6/1922

⁹⁴ TNSA: GO868 LE 21/7/1922

and Corporation Commissioner.⁹⁵ The details of both schemes are themselves unimportant, but demonstrated the webs of communication between political and administrative organisations at municipal, district and provincial level. These meant that lines of financial or political accountability were almost impossible to trace. Within these networks of correspondence, there was an increasing discursive claim that the state was responsible for the child. What precisely constituted 'the state' and the division of responsibility between local agencies and provincial government departments was varied, contested and difficult to ascertain. In the morass of bureaucracy the small illiterate child was easily forgotten.

Financial implications of compulsory education

The Education Act was intended to alleviate the funding crisis in education and provide additional educational facilities.⁹⁶ Under Chapter Three, local areas could levy tax that would contribute to an Elementary Education Fund (EEF) solely for the purpose of primary level education. This tax was to be no more than 25% of local tax revenues (Section 34), match-funded by the government. The provincial government argued that until 1920 funds had been 'spasmodic and precarious' but that the new system was to be uniquely progressive in India.⁹⁷ The Act was intended to demonstrate the Government's commitment to decentralisation 'giving to the local residents the principal voice in determining to what extent and in what direction they wish their elementary education to be extended.' It proposed that the provincial government 'had no desire to divest themselves of their financial and general responsibility.' However, municipalities such as Negapatam were pressurised to introduce an education tax and the commitment to match local funding meant that while educational spending increased, the provincial government retained control over local budgets.⁹⁸ The DEC was, however, liable for a failure to expand and protests that it was 'the essential duty of the State to provide adequate funds' were ignored.⁹⁹ The decentralisation of

⁹⁵ TNSA: GO951LE 8/6/1925: Correspondence 26/3/24, 30/4/1924, 6/6/1924, 8/6/1925, 3/9/1924, 23/8/1924

⁹⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLA Debate 30/9/1920 p.101

⁹⁷ TNSAL: MLA Debates 29/3/1920 p.689

⁹⁸ TNSA: GO1465 LE 16/10/1923

⁹⁹ TNSAL: MLA Debates 19/3/1923 pp.2582-86, 2597, 2603; BL MssEur E221/44 Hartog Evidence: Nityandanda Mudaliar p2, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi

education control and finance not only blurred accountability for educational provision, but enabled provincial and district bodies to espouse compulsion education as a demonstration of their own modernity and concern for the child, but to avoid the duty of paying for it.¹⁰⁰

Parallel to the conviction that compulsion was necessary was the belief that ‘generally in all countries wherever you compel a man to send his boy to school then you cannot ask him to pay school fees.’¹⁰¹ Clause 47 established the ‘abolition of all fees in elementary schools’ within the compulsory area.¹⁰² This made the state directly responsible for financing education, even if what constituted ‘the state’ was disputed. Elementary education in the Presidency was dominated by private aided institutions, mission (15%) and non-mission (44%) schools comprising 59% of educational provision in 1932.¹⁰³ These institutions demanded fees from students in addition to their government grant, and accordingly a commitment was given that ‘the loss sustained by institutions under private management must be made good by the DEC.’¹⁰⁴ The provision of compensation proved a highly controversial policy, and appears unique to the Madras Presidency. It was founded on the government’s reliance on private aided provision and the fear that the alternative schemes such as fee reductions for poor students were administratively too difficult. There was considerable dispute over whether the provincial government, local authority or DEC would be liable for this compensation, which some feared would require the entire education budget.¹⁰⁵ Under pressure both the Justice Party Education Minister, Patro, and the British DPI, Littlehales, agreed that the introduction and funding of compulsion was the responsibility of the local authority.¹⁰⁶ The Madras Educational Rules established the basic rate of compensation, although it applied at the discretion

¹⁰⁰ TNSA: GO779 LE 17/4/1935, Question & response 27/2/1935

¹⁰¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Debates 28/9/1920 p.74

¹⁰² IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Select Committee 21/7/1920

¹⁰³ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1931-32, Quinquennium 1927-28 to 1931-32

¹⁰⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Select Committee 21/7/1920

¹⁰⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Debate 28/9/1920 pp.23, 72-3, Select Committee Report: Minute of Dissent N. Subba Rao

¹⁰⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Debate 28/9/1920 pp.72-3, TNSAL: MLA Debates 15/11/1921 pp.1383, 1385

of local authorities.¹⁰⁷ It is clear that while all supported free education, no institution of the state was willing to take financial responsibility for its provision.

The complicated relationship between private aided institutions and the state's newly claimed responsibility for the child's education was revealed in Madras City.¹⁰⁸ The municipal Corporation depended on the aided schools to provide accommodation for the staged introduction of compulsory education in 1925, and became liable to compensate these schools for the income they previously received from fees. The cost of direct management of the aided schools was rejected as 'prohibitively high,' although the schools were perceived to be 'less costly but equally efficient' to those under public management.¹⁰⁹ The Commissioner's suggestion that the schools should receive full compensation in line with the existing rates of school fees was widely supported.¹¹⁰ Full compensation was around four or five times the 'ridiculously low' rate set out under the Educational Rules.¹¹¹ A mere two years later there was a call in the Corporation for a thorough re-investigation of educational policy with the aim 'to obtain maximum results with minimum expenditure.'¹¹² Direct management or the municipalisation of aided schools was increasingly popular, although recognised by both Congress and Justice parties to be financially impossible.¹¹³ Trade Union leader E.L. Iyer argued that:

Corporation schools are conducted better than the aided schools and if they spend more money, let them spend it; for it is in the interest of the Corporation to see that the boys of Madras get a decent education and not education which costs less and which does not really educate them at all in the end.¹¹⁴

By September 1930, the EEF was running a serious deficit because of full fee compensation, inhibiting the expansion of further educational provision.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Debates MLA 28/9/1920 p.24

¹⁰⁸ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1930-31 p.23

¹⁰⁹ MCA: Proceedings 14/5/1925 p.183-187

¹¹⁰ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1925, 8/5/1926 p.62, 7/9/1925 p.49, 8/5/1926 pp. 60, 63-69

¹¹¹ MCA: Proceedings 16/4/1926 p.20

¹¹² MCA: Proceedings 11/4 1927 p.9

¹¹³ MCA: Proceedings 11/4 1927, 16/4/1928, 23/9/1930

¹¹⁴ MCA: Proceedings 11/4/1927

¹¹⁵ MCA: Proceedings 23/9/1930

The alternative solution to the education funding crisis was to reject the initial principle in the Act that compulsory education should be free.¹¹⁶ From 1926 there was increasing support for the idea that managers of aided schools should be able to refuse the government subsidy and levy their own fees, re-creating a parallel private education system.¹¹⁷ This was supported by Labour leader and Justice V. Chakkarai Chettiar who stated that ‘Our business is only to see that the children of the city are educated’ and if ‘parents are prepared to pay for their children’s education’ then ‘what do we care if they do that so long as their children do not go without education?’¹¹⁸ As the extent of the financial burden became clear, support by the Justice Party and Congress Swaraj Party for the reintroduction of fees in private aided schools led to a refusal to pay compensation, in direct defiance of the MLC.¹¹⁹ These manoeuvrings ultimately prompted an Amendment to the Education Act allowing private school managers to charge fees within the compulsory area.¹²⁰ The debate within the MLC demonstrated the confused nature of state provision, allied with concern about the quality of education and the dependence on private aided schools for basic educational provision.¹²¹ There was continuing anger across the parties, but particularly in the Justice Party, that the government’s support for education was in principle only, and that the financial burden fell on local authorities.¹²² The final decision moved responsibility back to the parent, by amending the law so that aided schools could levy fees although municipal schools remained free, despite the recognition that this would cause variations in educational standards and favour the progress of the middle class rather than the poor.¹²³ The opposition of those who represented the poor, either Dalit leaders or the Provincial Labour Party, was drowned out by the practicalities of finance and the belief that parents should be allowed to choose.¹²⁴ Reducing the financial dependence of the aided schools also reduced the influence of the Local Authority over the education provided in them.

¹¹⁶ MCA: Proceedings 8/5/1926 p.52

¹¹⁷ MCA: Proceedings 8/5/1926 p.48

¹¹⁸ MCA: Proceedings 8/5/1926 p.49

¹¹⁹ MCA: Proceedings 8/5/1926 pp.50- 53, 11/4/1927, 26/8/1927

¹²⁰ TNSAL: MLA Debates 30/30/1931 pp.112-3

¹²¹ MCA: Proceedings 19/3/1931 p.33

¹²² TNSA: MLA Debates 30/3/1931 pp.116-8, 123, 120, 127-128

¹²³ TNSA: MLA Debates 30/3/1931 pp.119, 126

¹²⁴ MCA: Proceedings 24/7/1931 pp. 121, 124, 130,

The debates, in the MLC and in municipal bodies, reveal the widespread commitment by members of the political and administrative classes to the education of all children within the Presidency, with little consideration of party political boundaries. However, the continuing reluctance to provide sufficient funding, either through new tax revenues or a bigger proportion of provincial resources, demonstrates the extent to which children were forgotten when the state decided how to use its resources.¹²⁵ Idealistic support for compulsory education was more important as a claim to modernity for the elite, than as implemented reality. The commitment to free education was more contested, and by the 1930s the Madras Corporation had returned to a tiered funding system of private aided, municipal, and labour department schools. This further exacerbated existing educational divisions of class and caste, highlighting the centrality of wealth and family in educational opportunity. It also illustrated a continued acceptance of the rhetoric of parental choice.

Parental authority

The recognition that richer parents desired to contribute financially to ensure their child received a better quality of education revealed the multifaceted relationship between the state and family. Parents were recognised in the Educational Rules as a key site of authority in the child's life.¹²⁶ From the earliest debates it was agreed that compulsion should be introduced very gradually, for 'if there is any social custom that will create resentment it will be the punishing of parents for not sending their boys to school'.¹²⁷ After 1920 the approach remained consensual: 'persuasion in the first instance and compulsion by slow degrees' were required, using local agencies such as the DEC and village panchayat.¹²⁸ The aim was to provide 'inducements' to parents, while educating them to 'understand the value of education' so that parents 'look upon the education of their children as a paramount duty cast upon them.'¹²⁹ The

¹²⁵ Post independence: Kumari *Juvenile Justice System in India* p.41, AB Bose *The State of children in India: Promises to Keep* (New Delhi: Manhor, 2003) p.206

¹²⁶ IOR: V/27/860/97 Madras Educational Rules 1940 p.28

¹²⁷ TNSAL: MLA Debates 21/11/1919 p.185

¹²⁸ IOR: V/27/862/4, TNSA: GO1440 LE 28/11/1922: AP Patro 18/6/1922, Sir Ahamad Thamby Maricair 6/10/1922, GO 2070 LE 5/12/1925 Conjeeveram Council 30/9/1925

¹²⁹ TNSAL: MLA Debate 19/3/1923 pp .2598, 2600-1

terminology was consensual and persuasive, a recognition that non-attendance reflected a failure among the lower classes to understand the value of formal education in the context of their lives, particularly in rural communities.¹³⁰

The rhetoric of persuasion was reflected in the reluctance to legislate against the employment of children, in contrast to other Presidencies.¹³¹ While the penalty for neglecting to send a child to school was harsher than in other Presidencies, there was no corresponding penalty for ‘unlawful employment of child during prescribed school hours’.¹³² Free education recognised the impact on family finances of losing the child’s income. On the rare occasions that child labour was discussed, it was in terms of ignorance and want, not the morality of employing children. Parental decisions were framed in terms of poverty and ignorance, and the parent was still regarded as the ultimate authority in the child’s life, despite potentially damaging their life chances.¹³³ This reflects Sarada Balagopalan’s argument that earlier colonial schemes for education used a discourse of ‘liberal benevolence’ in respecting parental choice for their child’s continued participation in child labour. She posits that this is not evidence of actual parental preference; instead it reflects the perceptions of lower-class parenting among legislators.¹³⁴

Parental influence over religious education

When religious education was discussed the views of parents were regarded as of paramount importance. The British official overseeing the Education Act, L. Davidson, acknowledged that ‘the conscience clause’ was ‘one of the most thorny subjects relating to education’ and one which all the contemporaneous Acts in other parts of India had avoided, content to leave untouched the religious neutrality of Wood’s Educational Dispatch 1854.¹³⁵ Two clauses are of particular interest. Clause 49 ensured that if and when compulsion was introduced the Government would have

¹³⁰ BL MssEur E221/44 Hartog Evidence: Missionary Education Council of South India p.6

¹³¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Note 7/4/1919, JM Sen *History of Elementary Education in India*, (Calcutta: Book Company, 1933)

¹³² IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. Statement 7/4/1919: first conviction Rs 10, to max Rs 100 or imprisonment for third and subsequent convictions.

¹³³ TNSA: GO2070 LE 17/6/1922

¹³⁴ TNSAL: MLA Debate 29/3/1920 p.691. See also Balagopalan *Inhabiting Childhood*: Chapter 2

¹³⁵ TNSAL: MLA Debate 30/9/1920 p.90

‘some means of safeguarding the religious sentiments of parents.’ Parents were therefore protected from prosecution for not sending their child to a school of a different faith when there was no alternative in the area.¹³⁶ Clause 53 directly attempted to prevent proselytisation in missionary institutions. It provided for children who attended a government grant-aided school where ‘the children are required to be present during religious instruction based on the distinctive doctrine or creed of any particular religion, sect or denomination’.¹³⁷ If ‘not less than ten guardians’ wrote to the DEC to complain and there was no alternative educational provision in the area, then the children would be exempted from attending the religious education class. This was based on the assumption that an increase in school provision would negate ‘the necessity for such exemptions’.¹³⁸ N. Subba Rao, a Brahmin Congress lawyer, preferred a more radical approach, with the view that attendance at religious instruction should require ‘the consent of the guardian in writing,’ and schools that contravened this should have their government grants halved.¹³⁹ This amendment was supported by all but three of the Indians on the Advisory Council, but the British majority before dyarchy meant it lost by twenty votes to fourteen.

Two days were spent discussing the conscience clause when the Education Act reached the MLC in September of 1920. In the debates, parents were viewed as the ultimate conscience for the child and religious instruction was seen to potentially undermine the parents’ responsibility to teach the child their faith.¹⁴⁰ It was generally agreed that ‘religious and moral education must be in the hands of parents themselves’ and that teachers could only ‘by precept and example’ demonstrate ‘the right moral standard’.¹⁴¹ Religious instruction in school was therefore about ‘imparting proper culture’. The alternative fear was that children would become ‘Europeanised’ through secular education, which might encourage equality but would encourage a critical thinking about all religious traditions.¹⁴² Mirroring the Elementary Education Act

¹³⁶ TNSAL MLA Debate 29/3/1920

¹³⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. 9/6/1919

¹³⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. 16/4/1919

¹³⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 26/7/1920 p.8

¹⁴⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 30/9/1920

¹⁴¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 28/9/1920 p.78

¹⁴² IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 30/9/1920 pp.89, 1459-60

1870 (England and Wales), a written request for an exemption was agreed to be the best way of assuaging parental anxieties.¹⁴³ Concluding the debate, the President reiterated that ‘no child is given religious instruction if the parents of that child do not wish it’. He was also ‘perfectly clear that the basis of religious instruction which is given to any child must be given by the parent in his own home’ with school complementing this.¹⁴⁴ The home was posed as the most influential site of religious teaching and it was clear that the government was not going to question parental authority in matters of religion. This reflected a well-established colonial division between public and private spheres, and the reluctance of the colonial government to interfere in matters of religion and personal law. As suggested earlier, the conscience clause also facilitated the growth of emerging educational communities in which the child was increasingly defined by their religious identity. The state, often acting through civic agencies such as the DEC, had begun to claim a relationship directly with the child. However, in matters of religion and in compulsory school attendance, state representatives were extremely reluctant to challenge the authority of the family.

Conclusion

The Madras Elementary Education Act 1920 had widespread support from differing layers of political institutions across the Presidency. While change was often discursive rather than actual, the promotion of compulsory education by the political classes and state agencies meant that the school was increasingly regarded as the normative space of childhood. In the context of India in the 1920s this was in itself a radical demand. The numbers not in school remained significant, but the institutionalisation of the way children were imagined demonstrated new formalisations of the boundaries between childhood and adulthood. This meant that children outside of formal schooling were de-normalised in a much greater way than before. They were seen as transgressing increasingly popular universal norms of childhood needs and rights, which delegitimised other experiences of education within the home or workplace. Imagining the child in school contributed to a dominant construction of ‘the child’ as male, Hindu and of caste background. This was not

¹⁴³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 28/9/1920, 30/9/1920 p.87

¹⁴⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 30/9/1920

merely about the ‘unevenness’ of educational provision.¹⁴⁵ Rather, children outside this implicit normative definition were categorised into distinct educational communities, which reflected other social identities such as gender, caste and religion. Belonging to one of these marginalised educational communities often became a more significant indicator of childhood experience, opportunities and boundaries, than age or immaturity.

The assertion of state responsibility for the child contained within the Elementary Education Act was a claim to modernity; characterising the state as protector of the vulnerable over an explicit acknowledgement of the child as future citizen. Whilst the perceived ‘duty’ of the state to provide education was acknowledged, discharging this responsibility involved a variety of actors. This included the newly formed DEC, local and municipal councils, private aided schools, the Director of Public Instruction (DPI), the Education Department and the Labour Department. Each of these bodies claimed responsibility for the child; implicitly as ‘the state’ and by upholding the best interests of the child. At the same time, none wanted the responsibility of paying for education, or the unpopularity of increasing taxation to fund it. This contributed to what a contemporary journalist called the ‘miserable chaotic condition’ of elementary education.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, the desire to devolve tax collection to local bodies had a dual effect. It justified an ‘avuncular’ intervention as Indian and local, almost within the scope of the extended family. Yet parallel to this, decentralisation increased regional disparities and put the burden on the local taxpayer, blurring lines of accountability.¹⁴⁷ Despite an attempt by the Madras Corporation to enforce equality of schooling through free compulsory education, by the early 1930s this was revised so that parents could choose to pay school fees. State agencies were also reluctant to compel school attendance or question the authority of the family in matters of religion. Although the dyarchical state claimed a new relationship with the child, its interventionist potential was limited by continuing concern for the authority of the family, and the lack of political will to take financial responsibility.

¹⁴⁵ Balagopalan, *Inhabiting Childhood*

¹⁴⁶ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1925 p.233

¹⁴⁷ Chaudhary, ‘Land revenues, schools and literacy’

(Chapter Two) Educating the Child: the Introduction of Compulsory Education in Madras City

In Madras the 1920s and 1930s was the era when the child came to be identified primarily as a learner within the institution of the school. Chapter One has shown how the Madras Elementary Education Act 1920 encouraged the introduction of compulsory elementary education throughout the Presidency, and the discursive, administrative and financial implications of this. Taking Madras City as an example, this chapter focuses on a more local level, and the way compulsion was instigated and managed by the municipal Corporation of Madras. Compulsory schooling began in 1925 and formally ended in 1943 with the administrative chaos after the evacuation of the city under threat of Japanese invasion.¹ In 1924 approximately 35% of the schools in the city were directly managed by the Corporation. The rest were administered by aided agencies, both mission and non-mission, and by the provincial Government, under the broad oversight of the Corporation-led DEC.² By 1941, 53% of children (46,000) were educated in the Corporation's 140 elementary schools.³ While the aided schools thrived as testament to middle-class anxieties about new social opportunities for children, the Corporation schools witnessed the greatest expansion, by targeting the provision of basic literacy and numeracy to socially and economically deprived areas which had previously been ignored.

The Corporation was a largely autonomous space, inhabited by Indians of many different communities. It formed an arena where educated representatives could discuss the nature of education, and how to implement new provisions, in ways which were largely outside the control of the colonial state. There was an element of budgetary control, but even that was decided in the Madras Legislative Assembly, a largely devolved Indian body. The debates in the main Council were chaired by an annually elected President, or Mayor after 1933, who was assisted by the Commissioner, the administrator responsible for providing information and implementing decisions. Only controversial discussions reached the council, more

¹ MCA: Proceedings 4/6/1943 p4, TNSA: GO1437 LE 10/10/1942

² TNSA: GO2268 LE 9/12/1926

³ MCA: Proceedings 25/11/1941 p.9

mundane matters, such as decisions on where to build schools, remained within the Standing Committee (Education). The President/Mayor, always male, was a member of the Non-Brahmin Justice Party until 1935 when Abdul Hameed Khan became the first Muslim and first Congress Party Mayor (later joining the Muslim League in 1937). After 1935 there were a variety of appointments from Congress, Justice and non-party leaders including the botanist C. Tadulinga Mudaliar (1942-43) and merchant G. Janakiram Chetty (1941). The first Dalit mayor was Congressman J. Shivashanmugam Pillai (1937-38) and while female councillors were rare Mrs Ammu Swaminathan was Chair of the Education Committee for most of the 1930s. It was noticeable throughout the debates that while a number of individuals were particularly prominent – Congress leader Satyamurti, Labour leader C. Basudev and Trade Unionist V. Chakkarai Chettiar – their views, even on the introduction of Hindi, seem to reflect their personal opinions more than any party political position.

Focussing on the specific local example of Madras, this chapter considers the discursive implications of compulsory education, and the practicalities of implementation. In the Corporation debates, the ‘child’ was not merely a learner. Instead, children were granted a particular status as future citizens and adults-in-the-making. The chapter explores the ways in which education was linked to future democratic participation in the assumed new nation and to civic responsibilities within Madras City. This rhetoric surrounding the child as potential and as investment was counter-balanced by an increasing sense of duty to the child, couched in terms of a child’s ‘right’ to education which reflected Indian participation in global discourses of child-saving and rights. Tracing the balance between these, not always compatible, strands in the Corporation discussions reveals the enhanced focus by the end of the 1930s on the child’s agency and the ability of children to influence events and even Corporation policy.

A study of the enforcement of compulsory education reveals an additional set of concerns. Conceptions of children were as much revealed in, and formed by, the small-scale interactions between children, their parents, teachers and the local councillors in the Standing Committee (Education) as in the grander discursive claims

of the Provincial Assembly or main Corporation Proceedings. These exchanges, and particularly the details of the education offered, complicate the semi-parental role of the State and the idea of the child as learner. They reveal the perceived characteristics of childhood and the ways in which the councillors engaged with modern ideas of the child as intellectually malleable and physically vulnerable. However, the child was not only identified according to a universalised category that prioritised age and characteristics distinct from adulthood. Rather, as demonstrated in Chapter One, children shared a variety of social identities with adults, in educational communities defined by sex, religion and language. Furthermore, socio-economic deprivation became crucial in defining the experience and the identity of the child. This chapter will consider the ideas surrounding the compulsory education scheme and its implementation, alongside a discussion of who constituted a learner, what children should learn, and how difference – linguistic and religious – between children was constructed, challenged and enforced.

Introduction of compulsory education

The Draft Scheme of Free and Compulsory Education for Boys and Girls in the City of Madras was introduced on 28 March 1924 at a Special Meeting of the Corporation by ‘the Gokhale of this presidency’ T. Varadarajulu Naidu, Justice Party Chairman of the Education Committee.⁴ The scheme was initiated in response to the newly recognised ‘duty’ of the Corporation to impart elementary education to its citizens following the 1920 Education Act and the 1921 census, which revealed that ‘half the males and nearly five-sixths of the females’ failed to reach even basic literacy levels.⁵ The scheme was founded on ‘the now well-accepted principle of the civilised world, that no child should be allowed to grow in ignorance,’ combined with the principles of ‘our ancient law-givers’ such as the Hindu Dharma Shastra, and the example of the other provinces. The aim was to ensure children gained a ‘workable knowledge of the three Rs’ – reading, writing and arithmetic - in the vernacular and a civic education, allowing them to work more effectively and participate intelligently in civic and political life as adults.⁶ Varadarajulu Naidu ‘vigorously pleaded’ that ‘throughout the

⁴ MCA: Proceedings 31/5/1932 p.10

⁵ TNSA:GO951 LE 8/6/1925

⁶ TNSA: GO951 LE 8/6/1925 p.3

civilised world the education of children is a primary duty of the State and the local bodies.’ He ended with an appeal that compulsory schooling was not ‘an ideal’ but ‘a necessity’ which would affect ‘the whole of our future *as a nation*’.⁷ The measure was seconded by lawyer Dr S. Swaminathan who argued that the ‘opportunity to learn the three Rs’ was a ‘birth-right’ or ‘elementary right’ because ‘the boys and girls of today are the citizens of tomorrow.’⁸ Underpinning the introduction of compulsory education was a discourse on rights and the duty of the modern state to provide opportunities for the child, in the context of national development where the child is a future adult. This was used to demonstrate the progressive modernity of the state itself.

Based on the principle of ‘natural justice’, the Chairman demanded unanimous support for the Compulsory Education Scheme. The only objections from Councillors were based on practicalities, such as a lack of school accommodation, although there was some disquiet expressed at the notion of ‘compelling’ rather than ‘persuading’ parents.⁹ As in the MLC, but in contrast to the all-Indian position, the agreement in the Corporation was almost unanimous.¹⁰ There was widespread public support which meant that even when faced with severe financial difficulties in 1930, Councillors had to constantly reaffirm their commitment.¹¹ The councillors emphasised the intellectual heritage and global context of the scheme, which delivered education similar to that provided by the British, Japanese and the Philippines to enable ‘our motherland to take her rightful place among the nations.’¹² Madras’ position ‘in the civilizational stream’ was emphasised by a number of councillors, as was the link between compulsory education and ‘national development’.¹³ These underlying arguments, that the ‘modern’ or ‘civilised’ state had a duty to promote education for the benefit of the child, and particularly to ensure the status of India as a participant in the modern world, had implications for the value of the lives of children and children’s claims upon the resources of the municipality. It is important that this assertion of participation in

⁷ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.477, 482, Short Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.143

⁸ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.477

⁹ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 pp.492-4

¹⁰ Rao ‘Compulsory Education’ p.175

¹¹ MCA: Proceedings 20/5/1930

¹² MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 pp. 476, 488

¹³ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 pp. 488, 491, 495

global modernity underpinned the support for this decision, despite the Councillors not participating at the level of national or provincial government.

Compulsory education was to be introduced gradually over seven years through a plan agreed by the provincial Education Department, Madras DEC and the Corporation starting with three divisions in 1925-26, and gradually extending by about three divisions per year until 1931-32.¹⁴ The plan included provision for a further 20,810 children, including 8,560 boys, and 12,250 non-Muslim girls.¹⁵ It was financed through a separate EEF funded by an Education Tax of 0.25% on the annual value of property, introduced from April 1925 and applied across the municipality.¹⁶ The Corporation would then contribute a sum of Rs 2,40,000 from the General Revenues, with the Government of Madras funding an equivalent amount under the Education Act 1920, Section 48. In exchange, Property Tax was to be reduced by 1.5% meaning that funding for slum improvement and other social investments was to be sacrificed for the sake of education.¹⁷ While the journalist K. Vyasa Rao warned that the scheme had been costed only for one year, and G.A. Natesan of the Indian Liberal Party advocated a more gradual approach, the vast majority of Councillors supported the Justice Dr C. Natesan who stated that 'the Corporation should be prepared to spend any amount on education'.¹⁸ A more detailed discussion of the funding implications for compulsory education can be found in Chapter One.

Discourses of the child in education

The rhetoric surrounding compulsion reveals contemporary views of the child. In her ground-breaking work, Balakrishnan argues that the narrative of children as the citizens of tomorrow became important in the post-Partition world of internment camps and national identity. It then became the focus of state investment in the 1950s under Nehru, but had limited importance in the pre-independence period.¹⁹ The evidence from the Madras Presidency demonstrates that this process began much

¹⁴ TNSA: GO951 LE 8/6/1925. Divisions are local authority wards/areas.

¹⁵ TNSA: GO951 LE 8/6/1925. Letter 15/4/1925

¹⁶ MCA: Proceedings 3/2/1925

¹⁷ MCA: Proceedings 20/1/1925 p13; TNSA: GO951 LE 8/6/1925

¹⁸ MCA: Proceedings 20/1/1925 p.14

¹⁹ Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away*: p.14

earlier, and was related to the participation of Indians in municipal and provincial government, rather than the independence struggle. From the 1920s the discussions regarding education revealed a changing relationship between the child and the state and a clear preparation for political representation. The close relationship between democratic participation and education was demonstrated at all-India level in the decision of the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission), whose primary focus was constitutional reform, to include an Auxiliary Report on Education (Hartog Commission) in 1929.²⁰ Likewise, when Dr S. Swaminathan supported the introduction of compulsion in Madras, he did so explicitly on the basis that ‘the boys and girls of today are the citizens of tomorrow’ who are ‘entrusted to our care’.²¹ Initially, the primary focus was the civic participation of the future citizens of Madras; ‘proper education’ for children being important for ‘the advancement of the city.’²² This was to maintain Madras as a ‘pioneer’ ‘ahead of many other cities in India’ and preserve the ‘splendid lead’ set by the Presidency-wide Elementary Education Act in 1920.²³ Again, Justice Dr C. Natesan expressed this in terms of the ‘birth right of every civilised child’, of ‘fighting for rights’ but also as consciously in the ‘eye of the civilised world and in the eye of the brother Corporations’.²⁴ It was not just the ‘future strength of the nation’ that was at stake, but it was also argued that ‘primary education is essential for carrying on our civic life’.²⁵ The investment in education was explicitly intended to reduce the budget requirements in other areas, and increase the efficiency of both public health and sanitation measures.²⁶ Compulsory education was going to modernise India for independence, and invest in civic life by disciplining the future citizens.

It was constantly repeated that the Corporation was responsible for ‘educating the mind of the child of today and making him the citizen of tomorrow’.²⁷ Particularly after 1935 with the increased franchise in the Government of India Act, the debates reflected

²⁰ BL: V12547

²¹ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.477

²² MCA: Proceedings 18/3/1935 pp. 19, 20

²³ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p. 482,485; 17/2/1931 p.25; 3/3/1931 p.27

²⁴ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.490, 485

²⁵ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.499

²⁶ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.484

²⁷ MCA: Proceedings 27/9/1938 p.23

concern for children as future ‘self-respecting citizens’ who would ‘build the future nation’.²⁸ This was directly linked to democratic participation: ‘they are the future voters of the city. We must literate them in order that they may exercise the franchise properly when they grow up.’²⁹ The focus on the ‘nation’ was reflected in the 1936 Congress resolution to hang a portrait of Gandhi ‘in a conspicuous place’ in all educational institutions to encourage the ‘moral elevation and mental enlargement’ of ‘our future citizens’.³⁰ This received support across the chamber and was intended to ‘develop in growing children patriotism and other moral virtues. They will thereby become valuable citizens and enhance the country’s position and prestige.’³¹

The focus on the nation was not linked to a specific party, or to a particular definition of ‘the nation’. Even despite the budgetary constraints of war, it was argued that elementary education for the ‘citizens of tomorrow’ should not be impacted.³² The content of Corporation textbooks was to ‘imbibe’ in children the ideals that would ‘enable’ them to become ‘proper, honest and good citizens’, and instil the correct social positioning of ‘nationalism, patriotism, manhood and womanhood’.³³ These discourses emphasised the intellectual plasticity of the child, demonstrating the influence of teachers and adults in authority. However, Mrs Ammu Swaminathan opposed the production of standard textbooks across Corporation schools, arguing that textbooks should change around every three years to retain the interest of both teachers and pupils.³⁴ She emphasised a threefold approach to textbooks: ‘from the point of view of the children being poor, the point of view that the children are going to be our future citizens and the point of view of making education interesting for children.’³⁵ Coming from the most influential member of the Corporation concerning education, this conception of children was critical: it acknowledged the children’s socio-economic circumstances as affecting educational opportunity, engaged with the idea of the child as an adult-in-the-making, but also considered the child actively engaging

²⁸ MCA: Proceedings 19/11/1935 p.60

²⁹ MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1938 p.6

³⁰ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1936 p.36

³¹ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1936 p.37

³² MCA: Proceedings 8/12/1942 p.12

³³ MCA: Proceedings 7/7/1937 pp.24, 32

³⁴ MCA: Proceedings 7/7/1937 p.27-28

³⁵ MCA: Proceedings 7/7/1937 p.26

with the content of education. By 1937 the nationalist message for the future citizen was paired with a greater engagement with the child as learner and a desire to capture their interest on their own terms.

Agency

The awareness that textbooks were read by children whose interest needed to be engaged paralleled a greater acknowledgement of the child as a political actor by Councillors.³⁶ By the mid 1930s rather than merely the ‘children of the citizens of Madras’, the child was considered in terms of its actions and reactions to education. There was concern across political parties that teachers had become more important than their pupils, and the 1938 discussions surrounding staff poverty focussed on the impact on the child learner.³⁷ Those supporting the teachers also recognised the limitations of their transformative power, emphasising that teachers ‘Take the material that is submitted to them. They cannot perform magic. They cannot transform individuals who have not had any intellectual training into first-rate personages.’³⁸ While the tone itself might be despairing, the debate showed a new recognition that children themselves, with different experiences and aptitudes, were the objects of the teacher’s care and could affect the educational process.

By 1939 there were many actors involved in the educational debates, a point underlined by a row over the Congress idea to rejuvenate the teaching profession through the periodical transfer of staff between schools.³⁹ The move was widely opposed by the public and interested groups such as the Parents Association and Corporation Teachers Association. Labour leader, C. Basudev, in tones which reflected bitterness at the hegemonic claims to representation made by the Congress party, sarcastically commented ‘our Congress colleagues are the custodians of everything and represent everybody – the expert, the parent, the child and the teacher.’⁴⁰ He then went on to argue:

³⁶ MCA: Proceedings 19/11/1935 p.52

³⁷ MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1938 pp.17, 19, 30/2/1938 p.50-57

³⁸ MCA: Proceedings 13/12/1935 p.61

³⁹ MCA: Proceedings 24/1/1939 p.32

⁴⁰ MCA: Proceedings 24/1/1939 p.32

Mr Satyamurti [Mayor] may say that if the children come and say that they do not want the transfer of teachers he will drop it. The Premier said that if the pupils come and say that they are not going to study Hindi he would drop it. Mr Satyamurti will not accept expert advice, but may hear the child; let them wait on him in a deputation.

Another councillor claimed support for his own viewpoint by suggesting that ‘if probably the children are asked, they will also say so’.⁴¹ In a later discussion regarding school attendance, Basudev contended that policy could be changed if the Justice Party led ‘a deputation of children’.⁴² These comments, which contain a hint of adult alarm, suggested that the politically active child could claim attention and precedence over the expertise of politicians and professionals because of their juvenile status. Successful education was increasingly perceived to be ‘a good and abiding contract...between the teacher, the pupil and the parent.’⁴³

The child was now counted as one of the interested stakeholders in education. When a new school was debated in November 1939 Councillor N. Rajagopalan proffered that ‘every child who wants to learn in the Corporation school must be admitted’.⁴⁴ This highlighted the decision of the child to go to school, rather than parental direction. This was supported by G. Rajamannar Chetty when he suggested including Rs 2,000 in the budget for prizes as ‘an incentive to poor pupils to attend school regularly’, contrasting with earlier incentive schemes aimed at parents.⁴⁵ In a debate in November 1939 concerning school buildings, the Commissioner argued that all actions were carried out ‘in the best interests of the children and the best interests of the city’.⁴⁶ Within the Council, the ways in which the child was constructed changed over time. In the 1920s the child was imagined as a future citizen with civic responsibilities; by the 1930s there was an increased awareness of the child participating in the democratic process as an adult. Initial intervention in the compulsory education scheme was couched in terms of ‘rights’ but this appears to have been primarily a discursive claim

⁴¹ MCA: Proceedings 24/1/1939 p.36

⁴² MCA: Proceedings 24/1/1939 p.35

⁴³ MCA: Proceedings 24/1/1939 p.35, 28/10/1942 p.9

⁴⁴ MCA: Proceedings 29/11/1939 p.16

⁴⁵ MCA: Proceedings 29/11/1939 p.30, 25/2/1931 p.3

⁴⁶ MCA: Proceedings 14/11/1939 pp.42-43

to modernity. By the end of the period there was much greater engagement with children themselves as ‘being’, and a demonstrable concern for children separately from their status as future citizens.

The implementation of compulsory education

In education, as the reforms to juvenile justice considered in Chapters Five and Six, there was a noticeable disjunction between the rhetoric and the reality. Even the initial scheme was recognised as ‘a pious resolution’ rather than a well-considered financial proposal.⁴⁷ The initial scheme, which encompassed three divisions within the city, was extended in 1926 to a further three, specifically because they were among the poorest and most educationally deprived areas.⁴⁸ Following the perceived success of this, the staged seven year plan was abandoned and compulsion was immediately extended across the city. However, this had limited effect on school attendance figures, widely recognised as due to a ‘want of funds’.⁴⁹ The 1928-29 budget thus suggested an EEF of Rs 9,23,000, comprised of a grant from the Corporation General Revenues budget, and a Corporation Education Tax increase to 1.5% to bring in Rs 2,36,330 which the Presidency Government then matched.⁵⁰ This funding covered 74 new schools (a still pitifully inadequate number) and compensation to aided schools for loss of fees, but included a reduction in teachers’ salaries. By 1930 the Fund was running into real financial difficulties. This reflected the decision to pay fee level compensation (as discussed in the previous chapter). The rapid rate of expansion also played a role; in September 1927 there were 632 teachers and 20,129 pupils, by May 1930 the figures were 724 and 21,972 respectively, with the number of teachers increasing disproportionately.⁵¹ While around 12,000 children had still to be provided for, the shortage of funds was causing serious concern and spending was forecasted to rise to 9.65 lakhs in 1930-31.⁵²

⁴⁷ TNSA: GO951 LE 8/6/1925, Letter 23/8/1924

⁴⁸ TNSA: GO2268 LE 9/12/1926

⁴⁹ MCA: Proceedings 5/5/1937 p.27

⁵⁰ MCA: Proceedings 16/4/1928

⁵¹ MCA: Proceedings 20/5/1930

⁵² MCA: Proceedings 20/5/1930

The discussion born from this funding shortfall provided a model for almost all debates surrounding the EEF budget in the 1930s. It simultaneously included serious concerns (from all political parties) about the extent of the financial burden, a desire for efficient spending and reluctance to raise taxation, while reiterating a personal commitment to literacy for all children. In 1931-32, the Education Tax was raised from 1.25% to 2.5% on the annual value of property, accompanied by a corresponding reduction in Property Tax. This meant that a greater proportion of the Corporation budget for 1931-32 went to Education, but taxpayers were unaffected.⁵³ Neither the Congress nor Justice party were prepared to raise taxes, despite repeated urgings by the Labour and Dalit representatives.⁵⁴ By 1939 long-standing Justice T.R. Kothandarama Mudaliar acknowledged that compulsion was 'a fiction' and that councillors 'delude ourselves' into thinking that they were 'doing our duty by the children of the City'.⁵⁵ This attitude underlined the entire history of compulsion until it was suspended in 1943. There were multiple commitments and extended speeches but consistent underfunding and endless budget decisions that were never implemented.⁵⁶ Similar to the Madras Children Act 1920 discussed in Chapters Five and Six, the desire to be perceived to be as modern and 'civilised' was not underpinned by a commitment strong enough to incur the political hazards of raising taxation.⁵⁷

Lack of space within schools, both in terms of a shortage of school buildings in specific areas and within existing schools, was a significant obstacle to expanding compulsion. The 1931 census recorded 10,000-15,000 children still not in school.⁵⁸ It was clear that there was insufficient space to house all eligible children and new building programmes, such as the one in 1938-39, were woefully underfunded.⁵⁹ By 1933 it was admitted that 'we cannot provide sufficient accommodation.'⁶⁰ The schools which did exist were described as 'appalling' and 'excessively overcrowded', and the

⁵³ MCA: Proceedings 17/2/1931 p.24

⁵⁴ MCA: Proceedings 9/12/1936 pp. 38-39, 31/3/1937 pp.96-97, 17/3/1938 p.11

⁵⁵ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 p.11

⁵⁶ MCA: Proceedings 29/7/1934, 23/2/1939, 18/11/1939, 3/2/1941

⁵⁷ MCA: Proceedings 27/9/1938 p.15

⁵⁸ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1933 p.27

⁵⁹ MCA: Proceedings 24/8/1926 p.48

⁶⁰ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1933, 29/3/1933, 9/12/1936, 17/3/1938 p.11, 15, 29/7/1941 pp.23-33

Corporation cattleyards were alleged to ‘be in a better sanitary condition’.⁶¹ Some were even acknowledged by the Chairman of the Education Committee to be ‘fit objects to be investigated by the Society for the Protection of Children’.⁶² Parents were blamed for the non-attendance of their children, concealing the Corporations’ inadequate provision of places.⁶³ Once again, the claim to a modern understanding of the relationship between the state, child and the family took precedence over implementing facilities and funding to put this claim into practice.

Enforcing compulsion

In addition to providing school accommodation, the Corporation had to enforce attendance. To this end, compulsory education was free (see Chapter one). Central to compulsory education was the new understanding that the child was principally a learner, defined by intellectual malleability, and the normative place for a child to be found was institutionalised within a school. The DEC highlighted in 1925 the need to ‘educate public opinion’ about the value of formal schooling and to persuade children to attend school with ‘the minimum of inconvenience to their parents’.⁶⁴ Enforcement was generally carried out by Corporation schoolteachers who were required to compose registers of children, which were moderated by the local Medical Registrars and Superintendent of schools.⁶⁵ Teachers were encouraged to use every Saturday morning to provide progress reports to parents and ‘to persuade other parents to send their children to school.’⁶⁶ The schoolteacher was used as the local embodiment of the interventionist state and as a symbol of a new Indian modernity able to penetrate within the family setting.

When persuasion by teachers failed, an Attendance Committee was to enforce the attendance of those already enrolled in schools. It had a secondary aim of expanding educational provision to those who had no previous contact with the school system.⁶⁷

⁶¹ MCA: Proceedings 13/10/1924 p.336

⁶² MCA: Proceedings 7/9/1926 p.50

⁶³ MCA: Proceedings 29/11/1939 p.22, 25

⁶⁴ MCA: Proceedings 14/5/1925 pp.183-44

⁶⁵ MCA: Proceedings 22/7/1925 p.352

⁶⁶ TNSA GO2268 LE 9/12/1926 Scheme for the Extension of Free and Compulsory Education p.4

⁶⁷ MCA: Proceedings 25/11/1925 p.352

Each municipal division had an Attendance Committee of fifteen ‘local men and women of light and leading...public-spirited persons to shoulder the responsibility’ who had the power to prosecute ‘defaulting parents’ whose children were enrolled but consistently failed to attend.⁶⁸ Yet while this delegated power to civil society bodies to intervene in the family, there were firm regulations for the conduct of meetings, and 75% of members had to be present before a decision for prosecution.⁶⁹ Three Attendance Officers were also employed by the Corporation in 1929.⁷⁰ This was contested by Congressman Satyamurthi, who argued that compulsion should be enforced ‘gently’, through ‘talking’ and only ‘through an honorary agency’ in contrast to ‘officers who will drive in motors or cycles [who] will frighten the people out of their wits.’⁷¹ The role of the unpaid voluntary agencies, rather than state personnel, in making state intervention appear more acceptable was not discussed further in the educational context. It mirrored the role of honorary agencies and civil society bodies as avuncular citizens implementing juvenile justice provisions as seen in Chapter Six. The exceptions were the *pial* schools, and parents were to be prosecuted if their children attended a school not in receipt of government funding, and therefore not subject to the Madras Educational Rules.⁷² Given the shortage of school accommodation, this re-emphasised the hierarchy of educational establishments. It also highlighted hierarchies of curriculum and a perceived commitment to the assumed modernity of state-controlled institutions.⁷³ Ultimately, a system was established which claimed the power to intervene, but in reality meant that there was little chance it would be enforced, demonstrating an underlying reluctance to contest parental authority.

A number of interventionist schemes were initiated to encourage parents to send their children to school. This included the Midday Meals Scheme discussed at length in Chapter Four. V.G. Vasudeva Pillai ‘the champion of the Depressed Classes’ moved the radical solution that compensation should be awarded to parents. He reasoned that

⁶⁸ TNSA:GO1951 LE 8/6/1925; GO2268 LE 9/12/1926, MCA: Proceedings 22/7/1925

⁶⁹ MCA: Proceedings 30/10/1930 Attendance Committee Rules

⁷⁰ MCA: Proceedings date missing 1929

⁷¹ MCA: Proceedings *ibid*

⁷² TNSA: GO1951 LE 8/6/1925

⁷³ Crook (ed.) *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*

‘they are deprived of the earnings of their children, which have hitherto been a source of income contributing to the comforts of the poverty-stricken family.’⁷⁴ Justifying the scheme on the basis that it was ‘in vogue in London and other places,’ he argued that compulsory education should not be ‘at the expense’ of the poor, whose children were ‘all wage earners’.⁷⁵ This radical idea was supported by the Muslim representative, Abdul Hameed Khan, but defeated on the basis of cost. The legislation itself provided exemptions, allowing attendance at a part-time school if ‘the child’s earnings’ were ‘absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the family’.⁷⁶ Two clear strands characterised the debates. The first was a recognition that, despite the lack of legislation explicitly banning Child Labour in the Madras Presidency, work by children as young as eleven years in *beedi* factories, coffee hotels and theatres was ‘against all canons of humanity’.⁷⁷ The participation of children in paid work highlighted that children were ‘not viewed as a long-term investment as future adults, but rather as an immediate contributor to a group income’.⁷⁸ These arguments about the economic innocence of children reflected the self-positioning of the educated middle classes as modern, in contrast to the backward and traditional family. The second, equally prominent, strand was the widespread support for the authority of that family, the focus on persuasion, and sympathy for the reliance of poor families on children’s wages for survival.⁷⁹

The child in school

To enforce compulsion the education provided within the schools had to be useful and relevant to the lives of children. This in turn provides an indication of how the child was constructed as a learner. The content of education was discussed within the Education Committee, but occasionally interrupted into the main business of the Corporation. Vocational education was perceived to be an antidote to the oft-mentioned fear that children were ‘overburdened’ or ‘over-worked and over-taught’.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ MCA: Proceedings 25/2/1931 p.3

⁷⁵ MCA: Proceedings 25/2/1931 p.3

⁷⁶ TNSA: GO 2268 LE 9/12/1926

⁷⁷ MCA: Proceedings 13/11/1931 p.4, BL: Sen *History of Elementary*

⁷⁸ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1933 p.29

⁷⁹ MCA: Proceedings 13/11/1931, 1/12/1931 p.25

⁸⁰ MCA: Proceedings 18/10/1932; 4/7/1933 pp.42-3

It received extensive attention within educational circles as more reflective of the learning needs of the child, reflecting the new global interest in progressive pedagogy (see Chapter Three).⁸¹ In 1927 vocational courses were established in a number of Corporation schools. They predominantly covered weaving or net weaving, but also included lace making, brickmaking, carpentry, and embroidery.⁸² According to N. Sankaran, who claimed authority as a 'humble pedagogue', this would give the children 'a chance to improve their thinking power' and would 'help to form the habit of hard work which is good for our children'.⁸³

Ideas surrounding vocational education reflected India's heritage of 'craftsmen' and new pedagogical theories, but was also a functional approach to education driven by social class.⁸⁴ Swaraj politician Bakthavathsulu Naidu maintained that 'vocational training is absolutely necessary for the children of the labouring classes' who were affirmed as the key focus of Corporation schools.⁸⁵ Children were to be given training in their parents' occupation, which was seen to give them the opportunity to 'eke out a livelihood' and 'cultivate their aptitudes'.⁸⁶ As a minimum, the skills learned might provide a 'supplementary vocation' specifically for poor boys.⁸⁷ There was some opposition to vocational education, primarily because it was considered a waste of limited resources better spent in improving literacy. It was perceived to have limited pedagogic or economic value too, given that the real expertise in these areas lay at home.⁸⁸ Compulsory teaching of a skill in schools therefore helped to enforce the primacy of institutional learning, even when other forms of instruction were more effective. The education provided curtailed the personal ambitions of the children, and they were instead educated as future adult citizens to maintain their place in the social hierarchy. This endorses Balagopalan's view that vocational education was used as a

⁸¹ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1931

⁸² MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1927

⁸³ MCA: Proceedings 31/3/1937 p.114; 1/12/1931

⁸⁴ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1927

⁸⁵ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1927

⁸⁶ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1927

⁸⁷ MCA: Proceedings 3/8/1928

⁸⁸ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1927

means of limiting the aspiration of the lower classes, whilst disciplining them into a new relationship with the state as citizens.⁸⁹

Gandhi's Wardha Scheme of Basic Education was introduced in six boys' and six girls' schools as a pilot vocational education scheme. Coinciding with the dominance of the Congress party in the Corporation, it was intended to bring 'at least some measure of justice to the children of the poorer section of the city'.⁹⁰ However, the stated aim was 'to make the schools economic and self-sufficient' and explicitly 'to see that the child pays for its education out of its own labour' by 'marketing the products manufactured by pupils'. The Scheme caused outrage across the chamber, as:

A modern form of child labour.... We must not make the child feel the responsibility of maintaining itself and pay for its education at least til the age of 10. It is too early an age to ask the child to shoulder the responsibility that you now seek to impose on it. I would rather have the child devote itself to reading its books and not to be worried over anything. It is in that way alone that we can make the child realise the responsibilities of life in adult days.⁹¹

This received widespread support, and Justice T.R. Kothandarama Mudaliar opposed the 'unhealthy doctrine' of implying that children 'are to be sweated for finding the salary of the masters'. He compared it to 'the child labour that we condemn in industries'.⁹² In 1939, he reemphasised this when, supported by fellow Justice M. Damodaram Naidu, he argued that Madras was already a global pioneer in vocational education, but that the Wardha Scheme was merely producing unskilled labourers.⁹³ Two visions of childhood emerge here. One, associated predominantly with Wardha and the Congress party, explicitly linked vocational education to disciplining the lower classes into citizenship, hoping to recover some of the costs of education. The other, expressed by a wider range of political opinions, envisioned the child as economically innocent, physically vulnerable, and clearly distinct from adults. Yet while the latter group claimed a modern understanding of 'the child', envisaging the child primarily as a learner in school and distancing themselves from non-modern ideas such as child labour, the symbolic impact of these ideas appears more important than a commitment

⁸⁹ Balagopalan, 'Constructing Indigenous childhoods:'

⁹⁰ MCA: Proceedings 5/5/1937, 17/3/1938 p.13

⁹¹ MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1938 p.10

⁹² MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1938 pp.10-13

⁹³ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 pp.17, 12

to implementing them.

The child in school received not only ‘mental training’, but was in a site of physical safety, where the Corporation could effectuate their ‘increasing burden of responsibility for the physical health, nourishment and protection of children’.⁹⁴ Physical weakness, specified in detail, was a convincing reason for exemption from compulsion (Clause 50).⁹⁵ The physical vulnerability of the child was a frequent source of anxiety to councillors, and compulsion was introduced on the understanding that a school would be provided within half a mile of every home ‘in view of the traffic in the city’.⁹⁶ In the Act itself, Clause 45 demanded that schools would be provided within a one mile radius of home, after extensive discussion ‘of the possible hardship involved by compelling young children’ to walk so far.⁹⁷ Concern for the child was evidenced because ‘it is rather too much upon the young children’ and was described in terms of ‘cruelty’, ‘trouble’ and ‘hardship’.⁹⁸ Later proposals to amalgamate schools, especially at the higher standards (V-VII), were designed to improve educational efficiency by sharing teachers and resources.⁹⁹ The plans were fiercely criticised, not only because of the diverse educational needs of the different linguistic and religious communities. A major concern was that making the children travel further to school would discourage attendance, because the traffic would threaten the physical safety of the children.¹⁰⁰ One potential solution was to extend the number of ‘conductors’ who transported boys safely from home to school from the current 60 schools to 91.¹⁰¹ The proposal received extensive support across the Corporation based on the perceived vulnerability, and possible stupidity, of children in congested streets. The question of who was responsible was disputed. Justicite K. Sreeramulu Naidu wondered ‘Have they not any God fathers in this Council?’ a significant allusion to the way in which Councillors perceived their own relationship with the city’s

⁹⁴ MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1928 p.2

⁹⁵ TNSA: GO1951 LE 8/6/1925 p.5

⁹⁶ TNSA: GO951 LE 8/6/1925 Letter 15/4/1925, GO2268 LE 9/12/1926 Letter DPI 15/10/1924

⁹⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 28/9/1920, Select Committee 21/7/1920 p.69

⁹⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1592, File 2941. MLC Debate 28/9/1920 p68-69; Select Committee 21/7/1920

⁹⁹ MCA: Proceedings 7/9/1931 p.35

¹⁰⁰ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1935 p.43

¹⁰¹ MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931 p.38

children.¹⁰² Fellow Justicite M. Sundaram Naidu, by contrast, opined ‘it is the duty of the parents of these children to see that they are sent safely to their schools’.¹⁰³ Despite concern for the safety of children, and an increasing recognition that it was the avuncular duty of the ‘godfathers’ of the Corporation to protect them, no one was prepared to pay for it.¹⁰⁴

Identity and education

Biological age, physical vulnerability and intellectual immaturity were becoming important distinguishing features of childhood during the 1920s and 1930s. However, childhood was not the only signifier of identity or even the most important for many children. Chapter One has indicated the ways in which children were perceived to belong to educational communities, defined according to gender, religion and caste, and the legislative and administrative implications of this at Presidency level. Looking at the smaller scale of the Corporation, we can assess the ways in which children were perceived and how this influenced their educational opportunities through three examples of particular controversy: Muslim education, language politics, and poverty. This unpicks the tensions underlying new discursive claims to universal childhood and to a new nation of India, and the realities of implementation.

A Special Meeting of the Corporation agreed that when compulsory education was introduced, Muslim girls would be exempted. This responded to widespread protests by the Muslim community that the secular education of girls was against ecclesiastical law (*Sharia*).¹⁰⁵ The debate mirrored wider concerns about Muslim education, reflecting the different definitions of what constituted a child (see Chapter One). Separate provision was underpinned by two parallel arguments, that the Muslim child has distinct pedagogical needs, and that separate schooling was required as a form of positive discrimination towards a particularly disadvantaged community.¹⁰⁶ The exemption was temporary while the Muslim councillors sought to re-assure Muslim

¹⁰² MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931 p.39

¹⁰³ MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931 p.38

¹⁰⁴ MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931 pp. 21-23, 38-42, 19/9/1935 p.43

¹⁰⁵ MCA: Proceedings 27/1/1925, 31/12/1924, TNSA: GO951 LE 8/6/1925 Letter 27/9/1925

¹⁰⁶ Seth, *Subject Lessons*: NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Reports, Quinquennial Reports

opinion.¹⁰⁷ Significantly, during the extensive discussion the suggestion that this question could only be decided by Muslim councillors was widely accepted.¹⁰⁸ The assumption that separate schools were necessary for Muslims was opposed in 1928 by Communist Party leader M. Singaravelu Chettiar, who worried that:

We do not know what will become of India if we introduce communalism in our schools by establishing separate schools for Anglo-Indians, for Mohammadans, for Sikhs...the Sympathy of our comrade Mrs Angelo will be better shown in asking for more schools for all children in the city of Madras, irrespective of religion, caste or creed. After all, who are these so called Anglo-Indians, Hindus and Muslims? They do not belong to different races. They are all born in India and have to die in India.¹⁰⁹

This radical, if somewhat belated, call for the education of the Indian child based on 'national progress and for early attainment of swaraj' fell on deaf ears. Muslim lawyer and philanthropist Basheer Ahmed Sayeed, supported by Justice Party's Dr C. Natesan, reaffirmed his belief that the Muslims were 'still lagging behind' in education and wanted to 'preserve a civilisation and culture of their own'. This was accepted as one of the 'stern realities of Indian life'.¹¹⁰ Yet while in 1931 Congressman Satyamurti contended that education for Muslims was the key to 'removing communal misunderstandings', the continued underfunding of Muslim schools revealed scepticism from the Muslim Community about the commitment of Congress or Justice Parties 'to translate that interest into action'.¹¹¹ Communal tensions heightened during the 1930s, and there was further condemnation in 1938 of the 'serious consequences' of communal education. The latter was seen to 'perpetually isolate children of the community' and 'divide the country into various groups' undermining the production of the new nation.¹¹² In practice, education remained segregated on communal lines.¹¹³ However, the complicated realities of the paternalistic state's claim that it was responsible for all children meant that in practice 'Muslim boys' were increasingly set against the definition of a 'normal boy'.

¹⁰⁷ MCA: Proceedings 27/1/1925 pp.21, 22

¹⁰⁸ MCA: Proceedings 27/1/1925 pp.19-22

¹⁰⁹ MCA: Proceedings 4/8/1928

¹¹⁰ MCA: Proceedings 4/8/1928

¹¹¹ MCA: Proceedings 19/3/1931 pp.21, 24

¹¹² MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1938 pp.2-22

¹¹³ MCA: Proceedings 6/10/1938 p.14

The extensive historiography of institutional education for girls holds little relevance for elementary schooling.¹¹⁴ There was very little engagement with female schooling by the councillors, other than a concern that male teachers did not have sufficient technical skills in music, *kolattam* dance and needlework and a fear of co-education.¹¹⁵ More significant in the context of Corporation politics has been the work of historians such as Urvashi Butalia, whose work on partition demonstrated the ways in which women embodied the honour and purity of the community.¹¹⁶ The Muslim community's initial reluctance to sanction education for girls demonstrated this link between gender, physical vulnerability and honour. The most frequent and voluble controversy centred on the Corporation's agreement to pay for bullock carts and conductresses in order to maintain purdah restrictions for Muslim girls while travelling to school.¹¹⁷ The 1931-32 budget, for example, provided Rs 5,000 for conveyance charges for Muslim girls, although the schools themselves were agreed to be 'simply hopeless'.¹¹⁸ The carts regularly contained ten to fifteen girls and there were frequent accounts of injury because of overcrowding.¹¹⁹ The lack of carts meant that:

After school is closed, girls have to remain until 7 in the evening before the late batch can leave and reach their homes at 8pm. On account of this, little children are subjected not only to great inconvenience but to a risk to their lives also sometimes, and this meant that children went without proper meal times.¹²⁰

In response to this 'cruelty' the councillors suggested buying a number of Ford Pleasure cars, but there was no provision in the budget. Similarly, in 1937 there were reports of girls spending twelve hours a day at school and travelling, and of the occasional girl falling from overcrowded carts: they received sympathy, but certainly no more funding.¹²¹

¹¹⁴Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Preeti, 'The transformation of Schooling in Colonial Punjab, 1854-1900' in Rao, *New Perspectives*, Raman, *Getting girls to school*

¹¹⁵ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1931 p.19, 30/1/1938 p.7

¹¹⁶ Butalia, *The other side of silence*

¹¹⁷ MCA: Proceedings 16/4/1929

¹¹⁸ MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931 p.47

¹¹⁹ MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931 pp.46-49, 12/2/1932 pp.26-29

¹²⁰ MCA: Proceedings 12/2/1932 p.29

¹²¹ MCA: Proceedings 31/3/1937 pp.109-112

A 1939 suggestion by the Education Committee to provide buses to transport Muslim girls was again defeated through lack of funds.¹²² In response, the committee appealed for donations by ‘people who are interested in educating the Muslim girls’.¹²³ This was firmly resisted by trade unionist Albert Jesudasan who argued that ‘Muslims are also citizens of Madras; they are also paying taxes’ and as such had ‘rights’ to education. This point was agreed with by K. Muhammed Ibrahim, who feared the ‘invidious distinction between the education that is imparted to Muslim children and that of the children belonging to other communities.’¹²⁴ An earlier attempt, by the Labour leader S. Parthasarathy, to provide conveyance for all girls regardless of community was rejected on the basis of cost and the religious necessity of purdah.¹²⁵ However, it appears to have been used to highlight the ‘competition’ for resources between differing communities within the Corporation.¹²⁶ The reinforcement of equal rights for all citizens, acceptance of communal difference and disparities in funding shows how education played into well-established discourses of political inclusion and exclusion. It questioned the commitment of the Corporation to see Muslim children as within their commitments to ‘all children’. Strikingly, the forgotten story was the growing number of Muslim girls who engaged in significant personal sacrifice, braving dangerous travelling conditions and often missing meals, to attain a basic education.¹²⁷

Language and identity

Religious belief was only one aspect of the identity politics of the Madras Presidency. A cultural nationalism linked to the Tamil language became particularly prominent by the end of the 1930s, often in opposition to Hindi which came to symbolise the political dominance of the North.¹²⁸ In 1931, Congress leader Satyamurti suggested that Hindi be introduced as an optional subject in the higher Standards (V-VIII) of elementary school, although Muslim children who learned Urdu were exempt. He argued that

¹²² MCA: Proceedings 13/4/1939 p.39

¹²³ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 p.5

¹²⁴ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 pp.21, 27

¹²⁵ MCA: Proceedings 12/10/1937 p.54

¹²⁶ MCA: Proceedings 12/10/1937 p.57

¹²⁷ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1936-37, Quinquennium 1932-33 – 1936-37 p.107

¹²⁸ Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue*

Hindi would become ‘very soon the national language of this country’, and was an essential preparation for independence.¹²⁹ The ensuing debates, which reappeared each year with the EEF budget discussions, centred on the technical aspects of the relationship between the spoken and written languages of Hindi, Hindustani and Urdu. The debates were underpinned by a feeling of alienation in the South that was often repeated by both Hindi speakers and non-speakers, especially within the Congress party.¹³⁰ In 1937, eventually in power in the Legislative Assembly, the Congress party attempted to make Hindi compulsory in Secondary Schools across the Presidency. This was opposed by the Self-Respect Movement and the Justice Party, both in the Corporation and in the Assembly, on the basis that they were protecting teaching in the vernacular as defined in the 1920 Education Act.¹³¹ A frustrated Satyamurti claimed ‘We know what is good for our children’, and many of the debates featured similar claims to understand the child as learner, and thereby represent him/her.¹³² In addition, the more malleable mind of the child was assumed to be a unique advantage in language learning.¹³³ Opposition to learning Hindi matched previously mentioned concerns about children being ‘overburdened’ by excessive academic teaching and re-emphasised the vernacular as the essential medium of instruction for young children.¹³⁴ Tamil language campaigner T.S. Nataraja Pillai argued that it was ‘positively sinful’ to introduce Hindi because it had no connections to the home setting, and would involve ‘burdening the young minds unnecessarily’.¹³⁵ Protecting the ‘burdened’ child, and the identity of the child as representative of an oppressed minority, were powerfully emotive political tools. They emphasised the universal vulnerability and plasticity of the child and the universal authority of adults, as well as identities that were much more localised, impacting upon the lives and opportunities of children.

¹²⁹ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1931 p.27

¹³⁰ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1931 pp. 33-35, 4/12/1934 p.47, 8/10/1935 pp.47, 54, 31/8/1937 pp.55-6

¹³¹ MCA: Proceedings 7/2/1933 p.40, 31/8/1937 p.56

¹³² MCA: Proceedings 8/8/1933 p.68; 22/12/1936 p.54, 31/8/1937 p.49, TNSA: GO1908 Education 10/9/1936

¹³³ MCA: Proceedings 4/12/1934 pp.41-47

¹³⁴ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1931 p.31, 31/8/1937 pp.53-54

¹³⁵ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1931 p.35, AR Venkatachalapathy, *In those days there was no coffee* p.153

With a commitment to education in the vernacular came the need to provide education in various languages. Schools were required in Urdu and in Telegu for sizeable populations, as well as the occasional request for facilities for language minorities, such as Gujarati girls.¹³⁶ Around 30% of children spoke Telegu, and a number of Telegu-medium schools were opened in 1930.¹³⁷ However, lack of adequate Telegu teaching staff meant that the Telegu-speaking population felt not ‘cared for at all’ despite the legal provision that ‘they have got *a right* [my italics] to be taught in their own mother tongue’.¹³⁸ Given that the 1931 census suggested the Telegu community was around 25% of the total population, the lack of interest in this group, in comparison for example with the interest in the Muslim minority, was indicative of the hierarchies of linguistic and religious communities within the Presidency.

Schools for the poor

Educational provision may have reflected the linguistic and religious identities within the city, but there was no attempt to engage with caste as the basis of an educational identity. This was in direct contrast to the Presidency-wide Education Department, the Public Instruction Reports and the Labour Department, established specifically to encourage Dalit education. These institutions, much closer in their organisational structure to the colonial state, used caste difference as a basic element of both policy and statistical analysis (see Chapter One).¹³⁹ In 1928, during a discussion about Muslim education, Justice Party founder Dr C. Natesan argued that similar separate schools were necessary in Madras City for the elevation of the Dalit community.¹⁴⁰ This was fiercely opposed, with councillors of all parties arguing that ‘Adi-Dravida boys are allowed admission into any schools’ and would not benefit from separate caste institutions. This decision was ideological as well as financial, and supported the Congress claim that Dalits should be counted within the Hindu community, as at the Round Table Conferences 1930-32. There was no recorded political opposition to the Dalit community receiving schooling in Corporation schools, and a number of

¹³⁶ MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931

¹³⁷ MCA: Proceedings 7/9/1931 p38, 18/11/1939 pp.15-18

¹³⁸ MCA: Proceedings 7/9/1931 p.39

¹³⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Reports, TNSA: GO329 Home (Education) 17/03/1919, GO886 Home (Education) 07/08/1920, GO28 LE 06/01/1922

¹⁴⁰ MCA: Proceedings 16/4/1928

privately run Dalit institutions were taken under Corporation control in 1937.¹⁴¹ By 1939, Dalit children were ‘coming in larger numbers than ever before,’ and there were concerns about the lack of qualified teachers from the community.¹⁴²

There was little scrutiny by Councillors of the structural difficulties caused by caste identity, as reflected in later post-independence schemes of positive discrimination. Instead, the emphasis was upon engaging with poverty and lack of education as a socio-economic problem. The underlying commitment to free education was reliant on the understanding that children would be ‘placed on a footing of equality as regards facilities and opportunities for education’.¹⁴³ Under the 1920 Education Act, it was mandatory that all schooling in compulsory areas was free to ensure absolute equality of access and quality. This was repealed in 1932 (see Chapter One) and it was clear that in practice those labelled ‘the rich man’s children’, who could afford a better quality of education in less crowded conditions, attended aided schools and were eager to maintain their privileged status by paying fees.¹⁴⁴ The poor were perceived to be the particular responsibility of the Corporation, and there was a broad agreement that municipal schools should be only ‘for the sake of the poor and the Depressed Classes’, positioning the Corporation as having unique responsibility for the poor child.¹⁴⁵ This free education for the poor should be seen in the context of wider paternalistic improvement schemes for slum areas; including housing improvements and bathing fountains.¹⁴⁶

The responsibility to provide free education for ‘poor children’ was strictly defined. Additional resolutions to provide free books or clothes for those designated ‘poor’ were not successful, even when some teachers refused to accept pupils without equipment.¹⁴⁷ Labour leader C. Basudev argued that 90% of the 35,000 Corporation school pupils were ‘children of the poorest of the poor in the city’ and that an estimated

¹⁴¹ MCA: Proceedings 5/5/1937

¹⁴² MCA: Proceedings 30/6/1939 p44-47, 18/11/1939 p.14

¹⁴³ MCA: Proceedings 14/5/1925 p184, 30/3/1938 p.18

¹⁴⁴ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 p.39

¹⁴⁵ MCA: Proceedings 13/10/1924 p.235, 8/12/1924 p.61, 13/11/1931, 14/5/1925 p.184, 30/3/1938 p.18, 18/11/1939 p.39

¹⁴⁶ MCA: Proceedings 13/11/1931

¹⁴⁷ MCA: Proceedings 25/10/1938 p.40

95% of parents could not ‘afford to give them good clothing and the necessary books and slates’.¹⁴⁸ These ‘little urchins’ had ‘poverty... written on their faces’ and struggled to find even ‘the barest minimum of clothing’, causing disquiet to their wealthier peers.¹⁴⁹ Lack of adequate resources, particularly textbooks, increased inequality within the classroom and had a disastrous impact on ‘the pupil’s home preparation’ which was ‘the most fruitful cause of irregular attendance’.¹⁵⁰ A further scheme to facilitate ‘regularity and continuity’ of school attendance involved the provision of free school meals to poor children.¹⁵¹ Additional scholarships for poor children were offered on the basis of intelligence, but to gain the scholarship the child had to be ‘certified poor by the Divisional Councillor or Honorary Magistrate’.¹⁵² The discussions were characterised by a dual call; empathy for the poor, and the modern municipality’s duty to educate.

The complicated relationship between what constituted ‘elementary education’ and the opportunities available to poor children was confirmed in 1936. There was a move to provide financial incentives for ‘the children of the labourers’ to remain in school for V and VI Standards.¹⁵³ These plans were defeated due to shortages in funding, as were further resolutions in 1937 and 1938.¹⁵⁴ While supported by Labour leader C. Basudev as a ‘bare necessity’, the proposal was rejected by the Commissioner because of the 15,000 children who received no schooling.¹⁵⁵ In 1939 the Education Committee proposed to extend education at the cost of minimal fees; in Standards VI (12 annas per month), VII (14 annas) and Standard VIII (Rs 1). Concessions were made ‘to all the Muhammadan boys, scheduled caste boys, backward class children, to poorer children of other classes and to girls’.¹⁵⁶ This tacitly acknowledged the assumption of the Education Committee that five years was sufficient to teach children basic numeracy and literacy, therefore any further education could not be counted as either

¹⁴⁸ MCA: Proceedings 31/3/1937 p.113

¹⁴⁹ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939 p.35

¹⁵⁰ MCA: Proceedings 25/10/1938 p.38

¹⁵¹ MCA: Proceedings 25/2/1931

¹⁵² MCA: Proceedings 18/2/1932 p.2

¹⁵³ MCA: Proceedings 9/12/1936

¹⁵⁴ MCA: Proceedings 19/1/1937, 4/10/1938 p.44

¹⁵⁵ MCA: Proceedings 31/3/1937 pp.100-1

¹⁵⁶ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 p.4

‘compulsory’ or ‘free’. The proposal was passionately opposed as ‘an act of criminal folly’ because funding constraints meant that ‘certain children’ would progress, and ‘deprive others from having even elementary education’.¹⁵⁷ This fitted the understanding that basic literacy was necessary ‘for all children’ specifically so that ‘labouring classes and the menial workers may do this work whatever be their own sphere of life with more intelligence [and] with more enthusiasm’.¹⁵⁸ These sentiments mirrored the 1925 resolution that ‘besides the three Rs the further curriculum of studies ought not to be maintained in all schools in the City *but the same vary according to the class of children attending the school* [my italics]’.¹⁵⁹ Poverty and social class were to be key deciding factors in the quality and length of educational provision.

Opposing this, Labour representative C. Basudev emphasised that all elementary education should be free and should continue for eight years, describing:

[The] hunger for education among the working classes. They refuse to stay where they are. They refuse to allow their children to stagnate in the same wretched condition of life into which their birth has confined them. They want their children at least to become clerks, not remain manual workers. It is our duty, if we really are here to work for the uplift of the working-class, to see that birth is not an obstruction to the achievement of human ambitions.¹⁶⁰

While Basudev remained in a minority, it was accepted that levying a fee even for the higher grades was ‘a very evil principle which is bound to act most adversely upon the poor classes’.¹⁶¹ The debates reaffirmed that ‘we, representatives of the poor, have certain duties and responsibilities’ and that those attending Corporation schools were ‘children mostly drawn from the slum areas... and very poor people who cannot really afford to pay schools fees.’¹⁶² This series of debates revealed the continued commitment within the Corporation, fifteen years after the institution of compulsory education, to the ideal of that free education should be available to all children and that it was the responsibility of the Corporation to provide for the poor. However, for most councillors education was focussed on basic literacy and numeracy to enable the

¹⁵⁷ MCA: Proceedings 29/11/1939 p.4, 18/11/1939 p.31, p8 29/11/1939 pp.10-11

¹⁵⁸ MCA: Proceedings 1924 p.488

¹⁵⁹ MCA: Proceedings 14/5/1925 p.187, 8/12/1942 pp.16-19

¹⁶⁰ MCA: Proceedings 29/11/1939 p.7

¹⁶¹ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 p.19

¹⁶² MCA: Proceedings 23/8/1938 p.37, 14/11/1939 p.46, 18/11/1939 p.19

production of more disciplined citizens - there was no corresponding commitment to a sufficient standard of education to provide the skills or opportunities for social progression. The revolutionary commitment to universal education adhered to by Madras politicians could thus quickly degenerate into the advocacy of segregated and dual-track education under the combined pressures of financial constraints and caste and class prejudice.

Conclusion

There was broad consent by 1924 among the political classes in Madras that compulsory elementary education was necessary for the future of India. Compulsion institutionalised children into a new relationship with the state, and through this rhetoric, the school became both the normal site of childhood, and the legitimate and primary space for the interaction between children and the modern state. The focus on institutional education downgraded education received in the home, community or workplace, and reinforced the idea that the separation between education and work was a defining feature of childhood. Those children whose families did not send them to school both failed to receive the practical benefits of schooling, and were increasingly defined as marginal to an emerging universal norm of modern childhood.¹⁶³ Although the child was imagined as being in school with the capacity to learn, there was much less attention given to the educational content than is often assumed in the secondary literature. While there was discussion over Gandhi's Wardha scheme, achieving basic literacy and numeracy appears to have been the primary focus. The Councillors were less interested in the specific intellectual development of children and more concerned about their physical vulnerability. This was seen in the conveyances for Muslim girls, the fear of traffic, and the need to provide both clothes and midday meals. However, while the rhetoric might suggest the 'institutionalisation' of childhood in South India, the failure to adequately finance the scheme meant that the practical reality of childhood was quite different, particularly for the 17,000 children still not in school in 1939.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Balagopalan, *Inhabiting Childhood*, esp. introduction

¹⁶⁴ MCA: Proceedings 23/3/1939 p.34. 1939: Corporation 137 Elementary Schools, 39,000 pupils.

Throughout the period the institutionalised child was seen predominantly for his/her worth as future citizen, and thus merited municipal investment as an adult in the future. Education was intended to provide basic literacy, make populations easier to manage, and regulate individuals into a relationship with the state, the city and the newly forming nation, assuming eventual access to a form of democratic participation. However, by the end of the 1930s there was also the beginning of an engagement with the child as a child. This conception included the child possessing the capacity to make decisions and hold opinions, and be counted as a political and ultimately historical agent without the mediation of the family. The discourse surrounding compulsion also incorporated a fledgling discourse on rights. These rights superseded the socio-economic needs or authority claims of the family, echoing global discourses emerging from the League of Nations or New Education Movement. In practice, the authority of the family was not challenged by the Attendance Committees. In contrast to the way in which the home was disregarded by the expert pedagogues seen in Chapter Three, the overarching desire was to work with, rather than against, the family, and indeed family economy.

The Corporation schools were specifically designed to provide education for ‘the poor’ of the city. This was not education designed to enhance opportunity or develop skills, and any education beyond the Fifth Standard involved prohibitive fees. It was intended to maintain and regulate the position of the labouring classes, socialising children into new understandings of work and time discipline, but not to provide any challenge to the social order. Within these discourses, the idea of ‘the poor’ became an important identity, highlighting the often ignored class-based nature of politics in Madras, and the instincts of a reforming, philanthropic middle class, couched in terms of ‘liberal intervention’. Focussing on ‘the poor’ also allowed the Councillors to imply that poverty and inequality was a socio-economic problem, possibly linked to imperialism, rather than a result of more complicated structures of religion, caste and exclusion. This was despite the fact that the politics of the Madras Presidency were dominated by caste ideas, and the key political division in the Presidency was between Brahmins and the Non-Brahmin Justice Party.

Refusal to engage with caste discrimination in the Corporation schools demonstrates the variety of approaches to educational identity within the Madras Presidency. It stood in stark contrast to the caste-based educational policies pursued at Presidency-level by the Labour and Education Departments, and to the refusal of the pedagogues discussed in Chapter Three to engage with anything other than age as a social identity. In the Corporation, the child was not so much described as a representative of the community or a focus for competition over scarce resources, but possessed of multiple and co-existing identities. The councillors thus expressed an understanding that identity and home community was crucial to the life experiences, expectations and self-perception of each child. This was not an engagement with the 'Indian' child, but an acknowledgement of the multiple ways in which 'childhoods' could be experienced; ways that included gender, linguistic, religious and socio-economic community. At the same time, the emerging rhetoric of the 'normal' child as in school, as male, Hindu, middle class and upper caste, reinforced the childhood of the majority in terms of lack, and reinforced the 'unevenness' of the educational terrain.¹⁶⁵ When considering children, the Madras Councillors engaged with differing and conflicting identities beyond mere differences in age.

¹⁶⁵ Balagopalan, *Inhabiting Childhoods* p.77

(Chapter Three) Imagining the child as learner: progressive pedagogy in the Madras Presidency

While the previous chapters have considered the expansion of elementary education within the Madras Presidency through the work of state actors, within the Municipal Corporation and MLC, the primary focus of this chapter is the discursive construction of childhood by individuals actively engaged in pedagogy and teaching at a local level. The first section considers the writings of Indian pedagogues in *Educational India*, the only English-language pedagogical journal to have been printed in South India during the 1930s.¹ The articles within the journal reflected a local engagement with the new global interest in ‘progressive education,’ bypassing the work of more overtly political figures such as Tagore, Gandhi or Zakir Hussain. Progressive education emphasized the central role of the child as a recipient of elementary education and focused on pedagogy and educational methods, rather than the content of the curriculum.² This complemented the parallel introduction of compulsory education which encouraged the institutionalization of children and meant that, in popular and statist discourse, children were now assumed to be in school and were perceived primarily as learners.

A detailed discussion of pedagogic theory reveals contemporary views about what was to happen within the classroom. Looking at the ways in which pedagogues sought to distance themselves from traditional education and the particular focus on learning through activity reveals new normative constructions of childhood. Pedagogues claimed a role for themselves as scientific experts, and constructed pedagogy as science, contributing to a modern global discourse of the child in which children were imagined along a universal developmental sequence. This contributed to the development of a new relationship between the modern state and the child, one that justified intervention in the lives of children by establishing children as the object of scientific endeavour. Of central concern is the relationship between new innovative

¹ I have been unable to find evidence of any Tamil-language journals from this era, either in IOR or TNSA.

² SR Karnataka ‘Child-centred education’ *Educational India*, 02/1937 p.293. Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: the British in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), Crooks, *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*:

Western pedagogies, and their application to the Indian context. This chapter explores the discursive relationship between the Indian child, the universal child and the Indian home, and the ways in which new pedagogical ideas beginning in the West were reformulated by local pedagogical elites to facilitate their own participation in emerging global discourses surrounding childhood.

The realities of implementing new pedagogical ideas in schools nuanced the theoretical approaches considerably, in India as in the West. In so far as the evidence exists, the chapter then investigates the way a number of female teacher training colleges, particularly Lady Willingdon College and St Christopher's Training College, sought to convey these ideas to trainee teachers. The chapter ends with a more detailed consideration of how the Children's Garden School, one of the few local schools whose records have survived since the 1930s, attempted to implement progressive methods. An examination of the ways in which these organisations negotiated the gap between theory and practice, the individuals involved and the practicalities of implementing new ideas in material culture, in ethos and in practical activity, contributes to a wider understanding of the ways in which ideas about childhood, and particularly the Indian child as learner, were constructed.

Traditional Education and 'New Education'

Progressive education, termed 'New Education' in India, was fashioned as a modern methodology inherently opposed to traditional education, both in content and in transmission. It implied an unequivocal condemnation of the 'old' or 'traditional', encompassing both colonial and pre-colonial educational approaches. The curriculum of colonial education was intended to support British rule, and was associated with 'poor pedagogic technology'.³ This included an overemphasis on literary education, examinations and rote-learning under the guidance of all-powerful but low-status and badly paid teachers.⁴ Limited numbers of students enrolled, and by 1930 even the Indian Statutory Commission doubted whether those who did attend learned anything

³ Viswanathan *Masks of Conquest*, p.101, Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of Raj*, Kumar, Bara, Khadria, Gyaithri, *Education in Colonial India*: pp.12-14

⁴ MS Srinivasa Sarma 'The modern trend in teaching methods: the foundations of Educational Reconstruction' *Educational India* 04/1938. Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education*: p.300, Seth, *Subject Lessons*

of practical, intellectual, or moral worth.⁵ Pre-colonial education was symbolised in the *pial* school, which was directed by one teacher who emphasized oral traditions, commanded absolute obedience, and often used excessive discipline.⁶ While Gandhi lamented the demise of the ‘beautiful tree’ of Indian education, there was no real commitment among Indian pedagogues to revive it and references by nationalist leaders were largely nostalgic.⁷ Those who did attempt to restore the learning of Indian culture and religion, such as Annie Besant or Tagore, used the technologies of Western education in uniform, curriculum structure and timetabling.⁸ In practice, many of the precolonial *pial* schools had merged into the new colonial system and the differences were probably less significant than previously thought.⁹

The growing rejection of ‘traditional’ education led a number of Indian, colonial, and missionary pedagogues to focus on educational methodologies, rather than the content of the curriculum. New Education stressed the central role of the child and encouraged learning through experience at a pace that suited the individual.¹⁰ This was influenced by a number of Western pedagogues such as Dewey and Montessori; theories such as Group Method and Project Method, Dalton Plan and earlier ideas such as Froebel’s Kindergarten movement and Pestalozzi’s Object Lessons.¹¹ Object lessons had been used earlier in Bengali mission schools, to encourage Indian children to progress from describing objects, to categorising them, to then expressing abstract ideas, reflecting the intangible truths and ideas they associated with Protestant Christianity.¹² The global transfer of these ideas was indicated in affiliations and contacts between educational experts internationally. For example, the International Movement in

⁵NLS: Indian Statutory Commission, *Report*, Vol 1 (London, May 1930) p.402

⁶ Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education*

⁷ Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century* (New Delhi: Bilia, 1983) p.24

⁸ Kumar, *Lessons from Schools*, chapter 4, Sarkar, *Rebels, Wives, Saints*: Chapter on Tagore, Bagchi ‘Connected and entangled histories’ p.816

⁹ Kumar, *Politics of Gender, Community and Modernity* p.37, Padma Sarangapani, *Constructing School Knowledge: An ethnography of learning in an Indian village* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003) p.170, Kumar, *Lessons from Schools* p.69

¹⁰ Karnataka ‘Child-centred education’ p.293

¹¹ PK Banerjee ‘The Aim of Education’ *Educational India* 10/1935 p.129, C Swamikannu Paul, ‘New Ideals in Education’ *Educational India* 02/1936, Dr M Siddalingaiya, ‘Modern Developments in Educational Practice’ *Educational India*, 05-06/1937 p.405

¹² Sengupta, ‘An Object Lesson’, William Glover, ‘Objects, Models, and Exemplary Works: Educating Sentiment in Colonial India’ *Journal of Asian Studies* 64:3 (2005) pp.539–66

Progressive Education and New Education Fellowship gained particular prominence in the 1920s, a specifically Indian section being started in 1933 under the Presidency of Dr Rabindranath Tagore.¹³

The pedagogical journal *Educational India* was established in 1934 as a forum for Indian educational theorists and practitioners to engage with these new pedagogical ideas at a local level. The journal was billed as ‘a high class monthly’. It was edited by a number of prominent pedagogues including Prof M. Venkatarangaiya of Andhra University, along with Prof C. Swamikannu Paul, M. Seshachalam, C.B. Krishnasastri and later D. Nityananda Sastry.¹⁴ Based in Masulipatam, it received disproportionate interest and contributions from South India. While earlier pedagogical journals, such as the *Schoolmaster* from the 1880s and 1890s, were dominated by re-printed articles from journals abroad, *Educational India* contained original articles, largely authored by Indians. Most contributors had prominent jobs within the teaching profession - i.e. as Principals of High Schools or University Professors - although some, such as the Dewan of Mysore, had been bureaucrats in the Madras Education Department.¹⁵ Despite a majority of male authors, a few women submitted articles, for example Mrs Chenciah wrote extensively on infant education and Mrs K. Saththianadhan on education and parenting.¹⁶ The journal claimed to be ‘devoted to the investigation...of the current problems of Indian education, from the theoretical as well as the practical standpoint’ and to ‘carry out such an analysis and suggest improvements based on the actual experience of the people at large.’ It saw education as the ‘primary responsibility’ of the government as an ‘organised representative of the nation’, but suggested the government be ‘guided by those who are in touch with public opinion’. The journal thereby claimed to be both expert and representative. It was explicitly designed for members of the teaching profession, managers of institutions and the

¹³ P Kallaway ‘Conference Litmus: The Development of a Conference and Policy Culture in the Interwar Period’ in K Tolley, (ed.) *Transformations in Schooling: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*. (New York, 2007) p.123. Report New Education Fellowship: visit of Delegation to India, *Educational India* 4/1937, *Educational India* 01/1938 p.277

¹⁴ *Educational India*, 01/07/1934

¹⁵ *Educational India* 03/1935: DS Gordon Assistant Professor of Education Mysore University or T Vyas, Principal of New Era School Bombay, *Educational India* 07/1934: Ismail, Dewan of Mysore

¹⁶ Mrs D Subhadra Chenciah ‘Right Training in the infant stage’ *Educational India* 12/1936 p.211, 03/1935 Women’s Page, Mrs K Saththianadhan, ‘Corner for Women’ *Educational India*, 09/1938

general public; although the size of the print run and circulation is unclear.¹⁷ Despite these claims, *Educational India* primarily reflected the sharing of ideas among a small professional elite, with more evidence of entanglement in global theoretical debate than serious attempts to cause practical change in India.¹⁸

Learning through activity

The fundamental premise of New Education was the engagement of the child-learner in structured activities rather than rote-learning, and this was discussed at length in *Educational India*. Children were expected to learn through self-experimentation and a ‘scientific attitude of testing results and forming conclusions [which] is fatal to a blind belief in outworn tradition.’¹⁹ The Moga teacher training school in Punjab was consistently cited as a model for progressive schools, and their teacher training course emphasised the focus on ‘activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be accrued and facts to be stored.’²⁰ A further article on Moga emphasized that education should be ‘student-centred’ so that ‘the student be made to think’.²¹ While literacy and numeracy were vital outcomes of education, the implicit aim was to mould children into rationally thinking adults within their social context. Through attempting activities themselves, pupils were intended to understand the scientific foundations underlying the information they were acquiring, making it easier to remember and apply. For example, a craft such as weaving could be studied practically, with each pupil participating. This in turn would lead to an explanation of its history, geography, and scientific and mathematical techniques, which could then be followed up by more extensive research in the school library. Learning would thus imitate at a very basic level the methodologies – hypothesis, experiment, and conclusions – of experimental science.²²

¹⁷ *Educational India* 08/1934

¹⁸ Bagchi ‘Connected and Entangled Histories’

¹⁹ Krishnayya, GS ‘Some lessons from negro education’ *Educational India* 11/1934

²⁰ Staff training course ‘First Steps in Vernacular Education, Suggestions for Improvement’ Moga Oct-Dec 1935 *Educational India* 05-06/1936 p.416

²¹ Swamikannu Paul, ‘New Ideals’ p.294

²² BV Subbarao ‘State and Education’ *Educational India* 02/1935 p.255

Literacy was to be taught through the active engagement of the pupils. For example, at Moga basic literacy was taught through ‘a scientifically constructed method’ which included material relating to the children’s home experiences, story-telling, phonetics and silent reading.²³ Writing too was not to ‘degenerate into a copying of set types’ but rather become ‘a satisfying creative effort’ as the pupils were ‘encouraged to express their real joys through the pen’.²⁴ Illustrations and excursions were to be utilised. Education was to be scientific, not literary, and was to cover not ‘only the dreams of the power and transcripts of the novelists, but also the more concrete achievements of the scientist and social reformer.’²⁵ The sciences of biology, geography and economics thus took precedence over literature when it came to providing the emergent citizen with the skills and understanding of the modern world.²⁶ Geography, for example, was intended to provide the child with analytical and information gathering skills, to make the child aware of themselves and their distinctive place in the world and to foster an acceptance of cultural difference which would contribute to ‘universal peace’.²⁷

While New Education was based on active learning and teaching scientific methodologies which exercised ‘the elements of thought embedded in the juvenile mind’, the pedagogues were reluctant to support vocational education as a subject on its own right.²⁸ Morality was likewise not taught as a separate subject, but was to underpin the entire curriculum. ‘The give and take of competitive recreation’, particularly team sports, was to ‘teach the boys to respect the rights of others and to trust those who play with or against them’.²⁹ At Moga, children learned budgeting through receiving monetary rewards for their work.³⁰ Living together in cottages also

²³ Moga ‘First Steps’ p.416

²⁴ A Bagshaw, ‘The place of beauty in education’ *Educational India* 11/1934 p.167

²⁵ Ismail, ‘Mass Education’ *Educational India* 07/1934 p.20

²⁶ B Ramchandra Rao, ‘The Need for a New Orientation in Education’ *Educational India* 09/1935

²⁷ P Venkata Rao, ‘Pedagogics of Regional Geography’ *Educational India* 02/1935 pp.297-8

²⁸ NK Venkateswaran, ‘The Three Kinds of Teaching’ *Educational India* 01/1935, N Kuppaswami Avengar, ‘The Declared Aim of Education’ *Educational India*, 01/1937 p.254

²⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 Almost all DPI Reports 1920s and 1930s. HC Buck ‘An interpretation of Physical Education’ *Educational India* 07/1934, AB Van Doren, (ed.) *Fourteen Experiments in Rural Education: Some Indian Schools where new methods are being tested* (Calcutta: Association Press, 1928) p.23. James H Mills & Satadru Sen *Confronting the body: the politics of physicality in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*, (London: Anthem, 2004)

³⁰ Van Doren, *Fourteen Experiments* pp. 46-7, 64, 93

provided practise in building strong interpersonal relationships within families and communities and prioritised ahead of household or academic skills.³¹ While there is limited empirical evidence of their impact, the educational objectives were clear: the formation of children into trustworthy, self-aware adult citizens, trained through active cooperation and responsibility. In the end, ‘the pen may be mightier than the sword; but the spade and the needle are better than either’.³²

Pedagogy as science

Rather than placing the curriculum at the centre of education, the educators at the Imperial Education Conference in London in 1923 reiterated that the child as learner was to be the focal point.³³ Not content with teaching children scientific methods for acquiring learning, each child was to become a special object of scientific study, with pedagogy as a scientific discipline.³⁴ This was linked to an interest in the natural development of the normal child and pedagogical uses of psychology, as seen particularly in the works of Piaget.³⁵ G.S. Krishnayya, of Teachers College Kolhapur, maintained that ‘matters of the mind might be investigated with scientific precision and mathematical accuracy’.³⁶ This made possible a scientific approach within the classroom, and an understanding of child psychology and ‘normal’ child development was regarded as more important than an understanding of the curriculum.³⁷ Numerous articles in *Educational India* described the mind in great detail, although none claimed racial specificity.³⁸ Purported scientific intelligence tests assessed a child’s ability to acquire and process information. These were used to calculate the mental age of the child, in comparison with his/her chronological age, as set against the ‘normal’ average of 100%.³⁹ The emphasis within the classroom was to categorise children by intelligence, thereby identifying ‘laggards’ who inhibited other students and were

³¹ Van Doren, *Fourteen Experiments* p.80

³² M Venkatarangaiya ‘Mahatma Gandhi’s Educational Views’ *Educational India*, 09/1937

³³ IOR: V/27/860/10 Lillian De Lissa, ‘Infant Education’ Report of the Imperial Education Conference (1924) p.75

³⁴ DS Gordon, ‘New Education - what it means’ *Educational India*, 03/1935

³⁵ IOR: R/2/511/185: ‘New Psychology and the Curriculum’. Theme of New Education Conference 1929

³⁶ Krishnayya, ‘Some lessons’ p.5

³⁷ Anon ‘Education and Environment’ *Educational India* 09/1934 p. 104; Moga ‘First Steps’ p.420

³⁸ SR Diddi ‘General Methods of Teaching’ *Educational India* 02/1937 p.298

³⁹ C Swamikannu Paul ‘Intelligence Tests’ *Educational India* 01/1935 p.251

excluded to prevent their own supposed ‘incurable inferiority complex’.⁴⁰ This involved the differentiation between those with ‘remediable educational backwardness’ and those with ‘innate dullness’.⁴¹ The ‘feeble-minded’ were not only presumed to be incapable of learning, but were assumed to be susceptible to social deviance.⁴² More explicit than the majority of educators, Prof M.S. Srinivasa Sarma of National College, Trichinopoly, viewed this as one aspect of the contemporary eugenics debates and highlighted ‘imbeciles, idiots and morons’ as a ‘positive menace to society’.⁴³

By establishing education as a scientific discipline which informed and legitimised ‘progressive’ pedagogical methods, the pedagogues claimed to be objective and rational experts who operated under ‘the liberating force of the scientific spirit’.⁴⁴ By self-definition, their expertise was in no need of regulation by either politicians or the public.⁴⁵ The Indian experts were keen to establish themselves as partakers in a Western intellectual heritage of specialist pedagogues, intimately engaged in a global project.⁴⁶ Indian educators tried to situate themselves as unequivocally equal participants in a global discourse, and pointed to experiments, such as those at the Lady Willingdon College, as more progressive than the education system in both the United States and Great Britain.⁴⁷ This is perhaps reflected in their desire to publish so voluminously in English. Indian experts were claiming control not only over education policy, but also over children’s bodies in the name of their own scientific expertise.

⁴⁰ MS Srinivasa Sarma ‘The roots of educational reform: a study in pedagogical handicaps’ *Educational India* 12/1936 p.215

⁴¹ Article reprinted from *Schoolmaster on* ‘Treatment of backward children in England’ *Educational India* 09/1937 p.226, Jal J Nanavaty, ‘The Backward child’ *Educational India* 04/1939 p.345

⁴² Van Doren, *Fourteen Experiments* p178; Answers from the Editor, *Educational India* 11/1934 p.170, Mathew Thomson *Psychological subjects: identity, culture and health in twentieth century Britain* (Oxford, 2006) pp.109-123

⁴³ Srinivasa Sarma ‘The roots of educational reform’ p.218, For work on eugenics in South India see Hodges, *Reproductive Health in India*

⁴⁴ Gordon, ‘New Education – What it means’ pp.327-8, Bagshaw, ‘The place of beauty in education’ p.165, MR Sakhare ‘Intelligence’ in *Educational India*, 04/1937 p.367

⁴⁵ KT Paul in Van Doren *Fourteen Experiments*

⁴⁶ Editorial *Educational India* 07/1934 p.22, CB Krishna Sastry ‘Vernaculars as media of instruction’ *Educational India* 07/1934, Bagchi ‘Connected and Entangled Histories’

⁴⁷ NLS IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1927-28 - 1931-32 p.96

The privileged place of the expert can be seen in the extended reaction to Gandhi's educational plans, which became the subject of many articles, including a critical editorial, in 1937 and 1938.⁴⁸ Gandhi argued that Indian handicrafts such as spinning should be taught 'scientifically' so that children understood the mechanical aspects, and this would lead to a further investigation of literacy, history and arithmetic necessary for the successful completion of the process.⁴⁹ His central argument – strikingly linked to progressive pedagogy in both methodology and terminology – was that learning should happen through scientific methods of observation and experimentation. This would help students develop their physical, rational and spiritual faculties. This reinforced the dignity of rural labour, without challenging the social hierarchy.⁵⁰ While there was broad support for the political goals of the Mahatma among the pedagogues, there was also an underlying frustration that his ideas were a less sophisticated model of their own ideas over the last twenty years.⁵¹ In addition, his one clear innovation, that schools should be self-supporting by selling the children's craftwork, was bitterly opposed by pedagogues and politicians as effectively legalising child-labour.⁵² The fear that children were to be made financially responsible for their own education illustrated a firm commitment to the vulnerable child, and the responsibility of the state to provide for the child as learner. It also demonstrated the concern of the pedagogues that a politician was threatening their claims of scientific expertise.⁵³ This may also explain why there was only one article on Tagore's educational experiment at Shantiniketan.⁵⁴

Specialist pedagogues, headmasters and psychologists bolstered their own position as equals in an international discourse by embracing universality and scientific expertise over cultural specificity. This provided another space in which to defy British cultural

⁴⁸ Editorial on Wardha, *Educational India* 11/1937 pp.173-175

⁴⁹ BL 8355.de.68 1937 All India National Education Conference, *Proceedings* (1937) p.4

⁵⁰ Simone Holzwarth and Veronica Oelsner 'Re-defining work and Education as a Means to National Self-Determination: A comparative Study of Gandhian India and Peronist Argentina' in Parimala Rao, *New Perspectives*.

⁵¹ Venkatarangaiya 'Mahatma Gandhi's Educational Views' p.83

⁵² Zakir Hussain on Wardha, *Educational India* 01/1939

⁵³ KN Pasupathi 'The Wardha Scheme' *Educational India* 04/1939 p.353, N. Kuppaswami Ayengar 'Wardha Scheme: confusion of thought as to what is revolutionary in it and what is not' *Educational India* 05&06/1939 p.415

⁵⁴ C Swamikannu Paul 'Educational Experiments: Bholpur Experiment' *Educational India* 08/1934 p.70

imperialism.⁵⁵ The first edition of *Educational India* reprinted both the 1924 Geneva Declaration and 'International Goodwill: League's Appeal to Children', emphasising that a rationalist education was essential to world peace.⁵⁶ Later, an article on the 'State and Education' emphasised that education was not 'a matter of charity and philanthropy; but today it is a matter of right.'⁵⁷ However, while the activities of the provincial governments were summarised in each issue of *Educational India*, neither the idea of education as a 'right' nor the state's role in enforcing the child's right to education through compulsion received any further attention.⁵⁸ A terminology of Rights was slowly beginning to be introduced in the state level discourses of juvenile delinquency and compulsory education (Chapters One, Two, Five, Six) demonstrating the global entanglements of the social reformers and political elites. The lack of attention paid by pedagogues to this parallel discourse perhaps reflects the particularly academic nature of their concerns about the child, and reluctance to engage with the messy business of engaging with real children and real parents.

Constructing the 'normal' child

Underlying the global theories of child-centred education, and indeed the global recognition of children's rights, emerging in the 1920s and 1930s were certain normative assumptions relating to what it meant to be a child. At its most basic, childhood development was seen in terms of the psychological IQ tests, in which children were categorised in relation to the 'average child' (mental age = chronological age).⁵⁹ There was frequent mention in the journals of the 'natural development' of the child and 'the law of the child'.⁶⁰ The primary feature of the normal child was their desire to learn through activity and active engagement with their environment.⁶¹ 'Adventurous self-learning' was perceived to contribute to the child's gradual

⁵⁵ IOR: R/2/511/185 World Conference on New Education 1929

⁵⁶ Editorial, *Educational India*, 07/1934

⁵⁷ Subbarao 'State and education' p.254

⁵⁸ *Educational India* 10/1934 p.143

⁵⁹ Swamikannu Paul 'Intelligence Tests' p.251

⁶⁰ Gordon, 'New Education – What it means' p.328, Nagaraja Rao 'The Individual Method' p.110, IOR:V/27/860/10 Imperial Education Conference, 1923 p.80

⁶¹ S David Malaiperuman 'Training our Emotions' *Educational India* 08/1939 p.250, Sundar Raj Naidu, 'The New Education' *Educational India* 08/1939

development in the rational understanding of the world.⁶² The child was described as characterised by curiosity, creativity and the constant active search for new experiences through which to develop.⁶³ Venkateswaran, mirroring Romantic and Wordsworthian sentiments of childhood, asserted:

Self-activity is the picture of child-life. We cannot overturn children in their natural impulses for their benefit. Their fancies and moods, their picturesque yearnings and adventurous imagination, their make-believe raptures, their dream-glories, are the immortal traditions of their nature.⁶⁴

The natural activity of the young child was to play and this, too, received a great deal of attention in the pedagogical literature. Prof M.S. Srinivasa Sarma of National College, Trichinopoly argued, that play was ‘most valuable’ because ‘it gives not only strength but courage and confidence, and contributes energy, decision and promptness to the will.’⁶⁵ Cooperative play was seen as practice for cooperating with peers in later life while satisfying an inherent love for experimentation and liberty.⁶⁶ This was linked to a desire for spontaneity, and freedom, as well as ‘action’ and even referenced to the Taittiriya Upanishad.⁶⁷ Srinivasa Sarma again reiterated:

Play is the making of the moral man. It is the nursery of virtue, and generates a sense of fellowship and exerts a tremendous influence in moulding individuals and preparing them for social life, for co-operation, for submission and for leadership. It encourages friendly intercourse and a healthy rivalry between the members, and thus tends to the increase of mutual understanding and sympathy.⁶⁸

Elevating the ‘normal child’ as learning through play and self-discovery was the basis of New Education. However, the establishment of a system based on the natural cognitive and behavioural development of the child pathologised any deviance from

⁶² Venkateswaran, ‘Three Kinds of Teaching’ p.257, NK Venkateswaran, NK ‘Three Axioms of Education’ *Educational India* 06/1935 p.420

⁶³ Srinivasa Sarma ‘The modern trend’, M Srinivasa Sarma ‘Attitudes - their Formation: the heart of the Educational Process’ *Educational India* 10/1935 p.129; Nagaraja Rao ‘The Individual Method’ p.111, Chenciah, ‘Right Training’ p.211

⁶⁴ Venkateswaran, ‘Three Axioms of Education’ p.420

⁶⁵ M Srinivasa Sarma, ‘The Test of Educational Efficiency’ *Educational India* 1935 p.342

⁶⁶ D Krishnayya, ‘Infant Teaching’ in *Educational India* 10/1935 p.218

⁶⁷ Sir Jehangir C Coyajee, ‘Some thoughts on Education’ *Educational India* 08/1934, T Vyas, ‘Education and New Psychology’ in *Educational India* 03/1935 p.334, Dr James Kulpathi, ‘Character through emotion-education’ in *Educational India* 12/1936 p.130

⁶⁸ M Srinivas Sarma, ‘Children’s Misdeeds: their psychology’ *Educational India* 02/1937 p.286

this pattern.⁶⁹ Education became ‘the problem of directing the *normal growth* of the desirable type of character’.⁷⁰

Facilitating ‘normal growth’ required ‘enlightened discipline’ carried out through rational argument and ‘in the spirit of sympathy and kindness’.⁷¹ Corporal punishment was rejected as an example of both colonial and pre-colonial barbarism.⁷² The primary methods of discipline were to be covert surveillance and the inculcation of self-regulation. This surveillance was intimately linked to the idea of ‘love’, in which teachers constantly watched, monitored and classified children as if in a laboratory.⁷³ Freedom to act or to play was to be undertaken within strictly defined parameters, although children were given the ‘illusion of choice’. Education was intended:

To habituate the child in consecutive acts of right choosing and well doing, to develop in him healthful and sustained activities, to generate in him a sense of enlightened freedom and individual responsibility, and to inspire in him noble and expansive interests.⁷⁴

This had to be carried out ‘without doing violence to the originality and the creative spirit of the pupils’ but instead by bringing children ‘into personal and intimate contact with all that is good, beautiful, and desirable’ and giving them ‘ample opportunities to regulate and discipline themselves in the light of these high and sublime ideals’.⁷⁵ The individual was to become ‘a responsible moral agent’ through ‘the internalising of the ruling sanctions and values of the community in such a manner that they become the individuals’ own and receive his voluntary assent and support’.⁷⁶ As individual children developed self-control and an understanding of normative behaviours, this in turn facilitated new forms of social discipline aimed at controlling whole populations.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ Srinivasa Sarma ‘Attitudes - their Formation:’ p.127; Valerie Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions* (London: Verso 1990) p.203

⁷⁰ Srinivasa Sarma, ‘Children’s Misdeeds’ p.285

⁷¹ Venkateswaran, ‘The Three Kinds of Teaching’, Srinivas Sarma, ‘Children’s Misdeeds’ p.285, NLS: IP/MA.14 *Education in India* 1936-37 p.12

⁷² AS Venkataraman, ‘Corporal Punishment in schools’ *Educational India* 03/1939

⁷³ Chenciah, ‘Right Training’ pp.212-13

⁷⁴ Srinivasa Sarma ‘Children’s Misdeeds’ p.288

⁷⁵ Srinivasa Sarma, ‘Test of Educational Efficiency’ 1935 p.341

⁷⁶ NLS IP/MA.14 *Education in India* 1936-37 pp.16-17

⁷⁷ Srinivasa Sarma ‘Test of Educational Efficiency’ p.340, MS Srinivasa Sarma, ‘Discipline and school life: need for self-control’ *Educational India*, 01/1939 p.248

The gendered child

Gender difference was not given overt prominence in Indian pedagogical journals of the 1930s. Every issue had a 'Women's Page' written by Mrs K. Sathianadhan, founder of the *Indian Ladies Review*, but there was little reference to the elementary education of girls. Instead, domestic work at secondary level was discussed, reflecting the concerns of the journal's middle-class audience.⁷⁸ Articles on girls' schooling focussed on the scientific training of girls in housework, human biology and botany.⁷⁹ The training intended that the girl-child become a better mother and housewife, fitting in with the domestic and spiritual ideals of both the nationalist movement and Victorian ideals of middle-class domesticity.⁸⁰ While the Public Instruction Reports focussed on the need for more female education, and education of girls was a particular focus for contestation in the Madras Corporation (see Chapter Two), the pedagogues seemed unconcerned. This appears to reflect both a lack of genuine commitment to female education, and also a modernist perspective of the child as ungendered.

Despite the lack of overt gendering, New Education models were closely linked to colonial and nationalist ideals of masculinity. The pedagogues resisted Western depictions of deficient Indian masculinity, arguing that the purpose of education was to teach children to gain 'mastery' over their circumstances by acting not accepting.⁸¹ Learning was discussed in terms of aggressive masculinity, in normative features of activity and experimentation that denoted both strength and courage and led to the development of rational self-control. The child was expected to practice 'self-mastery' and education was perceived in terms of 'exploration and conquest'.⁸² The particular focus on masculine power as normative reflected the assumption that reason and science were located in the normal development of the masculine body and its ability

⁷⁸ Mrs K. Sathianadhan, 'Our Women's Page: Education for Mothers of Daughters' *Educational India*, 10/1936, Anon 'Education and Environment' p.104

⁷⁹ K. Sattianadhan 'Our women's page,' *Educational India* 02/1935 p.35, 10/1936 p.153, Bagshaw, 'Comparative study of Education' 06/1934 p.211, Krishnayya, 'The Social Approach' p.172

⁸⁰ Chenciah, 'Right Training'. Pradip Kumar Bose, 'Sons of the Nation: Child Rearing in the New Family' in Partha Chatterjee (ed.) *Texts of power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995)

⁸¹ Srinivasa Sarma 'Attitudes - their Formation:' p.127

⁸² Srinivasa Sarma 'The roots of educational reform'; Chenciah, 'Right Training' p.211, Venkateswaran 'The Three Kinds of Teaching' p.257

to control both itself and nature, thereby encouraging its hold on knowledge and truth.⁸³ The Indian pedagogues claimed this for the Indian child, contesting the racial implications of contemporary colonial discourse, and imagining the Indian child as equal to and sharing in a universal pattern of development. This meant the development of 'the self', with an emphasis on 'self-expression' and ultimately 'the healthy, happy growth and fullest development of each individual child'.⁸⁴ Rather than claiming the 'native genius' of the Indian child, the pedagogues were claiming participation in a normative, and universal, although originally Western, ideal of the child as an individual separate from the community.⁸⁵ P.K. Banerjee, headmaster in Ferozabad, contested this and suggested that New Education 'overemphasises the individual, whereas it was sadly missed in the past', and prioritised the education of a few bright boys at the expense of the majority.⁸⁶ Both Banerjee and the Dewan of Mysore proposed to situate the child in the community, as part of a wider collective.⁸⁷ However, their views were largely rejected by their peers as insufficiently modern.

Indian educators and the Indian home

The interaction of these almost exclusively Indian experts with the Indian context requires further analysis. The pedagogues claimed authority through their participation in modern global discourses regarding progressive pedagogies, but also through their claim to represent the 'particular native genius' of the Indian people.⁸⁸ There was little reference to racial difference, despite the prominence of race in the secondary literature. While Srinivasa Sarma suggested children of civilised nations benefited from cumulative evolutionary knowledge and therefore had a greater structural capacity to learn, this was an isolated example.⁸⁹ There was no attempt to replicate the international study of the 'African child's psychology' for the Indian subcontinent.⁹⁰ More common was the claim to inherent intellectual equality,

⁸³ Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions* p.203-10

⁸⁴ Moga 'First Steps' p.416

⁸⁵ Chenciah, 'Right Training' p.211, Gordon, 'New Education – What it means' p.329

⁸⁶ PK Banerjee 'Caning in Schools' in *Educational India* 04/1936 pp.371-2

⁸⁷ Ismail, 'Mass Education' p.20, Krishnayya 'Some lessons', Prof Sidhanta Editorial *Educational India* 7/1937 p.22, Banerjee 'The Aim of Education' pp.129-133. Gupta, *Early Childhood Education*

⁸⁸ Swamikannu Paul 'Educational Experiments in India' *Educational India* 07/1934 p.13

⁸⁹ Srinivasa Sarma 'The roots of educational reform:' pp.216-18

⁹⁰ M Dapaee, 'Belgian images of the psycho-pedagogical potential of the Congolese during the Colonial Era, 1908-1960' *Paedagogica Historica* (2009)

particularly evidenced by bilingualism.⁹¹ There was also no reference to the distinct educational opportunities of differing communities, such as Muslim girls, which claimed considerable political attention, as demonstrated in earlier chapters. The occasional reference to a collective identity in the journals was only in the context of the *national* community and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in relation to the nation state.⁹² What is unclear is whether the pedagogues were so focussed on a particular construction of the universal child's needs and wants that they viewed the specific context of community and identity as unimportant, or whether this absence was a more consciously political decision to reject traditional identities as uneducated bigotry in view of a more modern, secular approach to both education and to the future Indian state.⁹³

When the pedagogues in *Educational India* discussed the Indian context, they prioritised themes of 'culture' and 'home' over racial and religious identity. In nationalist rhetoric the home was constructed as the repository of the spiritual and cultural views of the nation.⁹⁴ This was the home of the educated middle classes, reflecting the domestic situation of the Indian pedagogues themselves. By contrast, the poor Indian home represented in the journals was perceived to be the key site of threat as the bastion of irrational tradition. In particular, it subsumed the individual identity within a collective identity of family and community. The Indian home was denigrated as the centre of traditional values, and a site of moral and intellectual corruption, and was contrasted to the modernity of the school.⁹⁵ The poor Indian home became a recurring site of 'lack,' with a 'cribbed and confined domestic atmosphere' that made it 'impossible' for the boy 'to feel youth's sense of adventure' and constantly subordinated his desires to domestic and social pressures.⁹⁶ The child was 'in danger'

⁹¹ 'The teaching of English in the Kindergarten Classes' in *Educational Review* 09/1912 p.418; Editorial, *Educational India*, 07/1937 p.22, Women's Page 'Education needs in real intercourse between East and West' *Educational India* 10/1937 p.146

⁹² GS Krishnayya, 'The social approach in Education' *Educational India* 11/1937, Kitroo and Dhar 'Curriculum for Elementary Education'

⁹³ This latter would reflect Srivastava's work on the Doon School in the post-independence era, Sanjay Srivastava *Constructing Post-Colonial India: National Character and the Doon School* (London: Routledge, 1998)

⁹⁴ Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*

⁹⁵ Zakir Hussain 'The Wardha Education Scheme' *Educational India* 01/1938 p.248, Satish Chandra M Joshi 'The suggestible child' *Educational India* 01/1939 p.355

⁹⁶ MA Mazumdar 'Young India' *Educational India*, 04-06/1938 p.397

at home, but the discourse was one of corruption, rather than financial insecurity. Religious, class, and national divisions were regarded as learned prejudice, which developed within children as a result of bad environment.⁹⁷ This was seen as the effect of uneducated parenting, coupled with a flawed cultural understanding of the vulnerability of childhood and need for education.⁹⁸ One feature was a lack of discipline and overindulgence from mothers.⁹⁹ Accompanying this was the figure of the despotic father; disinterested in parenting, but violently enforcing his authority, often while intoxicated, and ‘unfit to be the moral guardian of his children’.¹⁰⁰ The inability, or unwillingness, of poor parents to take into account the perceived innocence of the child meant that children were exposed to moral danger. The latter included *nautch* parties, indecent language and corrupting outdoor spaces.¹⁰¹ These formulations reflected nineteenth century colonial ideas which located threat in the seclusion of the *zenana* and feared the despotism of Muslim, and depravity of Hindu, masculinities.¹⁰² This led Srinivasa Sarma to argue that: ‘almost all delinquencies in schoolboys...are traceable to unbalanced home life’.¹⁰³

If learning in the early years was primarily based on observation and imitation, Srinivasa Sarma maintained that the ‘chief incubator of nervous disorders and misanthropic tendencies is the home’.¹⁰⁴ This suggests a class-based modernising agenda that gave the experts the power to represent, analyse and control lower-class children, because the ‘non-modernity of subaltern parents’ endangered the normal development of their children.¹⁰⁵ The pedagogues also provided the solution, in the regulation of the home. Children were to be ‘guided across the gulf between the school

⁹⁷ Chenciah, ‘Right Training’ p.212

⁹⁸ Editorial, 10/1934 p.142, Public Opinion VS Srinivasa Satstri, *Educational India* 9/1934 p.114, Bagshaw ‘Comparative Study’ p.211

⁹⁹ AV Matthew, ‘Parental Attitude’ *Educational India* 08/1936 p.56, M M Masilamani, ‘Home and School Influences’ *Educational Review* (1915) p.427

¹⁰⁰ Srinivasa Sarma ‘The roots of educational reform:’ p.218, AS Venktataraman, ‘Talking down to children: quite a wrong approach’ *Educational India* 07/1934, Masilamani, ‘Home and School Influences’ p.427, Banerjee ‘Caning in Schools’

¹⁰¹ Masilamani, ‘Home and School Influences’ p.426

¹⁰² Levine *Gender and Empire*

¹⁰³ Banerjee ‘Caning in Schools’ p.372, Srinivasa Sarma ‘The roots of educational reform:’ *Educational India*, 12/1936

¹⁰⁴ Srinivasa Sarma ‘The roots of educational reform:’

¹⁰⁵ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods* p.49

and the home' and only the teacher could facilitate this.¹⁰⁶ Homework was encouraged, as were 'useful and absorbing pastimes' such as stamp collecting.¹⁰⁷ Within the new curriculum, children were to be taught the responsibilities of the different members of the family, to contribute towards the 'regulation of home life.'¹⁰⁸ Dr G.S. Krishnayya, of Teachers College, Kolhapur, provided extensive advice to parents on discipline, leisure and play and the ways in which parents could help 'the young barbarian' 'to become a social being'.¹⁰⁹ Expertise gave authority to intervene in the family and proved that education could only be conveyed properly by those trained to provide it.¹¹⁰

While introducing Indian content into the curriculum, the pedagogues writing in *Educational India* constructed the home environment of the child in terms of 'lack'. The study of pedagogy and child development claimed to be both universal and politically neutral, but was founded upon 'powerful cultural and epistemological assumptions' that emphasised a particular understanding of individuality, rationality and masculinity.¹¹¹ These were not borne of foreign cultural assumptions, but resulted from the maintenance of a particular view of childhood as universally applicable, modern and scientifically proven, delegitimising the multiple other experiences and understandings of childhood as incomplete and inferior. The child was designated as learner at a particular stage in a universal understanding of childhood development. This defined the child's identity as based on age, rather than engaging with the multiple identities of caste, class and religion which were part of the daily life of children in South India, and which directly affected their educational opportunities. Indian pedagogues sought to encourage a relationship between the individual child and the modern state; justifying their intervention in children's lives as experts, which in turn proved their own claim to intellectual equality with the West.

¹⁰⁶ G Ramachandra Rao, Review RA Lyster, 1936 'Hygiene of the School' *Educational India* 03/1937, AS Venkataraman 'Do teachers require to be trained?' *Educational India* 07/1934 p.1,

¹⁰⁷ GS Krishnayya, Review Article 'What the home can do' *Educational India* 04/1939, Paresh Chandra Sen from *The Teacher's Journal* in *Educational India* 08/1934 p.74

¹⁰⁸ Kitroo and Dhar 'Curriculum for Elementary Education'

¹⁰⁹ GS Krishnayya 'Home discipline made easy' in *Educational India* 12/1938

¹¹⁰ Editor Answers *Educational India* 12/1934

¹¹¹ Sengupta, 'An Object Lesson' p.98

Training teachers in progressive pedagogy

Transferring the progressive theories and advice within *Educational India* into practice in the elementary school proved difficult. By 1927 22,000 children had received some training in subjects such as carving, carpet weaving and tailoring, and one-third of teachers had received tuition in teaching these subjects, yet funding constraints meant little systematic vocational instruction occurred, and the primary mode of teaching remained rote-learning.¹¹² Even Gandhi's more high profile campaigns failed to make much headway in mainstream teaching.¹¹³ There is reference made to progressive teaching being taught at only a couple of the male teaching colleges, namely the London Mission Society Rural Community Training School, Erode and the National Theosophical High School, Rishi Valley. By comparison, a number of female-only teaching colleges attempted to train teachers in new ways of teaching and learning, perhaps sensing a new opportunity.¹¹⁴ The DPI's *Quinquennial Reports* (1927-28 to 1931-32, 1932-33 to 1936-37) devoted an entire chapter of what was a largely statistical report to the pedagogical experiments of the Lady Willingdon Training College, Madras. This demonstrated support at the highest levels of government for new educational techniques. The College, and associated Practice School, was established in 1922 by R.S. Subbalakshmi, the first woman graduate from the Madras Presidency and a renowned educationist.¹¹⁵ Prominent in social reform networks, Sister Subbalakshmi had previously established a hostel for child widows and used the College as a means of educational and employment opportunities for them.¹¹⁶ Leadership was later continued by two British women, Miss Gerrard and Miss R. Barrie, gaining sufficient recognition that they were interviewed by the Education Commission in 1928.¹¹⁷ New pedagogical techniques were also used at the Teachers College, Saidapet, and the National Girls Schools, Mylapore but archival evidence for all these institutions is very limited.¹¹⁸

¹¹² NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1927-28 - 1931-32 pp.4, 119

¹¹³ MCA: Proceedings 5/5/1937, 17/3/1938

¹¹⁴ Raman, *Getting Girls to School* p.213

¹¹⁵ BL: ORW.1988.a.1738 *Some illustrious women of India : with special reference to Tamilnadu* (Madras, 1975)

¹¹⁶ Raman, *Getting Girls to school* p.109

¹¹⁷ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge, 2006) pp.57–60, BL: MssEur F221/44 Hartog Evidence

¹¹⁸ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1927-28 - 1931 p.101

Similarly, progressive techniques were used in the St Christopher's Training College, a missionary-led training college for women started by an Englishwoman Miss Brockway in 1923 in Madras.¹¹⁹ In 1936 St Christopher's merged with the neighbouring Bentinck Girls High School, in Vepery, and was supported after 1942 by government grants.¹²⁰ St Christopher's was based explicitly on a tradition of educated Indian women, such as Nur Jahan or Mumtaz Mahal, as well as the example of St Christopher himself, who in Christian tradition was recognised as 'the seeker who found God through helping a child'.¹²¹ The institutions catered only for young women and were led by reforming headmistresses such as Miss Marjorie Sykes (Bentinck High School, Vepery), Miss Helen Veale (National Girls School, Mylapore) or Miss Carrie Gordon (Teacher's College, Saidapet), providing leadership opportunities for British women not possible in the metropole.¹²² The young women who attended were a tiny minority, but teaching was becoming a socially acceptable opportunity for public service and a career for Indian women, particularly for child widows, while tertiary education significantly improved marriage prospects.¹²³ Using progressive methods in female teacher training confronted the symbolism of the all-powerful male teacher and challenged earlier educational strategies of excessive discipline and rote-learning. This trend towards training women teachers was not reflected in *Educational India*, which remained predominantly male in authorship and focus, further reiterating the disjunction between theory and practice and the gender hierarchies of the Presidency.

The teacher training schools explicitly rejected traditional pedagogies as producing 'parrot-like glibness' in which the majority of children 'remained apathetic, dull and uninterested'.¹²⁴ The teacher training involved a complete rejection of an 'unpractical

¹¹⁹ BL: MssEur F220/224 KN Brockway, Marjorie Sykes *Unfinished Pilgrimage: The Story of some South Indian Schools*,

¹²⁰ St Christopher's Training School: <http://scced.edu.in/about-us/> [Accessed 25/8/2015]

¹²¹ MssEur F220/224 p.2

¹²² Hastings, Charlotte 'Understanding Women educators in education policy networks through metropole and colony'. PhD Thesis. University of Edinburgh 2010

¹²³ IOR: Q/13/5/4, Conference with the Education Committee, Calcutta 16/1/1929 p.23, Mahima Manchanda 'Contested Domains: Reconstructing Education and Religious Identity in Sikh and Arya Samaj Schools in Punjab' in Rao, *New Perspectives*

¹²⁴ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1932-33 - 1936-37 p.114

and bookish mentality', replacing it with 'awakening intelligence' and, at Saidapet, 'cultivat[ing] individual freedom and self-control'.¹²⁵ The experiments at Lady Willingdon College had three explicit aims:

1. to fit pedagogical methods more soundly to the psychological needs and the laws of child development
2. to make teaching and curricula progressively more scientific and more socially and culturally effective
3. to discover how to utilise the natural self-activity of the child for its own 'self-education'.¹²⁶

The first aim emphasised the child as the site of scientific experimentation and entailed teaching physiology, psychology, and pedagogy, so as to equip teachers to understand the child. Similarly, the training at St Christopher's was explicitly based on the theories of recognized progressive pedagogues and psychologists such as Dewey, Thorndike, Kilpatrick, and Bagley.¹²⁷ The nursery teacher, Mrs Suganthi Charles, visited Westhill College, Birmingham to be trained in Froebel's Kindergarten ideas, and Maria Montessori herself visited the campus in 1939.¹²⁸ The students in all institutions were encouraged to recreate the scientific laboratory in the classroom through observation of the subject-child and applying a terminology of scientific principles.¹²⁹ By 1936-37, students investigated 'the working and development of the human mind by observation, psychological experiment, intelligence testing and test analysis'. This involved the complete study of the child, including anthropometric measurements, and reports on social and family environment, school attainment, personality and health. All this work was undertaken on the assumption that individual children could be categorized according to their position on a normative developmental pattern, and mirrored the scientific casework model widely used in British social work from around the beginning of the twentieth century.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1927-28 - 1931-32 p.101

¹²⁶ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1932-33 - 1936-37 p.96

¹²⁷ MssEur F220/224 p.353

¹²⁸ MssEur F220/224 pp.50-58

¹²⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Quinquennium 1927-28 - 1931-32, BL: MssEur 221/44

¹³⁰ Mathew Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, democracy and social policy in Britain, c1870-1959* (Oxford: OUP, 1998)

In Lady Willingdon College the students were taught to categorise the children to ensure their engagement in the correct stage of the 'great game of learning'.¹³¹ The intention was to stimulate the imagination: 'children like attacking a difficult task once their interest is roused'. Again there was use of masculine metaphors of mastery and control over activity and ultimately the subject areas themselves. The students engaged in a reformulation of history and language syllabuses and were taught how to modify their lessons according to the intellectual development of each child. While imparting information was important, keeping children interested meant that they were easier to control: 'happy and employed children are not naughty'.¹³² At St Christopher's this involved encouraging the students to differentiate between the 'quick' child and the 'slow' child, with a view to producing teaching strategies 'meant to help not the intelligent, but the retarded'.¹³³ Similarly, at Saidapet, categorising children individually as 'the clever, the average, the dull', meant that each child had 'a chance to work at this own pace'.¹³⁴

The child at school was to understand, and thereby conquer, his environment. However, despite a brief mention of 'the demands of general culture' and the interest in learning Tamil, there was no engagement with education as specific to the Tamil or Indian context at Lady Willingdon College. By contrast, at St Christopher's the young women had to engage more directly with the Indian environment. South Indian music, art, folk dance and handicrafts were taught, with the intention that the children would be 'engaged in handwork of some delightful sort, not very easy to distinguish from playing with toys'.¹³⁵ A Girl Guide company was set up in 1926-27 with two teachers as Captains. Through this the trainee teachers were taught 'Guiding as an Educational Method' and 'made experiments in Indianising the Guide ceremonies', for example through saluting the Guide World Flag instead of the Union Jack.¹³⁶ Teaching was carried out in Tamil, although Telegu was later introduced, and there

¹³¹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3: DPI Quinquennium 1927-28 - 1931-32 pp.97-101

¹³² NLS: IP/25/PJ.3: DPI Quinquennium 1932-33 - 1936-37 p.114, IP/MA.14 *Education in India* 1930-31 p.52

¹³³ BL: MssEur F220/224 p.58

¹³⁴ IOR: V/25/867/1 Corrie Gordon 'Child Education: scheme of work for the first five classes' (Madras: Teachers College Saidapet, 1930) p.4

¹³⁵ BL: MssEur F220/224 p37-38, 222/222 p.8

¹³⁶ BL: MssEur F220/224 p.40

was a particular focus on training the teachers in the ‘the cultural heritage of India’ through excursions to significant historical sites, originally Mahabalipuram and Vellore, but venturing to the cities of North India and the Deccan in subsequent years.¹³⁷ St Christopher’s also engaged more self-consciously in reformulating ideas of the Indian home. The headmistress argued that parents and the Education Department Inspectors were ‘bewildered by the freedom allowed to the children’, and that it took some time to persuade children to play with the toys ‘creatively and imaginatively’ in contravention of parental demands ‘to be sure to be good and sit still!’¹³⁸ The Indian home was recognised as an ‘affectionate hospitable place’ but lacking in ‘regularity and discipline’ in sleeping and eating, leading to ‘illness and waste’.¹³⁹ At Saidapet, the course was explicitly geared to ‘establish connections’ or ‘bridge the gulf’ between school-work, the ‘natural activities of children’ and the home, which was described as an ‘ally’.¹⁴⁰ Using the model of learning through activity, teachers taught children to ‘acquire habits of healthy living through being trained to perform the acts upon which health depends’. However, the focus on ‘cleanliness of person, surroundings, cleanliness in thought, word and deed’ evidences a subtler attempt to regulate the children’s home.¹⁴¹ In curricular terms, Saidapet also focussed on the natural history of the local area, and local historical figures.¹⁴²

In the 1920s and 1930s there was a clear acceptance in the female training colleges that school should be characterised by a ‘happy atmosphere of interested activity’.¹⁴³ Understanding the development and changing learning needs of children was central to the way a new generation of female teachers were being taught. The colleges differed in their attitude to the Indian home, as a site of threat, or collaborator in the education of children, and in the extent to which they used local material culture and traditions as teaching resources. This perhaps reflected the source material and funding sources of the institutions. While poverty was a concern, a class-based

¹³⁷ BL: MssEur F220/224 pp.39,47, Mss 220/222 p.6

¹³⁸ BL: MssEur F220/224 p.73

¹³⁹ BL: MssEur F220/222 Pamphlet Training for Home Life pp.3,8, MssEur F220/224 p.104

¹⁴⁰ IOR: V/25/867/1 Gordon ‘Child Education’ p.2

¹⁴¹ IOR: V/25/867/1 Gordon ‘Child Education’ p.26

¹⁴² IOR: V/25/867/1 Gordon ‘Child Education’ p.36

¹⁴³ BL: MssEur F220/224 p.114

narrative which concentrated on sanitising the poor home failed to engage with the specific consequences of local identities based of caste, religion and gender identities on children's educational opportunities and experiences. The failure to train new teachers to reconcile the local and universal in a practical way was perhaps another indication of why the changes in pedagogical thinking had so little practical impact, and of the continued disjunction between 'espoused theory' and 'theory-in-use' in the classroom.¹⁴⁴

Children's Garden School, Madras

A close look at the functioning of the Children's Garden School founded by Mrs Ellen and Dr V.N. Sharma in 1937 provides further insight into the impact of progressive education on views of the Indian child.¹⁴⁵ Both Dr and Mrs Sharma were interested in New Education. Dr Sharma was a Telegu Theosophist, his wife a German educated in history, art and psychology.¹⁴⁶ They met at the pioneering Odenwald Schule in Germany, before moving to Madras with the aim of implementing progressive education in an Indian environment. The school started with seven children in September 1937. It introduced free midday meals in 1938 and was recognised by the government as a special school in 1939.¹⁴⁷ 132 pupils attended by 1942, and the school moved to its current location, adding a middle school in June 1945, followed by a training school for Kindergarten teachers, a women's hostel and a crèche.¹⁴⁸ By the 1970s it had become an important teacher training institution. The school provided education from 8-11 am for children aged three to eight years, with instruction in English, Tamil and Telegu. There was an admission fee of one Rupee with a continuing monthly fee of three Rupees.¹⁴⁹ In 1941 the school was divided into eight educational stages by intelligence rather than age.¹⁵⁰ The following discussion offers

¹⁴⁴ Sarangapani, *Constructing School Knowledge* Appendix A, Alexander Robin *Culture and Pedagogy: International Comparisons in Primary Education*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) p.307

¹⁴⁵ The Archives and history are a key part of the publicity for this school, and the claim to originality and longevity contribute to its eligibility for funding and support. See <http://www.childrensgardenindia.org> [Accessed 22/10/2014]

¹⁴⁶ The Krishnamurti School was started in 1918 by Annie Besant, and relocated to Mandanapalle, Madras Presidency in 1931 under the Principal GV Subba Rao

¹⁴⁷ Children's Garden School Society (CGS): *'Let none be like another': Report of Children's Garden Society 1937-2007* (Chennai, 2007) p.11

¹⁴⁸ CGS: *'Let none be like another'* p.42

¹⁴⁹ CGS: Extract from 1939-40 school brochure, in *'Let none be like another'* pp.22, 25

¹⁵⁰ CGS: *'Let none be like another'* p.24

a qualitative assessment of the school's values and practices, as the founders sought to create 'a new system of education, uniting the best of what they had learnt in Europe, with the ancient traditions and culture of India'.¹⁵¹

The Children's Garden School clearly paralleled the scientific pedagogical rhetoric of the contemporary educational journals, claiming authority through scientific understanding based on detailed information gathering. The Annual Inspection of 1944 reported that the Kindergarten section was 'pre-eminently a pedagogic laboratory'. Research was undertaken into the activities of the children, along with a 'detailed personal history of each child'.¹⁵² It was constantly reiterated that: 'the school is organised on sound psychological principles' and 'the directors will watch the activities and interests of the child, keeping careful records of its psychological and mental reactions'.¹⁵³ The school's name was inspired by Froebel as a 'garden of learning, where children could learn through play, without fear, and with freedom to express themselves and to awaken their innate talents'.¹⁵⁴ The founding quotation 'Let each be perfect in himself' came from Goethe, further demonstrating the reliance on Western, particularly German, philosophy. Former Headteacher of the Kindergarten, and confidante of Ellen Sharma, M.S. Rajalakshmi claimed (in very orientalist tones): 'that the works of these German intellectuals helped Indians to know India'.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, she condemned colonial and missionary education, which turned children into 'imitative parrots' through rote-learning and produced a system in which Indians 'blindly aped Western ways... totally unaware of art, culture and greatness' of India and alien to Indian 'ways and values'.¹⁵⁶ The Sharmas were also critical of the focus on religious texts within Indian pedagogy, unequivocally rejecting 'religious dogmatism and cultural and economic imperialism'.¹⁵⁷ In contrast, Rajalakshmi

¹⁵¹ Lakshmi Viswanathan *Ellen Sharma's Kindergarten System: Pioneering pre-primary education in India*, Chennai: Seawaves Printers, 2007)

¹⁵² CGS: Annual Inspection Sept and October 1944, CGS Annual Report 1945-46 p.23

¹⁵³ CGS: Appeal by Directors, 'A School for the Little Ones, Mylapore, Madras' in '*Let none be like another*' p.21

¹⁵⁴ CGS: '*Let none be like another*' p.11

¹⁵⁵ MS Rajalakshmi *Under the Banyan Tree* no date of publication (trans. Miss Choodamani)

¹⁵⁶ Rajalakshmi *Under the Banyan Tree*

¹⁵⁷ Viswanathan, *Ellen Sharma's Kindergarten System* pp.55, 57

claimed Ellen Sharma personified ‘the spiritual wisdom of India and the scientific outlook of the West’.¹⁵⁸

While Goethe provided the foundational quotation, the school emblem was the banyan tree as an ‘ancient symbol for wisdom and shelter’, with children swinging from the roots. The Garden School was designed to reflect the *gurukala* system, based on a ‘feeling of familial closeness’ centred round Dr Sharma as *Guru*.¹⁵⁹ The school was imagined in terms of an extended family and community, with the Sharmas assuming the role of ‘surrogate parents’. The education received was to ‘train the child as a member of the community sharing its life with others and helping comrades as a preparation for wider and fuller services in the world’.¹⁶⁰ This involved removing the child from the influence of ‘servants and ayahs’ and placing him under the ‘careful guidance of trained teachers’ who would encourage the child to become ‘independent, courageous, spontaneous, active and social’.¹⁶¹ Discipline was used to help the children ‘acquire a moral sense through love rather than through stern indoctrination’.¹⁶² When inspected by the DPI, the Sharmas argued that it was one of the few ‘child centred’ schools where teachers ‘play the part of guides’.¹⁶³ A retired teacher insisted that ‘discipline begins outside the self with submission to authority, but true discipline ultimately comes largely from within’.¹⁶⁴ Using love to encourage self-regulation was key to the disciplinary strategy of the school.

The material culture of the school was to be both Indian and progressive. The initial exhibitions for parents and supporters included dolls and cars for the younger children, a handiwork table, an individual occupations table, a group work table and a school material table.¹⁶⁵ The curriculum involved traditional Indian *kummi* exercises, and equipment made of Mysore wooden beads, tamarind and eucalyptus seeds, coconut

¹⁵⁸ Rajalakshmi, *Under the Banyan Tree*

¹⁵⁹ Rajalakshmi, *Under the Banyan Tree*

¹⁶⁰ CGS: Annual Report 1938 p.13

¹⁶¹ CGS: Ellen and VN Sharma *Work by Principals 1942-43*, (self-published 27/3/1943) p.5

¹⁶² Rajalakshmi *Under the Banyan Tree*

¹⁶³ CGS: ‘*Let none be like another*’ p.9

¹⁶⁴ Interview with retired teacher G Saradambal 6/7/1999 – Viswanathan, *Ellen Sharma’s Kindergarten System* p.53

¹⁶⁵ CGS: Ellen Sharma Letter 8/9/1937 in ‘*Let none be like another*’ p.3

shells, pine cones, waste paper, colourful threads and palm leaves.¹⁶⁶ Songs and play materials were all sourced locally. Local dances were a particularly important aspect of school life; used to teach ‘undisciplined wild little fellows’ self-control and ‘obedience to an idea, not to a person’.¹⁶⁷ Lessons were taught through play, for example the children set up a small bazaar in class and bought and sold goods. Grammar was learned through language games and flash cards; maths through indoor and outdoor games and drawings in the sand.¹⁶⁸ The outside too was re-fitted with a playing field, skipping ropes, a sand pit, climbing ladder, and see-saws, and the school had two groups of cubs and bulbuls, as well as scouts.¹⁶⁹ Yet, while the teacher had a role as facilitator, it was recognised that ‘you cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant...the child also teaches itself.’¹⁷⁰ The child here was primarily seen as a learner engaging actively with their surroundings, and seeing inspiration and opportunity in their community and cultural traditions.

The Sharmas tried to change perceptions of what constituted ‘education’ and ‘what distinctly suits the Indian child’ arguing in their appeal for funding in 1937 that the school aimed to train children for social responsibility by leading ‘gradually from the often neglected play world’ to more academic teaching.¹⁷¹ This contained an implicit criticism that Indians undervalued the concept of play, assumed to be inherent and natural to childhood.¹⁷² Ellen Sharma began working with toy manufacturers to produce Indian toys to prove to parents that they were a more necessary investment in children than clothes and jewels.¹⁷³ With a focus on the ‘Indian child’ and the formation of ‘a real India school’, the Sharmas emphasised ‘there is no differentiation in the school between castes and creeds, poor or rich’. Equality was absolutely fundamental to the ethos of the school, and rich, middle-class and poor children were all explicitly welcomed and treated equally ‘so that no distinction or bar may be felt in

¹⁶⁶ CGS: ‘*Let none be like another*’ p.24

¹⁶⁷ CGS: 1939-40 brochure: ‘*Let none be like another*’ p.14

¹⁶⁸ Viswanathan, *Ellen Sharma’s Kindergarten System* pp.42-49

¹⁶⁹ CGS: Annual Report 1945-46 p.20

¹⁷⁰ Viswanathan *Ellen Sharma’s Kindergarten System*: p.298

¹⁷¹ CGS: VN Sharma and E Sharma ‘An Appeal’ Madras 1937 ‘in’ *Let none be like another* p.13

¹⁷² CGS: Letter 1943 from SV Ramamurthi, in *Let none be like another* p.13

¹⁷³ Rajalakshmi, *Under the Banyan Tree*

the plastic minds of the little ones themselves'.¹⁷⁴ The multiplicity of Indian languages was recognised - Marathi, Malayalam, Bengali, Canarese and Tamil - although with an overarching focus on English as a common language. Attention was paid to all religions and 'no child is compelled to do anything against his or her creed'. There was an ethos of teaching morality, ethics, and respect through the 'atmosphere of the school' rather than a specific doctrine.¹⁷⁵ This was to contribute to a 'more all-India and International (Universal) atmosphere in all spheres of our educational work', which echoed both the internationalism of the Sharmas, but also Dr Sharma's roots in the Theosophical movement.¹⁷⁶ Parents were encouraged to get involved in the school: in the Parents' Committee, on Founder's Day and on Mother's Day.

Undoubtedly the school progressed because it was supported by prominent members of the community. The school was opened by Sri Sami Saswatanandaji, President of Ramakrishna Mission.¹⁷⁷ An Advisory Committee was started in 1938, and a Parents' Committee in 1940. This comprised of prominent social reformers, such as Sister R.S. Subbalakshmi, former headmistress of Lady Willingdon College, D.T. Chiranjivi, Principal of Wesley Training College, Dr Hamid Ali Muslim, women reformer, and Mrs A.C. Krishna Rao, a founder (along with the Sharmas) of the Stree Seva Mandir to provide for poor women and children. It was presided over by S.N. Panchanadeswar, a prominent educator.¹⁷⁸ They were visited by a number of illustrious people, including the Minister of Education and the Chief Minister, and received donations from individuals such as Sir Archibald (the Governor of Madras) and Lady Nye.¹⁷⁹ When the new building opened in November 1941, it was blessed by his holiness Sri Swami Sasvatananda Maharaja with public support from the Advocate General and MCAS member T.R. Venkataram Sastri; the District Education Officer and the Assistant Commissioner of Police.¹⁸⁰ These, predominantly Indian, individuals were involved in social reform movements and philanthropic work, but

¹⁷⁴ CGS: Ellen Sharma 'The Public and the School', Financial Statement 1940-41 p.7

¹⁷⁵ CGS: Annual Report 1938 p.13

¹⁷⁶ CGS: Annual Report, assumed to be 1943 p.7

¹⁷⁷ CGS: Ellen Sharma Letter 8/9/1937 p.3

¹⁷⁸ CGS: Leaflet *Information for Parents*, undated, probably mid 1940s

¹⁷⁹ CGS: 'Let none be like another' p.32

¹⁸⁰ Viswanathan, *Ellen Sharma's Kindergarten System* p.26

had very close ties as officials and professionals to the political and bureaucratic establishment.¹⁸¹ The mention of so many prominent names highlights the degree of commitment to children's education, but also a general agreement with the Sharmas' interpretation of progressive pedagogy. This can be extended to suppose a broad agreement, among this elite, with their perception of what constituted the child-learner.

When New Education was implemented practically, the practitioners had to engage with the context of India in a much more profound way than the pedagogues who merely engaged with ideas in *Educational India*. While the Sharmas accepted these new pedagogical theories, and applied them scientifically, they had not only to use the materials available imaginatively but also to engage with the everyday reality of the child. This meant that there was much more focus on the daily concerns of teaching in multiple languages, of providing breakfast to poor children and developing strategies to deal with a number of conflicting religious beliefs. In addition, the Sharmas had to demonstrate to the surrounding community the validity of these ideas to maintain funding for the school. While the impact of the school might have been more limited than the journals, the Sharmas suggested a more nuanced appreciation of the combination of Western and Indian ideas regarding both pedagogy and children. This was revealed in the gentler pedagogical focus on activity rather than mastery; the more profound interaction with the context and the frequent use of horticultural examples which indicated more awareness of the limitations of training a living being.

Conclusion

A detailed study of the introduction of New Education adds a further layer to our understanding of the discursive constructions of Indian childhood by a small professional elite in Madras in the 1920s and 1930s. This discourse surrounding New Education was enthusiastically embraced by almost all pedagogues writing in the journal *Educational India*. By specifically distancing themselves from 'traditional' India, seen in both colonial and precolonial pedagogies; by distancing themselves from more overtly political educational ideas of leaders such as Gandhi, and by ignoring

¹⁸¹ Anne Logan 'Policy networks and the juvenile court: the reform of youth justice, c 1905-1950' *Crime and Misdemeanours* 3:2 (2009)

political debates over the expansion and funding of compulsory education, the pedagogues proved their own credentials as modern scientific experts. As Indians, the pedagogues claimed a unique role in understanding and representing the 'Indian child'. However, their power to define and explain was legitimised by their role as experts in a universal science of pedagogy and the use of scientific testing and categorisation. Scientific authority established Indian pedagogues as peers in modernity of Western pedagogical thinkers. It reflected the self-positioning of a locally based elite eager to resist British colonialism through a demonstration of intellectual and moral equality, and keen to contribute to what they perceived to be a global circulation of modern ideas. Scientific authority also justified expert intervention in the Indian home, and the pedagogues evidenced very little regard for the authority of the family. This contrasted with the more overtly political educational actors seen in earlier chapters.

Underpinning the new pedagogical ideas was a particular construction of the child as learner, to be found within the institution of the school. This child was playful and malleable, and acquired knowledge through engaging actively in the learning process. Through activity, the child could gain mastery over the curriculum but also over themselves, internalising the values of rationality and self-discipline. This positioned Indian children as equal to those in the West, including both in a universal developmental sequence. This normative construction contributed to the emerging global idea that biological immaturity - recognised variously as innocence, physical vulnerability or intellectual plasticity - was the most important social identity in the life of the child, and informed all their social relationships. There was no perceived need to theorise the 'Indian child', despite the multiplicity of ways in which childhoods were experienced on the subcontinent. Rather, in their writings about children the pedagogues placed age, or childhood, as the primary identifier, above national, communal or gender identities, which were associated with non-modernity or assumed to be important in adulthood.

The claim that the modern view of scientifically measured childhood was universally applicable delegitimised the multiple other experiences and understandings of childhood as incomplete and inferior. This delegitimised the childhood experience of

the majority of children (around 67%) within the Presidency who failed to attend even elementary schooling.¹⁸² The individuals working with children on a daily basis, at the teacher training colleges and Children's Garden School, evidence a much more nuanced understanding of this relationship between universal childhood and the Indian context. While the Lady Willingdon College implemented the more theoretical aspects of pedagogy and science, both St Christopher's College and the Children's Garden School used Indian materials and local dance traditions within their teaching. Not merely focusing on the child as individual, the Sharmas and other trainee teachers directly sought to acknowledge and accommodate the multiplicity of the cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds of the children in their classroom. While the teachers remained committed to progressive theory, and were concerned about the home situation of many children, the daily engagement with poverty, with parents and with the children themselves, seems to have made the teachers more understanding of the role of the individual within the wider community. They were noticeably less critical of the Indian home, or of parents. This allowed them to participate in what Sarkar calls an 'interactive universalism' in a much more thoughtful way than those who wrote in the pedagogical journals.¹⁸³

The interest in the Children's Garden School demonstrated the close links between the pedagogues and the reforming networks involved in other aspects of the child-saving project. As with the networks of juvenile justice reformers discussed in Chapter Six, the teachers were much more aware of their avuncular role within, rather than external to, the home community. The teachers legitimised their authority to intervene not only from being experts, but as semi-familial, as understanding the Indian home and context. Furthermore, the difference between the pedagogical journals and the practicalities of working with children evidences another form of the disjunction between theory and practice so often noticed by contemporaries and in the historiographical literature. It may also have a gendered dimension, teachers at the training colleges and Children's Garden Schools being almost exclusively female. Ultimately, constructing modern binaries of 'adulthood and childhood', of playful vs.

¹⁸² Sarangapani, *Constructing School Knowledge* p.257

¹⁸³ Sarkar, *Rebels, Wives, Saints* p.9

responsible, or of learning vs. working, were not appropriate in the lives of most children in the Madras Presidency, and certainly did not reflect their experience or opportunities.

(Chapter Four) Producing the healthy schoolchild

The intimate link between the body of the child and its intellectual development became a key aspect of the expanding educational concerns within the Madras Presidency in the 1920s and 1930s. The agreement within the Corporation of Madras that 'if you cannot feed the body of a child you cannot feed the brain' reflected a radical redefinition of the role of education authorities and a change in state welfare provision.¹ This has been ignored by previous historians, who have seen malnutrition only as a public health concern.² As Indians became more prominent in governance in the Madras Presidency they extended the authority of the State over the body of the schoolchild. The medical inspection of children was introduced in schools, allowing policy makers to 'know' the child statistically and to chart the health of the school population. This increased knowledge facilitated a number of interventions, particularly the introduction of free midday meals for poor students - a far-reaching departure in intervention in the health of the child, not introduced more widely in India until the 1980s.³

Both schemes, as well as a brief attempt to introduce a children's hospital, allow a study of the relationship between the state and the child. They detail the changing relationship between the state and parents over who claimed the authority to control the child's body, as well as who had the responsibility to provide food. Within this broad definition of 'state', the variety of schemes demonstrates the relationships between provincial and municipal government, and between definitions of education and public health, at discursive and practical level. This indicates the complicated nature of governance in the late colonial period, and particularly the key role of Indians operating at municipal level.⁴ Attempts to define the child statistically, departmental differences over funding and organisation, and discussions over intervention, all reveal

¹ MCA: Proceedings 11/3/1930

² VR Muraleedharan 'Diet, Disease and Death in Colonial South India' *Economic and Political Weekly* 29:1 (Jan 1994) pp.55-63, David Arnold's 'Discovery of Malnutrition and Diet in Colonial India' *Indian Economic and Social Review* 31:1 (1994) pp.1-26

³ Sunil Amrith, 'Food and Welfare in India, c. 1900-1950' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50: 4 (2008) pp.1010-1035

⁴ Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce* p.9, Mark Harrison *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian preventative medicine, 1859-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) p.228

the dyarchical state's claims to authority and to modernity within the context of the schoolroom. Perhaps unwittingly, they also strengthened a normative discourse which institutionalised the child within the formal education of the school. Underpinning many of the discussions – on paediatric medicine, on the use of Western drugs, and on the growing influence of nutritional science – was a claim to authority to intervene based on scientific modernity. This debate over scientific authority included a rejection of traditional Ayurvedic and Unani medical practices.⁵ The changing relationships between experts, parents and local councillors form an important backdrop to new ideas about the child and child health.

Reflecting earlier chapters on compulsory education, the discussion here of the Midday Meals Scheme interrogates the way childhood itself was imagined and the link between the physical and intellectual development of the child. This is set alongside an exploration of the growing interest in universalising narratives of the child's right to health and to education. The assumption of the child as 'becoming' fitted into a wider conceptualisation of the child as a future citizen and therefore the subject of investment in the future nation. There was also a growing recognition of the child as 'being', with an independent opinion that adults ought to at least consider before making decisions. This tension between the discursive construction of childhood as either universal or as specifically Indian, and then the practical implications of belonging to a marginalised group is worth exploring further, specifically in the context of children's health.

Medical Inspection of Schoolchildren

The idea of the medical inspection of schoolchildren in the Madras Presidency appears to have been introduced first at the 1912 Madras Sanitary Conference by the Health

⁵ The relationship between Western and Indian medicine was a complicated one, and the nationalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s both championed Indian medicine and was deeply ambivalent about it. Pratik Chakrabarti, *Western Science in Modern India: Metropolitan Methods, Colonial Practices* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), David Arnold *Science, technology and medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), Poonam Bala (ed.) *Medicine and colonialism: historical perspectives in India and South Africa* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014). Of particular note is the argument that Western medicine only really reached 'colonial enclaves' and the big cities, not the whole population. Poonam Bala *Medicine and Medical Policies in India: social and historical perspectives* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007)

Officer for Bangalore.⁶ Although the idea was dismissed, a further two articles appeared in the *Lancet* in 1913, demonstrating the growing interest in the impact that school sanitation had on the health and productivity of students.⁷ The idea was seized upon with alacrity following the First World War. A number of expert bodies emerged to provide advice, such as the Advisory Committee on Public Health Administration (1922), comprised of both medical practitioners and local councillors.⁸ This reflected a growing, particularly gendered, interest in maternal and infant health interventions both within Madras and across British India.⁹ It also reflected the increased participation of Indians in governance. In 1926 the provincial government introduced a scheme of school medical inspection for all students in secondary education under the direct control of the DPI.¹⁰ The scheme was extended in 1928 to include colleges and all elementary schools in areas where elementary education was compulsory and became a condition for government funding for all schools under private management.¹¹ In 1932 the scheme was abandoned due to budgetary restraints, with the exception of schools within Poonamalle Health Unit, a rural area which acted as an experimental site for provincial and international health interventions.¹² This paralleled developments in other provinces. In 1941 the all-India Central Advisory Board of Education and Central Advisory Board of Health formed a Joint Committee to provide 'systematic attention to the health of children'.¹³ This aimed to encourage educational success through cooperation between departments and between regions of India.

⁶ BL: 'School medical inspection in India' *Lancet*, (16/8/1913) p.508

⁷ BL: 'School Medical Inspection in India' *Lancet* (23/8/1913) p.597

⁸ BL: 'Notes from India on Madras Presidency' *Lancet* (19/3/1921)

⁹ Sujata Mukherjee 'Disciplining the Body? Health care for Women and Children in early C20 Bengal' in Deepak Kumar (ed.) *Disease and Medicine in India: a historical overview* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001), Barbara Ramusack, 'Women's hospitals and midwives in Mysore, 1870-1920' in Ernst, Waltraud Ernst and Pati, Biswamoy (ed.) *India's Princely States: People, princes and colonialism* (Abingdon: Routledge 2007)

¹⁰ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3. DPI Report 1927-28, IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1926 p.66

¹¹ NLS: IP/QA.7 Annual report of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India (PHC) 1928 p.122

¹² IOR: V/26/845/2 Central Advisory Board of Health *Medical Inspection of School Children and Teaching of Hygiene in Schools Joint (Jolly) Committee or Jolly Report* 1941 (New Delhi, 1942) p.2. On Poonamalle see IOR: V/24/3706 DPH, 1938, 1939, 1941

¹³ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report

Running parallel to the Presidency based initiatives, in 1922 it was decided by the Health Committee of the Municipal Corporation of Madras that the medical officers in charge of Corporation dispensaries should carry out a medical inspection of all children in elementary schools under direct Corporation management.¹⁴ The scheme was quickly deemed impracticable and a special officer was appointed as an 'experimental measure to carry out the medical inspection of school children'. This second proposal was initiated by the Education Committee and received support from across the chamber - particularly from the Justice Party - although the cost of implementation was disputed.¹⁵ By the end of 1923 5,670 boys from 38 Corporation schools had been inspected. The Public Health Commissioner was able to declare 'school medical inspection, though in its infancy, has taken root'.¹⁶ The Corporation continued to expand medical inspection throughout the city for elementary schools, particularly in areas under compulsory education. In 1939 four medical inspectors and two female inspectors carried out the inspection of 17,258 boys and 11,884 girls (about 87% and 83% respectively of those on the school rolls).¹⁷

Driven by modern ideas of governmentality and progress, the statistical surveillance of the population facilitated public health interventions and assisted in the 'creation of the colonial subject'.¹⁸ With the introduction of medical inspection children became a particular feature of this control. This mirrored earlier developments in Britain in which a statistical 'knowing' of the child helped to radically redefine the state's role in relation to children.¹⁹ Within the Corporation, each inspection was carried out by a doctor of the grade of Sub-Assistant Surgeon and included a full body examination 'from top to toe' which lasted about fifteen minutes.²⁰ In 1939 for example, the statistics detailed 9,357 boys (54%) and 5,235 girls (44%) as 'defective' and requiring

¹⁴ MCA: Annual Report of the Health Officer, Corporation of Madras (COM Health Report), 1918 p.4, Proceedings 13/12/1922

¹⁵ MCA: Proceedings 20/2/1923 pp.36-37

¹⁶ NLS: IP/QA.7 PHC 1923 p.130

¹⁷ MCA: COM Health Report 1939 p.2

¹⁸ Sehrawat, *Colonial Medical Care in North India*: (Oxford: OUP, 2013) pp.xlix – xlvii, Harrison, *Public Health* p.3, Hodges *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*

¹⁹ Bernard Harris, *The Health of the Schoolchild: a history of school medical service in England and Wales*, (Buckingham: OUP, 1995) p.61, Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*, Donzelot, *Policing of Families*

²⁰ MCA: Proceedings 11/4/1933 p4, 14, 23/9/1924 p.259

treatment. 9% boys and 3% girls were listed for poor cleanliness and 13% boys and 2% girls for malnutrition.²¹ This not only brought children under the scrutiny of the expert, but brought them into personal contact with a representative of the state other than the teacher, still within the classroom but outside the control of parents. The production of statistics also helped provide the scientific evidence required within the emerging discourse of the body of the normal child.

Taking responsibility for child health

In his report of 1919 the Health Officer for the Corporation made an impassioned plea for medical inspection. He argued that while provisions had been made for infant welfare, the Corporation 'should give thought to the welfare of its grown-up children', the schoolchildren.²² The state was perceived to have an obligation to public health and sanitation. This was not legally binding but rather 'a moral code, a code of conduct' which would facilitate the entry and retention of poor children in school, and thereby 'be of the greatest advantage to the health of the whole Presidency.'²³ The Health Officer argued that 'any scheme for national well-being and prosperity' needed to start with children for 'the child of today is the citizen of tomorrow, and would be a useful asset or a drag on the nation according to its health.'²⁴ The idea of the child as future citizen - and consequently as both an investment in the future nation and a responsibility of the modern state - was seen in the Director of Public Health's argument that 'civilised humanity has come to realise, more particularly during the last 25 to 30 years, that the child problem is the greatest social question of the day'.²⁵ An interest in child health was seen as not merely for the child itself, but it was argued that 'the welfare of the child is the welfare of the nation'. This mirrored wider nationalist discourses which sought to build a healthy nation, and to foreground the 'harmony between body, mind and spirit' as central to the cause of regenerating the Indian nation.²⁶ In particular, modern science now highlighted the impact of 'minor disabilities appearing in childhood or early youth' and the possibility of 'far-reaching

²¹ MCA: COM Health Report 1939 p.32

²² NLS: IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1919

²³ NLS: IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1919 p.5

²⁴ MCA: COM Health Report 1926 p.87

²⁵ IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1927 p.36

²⁶ Nagendranath Gangulee, *Health and Nutrition in India* (London: Faber&Faber, 1939) p.33

effects on health in later years if they are not properly treated in their early stages'.²⁷ In this discourse, children were portrayed as future adults, worthy of investment for their potential.

The child was imagined not only in terms of future value as adult-in-the-making, but also as current rights holder who as a vulnerable individual had a claim on the protection of the state. The Director of Public Health argued that:

Every child has the right to a fair chance of enjoying its heritage of life, and if the individuals primarily responsible for his birth are lacking in the knowledge essential for the fulfilment of their obligations to the child, it becomes the duty of the state and of society at large to interfere on behalf of those.²⁸

This echoed British discourses, often linked to the Chief Medical Officer in Britain Dr George Newman, who emphasised the need to 'arouse in the parents an interest in and a sense of responsibility for the care of their children.'²⁹ The Corporation Health Officer agreed that compulsory education

carried with it the further obligation on the parent or guardian to keep the children in a fit state of health for school attendance. The parent's duty is to see that the body of the child is maintained in a cleanly state; the master's to attend to the moral and mental equipment of the child.³⁰

Later, in 1941, the all-India Jolly Report on medical inspection highlighted 'the essential unity of the child's life in his home and in the school'. However, when the parents failed to adequately care for their children, the Report advocated state intervention within the home.³¹ The teacher was 'called in to use his influence and persuasive powers over the parents'. In 1934 a list of the defective pupils was maintained by each teacher, whose duty was to 'sermonise as much and as often as possible to the parent on the adage – a clean mind in a clean body'.³² In a rarely used phrase, the teacher was required to act *in loco parentis*, taking 'charge of sick children, as if they were their own parents'.³³ As the personification of the state within the community, the health of the schoolchild also became the responsibility of the teacher.

²⁷ IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1927 p.44

²⁸ IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1927 p.36

²⁹ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report p.26

³⁰ NLS IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1919 p.4

³¹ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report p.7

³² IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report; MCA: COM Health Report 1926 p.96

³³ MCA: Proceedings 13/12/1935 pp.12-13

The assumption that parents required external help to take an interest in the health of their children situated threat within the family and home, but recovery within the school.³⁴ This was seen again in 1927 when the Corporation Health Officer stressed the ‘extraordinary perfection commonly found in the newly-born’ only to emphasise the corresponding problem that many children were ‘doomed in advance to ill health and early death’ largely a result of the ‘social customs, traditions and habits’ which he perceived to be ‘in many cases eminently hostile to his healthy development’.³⁵ While in the discourses of education and juvenile justice the parents and home were accepted as legitimate authorities, for example in matters of religion, within public health discourses they were viewed as a particular danger and site of threat to the physical body of the child. In 1926 27% boys and 40% girls were ‘found to be dirty in their person and clothing, about 40% of them being verminous’.³⁶ Associating personal hygiene with intellectual development, the Corporation Health Officer then argued that ‘uncleanliness constitutes a sign of parental irresponsibility’. This was revisited in a number of debates over parental failure to supply adequate, or at least clean, clothing for their children.³⁷ The failure of parents to look after their children’s health was linked to both ignorance and neglect. The Corporation Health Officer assumed that disease was the result of ‘insanitary conditions of the home’ but that treatment was problematic because ‘parents are very loathe to follow up the latter [hospital’s] advice’.³⁸ Few of the boys prescribed treatment actually attended the hospital. This was probably as a result of poverty, but was attributed to the ‘conservatism and mostly superstitious ignorance’ of the parents.³⁹ In 1937 4,860 parents were present during the medical examination of their children, although this initial attribution of care was undermined by the claim that parents were using the inspection as an opportunity to receive treatment for their own ill-health.⁴⁰ While there was continued anxiety that

³⁴ NLS: IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1919 p.4

³⁵ NLS: IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1927 p.27

³⁶ MCA: COM Health Report 1926

³⁷ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.493, 28/3/1939 pp.35-36, NLS: IP/25/PJ.3. DPI Report 1929-30 p.34

³⁸ MCA: COM Health Report 1926 p.99

³⁹ MCA: COM Health Report 1926 p.91

⁴⁰ MCA: COM Health Report 1937

poverty prevented treatment, the 1941 Jolly Report made it clear that the home (and particularly the mother) was a site of threat to colonial – and dyarchical - modernity.⁴¹

Formulating a response: paediatric medicine

The expansion of public health statistics and ensuing debates was a largely bureaucratic concern. It was echoed in the political arena in the attempts of Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi to establish a hospital for children in Madras city in 1927.⁴² Reddi cited the work of Newman and school medical inspection in England, arguing that the current lack of medical resources specifically for children was ‘in direct contravention of the recognised principle observed in other civilised countries: “Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give”’.⁴³ Reflecting her participation in the international feminist and child rights movements based primarily around the League of Nations, Reddi was constructing the child as a rights holder in the present. She was also establishing a claim for paediatrics as a distinct discipline within medicine, which included a focus on Western science and allopathic medicine, on preventative medicine, and on the child’s body as medically distinct from the adult body.⁴⁴ ‘Tragically’ high mortality rates among children were specifically blamed on ignorance and unscientific practices, children being ‘absolutely at the mercy of the grandmother and the barber women’, and the poor Indian home being a particular site of contamination.⁴⁵ Ayurvedic medicine was also treated with suspicion as not conforming to Western rules of science.⁴⁶ Elite professionals such as Reddi, mirroring the pedagogues in Chapter Three, used this rejection of traditional practices as part of their own claim to modernity, and used this to contest colonial assumptions regarding Indian backwardness.⁴⁷ While claiming that children’s bodies shared characteristics the world over but were distinct from adults, Reddi feared the impact of the home on racial degeneracy, comparing ‘the thin wasted limbs’ of Indian children with ‘the muscular, round limbs of the Western children, their cheerful happy expressions with

⁴¹ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report p.14

⁴² TNSAL: MLC debates 31/3/1927 p.1414

⁴³ TNSAL: MLC debates 31/3/1927 p.1417

⁴⁴ Hendrick *Children, Childhood and English Society*,

⁴⁵ TNSAL: MLC debates 31/3/1927 p.1415

⁴⁶ Jeffery, *Politics of Health in India*

⁴⁷ Bala (ed) *Medicine and Colonialism*, Sehrawat *Colonial Medical Care* pp. xlviii-xlix, Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*: p.1

the melancholy and dejected looks of our children'. When Reddi argued that the government had 'to give relief to our innocent young, the speechless and helpless millions of India who are to be the future bulwarks of the State?' she saw these children not just as future potential, but as currently vulnerable and therefore the current responsibility of the state.⁴⁸ While she received support, for example from Congress politician A.B. Shetty, the debate again centred round eugenicist concerns that 'the first requisite for national prosperity is the physical wellbeing of the children of that country'.⁴⁹ These contrasting views of childhood were tied together later in the all-India Report on Medical Inspection which emphasised the 'child's right to health and happiness'. This ran parallel to the 'common aim, to aid the evolution of healthy and socially useful citizens' and thereby build the nation.⁵⁰ Ultimately funds were given to rent temporary accommodation to begin the establishment of the Children's Hospital but more in terms of an investment in 'racial success and national greatness' than a specific concern for the child.⁵¹

Formulating a response: public health statistics

Returning to the bureaucratic sphere, there remained continued confusion as to whether the gathering of statistics relating to schoolchildren should be a public health or educational concern. At provincial level, although inspection was carried out by medical practitioners, the results were organised and collated by the DPI, who had oversight over the sanitation in schools, and the teacher remained important in implementation.⁵² In 1930 the Director of Public Health highlighted the need for a cohesive public policy in line with other public health interventions, and the need for consistency and standardisation of methods of inspection and reporting.⁵³ At Corporation level, the inspections were carried out under the ultimate oversight of the Health Officer, who issued a detailed annual report of statistics. There appears to have been closer cooperation and awareness of interdependence between the Education and Health Departments within the Corporation. The Health Department often reiterated

⁴⁸ TNSAL: MLC debates 31/3/1927 p.1415

⁴⁹ TNSAL: MLC debates 31/3/1927 pp.1423-24

⁵⁰ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report p.8, 26

⁵¹ TNSAL: MLC debates 31/3/1927 p.1424

⁵² MCA: Proceedings 25/11/1925 p.352

⁵³ IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1930 p.36, 1931, 1938 p.36

the importance of ‘the education of the masses’ to combat ‘ignorance and superstition’ which continued to ‘circumvent the best efforts of the sanitarian’.⁵⁴

The idea of a cooperative endeavour to educate the population and increase public health, involving interventions at all levels of society, was accepted to be ‘a big and complicated question that can be satisfactorily solved only when all of us – the rich, middle classes and the poor – are all educated enough for citizenship and for properly discharging our duties by one another.’⁵⁵ What was less amicable was the accusation by local councillors that medical inspection was another example of the provincial government ‘shirking responsibility’, attempting to ‘take credit for the increase in elementary education’ but also attempting to ‘escape its share of contribution’ with funding coming from municipal level.⁵⁶ As with the funding of education and juvenile justice, the discourse of appearing modern and claiming an interventionist role appears to have been more important in the MLC than the actual interventions themselves.

Within the Corporation scheme medical inspectors were paid at the level of Sub-Assistant Doctors. The 1938 budget introduced a scheme which used honorary medical inspectors to enlist public-spirited practitioners, paying them a small honorarium, strikingly similar to the Honorary Judges discussed in Chapter Six.⁵⁷ This fitted the principle of minimum expenditure, espoused by Congress party councillor, and former Mayor, S. Venkatachalam Chetty who argued:

it is our duty so far as the children in our schools are concerned to study finances and their health, and if possible, to help them to develop their bodies. So it is not with a view to shirking our responsibility that I am making this proposal but I do want that the expenditure should be curtailed as far as possible.⁵⁸

Despite initial support, the scheme was condemned in 1939 as an ‘utter failure’ apparently due to doctors being more interested in their own more lucrative practices,

⁵⁴ NLS: IP/QA.7 PHC 1925 p.178, IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1920 pp.5-6

⁵⁵ NLS: IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1921 p.4

⁵⁶ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1936 pp.22-23

⁵⁷ MCA: Proceedings 2/2/1937, 30/3/1938 p.9. See also VR Muraleedharan ‘Rural health care in Madras Presidency: 1919-39’ *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 24:3 (1987) pp.31-33

⁵⁸ MCA: Proceedings 1/12/1936 p.23

and many Councillors disowned the policy.⁵⁹ Equally significant was the growing disquiet felt over medical inspection itself, and the feeling that the scheme produced ‘no tangible good’ and was an ‘enormous waste of money’ within a particularly stretched Budget.⁶⁰ As with the question of education, there was a difference between a theoretical acceptance of the need for medical inspection and a political commitment to pay for it. The Corporation Health Officer’s frustrated comment in 1921, describing politicians as ‘talking platitudes but achieving little’, seems characteristic of the next twenty years.⁶¹

The quantitative collection of statistics and their reproduction in tables and graphs facilitated the monitoring of mortality rates and disease of children in school, allowing the state to better understand the child.⁶² The statistics contributed to the formation of a normative discourse surrounding the child, as healthy, male and in school. In 1936-37 for example, 17,761 boys and 11,615 girls were inspected, out of which 51% of boys and 36% girls were recorded as ‘defective’, (14% and 2% respectively suffering from malnutrition).⁶³ Many were undernourished ‘mainly due to lack of balanced diet and vitamins necessary for proper growth and development.’⁶⁴ The superior result for girls appears to reflect the smaller numbers and higher socio-economic status of the girls attending school, rather than a clear gender difference in physical fitness. This discourse of the normal body of the child as physically and statistically distinct from the adult body reflected the growing participation of Indians in a discourse which treated children’s bodies as the same the world over.

Medical intervention

The statistics were also used to facilitate intervention. The Director of Public Health stressed that ‘it is not enough to point out defects without indicating how they can be rectified.’⁶⁵ Further, he emphasised that education alone was insufficient if the

⁵⁹ MCA: Proceedings 12/9/1939 p.32

⁶⁰ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939 pp.15, 30, 29/11/1939

⁶¹ NLS: IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1921 p.3

⁶² Donzelot, *Policing of Families*, Garland, *Punishment and Welfare*,

⁶³ MCA: COM Health Report 1936-37 p.23

⁶⁴ MCA: COM Health Report 1937 p.33

⁶⁵ IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1927p.41

facilities, for example for personal hygiene, were unavailable. In Madras city there was a call for the Chief Medical Officer not only to oversee the medical inspection but to ‘find remedies’, reflecting changing notions of governmentality.⁶⁶ There was also significant support for early intervention and the recognition that medical inspection ‘was more as a prevention than as a cure’.⁶⁷ This move from curative and reactive medicine - focussed on epidemics and starvation through famine - to preventative medicine was part of a wider change in public health under dyarchy. The move represented a major change in the way the state’s relationship with the child was viewed in terms of a modern responsibility to care for the vulnerable.⁶⁸

Expressing her support for a children’s hospital and in order to prevent ‘a criminal waste of life among children here’, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi argued that access to ‘proper medicine’ would decrease child mortality by around 80%, although she recognised that poor nutrition was a significant underlying factor.⁶⁹ As part of direct medical intervention to eradicate hookworm, the Madras Medical Association initiated a campaign to eradicate the parasite in 1922.⁷⁰ The initiative bore similarities to earlier vaccination campaigns and received particular attention and funds from a number of international bodies, such as the Health Section of the League of Nations, International Health Board of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation.⁷¹ Beginning with a pilot project in Munnar, Western Ghats, the campaign expanded from the Telegu to Tamil speaking areas. The focus was the ‘mass treatment of school children’ with Western drugs and an educational campaign, although less resources were spent on sanitation.⁷² The whole project was estimated to have reached 345 schools and around 30, 450 children.⁷³ This campaign, and a subsequent interest in infant health for five years at

⁶⁶ MCA: Proceedings 29/3/1933 p.13, 19/11/1937 pp.26-28, Sehwat, *Colonial Medical Care*

⁶⁷ IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1929 p34, MCA: Proceedings 23/9/1924 p.257

⁶⁸ Harrison, *Public Health in British India*, Amrith, ‘Food and Welfare in India’, David Arnold, ‘The medicalisation of poverty in colonial India’ *Historical Research* 85:229 (Aug 2012)

⁶⁹ TNSAL: MLC 31/3/1927 p.1414

⁷⁰ MCA: Proceedings 29/4/1922, Jeffery, *Politics of Health*, Arnold, ‘Medicalisation of poverty’, Harrison, *Public Health in British India*

⁷¹ NLS: IP/QA.7 PHC p.178

⁷² NLS: IP/QA.7 PHC 1926 p.66

⁷³ NLS: IP/QA.7 PHC 1926

the Poonamallee Health Unit, reflected both the strategic priorities of international organisations and a focus on Western drugs as the solution.⁷⁴

Malnutrition was recognised as not only an immediate cause of hunger and discomfort, but as having a longer-term impact on the child's health and resistance to disease.⁷⁵ It was recognised as a 'social malady' directly linked to poverty, perceived by some experts to be the responsibility of the financial rather than medical authorities.⁷⁶ However, as David Arnold has argued, poverty was increasingly constructed as a medical discourse, ignoring wider issues of socio-economic exploitation.⁷⁷ This gave authority to public health professionals and changed the nature of state intervention. The poor Indian family was assumed to have neither the financial nor intellectual resources to provide adequately for its children and was even construed as a threat, as noted above. While in 1939 it was suggested that rich donors or 'philanthropical gentlemen' 'should be approached for magnificent donations for our cause' including free educational resources and food, this was a rare occurrence.⁷⁸ Rather it was seen as the responsibility of the state to intervene, both to provide for the vulnerable and because children as future citizens were increasingly recognised as having rights. This required 'an intelligent interest on the part of the educated classes', particularly municipal councillors and members of local boards. It also necessitated 'a willingness on their part to devote thought and leisure to the improvement of the unhealthy conditions under which their less fortunate countrymen live'.⁷⁹ They should act, however, as part of the state rather than as individual philanthropists.⁸⁰ It was the state's responsibility to provide food, 'not [offered] as charity, but as a valuable means to control malnutrition' among schoolchildren that led to the formation of a Midday Meals Scheme in Madras city.⁸¹

⁷⁴ NLS: IP/QA.7 PHC 1938 p.26, 1939 p.33. John Farley *To Cast out Disease: a history of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundations* (Oxford: OUP, 2004)

⁷⁵ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report p.14

⁷⁶ Robert Wright, 'Keratomalacia in southern India.' *The British journal of ophthalmology* 6:4 (1922) pp.164, 175, MCA: Proceedings 11/2/1930, 26/3/1930

⁷⁷ Arnold, 'The medicalisation of poverty'

⁷⁸ MCA: Proceedings 18/11/1939

⁷⁹ IOR: V/24/3705 DPH 1922 p.34

⁸⁰ MCA: Proceedings 8/3/1938 p.28

⁸¹ MCA: COM Health Report 1926 p.98

Midday Meals Scheme

The Madras Corporation's free Midday Meals Scheme heralded a radical change in state intervention in the family.⁸² A unique project, the scheme grew out of earlier initiatives such as Rao Bahadur Cunnan Chettiar's Feeding Home for infants, the Corporation's Child Welfare schemes and the Triplicane Milk Depot which provided milk for undernourished infants.⁸³ The scheme started as an 'experimental measure' in the Cochrane Basin School and drastically improved school attendance in what was characterised as a very poor area.⁸⁴ The Scheme was particularly distinctive as being an educational rather than public health initiative. The same year, the Madras DEC appears to have set up a month-long experiment. This provided funds for headmasters to 'appease the unbearable hunger of these children'. The plan included 'funding hungry children' to 'experiment and ascertain what would be the average cost of a midday meal' at St Ann's Convent Girls School and a secular school run by the Social Service League, headed by T. Varadarajulu Naidu, Chair of the Education Committee.⁸⁵ The idea of providing free school meals on a wider basis was raised formally in 1924 at the Special Meeting of the Council for the introduction of compulsory education. T. Varadarajulu Naidu argued that free midday meals were necessary, along with night and part-time schools and a 'system of pre-vocational training' to help 'remove all possible hardships in the case of such poor children'.⁸⁶ The scheme was intended to discourage child labour and promote 'the higher interests of moral and mental development' of the children.

After the practical obstacles of suppliers were overcome, an experimental scheme providing free food at midday to children in school was started in 1925 by the Education Committee. The Scheme was introduced in two divisions and received widespread support across the council.⁸⁷ Provision was gradually expanded and in

⁸² Roger Cooter *In the Name of the Child* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*

⁸³ NLS: IP/26/HB.3 COM Health Report 1920 p15, Report of Child Welfare Scheme 1919–1920

⁸⁴ MCA: Proceedings 29/6/1923, 13/11/1931, 19/9/1939 p.8

⁸⁵ TNSA: GO244 LE 17/2/1927, GO1519 LE 1/11/1923, GO1189 LE 18/7/1924

⁸⁶ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.477

⁸⁷ MCA: Joint Conference Tax & Finance, Education Committees 11/3/1925, Proceedings 28/3/1924 p.477, 25/3/1925, 30/4/1925, 24/8/1926. IOR: V/27/860/11 GOI Memorandum on the progress of Education in British India 1916 and 1926 (1928)

1930 two centres, at Chintradripet and Peters Road, were established as a temporary measure to coordinate the preparation and distribution of food during term time. Chintradripet was made the permanent centre in May 1935.⁸⁸ Eight cooks worked from 3am until 1.30pm to prepare food, which was then circulated to all relevant schools. Distribution was supervised by the head teacher, with occasional surprise inspections by supervisors, medical inspectors and the Educational Officers. In 1937 4,500 children from 84 schools received midday meals provided by the Corporation.⁸⁹ This was expanded in 1939 to include 96 schools comprising 6,000 children and buttermilk was added as a supplement.⁹⁰ In 1943 5,750 pupils received free school meals, with continuing ‘clamour for food for more deserving poor children’ to be included.⁹¹

The Midday Meals Scheme profoundly redefined the role of the state in relation to the child.⁹² The councillors may have drawn inspiration from the 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act in Britain, or the School Lunch Committee in New York City from 1909, although, in contrast to educational and juvenile justice provisions, these global connections were not explicitly mentioned. This was not merely the collection of statistics, but active intervention in an area of life – the feeding of children – which was usually assumed to be the responsibility of the family.⁹³ The scheme eroded the boundaries between the public and private worlds of children, enabling what Ruis calls in the New York context, ‘the negotiation of social policy that redefined the boundaries between home and state, private rights, and public welfare’.⁹⁴ The move was also indicative of a ‘radical redefinition of the role of preventive medicine’.⁹⁵ Vaccination programmes had been an early indication of the modern state’s role in preventing disease, but linked more closely to the curative aspects. Intervening to provide

⁸⁸ MCA: Proceedings 3/5/1935 p.4

⁸⁹ MCA: Proceedings 4/1/1938 p.5, COM Health Report 1937 p.38

⁹⁰ MCA: Proceedings 1939 p.35

⁹¹ MCA: Proceedings 9/2/1943, 15/4/1943, 24/11/1943 p.2

⁹² Harris, *Health of the Schoolchild* p.6

⁹³ Christine Piper ‘Moral campaigns for children’s welfare in the Nineteenth Century’ in Harry Hendrick (ed.) *Child Welfare and social policy: an essential reader*, (Bristol: Policy Press, 2005) p.20

⁹⁴ AR Ruis ‘The Penny Lunch Has Spread Faster than the Measles’ *Children’s Health and the Debate over School Lunches in New York City, 1908-1930* *History of Education Quarterly* 55:2 (May 2015) p.195

⁹⁵ Harris *Health of the Schoolchild* p.2.5

nutrition, in what was an everyday rather than exceptional occurrence, was therefore something entirely new both in practical application and in claim. While this claim was perhaps more important in rhetoric than in practice given the relatively low number of children involved, it was also significant that food was provided not within the rubric of Public Health, but as an educational endeavour. Food was only to be provided within the context of the school, administered by teaching staff, for children of school age. This again bolstered the emerging idea that the defining place of childhood was the school.⁹⁶

Establishing the provision of food for schoolchildren as an educational concern highlights the competing claims of control and finance by a number of state agencies. A similar scheme was rejected by the provincial government in 1924 because it was assumed that truly deprived children would be working, not in school. Furthermore, the cost, estimated at Rs 43.20 lakhs on the basis of the current school-going population, was considered ‘prohibitive’.⁹⁷ The provision of midday meals was considered both ‘administratively difficult and financially costly’ on account of problems concerning inter-dining, satisfactory cooking arrangements, and presence of Dalits spread across the Presidency.⁹⁸ Even a small experimental scheme, backed by the DPI and Commissioner of Labour, was blocked by the Finance Committee as being outside the jurisdiction of the provincial Education Dept.⁹⁹

The Corporation of Madras decided to take responsibility for undernourished children and provided around Rs 5,000 for midday meals as part of the EEF. This was intended to encourage children to continue attending school. The Corporation’s Education budget of 1926, submitted for approval in exchange for funding, was rejected by the provincial Education Department. It was deemed illegal under the terms of the Madras Elementary Education Act 1920 to pay for food from the EEF.¹⁰⁰ The MLC was, however, happy for it to be funded through the General Revenues Budget.¹⁰¹ This

⁹⁶ TNSA: GO1508 LE 1/8/1927

⁹⁷ TNSA: GO748 LE 12/5/1924, GO106 LE 25/1/1926

⁹⁸ TNSA: GO748 LE 12/5/1924

⁹⁹ TNSA: GO748 LE 12/5/1924

¹⁰⁰ TNSA: LE 7/11/1927 Question 763, GO106 LE 25/1/1926, GO4600 LE 16/10/1926,

¹⁰¹ TNSA: GO4600 LE 16/10/1926, MCA: Proceedings 16/3/1927

caused great consternation in the Corporation, the provision of school lunches having been financed from the Education Budget since the initial experiments in 1919.¹⁰² The dispute demonstrated the close control retained by the provincial government over Local Authorities, despite the lip service paid to the devolution of power to local authorities. While both the Minister for Education, Dr P. Subbarayan, and the Education Department supported the idea, both were adamant that it was a matter concerning public health, rather than investment in education.¹⁰³ It was noticeable, however, that the 1938 Madras Public Health Act - designed to establish the public health interventions together on a legislative basis - contained little reference to the provision of food.¹⁰⁴ In addition, under section 37 of the Education Act the provincial Government was liable to match the money provided by the Local Authority for elementary education. Including the Midday Meals Scheme in this budget meant that the government would be responsible for more cost, and when the principle had been conceded was then liable for whatever the Corporation chose to provide, with potentially extensive financial repercussions. The extensive discussions, and sustained defiance by the Corporation, led to a change in the law in 1932.¹⁰⁵

Imagining the poor and hungry child

The dispute emphasised the growing symbolic value of the vulnerable child. Refusing to accept the government's position M. Singaravelu Chetty, the new Education Committee chair and a social reformer prominent in the Self Respect Movement, argued that 'There is no use of crying over what has been done already. You cannot starve the children, simply because you are fighting a battle against the Act....'¹⁰⁶ A later proposal to increase the budgetary allowance for midday meals from Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000 was rejected, but only after a debate which emphasised the threat of leaving the defenceless child hungry.¹⁰⁷ The following month, Congress councillor Satyamurthi used another debate to 'claim to have at least as much interest in the health

¹⁰² TNSA: LE 7/11/1927 Question 763

¹⁰³ TNSA: MLC debate 18/3/1927 in GO1508 LE 1/8/1927, GO1899 LE 3/10/1927

¹⁰⁴ IOR: Madras Public Health Act 1939, Act 4 of 1944

¹⁰⁵ TNSA: GO1899 LE 2/11/1931, GO106 LE 25/1/1926, LE 7/11/1927 Question 763, inc Draft Answer 29/8/1927. MCA: Proceedings 16/3/1927, 1/1/1932

¹⁰⁶ MCA: Proceedings 16/3/1927 p.39

¹⁰⁷ MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1927 p.40

and happiness of the women and children of Madras as the other side have'.¹⁰⁸ Councillors from both Justice and Congress parties claimed 'responsibility for the welfare of the children', although both accused the other of 'crocodile tears' for 'the unfortunate children'. The debates sentimentalised the poor child, 'to be pitied'.¹⁰⁹ During further discussions in 1937, the Congress Chair of the Education Committee Mrs Ammu Swaminathan, argued:

The children of the city should be the first care of the Corporation. We cannot afford to neglect their welfare. They are the future citizens, and it is up to us to see that they grow up in healthy surroundings. How can we expect them to grow into healthy men and women, how can we expect them to have any kind of proper education if they continue to remain under these circumstances?¹¹⁰

The consistent, and often emotional, appeal for better resources for 'poor children' received widespread support.¹¹¹ This reflected the claim by all parties to a new responsibility to protect the hungry child, which in turn strengthened the claims of the Indian state to a global modernity based on care for the vulnerable. It also represented an investment in the nation's future. As with the 1906 Act in Britain, these claims represented both a political investment in national regeneration, and more nuanced contribution to, and participation in, wider socio-economic and cultural change, including ideas about bio-medicine, state intervention and the normal child.¹¹²

Midday meals were provided for 'poor children' in response to 'the duty of the Government to encourage the backward, the helpless and the forlorn', a particularly emotive representation of children.¹¹³ The recipients were almost exclusively Dalits but this was very rarely mentioned explicitly. There was some awareness that the Dalit community lacked 'the wherewithal to organise their own *sangams* and funds to educate the poor,' and that 'the scale of poverty is different' thus meriting a different type of intervention.¹¹⁴ Many Dalit pupils were educated separately in Labour Schools, under the jurisdiction of the Labour Commissioner. Midday meals, like

¹⁰⁸ MCA: Proceedings 29/4/1927

¹⁰⁹ MCA: Proceedings 26/3/1928, 25/2/1931 pp.44-46

¹¹⁰ MCA: Proceedings 31/3/1937 p.91

¹¹¹ MCA: Proceedings 29/11/1939 p.10, 6/10/1938, 23/4/1939 p.42, 29/3/1930

¹¹² Cooter, *In the name of the child*

¹¹³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1796, File 1677.

¹¹⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1796, File 1677.

scholarships, were influenced by a contrasting desire to integrate Dalits into mainstream education.¹¹⁵ The ‘necessity and desirability’ of providing an additional meal to ‘encourage education’ was particularly supported by the Dalit representatives, such as Vasudeva Pillai, even though the numbers involved were a small percentage of the community. The provision was, however, framed as an answer to poverty, fitting into a modernist view which failed to acknowledge the structural inequalities caused by caste. In the MLC the Justice Party Education Minister Patro claimed to ‘understand and sympathise with Adi-Dravidas [Dalits]’ but argued that support should be given in view of ‘the poverty of the students’ and should include ‘deserving boys of all classes’.¹¹⁶ Patro then argued that there should not be ‘any unjust execution of the rules’ which would exclude Other Backward Castes, Muslims and Christians. Likewise during a debate in the Corporation in 1930, trade unionist and independence activist V. Chakkarai Chettiar spoke of his ‘feeling of responsibility’, ‘our duty’ as a matter of ‘justice’ to provide food for ‘all the children’ in the compulsory education areas.¹¹⁷ Justice T.R. Kothandarama Mudaliar favoured ‘the proposal to include all children of the poorer classes’, particularly those ‘deserving of help’.¹¹⁸ Congress Party member Abdul Hameed Khan argued

There are very many poor people in other communities also who deserve such kind of help and support. The facilities that are afforded to the Depressed Classes and other backward communities should be extended to the poorest people who cannot afford food to their children.¹¹⁹

As a prominent campaigner for the Muslim community he may have had his own constituency in mind. He nonetheless received widespread support for advocating an approach which would benefit ‘children who are poor’. Only Congressman Satyamurti admitted that ‘the Adi-Dravida class may have the largest number of poor children’.¹²⁰ Extending provision of free meals was further recommended in a supplemental budget in early 1932 ‘irrespective of caste or creed’. It appears, however, that no further action was taken and certainly no extra funding was provided.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ TNSA: GO1508 LE 1/8/1927, AB Shetty letter 25/2/1927; GO1899 LE 3/10/1927, GO748 LE 12/5/1924. Viswanath, ‘Rethinking Caste and Class.’

¹¹⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1796, File 1677.

¹¹⁷ MCA: Proceedings 22/9/1931 p.43

¹¹⁸ MCA: Proceedings 22/9/1931 p.47

¹¹⁹ MCA: Proceedings 22/9/1931 p.50

¹²⁰ MCA: Proceedings 22/9/1931 p.49

¹²¹ MCA: Proceedings 1/1/1932 p.2

The pattern was reflected in subsequent debates with a number of references, irrespective of party allegiance, to the provision of support for ‘poor children’.¹²² This included a claim by N. Rajagopalan, that ‘Every poor child in a school is entitled to have this food’. This particularly radical claim hinted at a new discourse surrounding the right to food, foreshadowing claims not made more widely until 2001.¹²³ While there was a tacit agreement that midday meals were supplied to ‘the poorest of the Adi Dravida community, Adi Andhra community, fishermen community and some very poor Hindu communities’ there was also a suggestion in 1941 that it should be extended to ‘children active in scouts and guides’.¹²⁴ Intervention, and the provision of food, was thus formulated in terms of the ‘deserving poor’, mirroring the concerns of late Victorian philanthropy and a desire to engage with the poor as victims, rather than poverty as a cause. The demonstration by Indian politicians of their modernity through their claims to intervention was in response to modern concerns of justice, socio-economic deprivation and state responsibility. This in turn reflected their uncertainty over the increasing use of communal identity in politics.¹²⁵ The reluctance to define modern intervention through caste (although in practice caste was often the determining factor) demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between the non-Brahmin Justice Party and Self Respect Movement over caste. These complexities are further demonstrated in the on-going conversation between Dalit leaders and the Congress Party over reservation and the relationship between Dalits and the majority caste Hindu community. Only Labour leader C. Basudev recognised ‘poor children’ as ‘the children who are unable to find a school, unable to clothe themselves and unable to get one meal per day’.¹²⁶ This appears to be the only engagement with the poor child outside the school, demonstrating the increasing hegemony of the equation of the child with the scholar.

Childhood poverty does not in itself explain why the Education Department of the Municipal Corporation found it necessary to supplement the responsibility of the

¹²² MCA: Proceedings 17/3/1938 p.14, 25/11/1941 pp.24, 37

¹²³ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939 p.41. Amrith ‘Food and Welfare in India’ p.1011

¹²⁴ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1939 p.19

¹²⁵ Gangulee *Health and Nutrition in India*, p.269

¹²⁶ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939 p.39

family in providing food for children. At a time when food interventions were primarily designed to prevent starvation, intervening to prevent malnutrition was a radical departure.¹²⁷ Free school meals were initially introduced as a way to boost attendance, based on the initial results of the Cochrane Basin School.¹²⁸ The provision of food made school more attractive, and compensated families for a potential loss of earnings for previously employed children.¹²⁹ This reflected the decision to attract pupils to education rather than prosecute non-attendance, discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. Attendance figures were closely monitored, and the cost of Corporation schools – Rs 28 per pupil in comparison to Government (Rs 18) and private schools (Rs 10) was justified on the basis of the provision of food, as well as the quality of the education provided.¹³⁰ When compulsory education was extended in 1926 to a further three of the poorest divisions in the city, the Chair of the Education Committee M. Singaravelu Chetty argued for the extension of the Midday Meals Scheme. Chetty cited a 90% attendance rate in areas ‘where food is given’ but insisting that without it, attendance was ‘a mere farce and the compulsion is merely illusive’.¹³¹ Attendance was claimed to have fallen by 50% while the scheme was briefly discontinued in 1927. This became the received, and frequently cited, wisdom.¹³² Even when the budget restrictions meant teacher salaries were reduced, there was little appetite to take ‘the retrograde step’ to ‘deprive these poor children of their midday meal’ which was ‘an incentive for them to go to school and get education’ and part of ‘advancing education which is the primary duty of the Corporation’.¹³³ Again, in 1938 it was argued that the provision not only improved health, but facilitated ‘regular attendance in the schools’.¹³⁴ To have this level of consensus for a scheme not widely recognised as an educational tool in the rest of India was remarkable.

The provision of food was intended to retain pupils and improve the quality of learning based on the scientific claim: ‘an elementary fact that hungry children are not able to

¹²⁷ Amrith, ‘Food and Welfare in India’ p.1024

¹²⁸ MCA: Proceedings 26/3/1930

¹²⁹ MCA: Proceedings 11/3/1930, 15/7/1930, 26/3/1930

¹³⁰ MCA: Proceedings 8/5/1926 p.72

¹³¹ MCA: Proceedings 24/8/1926 p.41

¹³² MCA: Proceedings 21/1/1927 p.34, 28/3/1927 p.36, 25/2/1931p.3, 18/3/1935 p.17

¹³³ MCA: Proceedings 18/3/1935 p.20

¹³⁴ MCA: Proceedings 17/3/1938 p.14

absorb teaching as readily as children whose stomachs have been attended to by the midday meal'.¹³⁵ As such, the provision of food at school was part of a medical discourse which linked the strength of the child's physical body to its intellectual capacity. This had links to the eugenics movement, but also an increased understanding of the educational impact of malnutrition. The Health Officer argued that 'ill-fed' children 'are listless and pine away in some corner of the classroom, taking little or no interest in what is going on in the School.'¹³⁶ Slater, Commissioner for Labour in Madras, insisted that children attending schools missed their midday meal and 'are thus half starved and unable to apply themselves to anything'.¹³⁷ The link between nourishment and education received widespread support, and was cited as a reason for Local Authorities to 'accept an increasing burden of responsibility for the physical health, nourishment, and protection of children as well as for their mental training' as an educational endeavour.¹³⁸ The relationship between mind and body was usually stressed in the context of physical education, and the production of the masculine body.¹³⁹ The change in focus in the 1920s and 1930s was the impact the body had on learning ability, which again impacted on the efficiency of school results.¹⁴⁰ This was primarily formulated in terms of capitalising on the investment in education as a means 'of endeavouring to secure to every citizen of the future that moral, mental and physical training' which would 'open to all the chance of realising their full citizenship'. It was, furthermore, part of an emerging realisation that free meals 'contribute to a child's readiness to learn and ability to participate in his or her own educational process', as an investment in the individual child and even in their 'joie de vivre'.¹⁴¹

Nutrition for children

¹³⁵ TNSA: GO244 LE 17/2/1927, 17/1/1927, MCA: Proceedings 22/9/1931 p42-44, 25/2/1931 p.46, 9/9/39 p.12, 29, Gangulee, *Health and Nutrition in India*

¹³⁶ MCA: COM Health Report 1926 p.82

¹³⁷ BL: MssEur E221/44, Hartog Evidence: Slater

¹³⁸ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report p.7, MCA: Proceedings 11/3/1930, 26/3/1930, 1/12/1936 p.26, 30/3/1938 p.4, TNSA: GO1508 LE 1/8/1927, Debate 18/3/1927, Gangulee *Health and Nutrition in India* p.7

¹³⁹ Mills & Sen *Confronting the Body*:

¹⁴⁰ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939 p.38

¹⁴¹ MCA: Proceedings 30/3/1938 pp.2-7, WR Aykroyd, *Notes on Food and Nutrition Policy in India* (New Delhi: GOI, 1944)

The type and quality of food was the subject of more debate than any other aspect of the Midday Meals Scheme. In 1930 a Councillor G. Narayanaswamy Chetty wrote to the Commissioner ‘complaining bitterly’ that ‘the food given to these children’ was ‘making them sick instead of making them healthy’ and calling for provision to be stopped until an adequate system of funding and inspection had been established.¹⁴² Inspection of the quality remained a challenge, variously described as food ‘which even the crows will not touch’, ‘not even suitable for beggars’ and ‘injurious to health’.¹⁴³ Alleged corruption and adulteration was a continually mentioned problem.¹⁴⁴ This fitted again into the rhetoric of the vulnerable child, exploited by adults even in the provision of basic nourishment, and therefore requiring further state protection. It also reflected the administrative difficulties of the Midday Meals Scheme, with food being cooked in the morning at a centre and then distributed through the city before midday.¹⁴⁵

The deliberations in the Corporation regarding the type of food to be made available in schools ran parallel to wider British colonial interventions in the sphere of nutrition. While Satyamurthi of the Congress party argued that the quantity was important, the intense debate over the variety of food provided suggested the extent of interest in the child’s body.¹⁴⁶ This reflected the extensive research into the South Indian diet carried out by Aykroyd and his colleagues, who argued that the usual diet of the Presidency contained excessive carbohydrates, being ‘extremely deficient’ in protein and including ‘inadequate’ fresh or dried fruit.¹⁴⁷ By the 1940s, the ‘science of nutrition’ was used extensively to demonstrate the long-term impact of malnutrition on the physical and mental development of the child.¹⁴⁸ It was also used to carve out a new space for intervention by nutritionists and dieticians, whose views had authority through their position as scientific experts. These specialists later participated in the Nutrition Advisory Committee of the Indian Research Fund Association, set up in the

¹⁴² MCA: Proceedings 26/3/1930

¹⁴³ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1939 pp.9, 14 29/9/1931 p.48, 22/9/1931

¹⁴⁴ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930, 22/9/1931 pp.42-48, 29/1/1943, 3/12/1935, 17/12/1935, 21/3/1938 p.17, 19/9/1939 p.11

¹⁴⁵ MCA: Proceedings 3/12/1935 p.20

¹⁴⁶ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930

¹⁴⁷ Aykroyd quoted in Gangulee *Health and Nutrition in India* p.213

¹⁴⁸ Gangulee *Health and Nutrition in India* p.80

aftermath of the catastrophic Bengal famine of 1942-43.¹⁴⁹ They contributed to colonial discourses which contrasted the rice-eaters of southern India and, more particularly Bengal, within a framework of degeneracy and effeminacy, with the masculinity of the wheat-eaters of the Northwest.¹⁵⁰ Importantly, they traced comparative strength and health to nutrition, rather than the increasingly discredited science of eugenics and racial and climatic difference.¹⁵¹

The members of the Corporation engaged with the debates on the provision of food to children through the language of nutritional science. Dr Syed Niamatullah, a practitioner of Unani medicine and Chairman of Health Committee, was concerned that the rice and *sambhar* provided by the Corporation had 'little nutritional value' and was often 'thick and coarse'. The children refused to eat it 'with the result that they are unhealthy and rickety in their constitution'.¹⁵² He proposed that the Health Committee should investigate alternative options 'as we thought best in the interest of the child'. A series of experiments were to be undertaken led by Justice Dr U. Krishna Rao to prescribe food which was appropriate to the 'various communities that partake this food', was scientifically proven to be 'wholesome and nutritive' and which cost less.¹⁵³ The idea was opposed because it was feared that the funding to provide meals would be reduced, and because conducting an 'experiment upon the stomachs of these unfortunate children' was rejected.¹⁵⁴ Congress Leader Satyamurthi, for example, was concerned that children should not be experimented on 'simply because they come under your guardianship'. Gopala Menon feared the introduction of foodstuffs that were 'revolting to the sentiments of the people', such as beef, ham, oranges or apples.¹⁵⁵ He also argued that it was 'wrong to experiment on the diet of the children', fearing science without an ethical context, citing the experience of women in America being fed cotton seeds to increase lactation. Ultimately, it was agreed that food had to be of 'a higher nutritional value' but also 'be liked by all the

¹⁴⁹ Gangulee *Health and Nutrition in India* p.80

¹⁵⁰ Patricia Barton, 'Imperialism, Race and Therapeutics: the legacy of medicalising the 'colonial body' *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* (Fall, 2008) p.508

¹⁵¹ Gangulee *Health and Nutrition in India* pp. 208, 80, 145

¹⁵² MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939 p.41

¹⁵³ MCA: Proceedings 7/3/1939, 28/3/1939

¹⁵⁴ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939, 14/3/1939 p.12, 28/3/1939 p.38

¹⁵⁵ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939 p.40

children in our schools', thereby limiting the imposition of adult authority on children and demonstrating the pragmatic realities of intervention.¹⁵⁶ This compromise received significant support, but the idea to increase funding from Rs 25,000 to Rs 75,000 was soundly defeated seventeen to eight.¹⁵⁷ Once more, the concern for children did not reach as far as the provision of adequate finance.

The opposition to nutritional experiments reflected an earlier discussion in 1930, when the Commissioner of the Corporation proposed a scheme to feed children bread and milk despite the added cost. 'Nutritional experts' had suggested they were more effective in reducing deficiency diseases than the typical diet of rice and curds.¹⁵⁸ This again reflected the assumptions surrounding the nutritional value of 'the ordinary diet of Madras Presidency'.¹⁵⁹ It also reflected international experiments, both the provision of midday meals in London schools and an experiment in Edinburgh which had demonstrated the particular nutritional value of bread and milk for growing children.¹⁶⁰ This reflected wider tensions in public health in the 1920s and 1930s: research was usually carried out at British institutions, but implementation was the responsibility of Indians.¹⁶¹ The suggestion that the child's body required different nutrition to the adult body, and that Tamil children had an equal need of and right to this food as Scottish children, reflected changing perceptions of the body of all children as distinct from fully grown adults. This mirrored the scientific discourses surrounding paediatrics as a distinct discipline.¹⁶² It met with strong opposition, for example by Mrs Hannen Angelo, an Anglo-Indian who founded the Madras Nurses Association and stood as a candidate for the WIA, who queried both the scientific basis of the study and its suitability for 'the habits of people of this country'.¹⁶³

Sambhar received particular support, both for its nutritive value and because many

¹⁵⁶ MCA: Proceedings 28/3/1939 pp.40-41

¹⁵⁷ MCA: Proceedings pp.43-44

¹⁵⁸ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930

¹⁵⁹ MCA: Proceedings 16/7/1930

¹⁶⁰ MCA: Proceedings 26/3/1930, 15/7/1930

¹⁶¹ Chakrabarti, *Western Science in Modern India*

¹⁶² MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930

¹⁶³ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930,

children were too poor to be given it at home.¹⁶⁴ In addition, *sambhar* was cited as ‘the best kind of food’ because it was ‘more palatable to these children’ and would thereby encourage attendance.¹⁶⁵ *Ragi*, a particularly nutritious form of millet from Kerala, was rejected even though it could be mixed with other foodstuffs such as *jaggery*, sugar or *badam* to suit ‘the different temperaments of the children’.¹⁶⁶ It was not considered of sufficient nutritional value to be worth causing opposition by parents and children. Attempts were made to introduce variety, and there was concern that diet should include rice, curds and *sambhar*, varied either according to season, on alternate days or even with the occasional addition of wheat cakes, bread, *halwa* or *ragi* flour chapatis.¹⁶⁷ Even in industrial schools, students were given a roll and two bananas ‘now and again for a change’.¹⁶⁸ This was not formulated on the basis of nutritional variety, but because ‘poor children will not like a monotonous diet’ and ‘prefer a variety’.¹⁶⁹ The suggestion that the type of food should reflect the opinions of children rather than nutritional science recognised some agency on the part of children and indicated the limits of the imposition of adult will upon children’s bodies.¹⁷⁰ In practice, cost seems to have been the deciding factor and there seems only to be records for tenders for the provision of rice.¹⁷¹

As well as the provision of meals, nutritional supplements were provided for children who were diagnosed as ‘undernourished’ during the medical inspection.¹⁷² This involved a course of ‘cod liver oil and tonics’ geared towards ‘proper growth and development’ of the child’s body.¹⁷³ Milk was also to be made more widely available, reflecting the earlier focus on the provision of milk in the Child Welfare Centres as a means of advancing infant and maternal health.¹⁷⁴ Buttermilk was advocated in 1930

¹⁶⁴ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/30, 14/3/1939

¹⁶⁵ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930, 14/3/1939, 28/3/1939 p.42

¹⁶⁶ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930 p17, 19/9/1939 pp.7, 12, 16. See discussion Muraleedharan ‘Diet, Disease and Death’ p.60

¹⁶⁷ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930, 19/9/1939

¹⁶⁸ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930

¹⁶⁹ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930. In particular Dr Syed Niyamatullah, Mrs Hannen Angelo

¹⁷⁰ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930, Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*

¹⁷¹ MCA: Proceedings 14/3/1932, 18/5/1932, 29/1/1943, 19/1/1943, 10/8/1942, 31/8/1942, 12/11/1942 pp.3-4

¹⁷² MCA: COM Health Report 1926 p.62

¹⁷³ MCA: COM Health Report 1937 p.4, 1938 p.41, 1939

¹⁷⁴ MCA: ‘Note on Infant Mortality and on the Work done under the Corporation Child-Welfare Scheme for one year, ending Sept 1915’ COM Health Report 1915-16

as a ‘very nutritious’ foodstuff, particularly important in building physical strength.¹⁷⁵ It was cost-effective, being produced by diluting thick curds with water, although the climatic conditions made storage difficult and temptation to over-dilute meant that practical nourishment was often minimal.¹⁷⁶ It is difficult to assess whether the fetishisation of milk as a supplement, both in the Corporation discussions and Aykroyd Reports, reflected the British experience or a universal idea that milk was particularly suited to children as well as infants. Scientific experts such as the Coonoor Nutrition Research Laboratories supported milk as producing ‘excellent results on the health and physique of children’. However, this may partially have been driven by the need of the Australian and New Zealand butter industries to export milk as part of the wider colonial economy.¹⁷⁷ The debates around appropriate food and supplements evince a wider engagement with the nature of the Indian child as culturally specific. They reflect the tastes and habits of a particular region of India, but also the growing acceptance that the child’s body was physically, as well as intellectually, distinct from that of the adult body.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1920s there was an emerging consensus that the state had both the right and the duty to intervene in the health of the schoolchild, without reference to parents. This reflected wider universalising narratives which characterised the normal child as scholar. The school became the only legitimate place for intervention, whether through inspection or the provision of supplementary food. This allowed state agencies to ignore the position of the child not at school, although these children remained the majority. South Indian politicians participated in an emerging construction of the child’s body as distinct from adults, viewed through the collection of normative statistics, the beginnings of paediatric medicine and the assumptions regarding the specific nutritional requirements of children. The influence of scientific experts helped to establish the universalising ideals of Western allopathic medicine and the growing power of a discourse of nutritional science. This discourse focused around a universalising idea of the body of the child in which the child was

¹⁷⁵ MCA: Proceedings 15/7/1930

¹⁷⁶ MCA: Proceedings 19/9/1939 p.7

¹⁷⁷ IOR: V/26/845/2: Jolly Report pp.6-7, 17

undifferentiated by gender, race or class. Indian legislators asserted their participation in a growing modern discourse of international rights and claimed their own modernity by constructing the Indian child as having the same access to rights as the British child. This made it difficult to engage with the identity politics, particularly of caste, which were emerging within the Presidency. This claim to modernity was based on two entangled discourses, one based on the modern state's care for the vulnerable, and the other on participation in an 'internationally recognisable brand of scientific and technological modernity'.¹⁷⁸

The claim to modernity and to control, by understanding children's bodies and providing for them, was left to the Corporation of Madras despite the attempt by the MLC to block funding whilst taking the political credit. At the same time, the claim to modernity facilitated intervention in the feeding of children, an activity particularly associated with the home. In this the state sought to supplement the authority and responsibility of the family in a way which was much more aggressive than in the discourse of juvenile justice or education: the home and family were much more directly constructed as a site of threat to the physical body of the child. Despite ambivalence in the political sphere, Ayurvedic medicine was also constructed by the experts as a threat and as linked to 'tradition'.¹⁷⁹ This was based on the primacy of both nutritional science and Western medicine to improve and understand the body of the child. The family was regarded as having neither the capacity to provide sufficient quantity of food on account of poverty, nor the knowledge to provide adequate nutrition or to see the long-term benefits of schooling rather than work for children. The provision of food at school was conceptualised as an educational rather than public health initiative. The mediating voice of authority between child and state in terms of health was not the parent but the teacher, as representative of both state and civil society. Yet, as was the case in other areas of interest in children, these medical interventions were the budget areas – in particular school medical inspections – which suffered earliest and most severely from budget retrenchments.

¹⁷⁸ Arnold, *Science, technology and medicine* p.18

¹⁷⁹ Chakrabarti, *Western Science in Modern India*

Increased intervention in children's lives had implications for the way in which childhood was constructed. The corporality of the child was important in the educational endeavour. As a result personal hygiene, physical vulnerability and educational achievement became linked to the production of the healthy body. In turn, the child was to become a virile and strong citizen contributing to the future health of the nation, and as such the cost of intervention and growth of preventative medicine was justified as an investment in the nation's future. Yet within this overarching discourse, there was growing acceptance that children not only deserved both rights and protection as a result of their age and vulnerability, but had opinions on the forms of intervention, and particularly food, which they considered acceptable.

(Chapter Five) Saving the Child: The Madras Children Act 1920 and the beginnings of a juvenile justice system

The Madras Children Act 1920 (MCA) marked a new beginning in the way that children in contact with the law, and the responsibilities of the state towards such children, were conceived in the Madras Presidency. The Act legally defined the child as different from adults, and initiated the expansion of a justice system centred on the specific needs of the child. ‘The child’ and its relationship with the state will be examined through the discursive constructions of juvenile delinquency in the writings of penal reformers, such as the 1919-20 Indian Jails Committee (IJC), and then in the content and significance of the Act itself, particularly the clauses intended to deal with the child ‘in danger’. Mirroring the methodology of the education chapters, these notions are set alongside a profiling of juvenile crime in court and administration records and then a detailed study of the Act’s practical consequences for the bodies and minds of children through the expansion of Certified School provision.

The 1920 Act reflected a decisive shift as the state decided it had a duty to intervene in the lives of children because they were in particular need of ‘care’ or ‘control’. This was not a moment when the ‘juvenile delinquent’ was discovered as a social menace, with the recognition of urban youth crime as a particular social problem as in some other British colonies.¹ Nor does it reflect the complex anxieties about the moral reformation of middle-class youth increasingly drawn to political nationalism.² Rather, the aim is to explore the ways in which these ‘delinquents’ were constructed, and the relationship between the child imagined as ‘dangerous’ or delinquent, and the child as ‘in danger’ or destitute. This goes to the heart of whether the juvenile justice system was intended to be preventative or rehabilitative, or whether these terms were mutually reinforcing in practice. The disjunction between the rhetorical constructions

¹ Fourchard, Laurent ‘Lagos and the invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920–60’ *Journal of African History*, 47 (2006) pp.115–37, RS Rastogi, ‘Prevention and Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency in India’ *Canadian Journal of Corrections*, 2 (1959), Gautam Chatterjee, *Child Criminals and the Raj: reformation in British Jails*, (New Delhi: Skhaya Publications, 1995)

² Stephanie Olsen, ‘Adolescent Empire: Moral Dangers for Boys in Britain and India, c1880-1914’ in Heather Ellis (ed.) *Juvenile Delinquency and the Limits of Western Influence, 1850-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) p.36

of the child and the practical implementation of the Act in the Courts and Certified Schools is central to this.

The chapter explores the ways in which the child was imagined as culturally specific - as an 'Indian child' - and how this related to contemporary discourses regarding race, nationalism, age and gender.³ A network of institutions, such as Chingleput Reformatory, were established in the late nineteenth century to reform delinquent youth. These institutions were widely regarded by British experts as a 'productive failure', and the failure to reform the delinquent child provided evidence of the innate racial inferiority of Indians rather than a failed, and inadequately funded, scheme of reformation.⁴ This chapter looks at the extent to which these racialised discourses of difference were relevant in the context of the 1920s and 1930s given the increasingly dominant global construction of a universal normative child, the cosmopolitan networks of the Madras elite and the impact of the constitutional reforms of 1919. Reflecting the wider changes in governance, this chapter considers the expansion of 'the social' as a depoliticised area of consensus, and the impact of changing ideas about intervention and authority on the child, the state and the family.⁵ In particular, it interrogates the regulation of the working class or poor family by middle-class experts, looking at different ways in which the family was constructed as a site of threat and pollution, or as the repository of the cultural memories and spiritual values of the nation.

Discourses of delinquency

Juvenile delinquency in India became a focus of public attention with the IJC, which gathered evidence in 1919-20, publishing its report in 1921. The concerns reflected the radical changes in the field of juvenile justice in Britain, with the introduction of the Juvenile Court in Birmingham and the passing of the Children Act in 1908. These legislative actions were the result of, and spawned, a growing normative global discourse of reformative juvenile penology which emphasised the uniqueness of the individual child as future citizen, and encouraged the psychological categorisation of

³ Nieuwenhuys, 'Global Childhood'

⁴ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, Olsen, 'Adolescent Empire'

⁵ Kumari, *The Juvenile Justice System in India*, Donzelot, *Policing of Families*:

children.⁶ By 1920 there was growing global acceptance that the modern state institutionalised as the Juvenile Court was the successor to the feudal government of kings as *parens patriae*, as ‘an embodiment’ of both ‘an ancient doctrine and of modern methods in the exercise of power of the state as the ultimate parent of the child.’⁷ The Jails Committee also reflected a long-term concern with the need for the reformation of Indian children through detention, evidenced first in Mary Carpenter’s work in the 1860s in Bombay.⁸ The first legislative response was an all-India Reformatory Schools Act 1897, although a Reformatory School had been established in Chingleput, near Madras City, in 1887.⁹ The aim was to provide children with moral structure and disciplined habits enabling them to ‘become useful members of society’ and prevent ‘relapse into crime’ thereby encouraging the productivity of the colony.¹⁰ Similarly, an early scholarly engagement suggested reforming the approach to juvenile justice to ‘manufacture of good citizens out of misguided youth’.¹¹

Alongside wider political reforms the Jails Committee recognised the need to modernise the justice system and encourage ‘elements of decency and humane administration’, including more limited use of corporal punishment and concern for the moral reformation of the criminal into a ‘useful citizen’.¹² Chapter Fifteen of the Committee’s report focussed exclusively on the child criminal and was explicitly influenced by changing theory and practice in Britain and America.¹³ The Report argued that successful reformation was more likely to happen in childhood, making the case that returning the child to his family through a probation system acted ‘in the interests both of the child and of the community’.¹⁴ If the home circumstances were

⁶ Garland, *Punishment and Welfare*, Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*: Pamela Cox and Heather Shore *Becoming Delinquent: British and European Youth 1650-1950* (Dartmouth: Ashgate, 2002)

⁷ Herbert Lou, *Juvenile Courts in the US*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1927) p.5

⁸ Anand Yang *Crime and Criminality in British India* (Tucson Arizona: University of Arizona, 1985), Anand Yang ‘Disciplining ‘natives’: Prisons and prisoners in early nineteenth century India,’ *South Asia*: 10:2 (1987) pp.29-45, David Arnold, ‘The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in C19 India’ in Arnold and Hardiman, (ed.) *Subaltern Studies 8*: (Delhi: OUP, 1994),

⁹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.4 Report of the Chingleput Reformatory School, Madras 1891-92 p.1

¹⁰ NLS IP/25/PJ.4 Report of the Chingleput Reformatory School, Madras 1898 p.11

¹¹ Saint Nihal Singh, *Making bad children good: a plea for an Indian juvenile court*. (Madras: Mount Road, 1910)

¹² IOR: Report of the Indian Jails Committee 1919-20 (House of Commons Records, 1921) pp.29, 31, 33, 201, 35, (IJC)

¹³ Clarke Hall *The State and the Child* in IOR: IJC p.196

¹⁴ IOR: IJC pp.193, 196

unfavourable, it was necessary to remove children and place them with adoptive parents, or in a rescue home run on cottage system lines.¹⁵ In the Juvenile Court, the attitude of the judge was to be 'parental', and he was to develop specialist knowledge of children.¹⁶ This demonstrated both the fear of the 'failed' family and its influence on the malleable child, and the perception that the family was also the solution. The suggestion that children's courts were unnecessary in India because Indian children rarely committed serious crimes was dismissed as 'merely due to ignorance of the facts'.¹⁷ The Report claimed that the Indian child had the same rights as the British child, and should be tried as 'child' rather than as 'Indian child'.¹⁸ In this, and in comparing an Indian child with a street-arab of London, a Paris *gamin* or a New York gutter-child, there was the evidence of a discourse of universality in the conceptualisation of childhood that would become increasingly important in the following twenty years.¹⁹ By contrast, the distinctiveness of Criminal Tribes was emphasised, and 'preventative detention' was encouraged for all members of this 'incurable class', including children.²⁰

When the implementation of the Jail Committee recommendations was assessed in 1940, the Madras Presidency was evaluated as the most 'enlightened and progressive' region, attributed to the leadership of a particularly reforming Inspector-General of Prisons.²¹ The gradual extension of Children Acts was noted, although the author Lt-Col Barker's thoughtful views were undermined in the Appendix in which a former Chief Judge argued that justice was endangered by a racial propensity of Indians to murder and to lie.²² A further study took inspiration from the English Borstal System, although the introduction suggested these methods 'might be adopted – not necessarily

¹⁵ IOR: IJC p.204

¹⁶ IOR: L/PARL/2/407 A – Madras, IJC Evidence p.170, Sen, 'Orphaned colony', pp.44, 463-488, Vallgård 'Between Consent and Coercion'

¹⁷ IOR: IJC p.197

¹⁸ IOR: IJC pp.196-7

¹⁹ Singh, *Making Bad Children Good*, p.6

²⁰ IOR: IJC p.179, Sen *Colonial Childhoods* p.55

²¹ Barker, Lt-Col FA *Modern Prison System of India: A report to the department* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1944) p.13

²² Sir Louis Stuart, Indian Empire Society, former chief judge of Oudh in Barker *Modern Prison System* Appendix

copied – in the East’.²³ The lack of detailed engagement with forming a culturally specific model of juvenile justice, mirrors the attempts by pedagogues in Chapter Three to introduce an educational system based on universal ideas about childhood which failed to engage with the practicalities of the Indian setting.

The only person who really grappled at a theoretical level with juvenile justice in the Indian context was Clifford Manshardt, an American missionary and Gandhian, who established the first Child Guidance Clinic in Bombay in 1937.²⁴ Manshardt contested the twin notions of an innate Indian propensity to crime and the inheritability of criminality. This intersected with long-standing missionary opinion, which highlighted the Indian home as a site of particular moral and spiritual depravity, but offered the possibility of reformation for children removed from its influence.²⁵ However, he refused to solely blame the child’s environment, arguing that even with a background of immorality, neglect and poverty only a small percentage became criminals.²⁶ Comparing India with the Western experience, Manshardt argued that while 95% of children arrested in England were charged with housebreaking and theft, in Bombay 1927-37 43% were arrested for destitution, and emphasised that 61% children came from outside the city, urban centres proving a magnet for those seeking to escape rural poverty. While these figures were unverified, Manshardt’s argument that the child offender was ‘generally a victim rather than a conscious offender’ was significant.²⁷

Manshardt regarded the Bombay Children Act 1922 as protective and preventative, rather than penal, and emphasised the ‘paramount need of the unprotected child’.²⁸ The family was also ‘central to our social organisation’ and the protection of ‘the stability of family life’ was necessary for ‘the proper functioning of the social whole’. Intervention was described in familial terms, and the new Juvenile Court was to have

²³ Cumming, Foreword in Barman, *S English Borstal System : a study in the treatment of young offenders* (London: PS King & Son, 1934) pp.16, 58, 76, 35, 406

²⁴ Manshardt, Clifford, *Delinquent Child in India* (Bombay: DB Taraporevala & Sons, 1939)

²⁵ Vallgård, ‘Between Consent and Coercion.’

²⁶ Manshardt, *Delinquent Child* p.13

²⁷ Manshardt, *Delinquent Child* pp.17, 57, 38

²⁸ Manshardt, *Delinquent Child*, p.91

‘special jurisdiction of a parental nature’.²⁹ The child was perceived as ‘a valuable asset’ and the future of both child and state were bound up together through the development of good citizens through the internalisation of bourgeois social values.³⁰ Manshardt recognised too the requirement for further study of ‘the Indian child in his Indian environment’ and ended with a call for an Indian children’s charter based on the universal rights of children as established in the American ‘Children Charter’ of 1931.³¹ He argued ‘certainly an Indian child is of no less value than an American child’ and required ‘the highest possible standards.’³² This demonstrated the developing influence of changing international views on children’s rights, particularly following the adoption of the Geneva Declaration in 1924.³³ The child rights movement was largely aspirational, but in 1934 the League’s Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People carried out a global investigation into the functioning of Juvenile Courts, as Note Two of the Geneva Declaration urged that ‘the delinquent child must be reclaimed’. In the Indian context, the gathered evidence demonstrated both the provincial nature of children’s courts, and showed Madras as among the frontrunners in Indian juvenile justice.³⁴ Although the scope and remit of the League activities was limited, the discursive influence of growing international networks of child-savers should not be underestimated.

Despite the extensive literature by Indians on social issues such as education, and the expansion of juvenile justice legislation, there was no equivalent discursive engagement with specifically Indian forms of juvenile penology. The unproblematic acceptance of this universalising discourse contrasts with the highly politicised protection of the female Indian child encapsulated in the Age of Consent Debates 1929.³⁵ The child as a future national asset was recognised, but the child was not

²⁹ Manshardt, *Delinquent Child* pp. 255, 100-105

³⁰ Manshardt *Delinquent Child* pp.110, 115, 123, 173, 178, 213, 230

³¹ Manshardt *Delinquent Child* p.262

³² Manshardt *Delinquent Child* pp.293 - 295

³³ Chris Leonards ‘Border Crossings: Care and the Criminal Child’ in Cox and Shore, *Becoming Delinquent*, Marshall, ‘The construction of children as an object of international relations’ p.104, Dominique Marshall, ‘Children’s Rights in Imperial Political Cultures: Missionary and Humanitarian Contributions to the Conference of the African Child of 1931’ *The International Journal of Children’s Rights* 12 (2004) pp.273–318, Mahood, *Feminism and Voluntary Action*: p.199

³⁴ NLS: LN.IV.2 (30), League of Nations: *Institutions for Erring and Delinquent Minors*, *Child Welfare Committee*, (Geneva, 1934), Tambe ‘The state as surrogate parent’

³⁵ Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation*, Mrinalini Sinha, *Spectres of Mother India*

constructed as culturally or racially different, rather Indian children were equal, and the definition of childhood was universal. This reflected the transnational interactions of those legislating for children. One aspect of this was the framing of the child as future citizen, and in direct relationship with the state, which co-existed with the continual reinforcing of familial authority, and the couching of state intervention in the rhetoric of family and universal values. In stark contrast to Sen's discussion of competition, it was the widespread consensus around what was perceived to be a social issue which is significant here.³⁶

Legislative changes

In 1920 the MLC passed the MCA, the first of its kind in India and closely modelled on the British Children Act passed twelve years earlier in 1908.³⁷ The initial Bill was introduced into the MLC in 1917, significant as pre-dating the Jails Committee 1919-20, and initiated before dyarchical government, although passed into law by the MLC as a devolved institution. The Bill, and later Act, established in law that the designation 'child' could be used for a person of less than fourteen years old, continuing longer if already under Certified School discipline.³⁸ The young person (sometimes 'juvenile adult') between fourteen and sixteen years also had limited criminal responsibility.³⁹ This established the boundaries of childhood in legal terms based on a numerical delineation of responsibility. The British Member of the Select Committee and previous Acting Inspector-General of Police, H.F.W. Gilman, re-introduced the bill in March 1918 to replace the existing 'defective and inadequate' Reformatory Act 1897.⁴⁰ Gilman claimed the Government was motivated by 'the utter inadequacy of the power to protect young children who were, so to speak, potential criminals but had not committed any crime' and the need to 'enforce the responsibility of the parents for the good conduct of their children.'⁴¹

³⁶ Sen *Colonial Childhoods* p.11

³⁷ Other Children Acts followed: Bengal 1922, Bombay 1924, Central Provinces 1928, Pondicherry 1928, Delhi 1941, Mysore 1943, Travancore 1945, Cochin 1946, East Punjab 1949

³⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1686, File 4040.

³⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1686, File 4040, p.4

⁴⁰ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 pp.450, 451

⁴¹ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 p.451

The MCA contained six sections, dealing with: (1) definitions of childhood; (2 and 5) Certified Schools; (3) responsibility of parents and guardians; (4) children at risk because of poverty or at threat because of their home surroundings; and (6) the juvenile court. In the subsequent discussion in the MLC, most members expressed themselves to be in favour of humanitarian legislation, explicitly in line with legislation in the metropole.⁴² Criticism was centred on the terms in which the MCA differed from the British version, and there was concern that the MCA should provide further ‘special protection’ for infants less than seven years and further protection against cruelty to children as in the British equivalent.⁴³ Congress politician and Egmore lawyer T. Rangachariar, for example, wanted a stronger reflection of the British legislation regarding juvenile smoking and drinking and the safety of children taken to entertainments, although he was worried about the religious implications of the Act.⁴⁴ Clause 29, which contained a provision that children ‘found begging, wandering, or destitute’ should be moved to industrial schools or placed with foster carers, caused most disquiet. Members of both the Justice Party and ruling Executive Council agreed that ‘there is a great deal of difference between beggars in England and beggars in this country’; begging having been outlawed in Britain under the Vagrancy Acts, but often contributing to the subsistence of Brahmin students.⁴⁵ This was not based on the idea of a distinctive Indian childhood, but a plea for the distinctiveness of Indian culture and social conditions.

The practical difficulties of implementation and the relationship between the agencies of the Juvenile Court and government were discussed.⁴⁶ Rangachariar emphasised the strengthening of civil society by extending the role of local committees and voluntary agencies, and avoiding police involvement.⁴⁷ Already involved in the MSPC, he was particularly concerned to facilitate the expansion of specialist knowledge within the voluntary sector, particularly as gender appropriate. Supporting this, M. Ramachandra Rao, a Mylapore Brahmin, argued that while the skills could come from civil society

⁴² TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 pp.451, 455

⁴³ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 p.454

⁴⁴ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 pp.453, 453

⁴⁵ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 pp.457, 458

⁴⁶ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 pp. 452, 455

⁴⁷ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 p. 455

and salaried professionals, the funding should be guaranteed by the Government.⁴⁸ The Bill was passed to the Select Committee, then re-debated in November 1919.⁴⁹ This involved a discussion about the need for speedy implementation and was particularly supported by the DPI, R. Littlehailes, who was to be in charge of the Certified Schools. There was broad support for the measures from across the parties, and criticism was based on individual points of disagreement.

The nature and terms of the state's involvement caused controversy when the Bill was discussed again in March 1920. Congress member Venkatappayya maintained that the state was obliged to provide financially, as being 'the duty and the function of the Government to maintain such children'.⁵⁰ He, and fellow Congress Member C.V. Narasima Raju, suggested that local bodies be empowered to become involved in Certified School management.⁵¹ The Indian Advocate-General, on the other hand, argued that the government could not assume statutory financial responsibility, but would be liberal in the provision of Grant-In-Aid funding to individual schools. He argued that private enterprises and charities could start schools which would be inspected by the provincial government, but was opposed to municipalities taking on that role.⁵² The position of the government was therefore deeply ambiguous. Although unwilling to accept financial responsibility as parent, the government wanted the power to regulate Certified Schools as *parens patriae* and were unwilling to countenance competition for this responsibility from other levels of government.

Further controversy surrounded the nomenclature, 'Reformatory' or 'Certified School' revealing an underlying confusion as to the purpose of the legislation and the role of the state.⁵³ The debate centred around whether the incarceration of children was based on sentiment or justice, and whether the intended purpose was protective rather than penal. This suggests that the rhetorical impact was as important as its physical manifestations, and being seen to protect childhood was more important than the

⁴⁸ TNSAL: MLC Debates 14/3/1918 p. 453

⁴⁹ TNSAL: MLC Debates 19/11/1919 p.127

⁵⁰ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p. 600

⁵¹ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.592

⁵² TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 pp.594, 600

⁵³ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.591

protection of real children, which in turn accounted for the lack of financial support. Additionally, the insertion of an additional clause which gave the government power ‘to exclude any class of children, young persons or youthful offenders from the operation of all or any of the provisions’ was passed without significant comment, on the understanding that there was a lack of facilities for female children. This mirrored the exemptions for girls under the compulsory education schemes (Chapters One and Two).⁵⁴ Children from groups designated Criminal Tribes were also assumed to be outside the scope of the Act. Similar to its British predecessor, the Children Act began on the premise that children have a special right to protection, but in the Madras context this could be withdrawn from those who did not fulfil a normative idea of childhood, explicitly excluding children on the basis of gender and of community.

The child in danger

The discussions surrounding Clause 29, which dealt with the child ‘in danger’, allow a further consideration of the relationships between the state, family and child. Clause 29 facilitated sending children to Junior Certified School or placing them in the control of a designated guardian if they were ‘found wandering and not having any home or settled place of abode, or visible means of subsistence’; had ‘no parent or guardian’; were ‘destitute’; were ‘under the care of a parent or guardian who, by reason of criminal or drunken habits, is unfit to have the care of the child’; or kept the company of thieves or prostitutes. The terms mirrored exactly the British 1908 Act. Clause 29 clearly indicated a concern among legislatures regarding poverty, but an underlying assumption that the state should only act if parents were absent or demonstrably harmful to their children. Poverty itself was insufficient for action, and the authority of the family was maintained. Most legislators supported these guidelines, which were expected to target ‘persons belonging to the lower classes’ and enabled the state to ‘look after people who would otherwise not be looked after’.⁵⁵

The position of the child in danger because of the actions of their parents was more complicated. A High Court judge and Congress politician, M.D. Devadoss, was

⁵⁴ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.590

⁵⁵ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.600

particularly supportive of attempts made ‘for the protection of poor innocents who are taken into houses of fame in order to be brought up as prostitutes’. He persistently highlighted the vulnerability and innocence of the child, and particularly emphasised that ‘young children who are not able to take care for themselves ought to be protected.’⁵⁶ This was supported by K. Venkatappayya who argued ‘girls need this protection much more than boys’; engaging with wider debates regarding *devadasis* and arguing that a ‘person who brings up girls for the sake of prostitution does not deserve any consideration’.⁵⁷ Very quickly the terms of the debate moved from ‘the good of the child’ to the ‘good of the country’ and the wider implications for cultural and racial purity. The amendments were withdrawn on the promise of a more wide-ranging bill to deal with prostitution from the Imperial Council in Delhi. The state had to negotiate between the twin duties of care for ‘children who may soon become offenders unless they are protected’ and protecting the innocence of those already incarcerated to ensure ‘proper control is exercised that they are free from contamination’.⁵⁸ Those already sexually active were legally defined in terms of gender, rather than age, and for girls sexual innocence appears to be the key boundary of childhood. M.D. Devadoss also introduced a further section, Part VII Offences Relating to Children which covered wilful assault, neglect or ill-treatment by those with custody or care of the child which would endanger the child’s physical or mental well-being, including the sale of cigarettes, *beedis* or intoxicating liquor to those under fifteen years.⁵⁹ Despite receiving support from the Madras Municipal Corporation this was withdrawn through lack of evidence.

The issue of child exploitation was revisited with a proposed amendment in 1932 to bring the MCA into line with subsequent Acts from other provinces, and align it more closely with its British predecessor.⁶⁰ A.B. Shetty, a Theosophist, independent MP and former Minister for Public Health, supported by the 1931 Report of the Chief Inspector of Schools, was convinced that ‘the exploitation of children’ should become ‘a punishable offence’ - for with early intervention ‘these unfortunate children can be

⁵⁶ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.599

⁵⁷ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.598, Raman, *Getting Girls to School*

⁵⁸ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.593

⁵⁹ TNSAL: MLC Debates 15/3/1920 p.601

⁶⁰ TNSAL: MLC Debates 27/1/1932 p.232

saved from a life of crime' enabling them 'to grow up as good citizens'.⁶¹ This reflected continuing concern by civil society bodies, such as the WIA and MCAS, about the seduction of minor children for 'immoral purposes' despite the all-India Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act 1928.⁶² Shetty argued that there needed to be a change towards active protection, not only removal 'from an immoral atmosphere' but also the prevention of smoking, gambling and 'neglect of and cruelty to children'.⁶³ Although the motion was carried, it was opposed by Justice M. Krishnan Nair who as President of MCAS feared compromising the ordinary corporal discipline of the family and suggested that the incarceration of all children found begging and wandering was financially and logistically impossible.⁶⁴ A further amendment in 1936 encouraged the extension of probation by relatives or 'suitable gentlemen' to reduce the costs of institutional care and prevent the return of children to unsuitable surroundings.⁶⁵ Again the overriding concern was the impact 'budding criminals' would have on 'the criminal problem of the future'.⁶⁶ Within the discourses surrounding the MCA there emerged a commitment to the protection of children as future citizens or national investments, a recognition of the duty of the state to act as parent if the natural parents failed to protect the child, but also a continuing reluctance to actively intervene in the child's home life. The terms of the rhetoric were prevention, deterrence and control rather than rehabilitation.

Despite the growing consensus that the state had a duty of care, the ambitions of the government were mired in the practical realities arising from competition over scarce resources.⁶⁷ In July 1938 Secretary to the Government of Madras, T.G. Rutherford, highlighted that the Government spent 'more on the young criminal than on the honest youth' as a 'sort of insurance provision against crime'.⁶⁸ While this difficulty was acknowledged as 'very pertinent' the Chief Inspector of Certified Schools emphasised 'the special responsibility of the Government to these children who in such cases have

⁶¹ TNSAL: MLC Debates 27/1/1932 p.232, GO902 28/6/1932 LE Annual Report for 1931

⁶² TNSA: GO621 LE 2/4/1929

⁶³ TNSAL: MLC Debates 27/1/1932 p.233

⁶⁴ TNSAL: MLC Debates 27/1/1932 p.234

⁶⁵ TNSAL: MLC Debates 3/9/1936 p.761

⁶⁶ TNSAL: MLC Debates 3/9/1936 p.762

⁶⁷ TNSA: GO2245 Home 12/9/1936, Chief Inspector of Certified Schools 14/5/1936

⁶⁸ TNSA: GO2245 Home 12/9/1936 TG Rutherford 7/7/1936

no home to go to and no one to take care of them'.⁶⁹ Proposals by the Madras Corporation, Public (Police) Department and MCAS for the 'establishment of a Children's Home in the city to which children begging in the streets should be compulsorily sent by law' were rejected in both 1925 and 1935 because the Corporation were unable to finance their share.⁷⁰ No further action was taken, and the proportion of destitute children admitted to Certified Schools declined so that in 1936 while 623 children were admitted, only 44 (7%) were detained directly under the destitution Clauses of the MCA.⁷¹ While there was an underlying assumed equivalence between destitution and crime, and recognition of the state's responsibility for children on account of age and vulnerability, there was little desire to finance the implementation of this.

The complex relationship between the state, the parents and the destitute child was highlighted in a legal case in 1942.⁷² In July 1942 the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Bezwada tried a group of five children (aged eleven-thirteen years) who had been arrested by the Railway Police. He ruled that the children were particularly lacking in familial control:

forsaken destitutes with no means of subsistence except begging... causing a lot of inconvenience and annoyance to the travelling public, and they were also committing petty offences such as pilfering away the food bundles of the passengers....These children have no control exercised over them, they have no means of livelihood. It is therefore obvious that the respondents are fit subjects for the exercise by the state of guardianship over them.⁷³

The five were committed to the Junior Certified School at Bellary, where they lived until December 1942 when eleven year old Gullipalli Yerrayya took the opportunity to protest to a Committee of Visitors that the Railway Police had assumed that he was abandoned but that he wanted to return home to his elder brother.⁷⁴ The Board of Visitors and G. Narayanaswami Chetty, Inspector of Certified Schools, both agreed in extensive correspondence with the Chief Inspector G.S. Gill that the boys should have

⁶⁹ TNSA: GO2245 Home 12/9/1936 Chief Inspector of Certified Schools 14/5/1936

⁷⁰ TNSA: GO1427 LE 15/7/1935

⁷¹ TNSA: GO2610 Home 12/7/1937

⁷² TNSA: GO2160 Home 6/9/1943

⁷³ TNSA: GO2160 Home 6/9/1943

⁷⁴ TNSA: GO2160 Home 6/9/1943 Committee of Visitors Bellary 28/12/1942

been admonished under the MCA or their parents fined, and that incarceration was not appropriate if their parents were alive.⁷⁵ This was resisted by Gill who provided extensive personal information about the boys, which stressed the inaccessibility or death of relatives and scientific verification of their age by the Assistant Surgeon. The District Superintendent of Railway Police also defended the decision to use Clause 29 (1) because ‘the respondents have no visible means of subsistence and that they [the family] have not exercised proper guardianship’.⁷⁶ Ultimately the boys remained at Bellary, but the case indicated that the boundaries of incarceration were clearly based in parental control.⁷⁷ There was underlying concern that it was easier for magistrates to send destitute children to Certified Schools than to carry out the necessary investigations to trace parents.⁷⁸ The Bezwada case demonstrated the ambivalence of the state towards destitute children and the continuing assumption by all adults involved that the primary responsibility for the child lay with family and intervention was a last resort. Most remarkable of all, this case came to government attention when a child queried the terms of his own imprisonment. The key determinant of state intervention was, therefore, not poverty or criminality so much as the absence of parental, or familial, authority and care.

Profiling juvenile crime

There are very few court records documenting the treatment of children in the 1920s. A small sample based on the records of the Presidency Magistrate Courts in Georgetown and Egmore detail the juvenile cases dealt with between 1922 and 1924, in a document ordered by the Education Department to assess juvenile crime rates and provide a statistical basis for future action.⁷⁹ These records are among the few which include information about individuals. For example Case 18334 refers to a boy of fourteen years called Munisami who was convicted of stealing (Article 379 Indian Penal Code) in the Georgetown Presidency Magistrates Court on 16 October 1922 and who received six lashes in punishment. The records detailed 240 cases for the Georgetown Court and 103 for Egmore. This did not include night cases from Egmore

⁷⁵ TNSA: GO2160 Home 6/9/1943 Chief Inspector of Certified Schools 13/1/43

⁷⁶ TNSA: GO2160 Home 6/9/1943 District Superintendent of Railway Police 17/7/1943

⁷⁷ TNSA: GO2160 Home 6/9/1943 Home Department 29/4/1943

⁷⁸ TNSA: GO5113 Home 26/4/1943

⁷⁹ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926

under the City Police Act which merely gave the number of cases brought by the police, with no specific crime mentioned. The child was defined by age, although with the lack of birth registrations there was no proof that children knew their own ages accurately and no mention was made of the criteria used by magistrates to define age, a perennial colonial problem.⁸⁰ Home district was not recorded, despite the position of the Egmore court beside the city's main railway station and evidence that migrant children were more likely to be in need of both protection and care from state agencies.⁸¹ Despite the political focus on gendered crime and prostitution during the 1920s and the increasing importance of educational communities defined by caste and religion, none of these categories were mentioned. As well as demonstrating again the arbitrary nature of colonial categorisation, the fact that age was the primary mode of identification demonstrates the beginnings of a numerical obsession as defining the boundaries of childhood. This was a significant new development for the Presidency, which reflected international trends in child-saving rather than colonial trends in statistics and governance.

The children were charged for a number of crimes, mostly related to theft or house-breaking or nuisance crime under the City Police Act.⁸² Only six were held under the MCA, and none were arrested for begging, despite the emphasis in the Act. Between both courts there was only one acquittal, revealing a presumption of guilt rather than a process of criminal justice. In Egmore 18% were discharged 'after due admonition' compared to 7% in Georgetown, although often in Egmore with a surety of Rs 50 (occasionally Rs 100) paid by the father on condition of good behaviour. The preferred Georgetown method was to use minor fines, ranging from two *annas* to five Rupees, which made up nearly 50% of all punishments, again reflecting the financial responsibility of the father. Corporal punishment was the most common penalty, always for property related crime, and six lashes were administered 'in the manner of school discipline' in 49% of the Egmore cases. By contrast the Georgetown magistrates were significantly less likely to sentence corporal punishment (36%), but it was usually much harsher: of the 85 individuals thus sentenced 21% received ten

⁸⁰ TNSA: GO1376 LE 12/7/1927 MCA Report 1925. Alborn, 'Age and Empire'

⁸¹ Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Inden, Imagining India*, Manshardt *Delinquent Child* p.27

⁸² TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926

and 19% received twelve lashes. The courts appear to have used punishment as a deterrent, while attempting to enforce the responsibility of the parents by giving them a small financial burden. The disparity in practice shows the local and somewhat arbitrary nature of criminal justice and the need to look beyond justice theory to its implementation, which varied even between two adjoining areas in Madras city. The Egmore magistrates seemed more progressive, being more likely to recommend probation (10%) and Certified School (16%) and using less severe corporal punishment. Of those sent to Certified School, whether Senior or Junior, six were sentenced under Clause 29 of the MCA, and whether the rest were repeat offenders or lacked parents is unclear; there is nothing to suggest that the crimes for which they were accused were any different in type, though perhaps in scale, from their peers. In a climate of financial constraint when adult justice was still considered the priority, the state was reluctant to assume a parental role, either in responsibility or financially, and the over-riding impetus appears to be efficiency rather than the establishment of legal innocence.

Profiling in Certified Schools

The children sent to Certified Schools lived under the gaze of the state to a far greater extent than the majority and are more visible, albeit as statistics rather than personalities, in the historical records. In 1919 the government managed one Reformatory with 252 inmates.⁸³ By 1940 there were five institutions with 1,426 inmates, of which 10% were female, 9% were Dalits and 45% from rural communities, reflecting the general demographic profiling of the Presidency.⁸⁴ A comparison of the literacy rates on admission for 1931, 1935 and 1942 (22%, 33%, 41% respectively) demonstrated that the expansion of education provision to lower-class boys was bearing fruit, although the percentage who self-described on admission as ‘school pupils’ remained low (1942 only 3%).⁸⁵ By 1942 the vast majority (73%) were ‘not in employment’, whereas in previous years the variety of employment was much greater, both in professional handicrafts, agriculture and as labourers. There was also

⁸³ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1919-1920

⁸⁴ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1939-40

⁸⁵ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 - 1931, GO1354 Home 14/7/1936 – 1935, GO1443 Home 26/6/1943 - 1942

a decline in those categorised as ‘beggars and wanderers’ (1931 11%, 1935 15%, 1942 3%), although the total number of children admitted in 1942 (960) was much greater than in previous years (172 and 334 in 1931 and 1935 respectively). It is unclear whether this indicates a rise in child poverty, a reluctance to employ children, or a greater desire on the part of the state to provide for children with no means of subsistence. Of course, these figures were unverified and were reliant on the children’s testimony.

While most children were incarcerated for two-three years (31%) the Administration Report of 1935 indicated 32 (10%) were sentenced for between five and ten years, and 19 (6%) for more than ten years. From the age profiles, 35% of those under twelve years would spend over five years in the Certified School, implying extensive disruption to family life or, more likely, incarceration because no family could be traced. In 1931 31% of those sentenced for over five years were committed under Clauses 29 and 30. For example, in one 1925 case five children were sent by the George Town Magistrate Court to the MSPC Junior Certified School for between six and two years until they reached age sixteen ‘or until such time they are claimed in the meanwhile by their relatives’ - ‘as evidently there is no one to take care of them, and as they are destitutes’.⁸⁶ This was reinforced by the figures on sentencing from the Remand Home run by the MCAS, where the vast majority were returned to their parents or released with warnings and a very small proportion were sent to Certified Schools, probably because their parents could not be traced.⁸⁷ This demonstrated the small beginnings of state intervention, and suggests that this was an exercise in care, in providing for children who were without parental financial support or control, rather than either rehabilitation or punishment. Crime does not appear to be of major significance here, but rather socio-economic background and existence of parents appears to be the important defining factor.

Implementation through Certified Schools

It proved easier to produce a broad consensus to legislate on the ‘juvenile delinquent’

⁸⁶ TNSA: GO123 LE 28/1/1930, Letter 21/10/25

⁸⁷ TNSA: GO1354 Home 14/7/1936, GO1443 Home 26/6/1943

than to agree how to pay for him. Current writings on the Indian juvenile justice system demonstrate the fundamental disconnect between the espoused rights of children and the ‘rightlessness’ of practice, children remaining an especially disempowered and marginalised group.⁸⁸ The seeds of this were obvious in the Madras Presidency, and five years after the legislation was passed the MCA applied only to Madras City, Chingleput and North Arcot, and only to male children.⁸⁹ Other limited sections applied to Cuddalore, Salem, Trichinopoly, Coimbatore and Madura and within the jurisdiction of the Railway Police. In September 1925 only sections 25 and 26 were in force for all children of both sexes throughout the Presidency, highlighting exclusions based on age, gender and provinciality but due largely to the lack of political will to fund the other functions of the Act.⁹⁰ It is significant too that the only operative sections were those which related to parental responsibility for the conduct of their children, or the need to appoint alternative guardians to fulfil that role.

The MCA was implemented through civil society involvement (as discussed in the next chapter) but also through institutions directly funded and managed by the state: the Certified Schools. The Chingleput Reformatory, renamed as the Senior Certified School, was established under the Reformatory Schools Act 1897 and had a record of functioning effectively, and a Junior Certified School was established at Ranipet, the first boys arriving there in April 1923.⁹¹ A further school was temporarily established in Rajahmundry, but transferred to Bellary in November 1931. By 1937 there was also a Senior Certified School for girls in Madras City run by the MCAS, a Junior Certified School run by the MSPC and St Mary’s Adi-Dravida Girls School in Vellore.⁹² A Remand home run by the MCAS was recognised in 1926 as an institution to offer temporary accommodation to children awaiting trial or found in the city without parents.⁹³ There was also a government managed borstal (or boy’s penitentiary) at Palayamkottai to deal with adolescents between sixteen and 21 years.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Kumari, *Juvenile Justice System in India* p.182, Weiner, *The Child and the State*, Kannabiran and Singh (ed.) *Challenging the Rule(s) of Law* p.182

⁸⁹ TNSA: GO2121 LE 11/12/1925, Question: 13/8/1925

⁹⁰ TNSA: GO1621 LE 16/9/1925, GO898 LE 17/5/1926

⁹¹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1922-23, 1923-4

⁹² NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1936-1937, 1932-1933 to 1936-1937 p.127

⁹³ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926

⁹⁴ BL: I.S.410/30. Bureau of Education, ‘The Neglected and Delinquent Children and Juvenile

The management of the Certified Schools involved a complicated relationship between a number of government departments. The Act was dealt with initially by the Law (Education) Department, after the passing of the Government of India Act 1919 but before it came into operation. Until 1939 the statistics for the Certified Schools were discussed in the Annual and Quinquennial Reports of the DPI, and the schools continued to be funded through the budgets of the Law (Education), then Law & Education and then Education Department. In 1919 a member of the Medical Service had been appointed as superintendent of Chingleput and tasked with improving the physical health of the boys there.⁹⁵ When the MCA came into force, he was replaced by a member of the Madras Educational Service under the supervision of the Inspector of European Schools, now re-designated Chief Inspector of Certified Schools.⁹⁶ In 1923-24 another officer from the Madras Education Service was appointed, but was regarded as 'not really of the proper type'.⁹⁷ He was replaced by an officer of the Jail Department on an enhanced salary, in line with other penal institutions. The issue was used by V.T. Krishnamachariar of the Education Department to move the Certified Schools to the administrative jurisdiction of the Jail Department, despite the 'sentimental objection to associating them with Prisons' because of the lack of interest shown by the Education Department and despite the opposition of the DPI.⁹⁸ This was based on the 'special science of juvenile penology and prevention of crime', which required that staff 'apply to their treatment of the subject the modern methods which we are already trying to apply into the Prisons Department'.⁹⁹

In 1925 A.P. Patro, as Justice Party Minister for Education, highlighted the complicated nature of the management, with the MCA funded from the Education budget but the Home Minister the responsible member in the MLC. He emphasised that while the Certified Schools were not penal institutions, the specialisms for dealing

Offenders in the States of Indian Union, 1949' (GOI Press, 1952) p.16, IOR: L/PJ/6/1902, File 1134.

The Madras Borstal Schools Act, 1926

⁹⁵ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1921-1922, 1916-1917 to 1921-1922 p.54

⁹⁶ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1922-23 p.22

⁹⁷ TNSA: GO1234 LE 15/7/1925 Letter 8/11/1924, NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1923-24

⁹⁸ TNSA: GO1234 LE 15/7/1925 Letter 8/11/1924, AR Knapp 29/1/1925

⁹⁹ TNSA: GO1234 LE 15/7/1925 VT Krishnamachariyar 8/11/1924

with rehabilitation lay with the Jail Department, and the educational officers lacked both 'experience and training' in modern penology. He also pressed, without avail, for the use of 'highly trained specialists' involving 'the application to each case of medical science in the form of psychiatry'.¹⁰⁰ The Justice Party were interested in portraying juvenile justice as rehabilitative, not penal, based around the idea of the child as individual and emphasising the production of law-abiding citizens rather than the criminalising of a community – by caste or socio-economic background. Both Chingleput and Ranipet were transferred to the control of the Inspector-General of Prisons Lt-Col Cameron, although Cameron continued to use the inspectors from the Education Department.¹⁰¹ The slow expansion of other provisions of the Act, including the juvenile courts, was carried out meanwhile under the control of the Home Department. While children were the emotive centre, they were used in power struggles between ICS departments and budgets and indicate the increasing power of professionals, themselves in conflict about the differing priorities of modern educational and criminological practices. The discussions reveal a wide consensus regarding the need for rehabilitation and the growing influence of a discourse of child rights, which emphasised the universal similarities rather than cultural or communal difference. A discursive concern did not mean funding, however, and the money spent per head decreased significantly between 1919 and 1939.¹⁰²

The content of schooling: school and the mind

The Rules governing the Certified Schools were agreed by politicians in the MLC and mirrored the rules for accommodation, sanitation and curriculum established by the DPI for other educational establishments. The schools were controlled by a Superintendent, assisted by a Medical Officer. The timetable was specified and school discipline was recorded in detail, with detailed discussion of good conduct badges as a financial incentive and of remuneration for industrial work, children receiving a small percentage, half for saving, half for sweetmeats or toys. Boys were disciplined according to a monitor system, with punishment by loss of marks or good conduct badges, deprivation of play hour, temporary cessation of family visits, corporal

¹⁰⁰ TNSA: GO1234 LE 15/7/1925, AP Patro 29/1/1925

¹⁰¹ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI1926-1927, 1921-1922 to 1916-1927 p.170

¹⁰² NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1919-20, 1939-40

punishment and deduction of earnings. Boys were allowed a monthly visit from parents, and allowed no more than six leaves of absence annually to visit relatives if behaviour 'justified such a privilege'.¹⁰³ Vast numbers of administrative statistics were to be produced, including library catalogues, clothing receipts, pupil savings bank accounts and histories of discharged pupils. Although, frustratingly, none seem to have survived in the archives, they reflected a colonial desire for control through scientific knowledge and statistics.¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting that in these rules there was no distinction made between the children incarcerated because of a criminal conviction, and those held because they were poor and without family.

The aim of the Chief Inspector of Certified Schools centred round the production of 'the self-supporting, self-respecting citizen'.¹⁰⁵ Mirroring global criminological discourses, he argued:

We try to broaden the mental outlook, teach the responsibilities of citizenship and equip each lad with a sound practical grounding in some useful industry..... The basic idea is that a lad brimming over with the vital energy of youth will develop a sound moral sense if he gets the right outlets for exercising that energy healthily and the right atmosphere in which his own innate instincts of fair play, good sportsmanship and observance of the square deal in his association with his fellows, can expand and flourish.¹⁰⁶

The delinquent child was assumed to have the possibility of reformation through the regulation of the healthy male body based on assumptions about the innate plasticity of children and their 'normal' response to the teaching, with no reference to racial difference. The children received basic literacy and a general education, and a vocational training which would provide practical skills to avoid a life of crime and poverty. Ranipet developed into a higher elementary school with six standards, while Bellary gave pupils a general education, and a choice of weaving, carpentry, tailoring and gardening. The curriculum at Chingleput was divided into two three hour sections. In the General Education course English, Geography, Indian History, Civics and Hygiene were taught and in the Industrial Section specialist instructors taught trades

¹⁰³ TNSA: GO801 LE 9/6/1923

¹⁰⁴ TNSA: GO801 LE 9/6/1923, Sen *Colonial Childhoods*, Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge*:

¹⁰⁵ Manshardt *Delinquent Child*

¹⁰⁶ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCA Report 1931

such as carpentry, blacksmithy and weaving. While three years at school was regarded as the minimum time needed to reform the character, it was also the minimum required to adequately teach a boy a trade.¹⁰⁷ The schools claimed full literacy on release, not an insignificant achievement when general literacy rates remained low. The reformatory results were monitored and a detailed statistical account kept of discharged children, although the figures were necessarily limited given the large numbers who did not report back. Some children profited by their association with the penal system, gaining social advantages through literacy, for example as teachers, jail instructors or railway workers, career options not available to most impoverished children.¹⁰⁸ In 1927, 74 were discharged from Chingleput and only three were reconvicted, although most were engaged in agricultural labour. In 1931 none of the children from Bellary followed the vocations taught in school, and in Ranipet less than 40% did so.¹⁰⁹ In the girls' schools, the children learned 'feminine handicrafts' of tailoring, lace making, weaving, and rattan work. While some items were sold, and there was a drive for self-sufficiency and some limited remuneration of the children, the activities produced little money or even skills and all industrial education seems to have been viewed primarily as a means of inculcating work discipline, and as a way to keep the children occupied.

A career in the brass band was considered one of the optimum choices for a boy from the Certified School, providing 'the morality of an honest livelihood' and a continuing ethic of military discipline.¹¹⁰ Nicola Sheldon has argued that music was an important pedagogical technique in British reformatories, encouraging moral values such as self-discipline but also providing a creative release for the boys and the opportunity for talent to emerge.¹¹¹ By the twentieth century brass bands had become an embodiment of the Imperial experience, linked to the military, to Empire Day and to missionary uplift projects.¹¹² In 1927-1932 the Junior school at Rajahmundry (then Bellary)

¹⁰⁷ TNSA: GO1376 LE 12/7/1927 MCA Report 1926 p.4

¹⁰⁸ TNSA: GO1376 LE 12/7/1927 MCA Report 1926 p.4

¹⁰⁹ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCA Report 1931 p.34

¹¹⁰ G Chatterjee, *Child Criminals and the Raj* p.21

¹¹¹ Nicola Sheldon, 'The musical careers of the poor: the role of music as a vocational training for boys in British care institutions 1870-1918' *History of Education* 38:6 (2009) pp.747-759

¹¹² Trevor Herbert and Margaret Sarkissian 'Victorian bands and their dissemination in the colonies' *Popular Music* 16:2 (1997), Trevor Herbert, *The British Brass Band: a musical and social history*, (Oxford: OUP, 2000) Chapter 5 God's Minstrels

provided training in bugle and band playing while Ranipet included bugle, flute and bagpipe playing.¹¹³ Chingleput had a strong music curriculum: for example in 1934 ten of the fourteen who studied band left to join regimental bands, either in the military, police or in the jail department.¹¹⁴ The school had invested in music and in the relationship with the regiments since the late nineteenth century, and its reputation was well established although there is no evidence of them having their own band.¹¹⁵

School and the body

Particular attention was paid to the reformation of character through the regulation of the ‘manly body’.¹¹⁶ Chingleput was particularly noted for its excellence in athletics and the school won a number of local athletic competitions.¹¹⁷ This was hardly surprising, given an hour every morning and afternoon was devoted to team games, boxing and athletics in the belief that ‘in the playing field and the gymnasium self-control and good sportsmanship are more or less self-taught’.¹¹⁸ Scouting was used extensively and, on the basis of the Madras experience, the Third All-Indian Conference of Inspectors-General of Prisons resolved unanimously to introduce Scouting ‘in all institutions set apart for the treatment of adolescents and young offenders’ as ‘it was felt that the basic principles of the Scout Movement and the Borstal System have much in common.’¹¹⁹ Scouting reinforced the idea of disciplined and militarised masculinity, but also helped encourage contact with those outside the penal regime, particularly in inter-school competitions, important for children who could spend up to ten years in a Certified School.¹²⁰ The Ranipet troops, for example, were represented at the District Scout Rally at Vellore in August 1924, where the scout troop came sixth, and the cub pack won the cub flag.¹²¹ The 1936 Report praised the

¹¹³ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1931-1932, 1927-1928 to 1931-1932

¹¹⁴ TNSA: GO1282 LE 24/6/1935 MCA Report 1934

¹¹⁵ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1909, Rastogi, ‘Prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency in India’ p.326

¹¹⁶ Satadru Sen, ‘Schools, Athletes and Confrontation: The Student Body in Colonial India’ in Mills, and Sen, *Confronting the Body*, Pamela Cox, *Gender, Justice and Welfare*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p.66. Abigail Wills, ‘Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950-1970’ *Past and Present*, 187 (May 2005)

¹¹⁷ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI 1921-1922, 1916-1917 to 1921-1922, 1931-32 Mayhew Shield, TNSA: GO1376 LE 12/7/1927 MCA Report 1926

¹¹⁸ TNSA: GO1032 LE 3/6/1926 MCA Report 1925

¹¹⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1961 File 2014. p.22

¹²⁰ TNSA: GO1354 Home 14/7/1936, GO1282 LE 24/6/1935 MCA Report 1934

¹²¹ TNSA: GO1282 LE 24/6/1935 MCA Report 1934

Chingleput scout crafts exhibition, and the Girl Guides of the MCAS school gained prizes in National Health Association essay competition, the Music Concert and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition.¹²²

Mirroring concerns in the metropole, the maintenance of a healthy body caused concern to the administrators.¹²³ In 1919 and 1936 Chingleput went through extensive changes in sanitary provision, medical care and a dietary review as did Ranipet in 1925. This was supported by the collection of health statistics, for example the monthly registers of weight, and prescription of the specific, size related, amounts of food due to each child.¹²⁴ Satadru Sen argues that a fear of juvenile homosexuality helped to produce the normative discourses on gender, generation, race and sexual preference used to justify the colonial and incarceration projects.¹²⁵ These anxieties were seen in the evidence to the Jails Committee. For example Mr A.J. Nicholas, Superintendent of Tanjore Borstal, wanted the removal of sexually active boys to adult jail, drawing the boundaries of childhood in sexual innocence rather than numerical age, as was often the case for girls.¹²⁶ None of the Administration Reports from the 1920s or 1930s mention sexual activity, possibly through lack of evidence or effective surveillance, but more likely because this might suggest that the state was a failed parent, unable to protect the vulnerable.

The dual elements of corporeal control and moral rehabilitation characterised the punishment regime. The school superintendents continually stressed the lack of physical enclosures as a pedagogical technique: 'there were certainly a good many escapes' but if 'our object is to awaken a sense of personal responsibility and teach boys to be confident, straightforward and self-reliant, it is necessary to trust them and give them some measure of freedom'.¹²⁷ Internalising values of self-discipline was therefore intended to be a more effective long-term means of control than corporal

¹²² TNSA: GO2556 Home 12/06/1940 MCA Report 1939

¹²³ Linda Mahood, *Policing gender, class and family: Britain 1850-1940* (London: UCL Press, 1995), Cox and Shore *Becoming Delinquent*:

¹²⁴ TNSA GO1234 LE 15/7/1925, IOR: V/24/2278 MCA Report 1936, IOR:L/PARL/2/407- A p.142

¹²⁵ Sen *Colonial Childhoods* Chapter 2

¹²⁶ IOR: L/PARL/2/407 A Evidence 4/1/1920 pp.104-5, Pandey 'Coming of Age', Jackson *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*, Sen *Colonial Childhoods* p.68

¹²⁷ TNSA: GO1032 LE 3/6/1926 MCA Report 1925

punishment. In 1930, for instance, there were 22 escapes and of these seventeen were recaptured. The Chief Inspector maintained the escapee tended to be a recent offender, who was still 'developing his power of choice between right and wrong' but 'may fail and take a false step towards liberty especially during the early period of training when he is homesick'.¹²⁸ Alongside engendering a new disciplinary ethos, punishment for misdemeanours was still necessary. In 1930, of the 84 offences committed, most related to breaking school rules, although seven were because of prohibited articles and ten were assaults. The punishments involved: two confined to barracks, four warnings, one whipping, eight had their status as monitors reduced and 69 received 'cuts' on the palm.¹²⁹ In the 1934 Report, there were 178 offences, five being assaults and escapes, 25 relating to prohibited articles and the rest relating to the school rules. The punishments included nine being deprived of marks and leisure hours, one warning, nine status reductions, 147 received 'cuts' on the palm and thirteen other punishments, but there was no case of whipping.¹³⁰ This was a pattern of minor offences and limited punishments, with the use of controlled physical pain against the body of the child remaining the most common. While the evidence of the children's actions or motivations is limited, there was sufficient evidence in the many minor offences committed (which might be called 'weapons of the weak') to cause upset to the colonial 'parental state' or at least minor disruption to the life of the reformatory.¹³¹ This provides some indication not only of how the children managed the disciplinary boundaries set by adult authority, but how their own actions contributed to discourses of control and power within the Certified Schools.¹³²

Given the sanitising effect of colonial reports, it is difficult to ascertain how daily life was experienced within the Certified Schools. The only clear division which emerges is between sexes, although female children seem to have been segregated on the basis of sexual innocence. Although the difference between destitute and delinquent

¹²⁸ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCA Report 1931, Letter 13/5/1932

¹²⁹ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932. MCA Report 1931

¹³⁰ TNSA: GO1282 LE 24/6/1935 MCA Report 1934

¹³¹ James C Scott *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. (Yale: Yale university press, 1990)

¹³² For extensive discussion of resistance by children in the Reformatory, Jenneke Christiaens 'Testing the limits: Redefining Resistance in A Belgian Boys' Prison, 1895-1905' in Cox and Shore *Becoming Delinquent*:

children remained a point of contention and children from Criminal Tribes were not under the jurisdiction of the Children Act, within the Certified Schools there seems to have been little differentiation in status or treatment. Statistics were kept for religion, occupation and age, but there was no interest shown in caste. The ethos was one of care and the production of future citizens through education and internalising values of hard work and self-discipline, although with limited corporal punishment to reinforce authority. The success of these measures in the lives of the children is very difficult to assess, as is the impact of institutionalisation on the emotional wellbeing of the child. While the Certified School may have been seen as an oppressive centre of adult authority, it may also have been a rational short-term survival strategy which provided shelter and food, or even long-term advantage in training and employment opportunities to those without family support.

Conclusion

The 1920s were a crucial decade for the foundation of the child welfare state in the Madras Presidency. This reflected a growing discursive consensus shared by legislators, practitioners and theorists and was based on a claim that an Indian child should be equally entitled to the same protection and treatment as a British child, meaning that the legislative provisions of the 1908 British Children Act and 1920 MCA should be equivalent. This highlighted the networks of communication between the colony and metropole. It reveals the nuanced impact of global discourses on childhood and the claim to the universal rights of the child based on a numerical definition of age as early as the 1920s in the Indian context. Remarkable too was the complete lack of distinctively Indian theoretical writings on specifically Indian forms or treatments of delinquency. Rather, the claim to equality and universality was more important than a claim to national or racial specificity despite the hegemony of anti-colonial nationalism in the political sphere. It reflected changing ideas about the nature of state intervention, children as future citizens and a claim by the Indian middle classes to share fully in the perceived modernity of the West as equals.

The 1920s and 1930s were the era of the development of the modern welfare state in the Madras Presidency. This included claims to intervene as parent in the lives of

children in need of both care and control. There was a broad political consensus about the necessity of intervention and the decisions taken were effectively depoliticised. Any conflict was between the authority and financial resources of the differing government departments; the individuals concerned were predominantly Indian and there appears no distinction between the views of the varying political parties, whether nationalist or pro-British. Yet state intervention, although couched in terms of the state's parental responsibility, was to be avoided if at all possible. There was little appetite to interfere with the authority of the father or wider family and institutionalisation was to be the last resort. Indeed at times the enforcement of parental responsibility physically and financially (Clauses 25 and 26) was the only juvenile justice provision in place for most of the Presidency. Petty crime by children was not viewed so much as a social menace or result of lack of parental control, but as a response to extreme poverty. The defining reason for a child's incarceration was the absence of parents rather than criminal responsibility or socio-economic distress and this was reflected in practice within the Certified Schools, with no difference made between those originally designated 'delinquent' or 'destitute'.

While the legislators were willing to claim rhetorical responsibility for children in need of care, in reality they were not willing to pay to implement this. The reformatories focussed on the reformation of character through corporeal control and education, in order to produce future citizens of the nation who were committed to an ethic of hard work and self-discipline. To some extent they succeeded, and with full literacy on release the employment and future opportunities of individual children were significantly enhanced. The volume of statistics produced was impressive, yet the administration reports seem more interested in assessing whether the state was fulfilling its parental duties than controlling the delinquent child. The limited expansion of child welfare provision and the lack of political will in its implementation demonstrate a state neither interested in controlling families or delinquent youth, nor interested in practical care for the vulnerable. It demonstrates a state motivated by a desire to be perceived as modern, as competent to govern and as in tune with emerging global discourses of juvenile delinquency and the protection of childhood. The provincial governments of Madras were more interested in being seen to protect

childhood than in protecting real children. That said, the radicalism of the MCA should not be overlooked, given that it was the first of its kind on the sub-continent. It claimed equality for Indian children with children across the globe and it defined the child both as future citizen and as the responsibility of the state in ways previously unknown in British India. Interestingly too, the MCA was one of the first pieces of legislation which defined the child in terms of age, and where numerical age was consistently more important than race or caste.

(Chapter Six) Protecting the poor child: the practical expansion of juvenile justice

The passing of the MCA 1920 demonstrated a new concern among legislators for children and the development of a consensus regarding children as the responsibility of the State, and as the embodiment of both vulnerability and potential. However, the responsibility for the implementation of the Act was unclear, with the exception of the government-run Certified Schools discussed in Chapter Five. The changing and negotiated relationships between state actors, such as politicians, officials and salaried magistrates, and voluntary societies were fundamental to the process of the expansion of juvenile justice provision. This process initially involved the Madras Society for the Protection of Children (MSPC), which then spawned the Madras Children's Aid Society (MCAS). To understand both how juvenile delinquency was constructed as well as the priorities for the implementation of the new juvenile justice and welfare provisions requires a detailed study of the foundation of the MCAS and its networks with other social reform organisations. The MCAS is analysed alongside other attempts to implement the MCA through the space and personnel of the juvenile court system, the probation service and the Boys Club.

Within the context of juvenile justice it is important to look at the growing power of the modern state, the increasing consensus that intervention was appropriate and the debated nature of familial authority. This again moves away from over-simplified assumptions regarding racial conflict between competing patriarchies and experts.¹ More important here is the expansion of 'the social' as the depoliticised area at the intersection between the state, the family, civil society and expert professionals.² In the European context, Garland argues that this new sphere of action was 'an *alliance* between the private and the public, the state and the volunteer' in which the state 'empowered' the implementation of policy by volunteers.³ Rather than attributing this to ideologies or class and gender structures, more recent research by Anne Logan has highlighted how policy in Britain was formulated through a group of interconnected

¹ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*

² Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* p.55, Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, Garland, *Punishment and Welfare*,

³ Garland, *Punishment and Welfare* p.206. Ellis (ed.) *Juvenile Delinquency* 'introduction' questions the extent to which this reflects the constructed nature of 'the state' itself.

individuals and activists in the labour, feminist and the penal reform movements, with links to the civil service.⁴ Clarifying the complicated relationships of the individuals involved in the Madras context and the nature of their relationship with the state helps further to uncover the way in which children were constructed as objects of social action.⁵

An examination of the way in which civil society actors implemented policy - rather than the reliance on the more discursive legislative manifestation - refines our understanding of how childhood was imagined. In particular, it demonstrates the interactions and anxieties across society in relation to questions surrounding the cultural specificity of childhood, the increasing influence of global ideas regarding the 'universal' child and child rights, and the ways these new ideas interacted with changing perceptions about the Indian family structure.⁶ Imagining welfare within the metaphors of the extended family both gave legitimacy to intervention, but also honoured the cultural allegiances of both nuclear and extended families.⁷ Furthermore, exploring the ways in which the MCAS organised and funded the juvenile courts and probation system facilitates an understanding of the ways in which children were envisaged as destitute or delinquent, as victims or as threat to the morals of society, and how this fitted into both the construction of Indian childhood and of juvenile delinquency.

Madras Society for the Protection of Children (MSPC)

The MCA 1920 confirmed a new consensus among policymakers that children were distinct from adults and deserved state action to protect their universal rights to protection and care. However, the implementation of many of the provisions was left to civil society. This fell initially to the MSPC, a non-governmental organisation established in 1908 for the protection and maintenance of orphan and destitute children under fourteen years of age, although with a particular focus on those under the age of

⁴ Logan, 'Policy networks and the juvenile court'

⁵ Cox, *Gender, Justice and Welfare*

⁶ Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away* p.87

⁷ Balakrishnan *Growing Up and Away* p.209

eight.⁸ The managing committee was male and highly educated. It included C. Cunnan Chetti, a noted educational philanthropist; Sir C. Sankaran Nair, former judge and Member for Education in the Viceroy's Council; and Sir John Wallis, an Anglo-Indian Advocate-General and former Chief Justice. With the Governor-General as President, the management of the society had close personal links with the governing establishment.⁹ The MSPC ran a home in Madras city which its managing committee hoped could be certified as an Industrial School under the MCA.¹⁰ The home provided shelter and tuition in gender-based skills, the boys in carpentry and gardening and girls in sewing, knitting, basket-making and cookery.¹¹ This work was funded by public subscriptions and a government grant amounting to two-thirds of the public subscriptions realised by the society in the preceding year. Public contributions were not inconsiderable. For example the Society received Rs 20,000 from the Dr Varadappa Naidu Fund.¹² When the building project ran into deficit in 1920 an appeal to the public raised contributions of Rs 2,415 which, along with further contributions from the Dr Varadappa Naidu Fund and from the late Doctor's son, helped to cover the shortfall.¹³ By contrast repeated grant applications to the government for additional facilities were refused because there was no provision in the budget. By 1923 both the MSPC and DPI were claiming that the home was one of the few which could carry out the provisions of the MCA and required a 'liberal grant' in 1924-25.¹⁴

The MCA was expanded under the authority of the Education Department, and after 1935 by the Home Department. No evidence has emerged that it was ever costed by the government, but was merely implemented as a principle. In 1925 the Education Department wrote to the MSPC expressing concern that the society's work was concentrated on the children's home and 'the large problem of rescuing and reforming

⁸ MSPC website: www.mspcchildrenhome.com. Evidence of the society's activities comes from its correspondence with the government, their own archives being untraceable.

⁹ TNSA: GO673 LE 2/6/1922

¹⁰ TNSA: GO673 LE 2/6/1922 MSPC Letter 24/3/1922

¹¹ TNSA: GO638 LE 8/4/1930 MSPC Letter 16/5/1929

¹² TNSA: GO673 LE 2/6/1922 MSPC Letter 27/5/1920. Dr Varadappa Naidu was a medical practitioner who funded the MSPC Orphanage. His family continue to be significant contributors. Raman *Getting girls to school* p.210

¹³ TNSA: GO1166 LE 1920

¹⁴ TNSA: GO1684 LE 1/12/1923 DPI Budget 21/11/1922

the incipient criminal is not prominently kept in view'.¹⁵ Instead, the MSPC tried to carve out a role as a Clause 29 organisation, concerned with the prevention of delinquency and interested primarily in rescuing orphaned children from destitution.¹⁶ This demonstrated a very clear distinction between the need for 'care' and 'control' which defined their identity as an organisation in relation to other child-saving bodies. The MSPC briefly became central to the 1925 negotiations surrounding the establishment of a State Children's Council to assist in the functioning of the MCA and the two organisations continued to work closely together, although the MSPC maintained its separate aims throughout.

The MSPC continued to receive financial support from the state to provide a home for destitute children, although a project in 1930 to construct a weaving shed to provide clothes and employable skills for the children was paid for by private donation from a retired Education Officer, despite the strong endorsement of the three Inspectors of Jails, Schools and Industries.¹⁷ For maintenance funding, the annual grant from the Madras Government remained equal to subscriptions and donations, subject to a maximum of Rs 3,000.¹⁸ This was strongly enforced when the donations fell below Rs 3,000 but when in 1930 they collected Rs 5,000, the request to match this figure was refused.¹⁹ In 1935 the Managing Committee had to cover the shortfall from their personal funds.²⁰ Notwithstanding attempts by the MSPC to argue that they were hampered by the global economic situation and particularly deserved financial support because 'the institution is the only one in South India which admits all castes', the government only provided the matched Rs 1,830, despite reserving Rs 3,000 in the budget.²¹ The dependence on private donations even to cover basic maintenance reflects the reliance of the Madras government on philanthropy to fund projects which they had established in law as universal rights. It was clear that children in need of 'care' were not a funding priority, and were reliant on donations from the upper

¹⁵ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Education Department 5/2/1925

¹⁶ TNSA: GO2080 LE 5/11/1926

¹⁷ TNSA: GO638 LE 8/4/1930 MSPC Report 16/5/1929

¹⁸ TNSA: GO638 LE 8/4/1930 Education 27/5/1929

¹⁹ TNSA: GO752 LE 28/4/1930 MSPC Letter 29/3/1930

²⁰ TNSA: GO735 LE 11/4/1935

²¹ TNSA: GO227 Home 22/4/1936 Memo 22/4/1936

classes, who were more likely to support those designated 'destitute' not 'delinquent' in their philanthropic giving, despite the rhetorical consensus in the MCA itself about the interrelationship between poverty and crime.

Expansion of juvenile justice

While the MSPC cared for the destitute, the other terms of the MCA existed only on the statute book. This caused concern to the WIA and in December 1924 Mrs Hume Stanford wrote to the Government regarding the 'poor and uncared for children' of Madras.²² In February 1925 the WIA offered to establish and administer a children's court, providing honorary magistrates and supervising a 'place of safety' for the children.²³ This concurred with previous correspondence which emphasised that among the primary concerns of the WIA was 'securing the welfare of children through health, legal and social agencies' to make the MCA 'a practical working protection for the children of Madras'.²⁴

In response to WIA agitation, the Education Department decided to create 'an experienced and energetic sub-committee of the MSPC'. As secretary, Mrs Stanford was the organising force although controls were established to 'ensure that she has no right to supersede the officers and members of the society', a reflection on the restrictions placed on the philanthropic activities of white women.²⁵ Invitations to serve on the committee were sent to ICS Education official V.T. Krishnamachari, a number of prominent Indian and British barristers and Mrs Vira Sing Chinnappa, Superintendent of the Madras Corporation Child Welfare Scheme.²⁶ The discussions resulted in the establishment of a 'State Children's Council' specifically responsible for 'rescuing' children 'not acceptable to the [MPSC] Society' and to 'advise Government as to the measures to be taken in *the best interests of the children of the Madras city* [my italics]'.²⁷ The stated need was

²² TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Letter Mrs Stanford 4/12/1924

²³ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 WIA Letter 5/2/1925

²⁴ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Annie Besant Letter 24/10/1924

²⁵ Barbara Ramusack, 'Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India 1865-1945' *Women's Studies Int. Forum* 13:4 (1990) pp.309-321

²⁶ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Invitation 6/3/1925

²⁷ TNSA: GO2080 LE 5/11/1926 MSPC Memo 5/2/1925, GO 433 LE 30/3/1925

a powerful non-official society which will act as an agent and representative of the Government in handling generally the problems connected with the rescue and reformation of children in Madras city who are either reconvicted of crime or need to be taken out of surroundings and locations which threaten to undermine and pervert their moral character and make them easy victims to the temptations to commit crime.²⁸

The solution for all children in contact with the Society was ‘rescue and reformation’, and although distinctions between the real and potential criminal were noted, they were regarded of limited importance. Important too was the need for welfare work to operate ‘under the auspices of a non-official society’.²⁹ While the state had established its duty towards children in the MCA, it was prepared to relinquish significant responsibility to non-governmental bodies acting in its name to implement this. Yet while the personnel and management were ‘non-official’, it was largely state-funded through the Jail Department budget, although the Certified Schools came from the Education budget.³⁰ In addition to an annual grant, further financial assistance could be obtained ‘on the basis of guaranteeing two Rupees for every one Rupee collected by subscription’, again placing the onus outside government.³¹

Madras Children’s Aid Society (MCAS)

The State Children’s Council became permanent in March 1926 as the MCAS.³² It was established as a non-official body with strong support from the judiciary, particularly the Chief Presidency Magistrate Dr Pandali (CPM).³³ The President was the Justice Party politician Muhammad Usman and the Vice-President was the Anglican Lord Bishop of Madras. The executive committee was formed from seven annually elected members, and three government nominees who were specifically charged with monitoring spending.³⁴ The initial committee included officials such as V.T. Krishnamachari, philanthropists such as S. V. Ramaswamy Mudaliar and politicians such as Justice G. Narayanaswamy Chetty and lawyer M.A. Tirunarayanachariar. It also included the WIA and Theosophist leader Dr Annie

²⁸ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Letter Education Department 5/2/1925

²⁹ TNSA: GO946 LE 14/10/1926 Education Note 23/10/1926

³⁰ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Inspector-General of Prisons 20/7/1926, DPI 24/1/1925

³¹ TNSA: GO2080 LE 5/11/1926 Letter 25/6/1925

³² TNSA: GO946 LE 14/10/1926 MCAS Letter 23/10/1926

³³ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 CPM Memo 4/2/1925

³⁴ TNSA: GO3893 Home 23/9/1940 Note 16/5/1940

Besant, social reformer Mrs Venkatasubba Rao (later of Madras Seva Sedan) and Mrs Stanford as secretary.³⁵

The MCAS began by establishing a remand 'home of shelter' for children 'pending their trial', 'committed to its custody by the court' or 'destitute and uncared for' and found wandering the streets. During 1927 this was used by 62 boys and four girls, in 1928 by 54 boys and fifteen girls.³⁶ Average stay was not mentioned. The MCAS then established a Junior Certified School and employed a Probation Officer.³⁷ By 1929 the Society also ran a Senior Certified School for girls which housed and educated 22 girls and was connected to other schemes for rescuing girls under the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act 1928. Funding remained precarious. In 1920 the government had assured legislators that it would provide 'liberal grants' to a committee which 'offered good guarantees of permanence and satisfactory working', which entailed inspection of the Society's accounts under the Education Department's Grant-in-Aid scheme rules.³⁸ However, government was not prepared to 'bear the whole cost' and the central role of 'private benevolence' from all communities remained a consistent principle.³⁹

Initially the Government provided funding to feed the remand cases and half of the other remand expenditure.⁴⁰ This was supplemented by a separate grant covering three-quarters of the maintenance of the Senior Certified School to an annual maximum of Rs 5,000.⁴¹ The precarious nature of the funding caused such concern that in 1927 the MCAS sent a deputation direct to the Governor.⁴² The Education Department's briefing notes acknowledged the potential cost required for the functioning of the Children Act, adding that the 'Government knew full well that they should bear its financial responsibility'.⁴³ The official position was that the cost of

³⁵ TNSA: GO2373 13/11/1929 MCAS letter 27/10/1926

³⁶ TNSA: GO483 LE 15/3/1929

³⁷ TNSA: GO 621 LE 2/4/1929 Letter MCAS 27/11/1927

³⁸ TNSA: GO621 LE 2/4/1929 ICS Memo 1/12/1927

³⁹ TNSA: GO621 LE 2/4/1929. H. Stuart letter, GO 2100 LE 1/1/1927: GOI note 24/5/1916

⁴⁰ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 MCAS Letter 23/10/1926

⁴¹ TNSA: GO2082 LE 6/11/1926

⁴² TNSA: GO2080 LE 5/11/1926 Letter MCAS 23/10/1926. GO946 LE 14/10/1926, GO 2100 LE 1/1/1927

⁴³ TNSA: GO621 LE 2/4/1929 Memo 29/11/1927

carrying out the specified provisions of the Act should be met by Government while additional costs, including schooling for inmates, 'should be provided for by private effort'.⁴⁴ The dialogue resulted in an increased grant of Rs 7,200 to cover the normal cost of maintenance for the Remand and Senior Certified Schools.⁴⁵ This was raised annually with an additional grant sanctioned by the Governor in 1929-30.⁴⁶ This provided the Society a budget of Rs 10,250 a year, which increased to Rs 15,250 in 1930 after the establishment of a working boys hostel.⁴⁷ The Finance Department was prepared to take responsibility for daily maintenance costs of individual children, estimated initially at seven Rupees for a boy (Remand Home) and twelve Rupees for a girl (Certified School).⁴⁸ The administrative functions and often salaries were paid by voluntary subscriptions.

An appeal for funding from the public in 1932 highlighted the 'humanitarian duty' of the MCAS towards 'poor young delinquent and destitute boys and girls of Southern India'. These children were 'at a turning point in their lives' with the potential to 'become criminals' or 'become good citizens, living straight, self-supporting lives'. The 'work of the society is to set the feet of each child in the latter path'.⁴⁹ The child, as both plastic and as adult-in-waiting, was to be engaged in a relationship with the modern state which encouraged him/her to contribute to society as future citizen, following a morality of hard work. Rhetorically, whether the children had been convicted of a crime or were merely poor appears to have been of little consequence. In either case children were viewed not as innately criminal, but as particularly malleable.⁵⁰ This contrasted with the MSPC which emphasised that their home maintained 'the classification of both children not at fault and at fault' in its practical governance.⁵¹ Mrs Stanford of the MCAS worried about the impact of poverty and immoral 'companions' and argued that the principal object of a children's court was

⁴⁴ TNSA: GO621 LE 2/4/1929 Education Dept 12/12/27

⁴⁵ TNSA: GO2100 LE 1/1/1927

⁴⁶ TNSA: GO418 LE 1/3/1928, GO 139 LE23/1/1929

⁴⁷ TNSA: GO1230 LE 23/6/1930 Education Dept Letter 1/3/1928, GO483 LE 15/3/1929

⁴⁸ TNSA: GO621 LE 2/4/1929 Briefing 26/1/28, GO227 LE 16/2/32, GO2222 LE 22/11/1933, GO79 LE 9/1/34

⁴⁹ Women's Library: MCAS Seventh Annual Report, 1932

⁵⁰ Weiner, *The Child and the State in India*, Rastogi, 'Prevention and Treatment' p.324

⁵¹ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 MPSC 27/2/1925

‘to create an agency for the prevention of begging by juveniles’.⁵² This involved returning ‘juvenile beggars’ ‘to their parents or guardian with a warning against repetition’ or sending them to a home ‘in case of persistent repetition or where there is no parent or guardian forthcoming’. The CPM was also concerned about preventing ‘the large number of poor and uncared for children in Madras’ ‘from entering the avenues to crime’.⁵³ This suggests a preventative strategy, a much closer conflation of the destitute as potential criminal and delinquent as the destitute child who had been apprehended. This mirrors the experience of other practitioners, for example the London Metropolitan Police, for whom ‘care’ and ‘control’ were ‘mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting concepts’.⁵⁴ The key distinction in the Indian context was the absence of parental care.

The probation system instituted by the MCAS in the 1930s differentiated between three types of deserving children. The first were orphans released from Certified Schools and the second were impoverished youngsters who had never been incarcerated but attended night schools to gain basic literacy. A third category were children ‘lost in the city’ who were sent by the police to the Girls Remand Home until ‘claimed by their parents’, with those unclaimed dispatched to the MSPC home.⁵⁵ This was mirrored in the 1931 MCAS Report, which specified four categories of children whom they considered their particular concern: ‘delinquent or youthful offenders, the majority of whom have parents or guardians’, ‘destitute innocent orphans who are homeless and parentless’, ‘diseased children’ rescued from brothels and ‘the mentally defective’.⁵⁶ The binaries used in this categorisation between orphans and those with parents, the delinquent and the destitute, the diseased and the healthy body, the mentally defective and the healthy mind, included gross oversimplification of the experiences of these children. Nonetheless, it appears that while the different circumstances of the children were acknowledged, the crucial distinction in deciding whether they became the responsibility of the MCAS was the existence of parents.

⁵² TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 CPM 18/12/1924

⁵³ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 CPM 18/12/1924

⁵⁴ Louise A Jackson ‘Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare 1919-1969’ *The Historical Journal* 46:3 (2003) pp.623-648

⁵⁵ TNSA: G0778 Home 23/2/1937 Madras Mail 17/2/1937

⁵⁶ TNSAL: MCAS 6th Annual Report, year ending 1931. Published in *Stri Dharma* 1932

There is no evidence to suggest this decision was explicitly based on parental care as either cost effective or important to the emotional needs of the child, but seems rather to reflect a wider fear of usurping parental authority and the paramountcy of the family.

The existence of parents remained the key distinction between groups, but other forms of differentiation also existed. Segregation was particularly important within the Girls Certified School. While sleeping arrangements for girls aged ten-sixteen years were made on the basis of the cottage system ostensibly to learn household management and other gendered vocational skills, it also allowed subtle segregation of those who were sexually active.⁵⁷ While childhood was numerically defined in 1920, in practice for girls sexual innocence was a more important marker:

It is wrong in principle, because children's outlook is different from that of the adult's – the child is innocent, guileless, trustful while the majority of the adults in our institution being widows have tasted the bitterness of life and can never make suitable classmates and companions to these young innocent children.⁵⁸

These 'adults' were the same age as the 'innocent children' but were widows. Segregation also existed based on whether sexual experience was deemed to be legitimate (marriage, widowhood) or illegitimate (prostitution). Girls 'rescued' in the WIA-led campaigns against prostitution, trafficking and *devadasis* were more likely to be dealt with by the Madras Vigilance Association, whatever their age. This involved a subtle gendering, and childhood bounded by age was in practice imagined as male, while the childhood defined by sexual innocence was imagined as female.⁵⁹ Similarly, there was a legal distinction between delinquent children and those from Criminal Tribes, who were explicitly excluded from the MCA but were tried directly by the Presidency Magistrates under the Criminal Tribes Act 1924.⁶⁰ This caused concern to the CPM and the MCAS, although in practice Criminal Tribes children were detained with other children in the Certified Schools.⁶¹

The 6th Annual Report ended in an emotional appeal for funding:

⁵⁷ Women's Library: MCAS Seventh Annual Report, 1932

⁵⁸ TNSAL: MCAS 6th Annual Report, year ending 1931

⁵⁹ For a wider discussion of the sexually active female child as both victim and social threat see Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*

⁶⁰ GO1879 LE 17/9/1930

⁶¹ GO1191 LE 22/8/1932 Inspector-General Police 9/6/1932, MCAS letter 26/4/1932

We appeal to the public, particularly to every parent, to think of the needs of these neglected, unwanted, destitute, helpless children who are here not because of their own faults but because their own parents, relations and community have failed properly to discharge their duties by them. We appeal to them all to devote a small percentage of their income for sheltering, educating and training these children to a useful and happy life.⁶²

The delinquent child was thereby constructed by the MCAS as ‘sinned against rather than being themselves sinners and criminals’ and the result of recognised familial failure.⁶³ Equally, the appeal was not for the state to accept parental responsibility and intervene in families. Rather it was an emotional plea for middle-class philanthropic responsibility as part of a joint or extended family system and a perception of national responsibilities in familial terms. In supporting the MCAS in 1936 the Advocate-General, Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, claimed he found ‘a growing belief in the dignity of human brotherhood and the duty placed on the people’ and growing recognition ‘on the part of more fortunate countrymen that they owed a duty to their less fortunate brethren’.⁶⁴ These views are significant, demonstrating a belief in philanthropic responsibility couched in the universalising terms of human brotherhood, and ignoring claims to the cultural specificity of India, or the imperial context.

Associates in the voluntary sector

The MCAS was part of a wider philanthropic community of middle-class individuals interested in the welfare of the nation’s future. First among these was the WIA. The MCAS was located within the WIA headquarters on Poonamallee Road, and a number of individuals were prominent in both organisations. The Annual Reports of the MCAS were published in the WIA’s monthly journal *Stri Dharma*, an English-language journal based around the parallel, but ultimately conflicting, ideals of liberal feminist internationalism and anti-colonial nationalism and edited by Margaret Cousins and then Muthulakshmi Reddi, both also active in the MCAS.⁶⁵ *Stri*

⁶² TNSAL: MCAS 6th Annual Report, year ending 1931

⁶³ TNSAL: MCAS 6th Annual Report, year ending 1931

⁶⁴ TNSA: GO 78 Home 23/2/1937 Madras Mail 17/2/1937

⁶⁵ Michelle Elizabeth Tusan ‘Writing *stri dharma*: international feminism, nationalist politics, and women’s press advocacy in late colonial India’ *Women’s History Review* 12:4 (2003) pp.623-649, Gorman, ‘Empire, Internationalism,’

Dharma's ethos of a gendered division of public work and the promotion of respectable activism for women was demonstrated during the Civil Disobedience campaign 1930-34 when it claimed that although 'the noblest man [Gandhi] living among us is in prison... the child in distress must be relieved, the hungry child must be fed, the delinquent must be reclaimed and the sick child must be nursed'.⁶⁶ Accordingly, the WIA promoted its members to a unique role as women on all children-related committees.⁶⁷ This claim that the 'mothers' – or perhaps 'aunties' – of the nation contributed to the nationalist movement by caring for the future citizens of the nation facilitated the activity of middle-class women outside the home, but ultimately limited the role of women by contributing to a gendered belief that women had a particular maternal role to play in understanding children.⁶⁸ It furthermore helped to move childhood firmly into the social, rather than political, sphere.

Later histories of the WIA characterised 1924-26 as 'the child welfare period', with the 'criminals of the future' as a central concern.⁶⁹ The WIA Annual Reports of the early 1930s detailed the specific interventions of its members as Lady Honorary Magistrates and within the MCAS.⁷⁰ However, juvenile justice was consistently overshadowed by the focus on the position of *devadasis*, Age of Consent and Suppression of Immoral Traffic legislation.⁷¹ By 1934 the WIA's Five Year Action Plan and the Women's Manifesto focussed on preventative action in maternal and child health, compulsory education and prevention of child labour, making only limited mention of 'neglected and destitute orphans [who] turn delinquent for want of protection and care'.⁷² That said, the WIA firmly believed the 'kith and kin however poor they may be' should be required to take responsibility for basic maintenance

⁶⁶ TNSAL: *Stri Dharma*, 1932

⁶⁷ IOR: MssEur F341/30/2 Annual Report WIA 1933-34 p.5, Geneva International Conference on Child Labour

⁶⁸ Anne Logan, 'A suitable Person for Suitable Cases': the Gendering of Juvenile Courts in England, c 1910-39' *Twentieth Century British History*, 16:2 (2005) pp.129–145, Radha Kumar *The History of Doing* (London: Verso, 1993)

⁶⁹ IOR: MssEur F341/186 WIA, Golden Jubilee Celebration, 1917-1967 (Recollections and Reminiscences), MssEur F341/182 IM Dickinson, 'Children's Aid Society' in *Stri Dharma* 10:11 (Sept 1927)

⁷⁰ IOR: MssEur F341/30/2 WIA Reports 1930-31, 1931-32

⁷¹ Pande, 'Coming of Age'

⁷² IOR: MssEur F341/182 *Stri Dharma* Aug-Sept 1934 p.489

costs, the child being entitled to state or civil society intervention only when the family had failed completely.⁷³

The formal ties between the WIA and MCAS might have weakened during the 1930s, but many activists remained prominent in both organisations, and were often also associated with both the Theosophical Society and the independence movement. This included Dorothy Jinarajadasa and Mrs Stanford, but also the juvenile court Honorary Magistrates, such as Lady T. Sadasiva Iyer who was also married to a judge and Justice Party politician; Mrs Margaret Cousins editor of *Stri Dharma*, and Mrs Malati Patwardhan.⁷⁴ Mrs Clubwalla Jadhav, Lady Magistrate and Honorary Secretary of the MCAS from 1938 for 25 years, also worked in the Seva Samajam, was Vice-President of the Madras DPAS and later Vice-President of the Indian Council of Child Welfare.⁷⁵ The MCAS Girls Club was formed by the Congress social worker and child welfare activist Durgabi Deshmukh. A noteworthy representative of this group of philanthropic professional women was Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi (see also Chapter Four). A medical doctor and the first woman voted to the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1926, Reddi established a children's ward at Madras Hospital, championed the implementation of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act 1928 and was active on the committees of the MSPC and MCAS.⁷⁶ Reflecting contemporary internationalist discourses, Reddi argued: 'it is recognised by all civilised nations that the first and primary duty of the State is to secure for every child the right to be bodily, mentally and socially fit'.⁷⁷ Furthermore 'it is the State and the Society that has to bear the whole burden and the responsibility' for the protection of the child.⁷⁸ Reddi established the Avvai Home, Mylapore, in 1930 for 'neglected vagrant and destitute children' because they are 'one human family and that all children are entitled to our protection and care'.⁷⁹ The home moved to Adyar in 1936, and by 1949 provided for

⁷³ IOR: MssEur F341/182*Stri Dharma* Aug-Sept 1934 p.491

⁷⁴ IOR: MssEur F341/186, IOR: ZD.9.b.31 Avvai home for orphans in Madras p.3

⁷⁵ IOR: MssEur F 341/72 Guild of Service Annual Report 1923

⁷⁶ IOR: W33/8063 Dr S. Muthulakshmi Reddy, 'My Experience as a Legislator' (Triplicane: Current Thought Press, 1930) p.222, MssEur F341/186

⁷⁷ IOR: W33/8063 p223

⁷⁸ IOR: W33/8063 p224

⁷⁹ IOR: ZD.9.b.31

about 100 children, with a Primary School added in 1939.⁸⁰ Like the MCAS, the Avvai home was not the direct responsibility of the WIA, although the WIA offered scholarships.⁸¹ While Reddi was uncompromising about the state's responsibility for the normal development of the child as rights holder and potential national resource, claiming 'our responsibilities as parent are manifold' she believed this responsibility could be uniquely fulfilled by the highly educated middle-class 'wives and mothers' of civil society movements.⁸²

Further evidence that child welfare was driven by a small network of individuals was demonstrated in the 1932 MCAS Report. The tone is self-congratulatory, reflecting the contributions of the managing committee such as the President, Sir M. Krishnan Nair (Justice Party) and other professionals such as the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi and the Presidency Magistrates.⁸³ The listed individuals ranged from Mrs Candeth, wife of the Deputy DPI for providing magazines to A. Appadurai Pillai, retired Director of Industries and Justice Party leader, for help with the Boys Club workshop. The donors followed a similar pattern and only eight donors did not have an official position or a spouse connected to the MCAS.⁸⁴ Prominent couples donated individually, Dr and Mrs H.S. Hensman were both committee members, he as a jail reformer and Professor of Mental Health, she as politician and Lady Honorary Magistrate.

The minutes of the 1940 Executive Committee show a similar profile and many of the same individuals, such as Mrs Clubwala.⁸⁵ The committee remained largely male, although the Secretary was now an experienced Anglo-Indian Lady Honorary Magistrate Mrs Hilde Theodore. Sir Mohammed Usman, for example, was the first President of the MCAS in 1926 and remained active in 1940.⁸⁶ As a Muslim member

⁸⁰ IOR: MssEur F341/186 pp.71, 79

⁸¹ WIA scholarships for ten girls in 1930. IOR: MssEur F341/186 p.6

⁸² IOR: MssEur F341/186 Reddi Address to WIA p.22, MssEur F341/30/2 WIA Annual Reports 1934-36

⁸³ Women's Library: MCAS Seventh Annual Report 1932 p.18

⁸⁴ TNSA: GO621 LE 2/4/1929

⁸⁵ TNSA: GO3893 Home 23/9/1940

⁸⁶ TNSA: GO2373 13/11/1929 MCAS letter 27/10/1926, GO3893 Home 23/9/1940 Executive Committee 9/4/1940

of the Justice Party, he had distinguished political career: President of Madras Corporation 1924-25; Home Minister 1934 and Governor of Madras 1934. Other reformers, such as B. Moppurappa, served on the committees of both the MSPC and MCAS as the government nomination, maintaining government observation of both societies, while Chief Probation Officer Sri K. Palani continued to attend.⁸⁷ Other groups also operated 'for the rescue and protection of the child life of the city', including the Madras Child Life Protection Society and Child Welfare Association, but have left no archival trace.⁸⁸ The MCAS expanded in parallel with other penal reform movements such as the DPAS and Borstal Association, both specialising in probation and functioning as non-official bodies funded by government and often sharing personnel with the MCAS.⁸⁹ Committee members had individual links to both the Congress and Justice parties, but party allegiances were rarely in evidence and there was little reflection of the wider disagreements which characterised more overtly political debates. Rather, there appears to be growing consensus among a number of interconnected and highly educated Indians who forbore from the tribalism of political parties for the sake of children's welfare. 'The child' was placed resolutely in the social, not political, arena.

Space of the juvenile court

Part VI of the MCA made the juvenile court a central institution for any modern scheme of juvenile penology, centred on the idea of rehabilitation rather than punishment.⁹⁰ Despite the legislative provision, the proposal for a children's court lay dormant until the WIA became involved in 1924.⁹¹ Writing to the CPM, Mrs Stanford noted that while magistrates were beginning to avoid the appearance of uniformed policemen and of a criminal court, the same building was still used and there was no place of detention for children awaiting trial. The CPM strongly supported the idea of a juvenile court, but emphasised that its success was dependant on finding suitable

⁸⁷ TNSA: GO946 LE 14/10/1926, GO3893 Home 23/9/1940 MCAS letter 8/7/1940, MCAS Minutes 9/4/1940

⁸⁸ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925

⁸⁹ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 Remarks 24/5/1940

⁹⁰ TNSA: GO1428 LE 15/7/1935

⁹¹ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Letter CPM 18/12/1924

personnel and ‘the money Government is willing to spend’.⁹² After discussion, it was agreed by the DPI, CPM and Chief Inspector of Certified Schools that there was an ‘immediate need for the establishment of a juvenile court’ with a presiding stipendiary magistrate and Honorary Magistrates ‘including women’, which would meet two or three times a week.⁹³ The CPM also advocated the establishment of a remand home and there was general agreement that this should be run by a non-official but government-funded ‘philanthropic body’.⁹⁴ The alternative option, to ignore juvenile nuisance cases, was opposed by the police as it ‘would greatly aggravate the insanitary condition of Madras streets’ and provide an additional incentive for adult criminals to exploit children.⁹⁵ In contrast to the more consensual rhetoric of the politicians, the implementation of the MCA was left to negotiations between different government departments, who wanted to protect their budgets and were often more concerned with the deterrence of petty crime rather than the future of the poor or criminal child.⁹⁶

By 1925 juvenile cases were being tried ‘outside the ordinary court hours and in a private room and every effort is made to see that the procedure followed is as informal and elastic as possible’.⁹⁷ Likewise, the Second and Third Presidency magistrates tried the children’s cases during the Court’s lunch break.⁹⁸ Children were usually dealt with on the same day or ‘released on bail to their parents.’⁹⁹ Yet the CPM remained concerned about the formation of a specifically juvenile court and in May 1925 temporary provisions were issued to recruit two benches of honorary magistrates and facilitate speedy sentencing under the Police Act for ‘nuisance cases’ of minor vandalism and petty crime.¹⁰⁰ Dr Pandalai based his proposals on the Calcutta Court which was presided over by Honorary Presidency magistrates, empowered by the Reformatory Schools Act 1897, and largely unchanged by the Bengal Children Act 1922.¹⁰¹ According to the Bengal Rules for the Conduct of the House of Detention,

⁹² TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 CPM 18/12/1924

⁹³ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Letter 24/1/1925

⁹⁴ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 Letter 18/5/1925

⁹⁵ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 Police Note 6/7/1925, CPM 8/7/1925

⁹⁶ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 DPI 10/6/25

⁹⁷ TNSA: GO169 LE 5/2/1925

⁹⁸ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 Third Presidency Magistrate 20/3/26

⁹⁹ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 CPM 30/4/1926

¹⁰⁰ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 CPM Memo 16/3/1926

¹⁰¹ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Government of Bengal Judicial Branch 12/1/1925

the children were over ten years, were separated by sex and could only be visited by parents and guardians or a legal practitioner accompanied by parents. Extensive information was also compiled from the Australian State Children Act.¹⁰² This supplemented Mrs Stanford's experience in the South African juvenile courts demonstrating the influence of personal networks in circulating information, and the growing international discourse on children.¹⁰³ The 'paramount importance' of the juvenile court and its associated services was reiterated by the all-India Inspectors-General Conference of 1927.¹⁰⁴ Accordingly it was agreed in 1930, after some debate, that rules should be drawn up for the proper functioning of the Madras juvenile court.¹⁰⁵

The answers to the 1929 League of Nations Questionnaire suggested that in Madras City the Chief and other Presidency Magistrates heard cases against juveniles in a separate room 'out of the regular court hours'.¹⁰⁶ A similar pattern was followed by the District Magistrates who responded. For example in Tinnevely the Magistrates used 'their Bungalows or the private room attached to their courts'.¹⁰⁷ The District Magistrate in Chingleput claimed children were dealt with 'during morning hours when no other case should be posted and the general public were excluded'.¹⁰⁸ The space of the court as distinct from the adult court, and as private, had thus become an acknowledged standard. However, the Inspector of Junior Certified Schools discovered that the general public were ignorant of the existence of the Children Act and recommended public education through social workers or the DPAS.¹⁰⁹ The Chief Inspector of Certified Schools criticised the lack of a formal juvenile court, and argued that 'no real headway has been made'.¹¹⁰ This was despite the MCAS offer that the

¹⁰² TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 Copy 3/11/26 based on information from Sydney NSW Aust.

¹⁰³ Marshall, 'The construction of children as an object of international relations', Alan Lester 'Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire' *History Compass* 4:1 (2006) pp.124–141, TNSA: GO 433 LE 30/3/1925 Undated Memo to CP Ramaswmi Aiyar

¹⁰⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1961, File 1014. Proceedings of the Third All-India Conference of Inspectors-General of Prisons, December 1927

¹⁰⁵ TNSA: GO1879 LE 17/9/1930, GO 1191 LE 22/8/1932

¹⁰⁶ TNSA: GO2202 LE 28/10/1929 GOI Home Department No. F.168/29 dated 26/9/29

¹⁰⁷ TNSA: GO2202 LE 28/10/1929 Proceedings of District Magistrate Tinnevely

¹⁰⁸ TNSA: GO2202 LE 28/10/1929 Proceedings of District Magistrate Chingleput

¹⁰⁹ TNSA: GO2202 LE 28/10/1929 Proceedings of District Magistrate Tinnevely

¹¹⁰ TNSA: GO2202 LE 28/10/1929 Chief Inspector Certified Schools Ooty 24/10/1929.

court could be held in their Remand Home.¹¹¹ It appears from the 1931 MCAS Annual Report that a separate juvenile court came into operation at some point in later 1929.¹¹² The evidence of the functioning and personnel of this Court is very difficult to trace, and only a fragmentary accounts can be found in the archives.

By 1935 there were two juvenile courts functioning, one in Madras city and the other in Vellore, although perceived to be unnecessary elsewhere due to the scarcity of cases.¹¹³ The Commissioner of Police re-established the principles: that the 'normal atmosphere of court was entirely undesirable' for children, and consequently police should be in mufti and lawyers, with their competing claims to truth, should be forbidden. Rather, the Commissioner argued that a juvenile court should be 'a parental enquiry into the shortcomings of children' in which an experienced Magistrate could be 'given the charge-sheet, the summary of the evidence of each witness, and if necessary the case diary, there will be no difficulty in eliciting the facts and in administering justice' in order that 'the youthful offender should not be frightened by the full paraphernalia of the law'.¹¹⁴ This was supported by discussions with the recognised experts: Mrs Jinarajadasa of the MCAS, the CPM, the Acting Inspector-General of Prisons who worried that the adult court would 'weigh on the mind of the child' and the District Magistrate S. Ranganathan.¹¹⁵ The Second Presidency Magistrate who presided over the juvenile court in Madras was less convinced. He argued that if children plead not guilty they should be entitled to an adequate trial with prosecution, defence and evidence tested by cross examination which would inevitably involve the presence of adults. The compromise suggested was an amendment to Section 44 (3) of the Juvenile Court Rules which allowed the defendant to engage legal support if they so wished.¹¹⁶ Fifteen years after the MCA was passed, the judiciary directly involved were still ambivalent as to whether the court was judging guilt or evaluating the child and his environment.

¹¹¹ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 CPM Letter 12/3/26

¹¹² TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCAS Report, GO2202 LE 28/10/1929 District Magistrate Tinnevely

¹¹³ TNSA: GO1545 LE 26/6/1934, GO 1282 LE 24/6/1935 MCA Certified Schools Report 1934

¹¹⁴ TNSA: GO1428 LE 15/7/1935 Letter 17/4/1935

¹¹⁵ TNSA: GO1428 LE 15/7/1935 Letter 7/5/1936, 25/5/1935, 9/6/1935

¹¹⁶ TNSA: GO1428 LE 15/7/1935 (Section 44 (3)), GO3554 Home 15/12/1936

Personnel of the juvenile court

According to the MCA and Juvenile Court Rules of 1930 the personnel within the court were as important as its designation as a distinct space, and unpaid social reformers were essential to the functioning of the Madras courts. These ‘public-spirited ladies and gentlemen’ were praised in every Annual Report of the Certified Schools and were important in every stage of the juvenile justice process.¹¹⁷ In late 1924 the CPM agreed that the juvenile court should be presided over by a salaried male Magistrate with the assistance of two honorary magistrates, one of whom should be a woman.¹¹⁸ Of the thirteen Honorary Magistrates for Madras City suggested by the Education Department and CPM in 1925, six were female.¹¹⁹ Mrs Stanford of the MCAS consistently advocated the use of Lady Honorary Magistrates, being keen to expand the connection between women’s public participation and children based on her experience in South Africa, arguing that: ‘The children like their presence very much and speak out their mind freely’.¹²⁰ The District Magistrate Tinnevely also agreed that the presence of women ‘helps considerably to reassure the child and give him or her confidence’ but also helps in understanding the replies.¹²¹ This received broad support both from officials and the MCAS. Women also participated on the Committee of Visitors and Mrs Dorothy Jinjaradasa became Chief Inspectress of Schools.¹²² This idea of a male, salaried Presiding Magistrate being assisted by an unsalaried, maternal Lady Honorary Magistrate remained central to the way the juvenile court was imagined.¹²³ While expanding women’s participation outside the home, the English example demonstrates that this initial claim to a maternal role was ultimately self-limiting and meant the courts effectively replicated the structure of the Western nuclear family, with caring feminine values perceived as additional to the authority of the salaried male.¹²⁴ Throughout the 1930s, the juvenile court was a

¹¹⁷ IOR: V/24/2278 Annual Reports of Certified Schools 1935, 1936, 1942. TNSA: GO1032 LE 3/6/1926 1925 Report, GO1376 LE 12/7/1927 1927, GO902 LE 28/6/1942 1942

¹¹⁸ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 Letter CPM 3/2/1925

¹¹⁹ TNSA: GO397 LE 16/3/1926 Letter CPM 18/5/1925

¹²⁰ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925 Undated Memo to CP Ramaswami Aiyar

¹²¹ TNSA: GO2202 LE 28/10/1929 Proceedings of District Magistrate Tinnevely 19/1/1928

¹²² TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCAS Report

¹²³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1961 Memo Home Dept 26/6/1940, Remarks CPM 24/5/1940 ‘patient motherly’ hearings, TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 Madras Juvenile Court Rules

¹²⁴ Logan, ‘A suitable Person for Suitable Cases’

sphere in which the presence of women was desired rather than feared, although pragmatically it was also a cost-effective means of expanding state power.

By 1940 the Home Department felt that the juvenile court system needed expanding, but the pressure on existing specialist magistrates was already too great.¹²⁵ The Report of the Chief Inspector of Certified schools showed that during 1940 37 sessions were held by the juvenile court in Madras and 35 in Madura, dealing with 913 and 369 cases respectively, giving an average per session of 25 cases in Madras and eleven in Madura.¹²⁶ This haste was criticised because it suggested a lack of specialised attention to which the juvenile accused was entitled.¹²⁷ The initial suggestion to employ a full-time salaried magistrate for children was rejected on the basis of cost.¹²⁸ Although unenthusiastic about Honorary Magistrates whom he regarded as uncommitted, inexperienced and too independent minded, the Chief Inspector felt he had 'no alternative' but to recruit unpaid individuals who specifically 'have special aptitude and knowledge required for the conduct of juvenile court'. Equally importantly these individuals should 'have a personal knowledge of working class conditions and homes'.¹²⁹ The CPM, on the other hand, felt that Honorary Magistrates 'of competence' could invest more time thereby improving the quality of the decision-making.¹³⁰ Ultimately it was agreed to modify the Juvenile Court Rules to allow competent individuals 'who can find sufficient leisure' to undertake the presiding position.¹³¹

In Madras City, the CPM was impressed with the work of Mrs Clubwalla the Lady Honorary Magistrate who sat on Wednesday mornings, but of the fourteen currently functioning Honorary Magistrates empowered to sit singly, only three were willing to sit on the juvenile court.¹³² Of these three, the two more experienced magistrates were required for adult work. The third candidate - a retired deputy Accountant-General

¹²⁵ TNSA: GO5112 Home 16/12/1940, GO Home 4200 15/10/1940

¹²⁶ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940

¹²⁷ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 Madura 29/5/1940

¹²⁸ TNSA: GO 4200 Home 15/10/1940 Chief Inspector Certified Schools 25/7/1940

¹²⁹ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 Chief Inspector Certified Schools 25/7/1940

¹³⁰ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 Remarks CPM 24/5/1940

¹³¹ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 MCAS Memo 8/7/1940

¹³² TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 CPM 16/10/1940

with no previous judicial experience - was ultimately chosen on the basis that once familiar with the procedures, all that was required was 'nothing more than a reasonable amount of sympathy and worldly-wisdom'.¹³³ Clearly the juvenile court was perceived to be inferior to the adult courts and paternal understanding more important than legal or specialist knowledge. In Madura the City Magistrate struggled to secure competent Honorary Magistrates, while in Coimbatore the District Magistrate relied on a competent retired Deputy Collector.¹³⁴ While an understanding of children was important, the key criteria for this unsalaried position was ownership of extensive property, demonstrating an elitist and paternalistic view of justice.¹³⁵ None of the presiding Honorary Magistrates were women, and if there was a difference of opinion between a salaried and Honorary Magistrate, the opinion of the salaried male Magistrates 'shall prevail'.¹³⁶

By 1942 there were Juvenile Courts functioning in Vellore, Salem, Madura, and Coimbatore as well as Madras City. In Salem, the court was presided over by two Honorary Magistrates, one a retired Sub-Magistrate and one a Lady Honorary Magistrate who together dealt with 228 cases.¹³⁷ In Coimbatore the Presiding Honorary Magistrate dealt with 68 cases in 1942, although the lack of a remand home meant a continued reliance on police custody.¹³⁸ Meanwhile, in Madras City S. Muthuswami Iyer tried nearly 60% of cases himself.¹³⁹ Whether tried under the Indian Penal Code or MCA, around 27% were sent to Certified School, 50% returned to parents, while the remainder were admonished and released.¹⁴⁰ Of the 939 tried, only 85 (or 9%) were acquitted or dismissed, and around half (437 or 47%) were brought to court because they were found destitute or wandering. Paralleling the British model of liberal intervention, the juvenile court was a paternalistic assessment of poverty, rather than a court of justice, mirroring the gendered authority of the nuclear family.

¹³³ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 CPM 23/10/40

¹³⁴ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 District Magistrate N. Arcot, Vellore 6/8/1940

¹³⁵ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 District Magistrate Madura 22/11/40

¹³⁶ TNSA: GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 Amended Rules of Juvenile Court 25/9/1940

¹³⁷ TNSA: GO4306 Home 19/11/1942 District Magistrate Salem 10/11/1942

¹³⁸ TNSA: GO3364 Home 21/12/1943 District Magistrate Coimbatore 17/11/1943, GO4365 Home 28/10/1940, GO1324 Home 28/3/1942

¹³⁹ TNSA: GO4306 Home 19/12/42 CPM Memo 2/11/1942

¹⁴⁰ TNSA: GO4306 Home 19/12/42 CPM to Judicial Dept 27/10/1943

The juvenile justice system remained particularly vulnerable to budget cuts, individual incompetence and chequered expansion, but by the 1940s it had been established in both law and practice that the government and civil society had a right to intervene, and that poverty and crime were mutually intertwined.

Probation and auxiliary services

In 1940 the Chief Inspector of Certified Schools argued that only the structures of the juvenile court were in place without sufficient investment in expert services, such as social workers or child psychologists, who could offer advice based on their scientific understanding of the child and its circumstances.¹⁴¹ He rejected the idea of the ‘innate wickedness’ of the child but reiterated that it was the responsibility of the court to establish whether ‘misbehaviour’ was caused by ‘mere poverty, emotional conflict and misdirected outlet or energy; or to bad company and example, either at home or outside.’¹⁴² Accordingly, there was some attempt to establish a probation service in the 1930s in line with similar organisations such as the DPAS.¹⁴³ The term encompassed Probation Officers who could arrange pre-trial custody, gather information regarding the child’s family and environment and supervise children after release or those sentenced to probation instead of incarceration.¹⁴⁴ The Probation Officer as ‘a respectable man of some social position’ with ‘great interest in children’ was required ‘to take the boy under his wing’.¹⁴⁵ The Education Department was eager to see these services within the remit of the MCAS, who were to act ‘not as officials but as their big brothers and sisters’, again wording intervention in the metaphors of the extended family.¹⁴⁶

The system was to function with Probation Officers who were sufficiently educated to produce monthly reports on health, conduct and progress.¹⁴⁷ They were to be paid at

¹⁴¹ TNSA GO2556 Home 12/06/1940, GO4200 Home 15/10/1940 Chief Inspector 26/6/1940, Manshardt *Delinquent Child in India*,

¹⁴² TNSA: GO2556 Home 12/06/1940

¹⁴³ IOR: L/PARL/2/407 A - Madras Jails Committee Evidence p.100

¹⁴⁴ TNSAL: MLC 15/3/1920 debate p598, TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925

¹⁴⁵ IOR: L/PARL/2/407 A - Madras Jails Committee Evidence

¹⁴⁶ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925, IOR: MssEur F341/182 IM Dickinson, ‘Children’s Aid Society’ *Stri Dharma* 10, 11 Sept 1927 p.165

¹⁴⁷ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932

the rank of police sub-inspector, funded by the government, but supervised by the MCAS.¹⁴⁸ It was argued that

one of the best ways of effecting the reformation of a child offender is to place him under the continuous supervision of some person possessing strength of character and sound judgment, who will keep himself in touch with the child, understands his difficulties and give him advice whenever needs, assist him in procuring work, and generally directs and influence his conduct for good.¹⁴⁹

This could be parents or other 'suitable persons' within the family; or other authority figures and members of the professional classes such as members of municipal councils, village headmen, police officers or recognised philanthropic societies. The model was the highly commended Madras Borstal Association and DPAS which drew on the support of the District Magistrate, the Presidency and Sessions Judges and officials as well as a system of paid Probation Officers. It 'found that there was no difficulty in finding employment for the boys, who had received an excellent training and were desired as employees'.¹⁵⁰

The expansion of probation services was intended to support rather than subvert the family. Before a case was heard in the juvenile court:

enquiries are made by the Probation Officer concerning the juvenile offender's parents, school work, environment, character etc and parents are interviewed. The parents in many cases attend the court on the day of hearing and the case is disposed of in a manner calculated to conduce to the welfare of the boy or girl.¹⁵¹

While rhetorically the welfare of the child was the paramount concern, in practice if parents were traced reinforcing the authority of the family meant that being 'restored to parents' was regarded as the best option.¹⁵² Mr Palani, the MCAS Probation Officer, supported the parents at home, for example in 1936 he visited 23 boys on probation, and found parents willing to co-operate by reporting 'the conduct of the boys at home, and ask our help if any difficulties arise with the boy'.¹⁵³ The Boys Club unofficially accepted 'uncontrollable boys brought by their parents' but 'in such cases the parents pay the cost of maintenance of those boys' to ensure parental responsibility

¹⁴⁸ TNSA: GO433 LE 30/3/1925

¹⁴⁹ TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937 Memo 22/12/1936

¹⁵⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/1961, File 2014. p.25

¹⁵¹ TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937 Note Home Dept 7/12/1935, 22/12/1936

¹⁵² TNSA: GO2556 Home 12/06/1940, TNSAL: MLC 15/3/1920 debate pp. 597-8

¹⁵³ Women's Library: MCAS Seventh Annual Report, 1932 p.14

continued.¹⁵⁴ Other ‘uncontrollable’ boys were briefly kept in the Boys Remand Home as a deterrent before being restored to parents.¹⁵⁵ Probation was not so much the embodiment of state parental control, but was managed, staffed, funded and constructed by social reformers using the rhetoric of the child’s familial network.

The Probation Officer in Madras City was the ideal, rather than typical, situation. The case of a twelve year old girl, Pappamma, from Dindigul demonstrated that for many children access to this ideal was limited.¹⁵⁶ Pappamma was convicted for theft and transported by two uniformed policemen to Chingleput Senior Certified School for four years.¹⁵⁷ The case became public when the MCAS complained to the Chief Inspector of Certified Schools that Pappamma was kept in jail for two months awaiting trial, in ‘flagrant breach of the MCA’. In particular, Rule 55 specified that girls should not be detained in police custody, and Rule 54 that children should not be detained in an adult jail. The MCAS requested that the Government remind Magistrates of ‘the right method of dealing with children’ which included the avoidance of adult penological words such as ‘convict’ but instead used the terms of ‘care and protection’ or ‘welfare and reformation’.¹⁵⁸ In Pappamma’s case, although an apology was issued, the Magistrate claimed that it had taken a month to discover her relatives and that she had been under the direct custody of the Jail Superintendent. This was not unusual given the lack of auxiliary services particularly for those awaiting trial, but demonstrated the multiple layers of exclusion experienced by some children, and the differences between the urban and rural situations.¹⁵⁹

The difficulties of juvenile justice at a distance from the urban centres was further demonstrated in 1936 when the Home Department requested details from District Magistrates as to local provision of pre and post-trial probation care for destitute children.¹⁶⁰ By 1936 Anantapur district had tried no cases under the MCA, and

¹⁵⁴ TNSA: GO778 Home 23/2/1937

¹⁵⁵ TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937 Note 18/1/1937

¹⁵⁶ Dindigul is a city in the South of the Presidency to the North of Madurai.

¹⁵⁷ TNSA: GO725 Home 19/2/1937 Detention Order, Madura case 24 of 1936, P Madhava Menon.

¹⁵⁸ TNSA: GO725 Home 19/2/1937 MCAS letter 13/3/1936

¹⁵⁹ TNSA: GO725 Home 19/2/1937 Letter CPM 19/3/1936

¹⁶⁰ TNSA: GO725 Home 19/2/1937. Includes separate submission from District Magistrates according to area.

Ramnad had none under Clause 29, although children awaiting trial were placed in the care of an unspecified 'well-intentioned or interested person of good character'. In most of the Northern, Telegu-speaking Districts (for example Nellore or Chittoor) there was little evidence of the MCA and no pre-trial provision. In western areas of the Presidency (for example Mangalore, Coimbatore and Calicut) most District Magistrates claimed to be taking action, and there was awareness of the terms of Act while parents were relied on for bail. The South of the Presidency and areas surrounding Madras city were much more engaged with juvenile justice provision. In North Arcot, there were seventeen gentlemen (officials and non-officials) approved for remand care by the Inspector-General of Prisons, two in Trichinopoly and in Salem and Shevapet stations all police officers above or of the rank of sub inspector. The District Magistrates of Malabar and Madura expressed a desire to improve, but stressed the problems faced with adult overcrowding. In South Arcot the children were left in the custody of non-uniformed police officers; the children in Guntur were kept in the main jail in separate cells. The local Village Headman also featured as the Probation Officer in all but name in a variety of areas throughout the Presidency (South Arcot, Guntur, Chittoor, East Godavari and Tinnevely), while the DPAS was involved in pre-trial and post-incarceration care in North Arcot and Nellore. The MCA, for all its universalistic intentions, was not universal in implementation and the protection and rights offered to children were greater in the areas surrounding the centres of political power. Existing figures of authority such as police, headmen and parents were central to the expansion of civil society and juvenile justice in rural areas, in contrast with the personal networks of philanthropic middle-class individuals in Madras city.

Boys Club

One of the more successful schemes run by the MCAS was the Boys Club which supervised boys (72 in 1932, 68 in 1931), including board and lodging for 38 boys in 1932.¹⁶¹ Boys Clubs were for 'ex-children of Certified Schools who have no homes to go to' and this was explicitly 'a different type of boy' to those who attended night school and associated with 'undesirable people'.¹⁶² In practice it seems that little

¹⁶¹ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCAS Report p.13

¹⁶² TNSA: GO169 LE 5/2/1925, GO2138 Home 4/6/1937 Note to Finance Dept 4/2/1937

difference was made. In 1936 the MCAS had the care of 54 boys on probation, and ran three night schools in Vepery, Choolai and Royapuram with 43, 47 and 54 boys respectively.¹⁶³ The Boys Clubs were held in Corporation School buildings.¹⁶⁴ In addition 94 boys were brought to the MCAS remand home by the police as ‘found wandering and uncontrollable’ but were ‘restored to their respective parents’ and were ‘being supervised and helped to find work’ by the Probation Officer.¹⁶⁵ Again, in 1937 the MCAS had 90 boys on probation, supervised by two Probation Officers because of their ‘vagabond life’ rather than specific delinquency, and often because these boys had absconded from home. If parents were discovered, the boys were returned to them if they were ‘respectable people’.¹⁶⁶ Teachers were both salaried and voluntary workers and activities were free to the juvenile members. The increased interest in non-institutional care in conjunction with other voluntary groups such as the DPAS was probably driven by financial considerations, but it was also easier to reintegrate boys into society without the physical marks of institutionalisation.¹⁶⁷ Generally funding was raised through dramas enacted by the boys themselves and from subscriptions of members of the Society. To aid their work, the Probation Officers also used voluntary workers such as Rover Scouts.

The Club functioned with the boys reporting to the Probation Officer on a Sunday, and the CPM received periodic progress reports. The Boys Club provided leisure activities, for example a party in September 1932 with sweets, informal talks and a lecture by National Health Association. It provided training opportunities, and the Probation Officers were able to secure employment for the boys in a number of prestigious weaving companies, as bookbinders and compositors, as Tramway Company conductors, as buglers and in domestic work. To assist this, the Club established a workshop which undertook vehicle repairs and manufactured iron and steel goods such as gates, windows and dustbins.¹⁶⁸ Journals, for example *Stri Dharma*, were used to secure public cooperation in purchasing these articles as a

¹⁶³ TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937 Chief Inspector Certified Schools 24/10/1936

¹⁶⁴ TNSA: GO778 Home 23/2/1937 MCAS 11th Annual Meeting

¹⁶⁵ TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937 Chief Inspector 24/10/1936

¹⁶⁶ TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937

¹⁶⁷ Chatterjee, *Child Criminals and the Raj*

¹⁶⁸ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCAS Report p.15

means ‘to uplift and reform and make useful citizens of these young lads’, a further call on middle-class philanthropic sensibilities as well as rehabilitation through capitalist endeavour.¹⁶⁹ This probation work grew through the 1930s, so that by 1935 the Boys Club housed 127 boys and the newly formed Girls Club five girls.¹⁷⁰ In 1937 Dorothy Jinarajadasa requested additional financial support from the Home Department, the work being severely limited by lack of funds and trained Probation Officers.¹⁷¹ The MCAS proposed dividing Madras city into five areas each with a Probation Officer, in addition to a city-wide Woman Probation Officer who was employed to facilitate the operation of the Immoral Traffic Act. An alternative scheme to establish children ‘left helpless without work or shelter’ as a self-sustaining village community reflected new pedagogical and penological ideas, but was too costly and radical to be implemented.¹⁷²

Conclusion

The MCA 1920 initiated reforms within the Certified Schools and established the juvenile court as spatially distinct from adult justice. The MLC and officials of the Home and Education Departments were content to leave the implementation of other areas of the Act to civil society groups. This began with the MSPC and then involved the State Children’s Council, later named the MCAS. The MCAS pressed for the expansion of juvenile justice, and provided the personnel and management of the Court’s auxiliary services, Honorary Magistrates and the probation service, although dependant on government funding. This contrasts with more state management of these services in Britain.¹⁷³ While the government was prepared to fund the basic maintenance of the children in the Boys Club and Remand homes, the voluntary organisations relied heavily on public donations. Echoing the educational reforms in Chapters One and Two, the idea of ‘the child’ as future asset and as demonstrating the modernity of the state appears to have been more important than providing for individual children.

¹⁶⁹ TNSA: GO902 LE 28/6/1932 MCAS Report

¹⁷⁰ TNSA: GO2610 Home 12/7/1937 Certified Schools Report 1936

¹⁷¹ TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937

¹⁷² TNSA: GO2138 Home 4/6/1937 MCAS Note 27/2/1937

¹⁷³ Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*

Rather than competing over who controlled and represented the body and mind of the Indian child, there was a general consensus regarding the position of the child with very little reference to the conflictual politics which generally characterised late colonial India. The evidence suggests rather that the expansion of juvenile justice happened in an area Donzelot calls ‘the social’.¹⁷⁴ This constituted a depoliticised and consensual area of the increasing regulation of the family, participated in by law makers, by bureaucrats, by expert professionals and by an increasingly active and vocal voluntary sector, often associated with the women’s movement.¹⁷⁵ Although Donzelot, and later others such as Weiner, situate their analysis within a Structuralist and Marxist framework, this change to liberal penology does not merely reflect the ascendancy of bourgeois values within the liberal state and philanthropic middle class attempts to control working-class families for the future of the nation and advance their own economic and social interests.¹⁷⁶ Rather, the expansion of ‘the social’ as an arena of action was founded on the networks and interrelationships of a small number of individuals.¹⁷⁷ There were noticeable connections between the officials of the Law (Education) and Home Departments and the members of the WIA, the MCAS and the MSPC. These individuals too were linked to wider social and political reform movements, particularly the Theosophical Society, Indian National Congress and Justice Party who cooperated together, despite the fraught nature of Madras politics in the MLC.¹⁷⁸ The MCAS, for example, was based within the WIA headquarters and incorporated many prominent politicians and ICS officials on their management committee. The enhanced status of the Lady Honorary Magistrates and expansion of the juvenile court was closely linked to the careers, connections and personalities of individuals such as Mrs Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi and Mrs Stanford. The conspicuous role of these women demonstrated the way children could be used to further a cause, and the gendered way in which children were perceived as still tied to the home, family, private and domestic spheres.

¹⁷⁴ Donzelot, *Policing of Families*

¹⁷⁵ Garland *Punishment and Welfare* p.206, Donzelot, *Policing of Families*

¹⁷⁶ Donzelot, *Policing of Families*, Weiner *The Child and the State*

¹⁷⁷ Logan, ‘Policy networks and the juvenile court’

¹⁷⁸ Sen *Colonial Childhoods*

While the MSPC focused its efforts on rescuing the ‘destitute child’ from a life of poverty which could lead to crime, the MCAS drew much less distinct lines between those perceived as actual or potential delinquents, seeing juvenile crime and poverty as mutually reinforcing.¹⁷⁹ This self-categorised the work of the MCAS as a welfare rather than criminal justice organisation. While most of the programmes, for example the juvenile court or Boys Clubs, noted the differing routes into contact with the state, the practical implementation of care and control seemed to have been the same for all boys. This was different for female children, where the sexually active girl-child was categorised and acted on as female mini-adult, sexual innocence being a clear marker of the boundaries of what constituted female childhood.

Although the terms ‘destitute’ and ‘delinquent’ were used, the distinction had little practical impact. The most decisive factor in practical intervention remained the existence and respectability of the parents. This does not reflect discourses surrounding the state’s ambitions to remove children from the potentially threatening nurture of their parents, either on racial or class terms.¹⁸⁰ Rather, in most circumstances the child was returned to their parents. When intervention was unavoidable because the child was shown to be without family, care for the child was facilitated by a variety of civil society activists who perceived themselves as operating within the family structure. The structure of the juvenile court mirrored the nuclear family, being designated a ‘parental enquiry’ with the salaried male Presidency Judge helped by the nurturing and maternal care of the Lady Honorary Magistrate. Just as Nehru perceived himself as uncle of the nation, the child was acted upon by the uncles and aunties of civil society groups who imagined themselves in terms of kinship relations rather than as an interventionist force.¹⁸¹ Through the control of funding and as the ultimate arbitrator of the child’s needs and rights whose authority was enshrined in law, the state tried to retain its position *in parens patriae*. However, the family remained the primary site of authority and nurture in the life of the child, and intervention only happened when the parents explicitly failed. Despite acting on

¹⁷⁹ Jackson ‘Care or Control?’

¹⁸⁰ Vallgård, ‘Between Consent and Coercion’, *Sen Colonial Childhoods*

¹⁸¹ Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away* pp.81, 221

behalf of the state, and funded by it, those who did intervene claimed that authority not as representatives of the state, but as part of the extended national family.

(Chapter Seven) The Experience of Aristocratic Childhood

The preceding chapters have demonstrated the changing ways in which childhood was imagined in state and civil society discourse, and the implementation of a variety of interventionist policies intended to improve the lives of poor children. This chapter changes the focus by looking at the fragmentary evidence of the lives of a number of orphaned aristocratic children living under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards. These children were unrepresentative by reason of their social status, lack of parents, socio-economic background and future prospects, as well as the proximity of their interaction with the colonial state. They were also considerably older than the schoolchildren mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, but were still legally defined as minor, discussed as ‘children’ and portrayed as representative of ‘Indian childhood’. The ‘scattered fragments of their lives’ provide a degree of insight into individual lives not possible for the children of the lower classes, which helpfully reminds us of the historical agency of children.¹ Furthermore, similar to the privileged secondary school children of Singapore, Hanoi and Hong Kong, the details of individual lives were ‘suggestive’ of the ways in which other children used, interacted with and questioned the nature and definitions of childhood.²

The focus here is a particular moment of colonial encounter.³ The British headmaster of Newington residential school for minor zamindars, Clement de la Hey, was murdered during the night of 16th October 1919. Two of the minor wards under his care were accused of homicide, allegedly in revenge after De La Hey had called them ‘barbarous Tamilians’. The transcripts of the trial, heard in the High Court of Bombay in 1920, contain witness statements from eight of the minor residents of Newington, aged between twelve and eighteen years. These voices were deeply mediated: recorded according to the prescriptions of the British law courts in a trial particularly noted for its display of colonial grandeur; reflecting the questions asked by adult lawyers, and probably translated. Nevertheless, they provided a unique opportunity for the wards to reflect on their experiences of colonial residential schooling. These

¹ Chatterjee ‘Testing the Local against the Colonial Archive’ p.224

² Pomfret, *Imperial Childhoods*, p281

³ Wagner and Roque, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge*

records are set beside the discussions surrounding the Guardian and Wards Act 1890 which legally defined ‘minority’ and ‘childhood’ for the landowning classes and provided a new role for the state as guardian. Complementing this are the colonial administration reports, which included a particular emphasis on Newington school, and the wider proceedings of the trial. These reports reflected colonial anxieties regarding the state’s role as ‘institutional shelter’ and competing desires to protect minor zamindars as children and to expand colonial influence through the introduction of modern estate management and the disruption of traditional networks of patronage.⁴ This highlighted the ambiguous approach of the British Raj to zamindars, who were constructed as both the quintessentially corrupt natives to be reformed by colonial education and as useful political allies.⁵ Bringing these sources together allows a more detailed consideration of the ways in which this relationship as guardian worked in practice.

There were 63 senior wards and 22 junior wards (the brothers, sisters and, even, wives of the senior ward) under the jurisdiction of the Madras Court of Wards between 1910 and 1940. Considering the minutiae of their daily lives and the practical workings of guardianship, education, marriage and sexuality revealed in the interventions of the children in the trial, in conjunction with the more formal administrative reports, contests our understandings of aristocratic childhoods. It also offers glimpses of the ways in which childhood, and other forms of social identity such as gender, race and social class, were imagined and experienced by these children within the intimate settings of their lives and within the everyday relationships between children, teachers and servants.⁶ The chapter concludes by considering the ways that childhood and race

⁴ Anand Yang, 'The Court of Wards in Late Nineteenth-Century Bihar' *Modern Asian Studies* 12:2 (1979), Benjamin Cohen, 'The Court of Wards in a Princely State: Bank Robber or Babysitter?' *Modern Asian Studies* 41:2 (2007), Pamela Price, *Kingship and political practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996). In Baroda and Mysore, by comparison, the Rajas attempted to develop their own indigenous version of modernity. Bhagavan *Sovereign Spheres*, Aya Ikegame, *Princely India Reimagined*, (London: Routledge, 2013)

⁵ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, chapters 5&6, Boria Majumdar 'Tom Brown goes global: The 'Brown' ethic in colonial and post-colonial India' *International Journal of the History of Sport* 23:5 (August 2006) p.806, David Cannadine *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2001). 1920-37 four of the five Chief Ministers were zamindars,, see Baker, *Politics of South India* pp.ix, 208

⁶ The importance of the domestic and the everyday is noted in Stoler *Race and the Education of Desire*: p.42

– particularly ‘Indian childhood’ - were constructed at the murder trial and used by both prosecution and defence. Despite one of the accused – Singampatti – turning Approver and gaining a pardon in return for evidence, the other accused - Kadambur - was ultimately acquitted and no one was convicted.⁷ This dramatic moment of confrontation has received no scholarly attention but allows us to reflect the relationship between legal definition and discursive constructions of childhood, along with limited scraps of evidence produced by children themselves of their own lives.⁸

Legislative framework

The legislative framework of the Guardians and Wards Act (Act VIII) 1890 (GWA) was an early example of new legal boundaries between adulthood and childhood which was used by the British administration to demonstrate their own modernity.⁹ The Indian Majority Act 1876 set the legal boundary between adulthood and childhood at eighteen years, although it explicitly exempted marriage, dowry, divorce and adoption from its jurisdiction and had no effect on religious rites.¹⁰ Under the GWA, the child did not attain legal majority until the age of 21 years. This contests Ishita Pande’s claim that the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 was the first ‘digital delineation of childhood’ by a specific age, and the first establishment of the child as a particular object of protection.¹¹ It also demonstrates the continuing complexity of the legal definition of ‘the child’ by digits of age, as seen earlier in the debates over compulsory education.¹²

The GWA established that the father and mother were ‘natural’ guardians of the child, with ‘absolute authority’ vested in the father (Section 17). The father was responsible

⁷ The murder remains unsolved, but it was most likely linked to a number of politically powerful zamindars who wanted official recognition for Newington as a Chief’s College and were opposed to the reappointment of De La Hey as principal. IOR: L/PJ/6/1628, File 7426.

⁸ High Court of Judicature Bombay, 1920. King Emperor vs Seeni Vellala Siva Subramania Pandia Thailavar (Kadambur). See also http://bombayhighcourt.nic.in/libweb/historicalcases/cases/De_La_Haye_Murder_Case_-1920.html [Accessed 2010]. For popular histories see S. Muttiah ‘The ‘Minors’ of Minor Bungalow’ *The Hindu* 03/12/2003, Randor Guy ‘The gunshot at midnight’ *Madras Musings* 1 & 15/3/2001

⁹ Nieuwenhuys, ‘Global Childhood’ p.270, Sen, *Colonial Childhoods* p.175

¹⁰ Mira Shambhudas *Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 Act VII* (11th edition) (Calcutta: Easter Law House Private Ltd, 1969) p.371

¹¹ Pande, Ishita ‘Coming of Age’

¹² Kumari, *Juvenile Justice System*

for the child's welfare and the child was required to follow the religion of the father, even after his death (Section 15). Parents could forfeit the right to custody of their own children only 'with very good reason' (Section 8, clause b) if the physical or moral welfare of the child was threatened, although the child could not bring a complaint against their parents until the age of fourteen years.¹³ This fitted into a wider discourse of protecting the child 'in danger', and permitted the legal 'orphaning' of children whose parents were deemed harmful.¹⁴ If a parent died, guardians were appointed from within the extended family to oversee the property and person of the ward (Section 21) and the adoptive parents had full responsibility for the child.¹⁵ If no guardian could be established the state had a duty to protect the child, combining the responsibilities of a medieval European monarch acting as *parens patriae* with a modern duty to protect the vulnerable.¹⁶ A Judge, Collector or official answerable to the Board of Revenue was appointed to represent the state as guardian, implementing the wishes of the deceased father (Section 18).¹⁷ This guardian was to fulfil the emotional and practical duties of paternal care, involving himself in the minutiae of the children's lives: 'his habits...his manners...his sentiments... and his little concerns'.¹⁸ By the 1920s, the surrounding guidance emphasised that 'the welfare of the infant is the prime consideration' or 'dominant matter'.¹⁹ This reflected a shift in emphasis from parental authority to the primacy of the child that reflected the changing international discourses about childhood, eventually encapsulated in the 1924 Geneva Declaration. The legislation therefore both protected the child, and provided the state with interventionist potential as protector of the vulnerable.

The GWA was an all-India Act, but was reformulated specifically for the Madras Presidency in 1902. V.S. Ranga Rao, Zamindar of Bobbili, emphasised that the Court

¹³ Macpherson *Infants, and Story's Equity Jurisprudence* in Shambhudas *Guardians and Wards Act* p.122

¹⁴ Sen, 'The orphaned colony', Vallgård *Imperial Childhoods*

¹⁵ On the death of the Hindu father guardianship would pass to the mother and on her death to the paternal relations (Section 17). For Shia Muslims the father was entitled to custody of sons and of daughters aged over seven years; while Sunni Muslim mothers had custody over the person, but not property, of her daughter until she attained puberty.

¹⁶ Macnaghten's *Principles of Hindu Law* (1825) in Shambhudas *Guardians and Wards Act* p.9

¹⁷ Shambhudas *Guardians and Wards Act* pp.132-4

¹⁸ Shambhudas *Guardians and Wards Act* p.24

¹⁹ Shambhudas *Guardians and Wards Act* p.9

of Wards would act for 'the protection and preservation of the proprietary class of the community'.²⁰ A specific class dynamic was thus added, suggesting that only the minor sons of the landed gentry were sufficiently important to be given the protection of the courts and the welfare of children was secondary to the preservation of the social order. Although primarily involved in the proper functioning of the estate, the court was entitled to appoint guardians and make arrangements for the 'custody, residence, education and marriage' of the ward, and their minor siblings (Section 26). Male minors could themselves be the guardians of their wives, and both male and female could have guardianship rights over their own children while still minors themselves. While Section 7 states 'the court in the matter of choosing a guardian of an infant must be guided entirely by the interests of the ward' this was always the court's assessment of best interest.²¹ Section 17 (3) established that 'if the minor is old enough to form an intelligent preference, the Court may consider that preference', and age (fourteen years for males, sixteen years for females), became the key determinant of 'intelligent preference' but their views were still just 'one of the elements for consideration'. The GWA 1902 suggested that for the landed classes at least, the child was a legal status and minority required particular protection. At the same time, the boundaries, competences and rights of the child remained shifting and unclear even in legal terms.

Practicalities of guardianship

The practical implementation of the legislation, and lived experience of children as wards, provides a more nuanced appreciation of aristocratic colonial childhoods and adolescence. Guardians became the human agents of regal protection and the parental ambitions of the state. The 1902 discussion of the Advisory Council of Fort St George regarding the appointment of Mr Morrison as head teacher of Newington School, and guardian of the wards who resided there, demonstrated the tensions involved in the choice. There was an attempted amendment by the Indians on the Council to ensure that a guardian should be a male relative or 'elderly person of the same religious persuasion as the ward himself' or at least governed by the same personal law.²² Congress leader C. Jambulingam Mudaliar particularly objected to Mr Morrison

²⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045. Select Committee Report 20/1/1902

²¹ Shambhudas *Guardians and Wards Act* p.25

²² IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045. p.41

having shaved the Newington boys' heads for hygiene reasons, which caused religious offence. Jambulingam Mudaliar claimed a guardian should:

be a person who will have a more intimate acquaintance of the daily life of the ward, and who will know the ways in which he ought to be brought up as a Hindu in the matter of his daily observances, dress and other details which, without conveying any special dogmas or religious ideas, go far to make up a Hindu... These things, so far as the people of this country are concerned, preserve their national appearance.²³

Although the British members admitted the mistake and reiterated their firm belief that British rule 'habitually respects every religious prejudice', another Indian representative - P. Ratnasabhapathi Pillai - disagreed, pointing out that Christian wards would never be put under Muslim or Hindu guardians.²⁴ This was not concern for individual children, rather to determine which of the conflicting elites could legitimately represent and control the bodies of the wards, and ultimately attempt to control their minds and identities.²⁵ The amendment was lost (by five votes to thirteen), reflecting the racial power balances in the Advisory Council, so that while the legal position of the GWA guaranteed that a ward would be brought up in the religion of his father, the ultimate paternal authority was the colonial state.²⁶

The rhetoric of guardianship in the Council and its practical working were quite different. The wards at Newington School were joined by at least ten others boys whose parents chose to submit their children to the temporary guardianship of Newington, in order to benefit from the education provided there.²⁷ De La Hey, as successor to Mr Morrison, claimed a parental role at Newington school, and described his role to his relatives as supporting the boys physically and emotionally:

My brother was so entirely wrapped up in these boys at Newington, he took the deepest interest in their affairs, joined in their games, nursed them when they were ill.²⁸

²³ IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045. p.44

²⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045. pp.41-42

²⁵ Mills & Sen, *Confronting the Body* p.75

²⁶ Nandy, *Intimate Enemy* p.14

²⁷ For example Sons of the Nawab of Banaganapalle, Zamindars of Tiruvur and Udaiyarpalaiyma. IOR: V/24/2378 Report on the Administration of the Estates under the Court of Wards in the Madras Presidency 1913-14 (COW Admin Report)

²⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Letter Winifred Hurst 12/11/19

Of the 42 guardians specified for the male wards between 1910 and 1940 in the Administration Reports, fifteen were assumed to have the headmaster at Newington as primary guardian, while eight remained at home with their mothers. Only three of the guardian-tutors were cited as British, while two mid-level Indian officials are mentioned, as were six tutor-guardians who also functioned as estate managers and were most likely Indian. Of the tutors specified, fifteen were identified as Indian and in all probability the other seven were Indian too, although the tutor's race was only mentioned after 1927, possibly reflecting the changing political situation or the closure of Newington school in 1920. Of those who did have a British tutor, one was specifically to help prepare the senior and junior wards of the Vizagapatam princely state for the Cambridge entrance exams, whilst the other was engaged for the senior and junior wards of the Urkaddu estate after they left Newington school. While Sen argues that the role of the guardians was to educate the young landowning classes in the ways of British landed gentry, it is clear that most of those appointed as tutors, who were described in the Administration Reports as exercising 'a very wholesome and salutary influence over the wards', were in fact educated middle-class Indians – the class whose influence the colonial government was particularly anxious to avoid.²⁹

Educating the wards

The fear of the Indian guardian and the Indian home was a clear motivating factor in the formation of the Rajkumar or Chief's Colleges, such as Mayo or Daly College, in Northern India. These institutions focused on rearing young aristocratic boys into rational manly adults according to the metropolitan behavioural norms of the English public school. Newington College was the South Indian equivalent, and from the early twentieth century it was felt by the Government of Madras that controlling the bodies of the wards in a school would ensure their physical, intellectual and moral progress, away from the polluting circumstances of the home. In 1902 the Advisory Council argued:

We all know what sometimes happens when a young prodigal succeeds to a great estate....But he has perhaps been a spoilt child brought up in leading strings, or pampered under some unwholesome system of stove culture. He suddenly finds himself the uncontrolled master of great wealth, and is surrounded by parasites

²⁹ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1927-8 p.9, Sen, *Colonial Childhoods* pp.156-162

who tempt him to squander his substance in riotous living. From one excess he plunges to another until he has addled his brains, enervated his body, and lost all power of application to business, of judgement and of self-control.³⁰

Drawing heavily on biblical metaphors, this demonstrated the government's fear of the Indian home and working of local patronage networks; and perception of the Indian upper classes as decadent, weak and corrupt which only a rational European education could prevent. This was directly questioned by the Indians on the Council, most notably the renowned nationalist C. Vijayaraghavachariar, who regarded the mixing of wards of different wealth and social status as dangerous to their moral state. He particularly highlighted the problems with communication and the lack of attention to cultural and emotional needs:

A highly enlightened European tutor for a little boy of eight or nine years is absolutely uncalled for. He cannot impart instruction to him; he might teach him how to play tennis, how to ride a horse, and he might acclimatise him to the weather of Ootacamund, but he cannot do more. The effect of this would be that he would use trousers and books, but I do not see how it added to his education.³¹

This was part of the growing Indian opposition to the moral emptiness of the colonial education system, and their desire to control the bodies of children as particularly valuable commodities in the controlling the morals of the future nation.

The main focus at the Newington school appears to be the production of 'manly dimwits' through an education which was not intellectually rigorous but focused on British language and customs, and masculine codes of honour usually associated with the landed gentry.³² There is some evidence in different years that Physics, Chemistry, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telegu were taught, but the source material is very limited. There was mention of carpentry lessons in 1918-19 and many of the excursions were linked to agriculture, for example Kangundi was interested in stable management, veterinary science and dairying and Sivagiri attended veterinary college.³³ The Public Instruction Reports all mentioned religious and moral education and ceremonies undertaken by

³⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045. p.4

³¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045. p.22

³² Sen, *Colonial Childhoods* p.180, John Mangan, 'Eton in India: the Imperial diffusion of a Victorian Educational Ethic' *History of Education* 7:2 (1978) pp.105-108

³³ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3, DPI 1907-08 1914-15,

pandits and a Religious Superintendent.³⁴ As part of their moral education, the wards were encouraged to be interested in current affairs contributing financially, for instance, to a War Fund in 1914-15.³⁵ There was an attempt to learn through activity, and the wards all had chores to encourage responsibility such as managing the library, stables, games fund and guns.³⁶ While learning English appears to be one of the incentives for aristocratic parents to send their children to Newington, success was limited.³⁷ The evidence of all the wards at the murder trial has obviously been transcribed and, by their own admission, it appears that the wards acquired 'a fair colloquial knowledge of English... but no real acquaintance in English, and no acquaintance with English literature' - very similar to Yang's observations in Bihar in the late nineteenth century.³⁸ While Viswanathan's argument about the power of English literature to inform ideas is interesting the practical application of it, even in this highly privileged educational setting, seems doubtful.³⁹

It is difficult to assess how much time the wards at Newington school spent engaged in formal education. In 1909 the wards and their guardians made an extended tour through North India, and spent two months of the hot weather at Ootacamund.⁴⁰ This was part of an established pattern, which involved tours of the West Coast of the Madras Presidency (1909-10, 1911-12), Ceylon (1910-11), Mysore and Masulipatam (1911-12), Orissa (1912-13), Burma (1913-14) and the North of India, including Calcutta, Benares, Lucknow, Delhi, Agra, Jaipur and Bombay, returning via Poona and Bangalore (1916).⁴¹ The wards had to submit travel diaries and the trips were 'considered to have been of a highly educative character'.⁴² The wards made frequent visits to the estates of ex-pupils as part of the old boys network, and short educational trips to local sites such as the veterinary hospital, sugar factories and weaving mills of

³⁴ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3, DPI 1912-13

³⁵ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1914-15 p.3, IOR: L/PJ/10251 Board of Revenue, Proceedings of the Court of Wards, Madras (henceforth Revenue COW Proceedings)

³⁶ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3, DPI 1907-08

³⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.39, 30. See particularly Singampatti ward, Junior Urkaddu

³⁸ Yang, 'The Court of Wards' p.260

³⁹ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, Ellis, 'Snapshots', Rao 'Introduction' in *New Perspectives*

⁴⁰ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1908-09

⁴¹ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1913-14, P/CONF/24, Report Morrison, Confidential 52 6/10/1916

⁴² IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1910-11, 1911-12

Messrs Stanes and Co.⁴³ Ikegame's study of the Mysore royals argues that these tours were used to reinforced the Maharaja's own social status within the imperial ruling order as well as his role as a traditional king within his own domain.⁴⁴ There was an echo of this at Newington, with the continual tours re-emphasising both the concept of 'India' and the notion of an 'enlightened ruler' and strengthening the bonds between individuals within a particular social class of future rulers. The tours also reflected the emergence of children's travel literature which encouraged the production of future citizens, emphasising the temporal distinctions of school and holidays, emerging ideas about childhood freedom and new educational constructions of power based on education and wealth.⁴⁵

A particularly detailed confidential report was submitted by Mr Morrison to the Government of Madras in 1916 which provided a qualitative analysis of the ten boys at Newington school.⁴⁶ The majority were portrayed as the ideal products of colonial parenting – hardworking and good managers and demonstrably indebted to colonial rule.⁴⁷ Three were regarded as particularly mentally and physically backward, while those identified as most intelligent were portrayed as most flawed in moral character (Nandigam) and choice of companions (Saptur).⁴⁸ The wards appear to have had little motivation to study, and Kadambur was regarded as 'one of the few students that ever took any interest in their studies.'⁴⁹ Even the government officials were frustrated with continuing low academic standard at Newington. In 1917 they commended the one ward that had passed the Matriculation Exam but:

They are not, however, satisfied that a larger proportion of the Court's wards might not reach this not very high standard of general education. They agree with the Court as to the benefit to be derived from riding, gymnastic and tennis, to which it is said that all minors as usual paid a good deal of attention; but they consider that a more resolute effort should be made to get most, if not all, of the Court's wards at least up to the Matriculation standard.⁵⁰

⁴³ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1913-14, 1915-16, 1916-17, 1917-18

⁴⁴ Ikegame, *Princely India Re-Imagined* p.61

⁴⁵ Nandini Chandra 'The Pedagogic Imperative of Travel Writing in the Hindi World: Children's Periodicals (1920-1950) *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (2007) 30:2 pp.293-325

⁴⁶ IOR: P/CONF/24 6/10/1916

⁴⁷ IOR: P/CONF/24 6/10/1916

⁴⁸ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1914-15

⁴⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.76

⁵⁰ GO 1060 Revenue 11/04/1917 in IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1915-16 p.20

This concern was borne out by the statistics: of the 43 for whom there is clear evidence, only eight had passed the matriculation exam by the time they reached majority. While three passed the Secondary School Leaving Certificate, three failed because they did not attend the exam and the rest did not even attempt this basic very qualification. Most wards left Newington having only achieved the most basic training in estate administration.

There was no noticeable difference in educational achievement after the closure of Newington, although the qualitative evidence is more limited. Between 1921 and 1940, 63 secondary or tertiary educational establishments were specifically mentioned in the Administration Reports. Five wards were sent to the Rajkumar College at Ranipet while twelve attended college, for example American College, Madura or Hindu College, Tinnevely. An additional four went to Madras Christian College, three to Stanes European High School and a further fourteen attended mission schools for their entire academic career, presumably imbibing similar values to the ones which the Court had hoped they would learn in Newington. The rest (a further 23) attended local grant-in-aid high schools, for example Board High School, Koilpatti or Municipal High School, Salem, indicating an educational democratisation and a mixing of social class not in evidence in the other Presidencies.⁵¹ The lack of educational achievement is reflected in the limited career paths of the wards and the majority seemed happy to continue with a comfortable life of hereditary privilege and agricultural dominance. A few were more ambitious, for example the Kallikota ward passed his BA in Madras Christian College 1921, but those who attempted university usually failed the entrance exam, often despite extra tuition, or failed to complete the course.⁵²

It appears that the academic instruction of the wards was subordinated to the production of the active male body – the diffusion of the ‘Tom Brown ethic’ a ‘secularised de-Christianised form of muscular Christianity’ into the colonies.⁵³ Every Court of Ward Administration Report detailed riding, gymnastics, golf and tennis.⁵⁴

⁵¹ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Reports 1920-1940

⁵² NLS: IP/25/PJ.3, DPI Report 1919-20, 1932-33, 1934-35, 1937-38

⁵³ Majumdar, ‘Tom Brown’ p.806

⁵⁴ For example IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1914-15

Cricket was played competitively, and exclusion from cricket matches became an important disciplinary tool.⁵⁵ A swimming pool was donated by the Telaprolu ward and it was 'in daily use', although only 'some' of the boys could swim.⁵⁶ This surveillance of the healthy male body led to an obsessive recording of ailments and bodily health and the Public Instruction reports recorded more information on the weak hearts, kidneys and adenoids of the wards and the details of their sporting activities than on the academic syllabus.⁵⁷ The wards received a health inspection once or twice a year – regular enough that the Medical Officer could personally identify the wards.⁵⁸ Even after the closure of Newington, the tutor-guardian of the youngest son of the Zamindar of Urkaddu (Junior Urkaddu) was 'instructed to pay particular attention to his physical exercise and to create in him an interest in those subjects for which he might have a liking, though it involved some departure from the ordinary school curriculum'.⁵⁹ The tutor of the South Valluru ward was similarly chosen in 1929 because he was from a zamindari family and was a 'keen sportsman': having the correct social class and physical abilities.⁶⁰

Learning to hunt and shoot was a further aspect of becoming part of the landed gentry – with disastrous effects for Mr De La Hey. Singampatti alleged that he had only handled guns after he arrived at Newington and that he, Kadambur and Saptur had gone on five or six shooting parties for small game since he had arrived three months before.⁶¹ Junior Urkaddu described Singampatti as the 'best shot in Newington', corroborated by his frequent companion Saptur.⁶² The only ward who refused to participate was Senior Urkaddu who argued 'I was frightened of it. I never accompanied them shooting because I was frightened. I ride, I sing, I do not dance...'⁶³ During the Newington Murder trial, Senior Urkaddu was identified by a lack of sporting prowess and with homosexuality, and both arguments were used to

⁵⁵ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1913-14, L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.21

⁵⁶ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1911-12

⁵⁷ IOR: P/CONF/24 6/10/1916

⁵⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.5-7

⁵⁹ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1920-21

⁶⁰ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1929-30

⁶¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.18

⁶² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp/ 3, 9, 80

⁶³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.60

undermine his evidence as demonstrating a lack of courage and moral integrity. Senior Urkaddu became the representative of a race and class associated with effeminacy, mimicry and failed masculinity, particularly in contrast to the murdered De La Hey whose innocence was established because he was 'as straight a man and keen an Englishman' as was possible.⁶⁴ This supports Majumdar's argument that physical prowess and self-discipline were regarded as the clearest indicators of moral fibre.⁶⁵

Relationships within Newington

The personal relationships at Newington School were very complicated. The primary focus for the Administrative reports is a quantitative record of the employment conditions and salary of the British headmaster. The evidence at the De La Hey murder trial, although reflecting the questions asked and the particular nature of a public courtroom, provides more qualitative evidence of the daily relationships within the school. De La Hey's brother argued that his relationship with the wards was 'exceptionally excellent' as expected by the one who was the embodiment of *parens patriae*.⁶⁶ The wards themselves testified that he was kind, especially Senior and Junior Urkaddu who were his favourites, but even De La Hey's brother admitted that he made 'not very tactful' jests at the expense of his pupils.⁶⁷ Although Kadambur (the Accused) was alleged to have been most offended by De La Hey's racism, it is more likely that his dislike stemmed from his head-teacher's opposition to his ambition to study in England.⁶⁸ There is very little evidence of the other teaching staff, save a brief mention of Mr Dharamrao, the Telegu teacher.⁶⁹ The only teacher described in any significant detail is the Tamil Brahmin teacher Mr K. Rangaswamy Iyengar, who taught Physics and Chemistry.⁷⁰ Although Rangaswamy slept elsewhere, he spent considerable time daily with the wards, sharing their leisure such as tennis and he appeared to be the primary adult companion of the wards.⁷¹ Rangaswamy worked

⁶⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Letter Winifred Hurst 12/11/19

⁶⁵ Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, Majumdar 'Tom Brown'

⁶⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition 18/6/1920

⁶⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition 18/6/1920, Trial Proceedings p.39

⁶⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.10

⁶⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.52

⁷⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.80

⁷¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.77

particularly closely with the wards sitting exams, and was aware when Kadambur and Saptur struck work in response to racist jibes from De La Hey.⁷²

Sen argues that servants in the Chief's Colleges provided an alternative parental authority, more supportive of the religious and cultural views of 'home' than the colonial guardians.⁷³ In contrast, while servants are mentioned at Newington they appear to have had little influence. The two Urkaddus had attendants, including their own cook.⁷⁴ Thalavankottai had a servant, Kunduswamy, but made it clear that he was not a confidant.⁷⁵ His previous servant, Thalavankottai's own uncle Veleswamy, had been dismissed after a dispute with Kadambur, possibly after trouble between the servants.⁷⁶ Berikai also had a cook whom Kadambur dismissed, although he claimed he 'was not very angry about it' because 'it was only a servant. I did not care for the servant.'⁷⁷ Singampatti similarly had two servants: a cook Kandaswamy and a 'grown up man Periaswamy' who had been a servant for 32 years on the Singampatti estate. Despite this, he argued: 'I had neither great confidence nor want of confidence in Periaswamy. I did not ask any of the servants to protect me.'⁷⁸ The ease with which servants were dismissed, and the nonchalance with which they were viewed suggests that a different kind of relationship than the one suggested by Sen, based predominantly around social distinction and a lack of familiarity. This appears to reflect Banerjee's work on the Bengali middle classes, whose separation from their domestic servants was important to their cultural identity.⁷⁹

The complicated nature of the relationships between the wards at Newington, glimpsed in the fragmentary evidence, suggests that changing patterns of status and alliance were as important to the wards as any interaction with the colonial state or national politics.⁸⁰ Caste and social distinction were important in cooking, for instance

⁷² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.75

⁷³ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods* Chapter 5

⁷⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.54, 43

⁷⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.48

⁷⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.52, 45

⁷⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.64

⁷⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.54, 43, 20

⁷⁹ Banerjee, 'Blurring boundaries'

⁸⁰ Nandy *Intimate Enemy* pp.xiv-xv

Singampatti, Kadambur and the Urkaddus would have dinner together but not with Chundi, Berikai and Peddamerangi who were from different castes, although Thalavankottai alleged the primary culinary division was between Tamils and Telegus.⁸¹ Berikai and Chundi were particularly friendly and shared a room.⁸² Distinctions in academic grade were important and Saptur and Kadambur spent a lot of time together, and possibly with Senior Urkaddu, because they were all studying for the Intermediate exam.⁸³ Family relationships complicated matters too, because Singampatti and the Urkaddus were cousins with neighbouring estates, but were not particularly friendly while at the school.⁸⁴ Thalavankottai had likewise lived with members of the Urkaddu family for many years.⁸⁵ Even the relationship between the Urkaddu brothers was problematic, the younger being perceived by the other wards to be entirely dependent psychologically as well as materially on his elder brother.⁸⁶

Wealth was an important signifier of status, and the wards were well aware that Kadambur was the ‘poorest lad in the whole school’.⁸⁷ Legal disputes made life complicated, for example the dispute over Thalavankottai’s adoption was opposed by his father’s widows who were Kadambur’s sisters.⁸⁸ As the only adopted son, Thalavankottai seems to have been viewed with contempt by the others, was described by the teacher Rangaswamy as ‘really much more uncivilised than the others’, and was probably the original recipient of De La Hey’s ‘barbarous Tamilian’ jibe.⁸⁹ The evidence given at the trial by most of the wards was limited, perhaps demonstrating a common defensive action to defend the right of their world to continue to exist outside the gaze of the colonial or adult state. Thalavankottai seemed to lack an awareness of this and his testimony was much more detailed, whether due to a lack of aristocratic finesse or perhaps because he was younger and more awed by the authority of the Bombay Court. Personality clashes were frequent, Kadambur thought little of the

⁸¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.39, 43, 44

⁸² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.61, 47

⁸³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.80

⁸⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.21, 59

⁸⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.47

⁸⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.80, 74

⁸⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.21, 39

⁸⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.47

⁸⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.77

character of Senior Urkaddu, Senior Kalikota and Arni and ‘He used to advise them. But people do not generally relish advice’. He also pronounced moral judgments on Thalavankottai and Berikai which significantly strained relationships.⁹⁰ Chundi and Peddamerangi were punished for stealing the possessions of the Arni boys, and were discovered after a fellow ward reported it.⁹¹ This may reflect merely the clashing of personalities within a confined space, but it demonstrates the complex set of power constructions of kinship, caste, religion and age which everyone at Newington had to negotiate on a daily basis, in which the British headmaster was largely unimportant.⁹²

Marriage and sexuality

Under the Madras GWA 1902, the state had parental responsibility for the person and property of the ward, but the guardianship of marriage was vested in other forms of more traditional authority: the mother and senior relatives, while the guardian became involved only to sanction the expenses.⁹³ Out of 85 senior and junior wards, there is evidence for the marriage of 40 while under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards. Kallikota’s experience was typical: his marriage to the daughter of Raja Narpat Singampatti Deo of Chakradharpore was arranged by the Collector in 1917 when the ward was nineteen.⁹⁴ This cost the estate Rs 49,600, and his wife received Rs 5,000 per mensem living expenses on the condition that she lived with her mother-in-law.⁹⁵ In practice, Kallikota’s wife lived with Miss C. Kerr as governess until he finished his BA exams in 1921 at Madras Christian College.⁹⁶ The primary cost of marriage seems to have been to the male estate, and there is little evidence of dowry in the Financial Proceedings, although for example Nandigam’s wife arrived with a motor car as a wedding present.⁹⁷ The Collector even managed to facilitate marriage between wards, including the marriage of Berikai in May 1922 to the Shulagiri ward's sister and in February 1924 between the sister of the Mannarkottai Ward and the Mambarai ward.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.81, 70, 43

⁹¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.90

⁹² Kumar, *Lessons from Schools* p.39

⁹³ IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045.

⁹⁴ IOR: P/10251 Revenue COW Proceedings 23/01/1917

⁹⁵ IOR: P/10450 Revenue COW Proceedings 5/7/1918, 19/02/18

⁹⁶ IOR: P/10688 Revenue COW Proceedings 26/6/1917

⁹⁷ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1914-15

⁹⁸ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1921-22, 1924-25, P/10450 Revenue COW Proceedings 06/03/17

Expenditure on weddings was generally more limited than the government feared and although a memo was issued in 1917 limiting wedding expenditure to Rs 50,000 the Financial Proceedings give little evidence of expenditure of more than Rs 6,000.⁹⁹ There is no record of any children or of cohabitation.

The complicated nature of the marriage arrangements is made clearer by the example of Dorachi, sister to the Urkaddu wards. According to the official reports, she remained on the family estate when her younger brothers moved to Madras, studying initially under Mrs S.G. Hensman and then Miss Lazarus before marrying in 1920, after which she disappears from the official record.¹⁰⁰ This marriage seems to have been negotiated by her guardian, and her brother, as senior member of the family, claimed he 'knew nothing about his sister's marriage affairs'.¹⁰¹ Singampatti likewise claimed to have no knowledge of his own marriage negotiations, which he viewed as the responsibility of his parents.¹⁰² It was alleged at the trial that Singampatti was sent to Newington in order to facilitate his marriage with Dorachi by befriending her brother, demonstrating the perceived power of the senior member of the family, and the absolute dominance of adults in decision-making.¹⁰³ The wealth and status of the Urkaddu estate meant that it would have been a prestigious match for any of the other wards.

The Singampatti-Dorachi match was feasible because she was daughter of Singampatti's mother's brother (*mama/chinnamma*), a familiar Tamil marriage alliance.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, Dorachi was the niece of the Raja of Ramnad, who was deeply implicated in the De La Hey murder. Thalavankottai claimed to have lived in the same house as Dorachi before he joined Newington in 1918, and as they were both from prominent families in the Tinnevely district, this was not unlikely.¹⁰⁵ In a further twist, it appears that most of the wards thought that it was Kadambur (the Accused)

⁹⁹ BL: GO 2571 Confdl 20/8/1917, V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1928-19

¹⁰⁰ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Reports, 1917-18, 1919-20

¹⁰¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.54

¹⁰² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.18

¹⁰³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.18

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Trawick, *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)

¹⁰⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.51

rather than Singampatti (the Approver) who was to marry Dorachi. It was alleged by Saptur that Kadambur was promised to marry Dorachi, a materially and socially advantageous alliance, but had ended the arrangement on moral grounds when he discovered that she was a 'spoiled woman'.¹⁰⁶ Kadambur had believed the testimony of Thalavankottai who claimed to know the details of Dorachi's liaisons.¹⁰⁷ This slight on his sister's honour was strongly disputed by Senior Urkaddu.¹⁰⁸ These details were provided by the defence to demonstrate the strained relationships between Singampatti, Kadamabur and Senior Urkaddu. Whether this was of relevance to the murder is very difficult to establish, but it demonstrates the complex interrelationships and information exchanges between the wards at Newington, and the intimate contestations of relationships, marriage and local politics around which their lives were based, performed completely outside the knowledge, boundaries or priorities of the colonial state.

During the trial, the prosecution aimed to assassinate the moral character of the wards by establishing Newington as a 'den of juvenile vice'.¹⁰⁹ In the popular accounts, the headmaster's wife was involved in sexual liaisons with the minors and despite being the primary witness she was retired quickly to England to avoid any improper revelations which would implicate her alleged lovers among the British elite.¹¹⁰ In 1919 Berikai and Thalavankottai were confined for a month to their bungalows at Ootacamund after Kadambur reported that the latter had been involved in procuring prostitutes for the former, much older, boy.¹¹¹ Senior Urkaddu was challenged in court about 'committing unnatural offence' with other wards.¹¹² The investigation focused on the relationship between him and wards from Kallikota and Arni, although Senior Urkaddu argued he was unaware that homosexual relationships were prohibited at Newington.¹¹³ These details were used by the defence to discredit the evidence and

¹⁰⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.51, 80, Letter 16/3/1920

¹⁰⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Letter 16/3/1920

¹⁰⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.59

¹⁰⁹ Muttiah 'Minors' of Minor Bungalow'

¹¹⁰ Muttiah 'Minors' of Minor Bungalow', Guy 'The gunshot at midnight'. Contested by Dorrie De La Hey's relatives, see Lady Belinda Morse in S. Muttiah *Madras Miscellany* 03/05/2004

¹¹¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.64, 46

¹¹² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.55

¹¹³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.54

moral character of the wards, conveniently fitting colonial stereotypes of the effete, oversexed and self-indulgent Indian prince.¹¹⁴ This supports Sen's arguments that the normative values of childhood such as sexual innocence were flouted by the princely child, in ways which reinforced colonial assertions that the Indian child was innately 'dangerous', 'precocious' 'incorrigible' and insufficiently 'childlike'.¹¹⁵ Moreover, it suggested the failure of the state – particularly the headmasters at Newington – as parents to protect the vulnerable and imbibe good moral values.

Along with Dorachi, a further twelve females were under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards. This included one female ward (Jeypore Kumrika), two wives of wards (Kudapalli and Mizapuram) and sisters of minor brothers whose age was impossible to establish because their relationship with the Court of Wards ended when their brothers gained majority.¹¹⁶ Usually female wards stayed at home with their guardian who was either their mother or an Englishwoman, for example Miss Johnston and then Miss Jordan for the Saptur sisters.¹¹⁷ This gave the governess considerable power over the daily life of the girls. Miss Kerr for example was instrumental in organising accommodation for the Telaprolu ward and his new wife in Madras.¹¹⁸ Later she became governess to the wife of Kallikota and then governess and companion to the South Vallur ward's sisters.¹¹⁹

Other than education, the primary focus for girls under the control of the Court of Wards was marriage, and with one exception all were negotiated while their brother was under the age of majority. This was fraught with moral and political anxiety, as seen in the case of Dorachi, and was very expensive. Most evidence of these young women comes from the Financial Proceedings, particularly from the clothes, jewels, gifts and even war bonds the girls or their families received.¹²⁰ Records of

¹¹⁴ Mayo, *Mother India*, Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*:

¹¹⁵ Sen *Colonial Childhoods* p.145, 85-87

¹¹⁶ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1911-12, 1913-14, V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1918-19 - 1933-34

¹¹⁷ IOR: V/24/2378 COW Admin Report 1911-12, 1919-1920

¹¹⁸ IOR: P/8282 Revenue COW Proceedings 17/3/1909

¹¹⁹ IOR: P/10688 Revenue COW Proceedings 26/6/1919, V/24/2378 1919-20 p.5

¹²⁰ IOR:P/10040 Revenue COW Proceedings 12/7/1916, P/10251 Revenue COW Proceedings 06/3/1917

correspondence show that the Collector himself arranged the marriage of Saptur's sisters with the Periyaur Zamindarni – mother of the proposed bridegrooms.¹²¹ The marriages were postponed in July 1917 and the girls moved to Madras with their guardian, Miss Jordan. Guarding their reputations, the future bridegrooms received permission from the Court to visit, but not stay with, their prospective brides.¹²² After her sister's marriage, the younger sister remained with Miss Jordan until her own marriage to the Zamindar of Bodinayakkanur.¹²³ There was also financial provision made for illegitimate sisters who were not recorded in the official reports, but who still required support from the estate. For example the Chundi ward paid an allowance to his natural sister Savitramma Garu and gave her a grant of Rs 1,000 after her marriage to the Raja of Gudigunta.¹²⁴ By meshing the disparate archival evidence together, and seeking to trace personalities and individuals, a better picture emerges of how childhood and adolescence was experienced by these aristocratic minors. Rather than seeing childhood in the grand discourses of colonialism and race, it is important to see the nuances and complications of daily lives in which other power relations and identities of class, of gender, of sexuality and of minority and childhood were more important.

Discourses of childhood in the Newington trial

While tracing the lives of individual children provides an insight into the experience of being a child, or at least adolescent, the evidence presented at the Newington murder trial in February 1920 and surrounding correspondence contributes to understanding the ways childhood was imagined within Madras society. The issue of childhood was dealt with by Chief Justice Macleod when he summed up the evidence:

Both sides may rely upon the youth of the witnesses. That argument cuts both ways. The prosecution may say 'These are young boys who cannot possibly imagine a conspiracy which involves one of their own number in ruin and disgrace and so they must be telling the truth'. On the other hand the defence may say 'these boys are no more likely to be telling the truth if that does not suit them than anybody else.'¹²⁵

¹²¹ IOR: P/10450 Revenue COW Proceedings 17/8/1918

¹²² IOR: P/10450 Revenue COW Proceedings 28/11/18

¹²³ IOR: P/10688 Revenue COW Proceedings 21/10/1919

¹²⁴ IOR: P/10251 Revenue COW Proceedings 24/01/1917

¹²⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. MacLeod Summing Up 5/2/1920 p.27

This directly intersected with the contemporary discourses as to the innocence of childhood, the innate truthfulness or deceptiveness of children, but also their capacity to formulate a plan and act as agents of their own futures. There was also some acknowledgement of ‘the child’ as requiring separate consideration from adults in sentencing. Macleod was very anxious to stress that the jigsaw puzzle of evidence should not be forced, and that a guilty verdict should only be given if all the pieces fitted together.¹²⁶ A decision of guilty would normally have meant capital punishment, and it appears that the youth of the accused may have contributed to the reluctance to convict. In a confidential memo, Lord Willingdon and other senior figures in the Madras government confessed their disquiet with the lack of conviction, but again acknowledged youth as a factor: ‘it had seemed to the layman to be only a question of whether Kadambur would be hanged or whether on account of his youth a minor penalty would be imposed’.¹²⁷

The recognition of the child as legally different within the criminal justice system was established in the 1920 MCA. This Act was designed to provide legal protection to children, in recognition of their physical, intellectual and moral immaturity and the requirement for additional protection (see Chapters Five and Six). The Children Act specified that a ‘child’ was under the age of fourteen years, and a young person between fourteen and sixteen years. By contrast, the legal majority for the wards as the children of the zamindar class was 21 years. The legal boundaries of adult responsibility were therefore reflective of class and social status. Of the eight young men giving evidence, the Approver Singampatti was sixteen years old, while the Accused Kadambur was eighteen. Of the other witnesses, Berikai and Saptur were eighteen years, Chundi and Senior Urkaddu seventeen years, while Peddamerangi was fourteen, Thalavankottai thirteen and Junior Urkaddu was twelve years, all legally minors under both the GWA and Hindu Majority Act. Although the Bombay Children Act was not enacted until 1922 both Acts emphasised that children should be tried in private and in a less formal setting, in line with recommendations by the IJC 1920. By contrast, the trial remains noted as an opulent showcase of colonial justice, the Chief

¹²⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. MacLeod Summing Up 5/2/1920 p.2

¹²⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Home (Judicial) Dept Official account 19/5/1920

Justice attending in full ceremonial dress, but the effect this might have on the witnesses as children, rather than as ‘native’, was not acknowledged.¹²⁸ As early as 1901 it was considered that wards should not be named in the Governor’s Council because of the potential impact on their families.¹²⁹ However, Chief Justice McLeod pointed out that by looking at the boys it was clear that ‘Thalavankottai seems rather different to the rest’.¹³⁰ This public humiliation of a boy sitting in the packed courtroom showed a remarkable failure of the state as guardian.

The boys were subjected to an aggressive cross-examination by the defence, with limited legal representation. English was the language of the court, and while both wards of the Urkaddu estate professed to be proficient in English, this was not the case for most of the boys. Even the De La Hey relatives pointed out that Thalavankottai ‘had a very imperfect knowledge of English and probably did not properly understand many of the questions’.¹³¹ The wards were forced to talk in court about intimate details of their personal and sexual lives, often in terms which they did not understand.¹³² Thalavankottai claimed ‘I was in great fright. I was frightened of being shot also. I was so much afraid that we might also be killed after the *dorai* [headmaster] was shot’.¹³³ There was no recognition of the child as having dealt with a particularly traumatic experience when their guardian – their legal parent – was murdered while they were sleeping only a few rooms away, and that one of their peers might have been responsible. Children as vulnerable was not part of the discourses of the court, while regarding these adolescents as legally children meant less weight was given to their evidence.

The evidence given by the children was viewed as particularly suspect because of their age. When Junior Urkaddu supported Singampatti’s claims that he was coerced, his

¹²⁸ Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*, Bernard Cohn, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’ in Hobsbawm/Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983). The De Le Hey case was the only one in 1920 in which the Chief Justice wore full ceremonial dress: bombayhighcourt.nic.in/libweb/historicalcases/cases/De_La_Haye_Murder_Case_-1920.html [Accessed 2010]

¹²⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/602, File 1045. 27/8/1901

¹³⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. MacLeod Summing Up 5/2/1920 p.5

¹³¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. De Le Hey Letter 18/6/20

¹³² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.55

¹³³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.50

evidence was immediately dismissed as merely that of ‘a small boy’, being the youngest of the wards.¹³⁴ When Thalavankottai contradicted himself the jury were advised not to rely on his evidence. He talked frequently about ‘not remembering’, ‘I cannot be very positive. I forget...I may have forgotten some portions. I do not have quite a good memory’.¹³⁵ Accordingly, the Chief Justice noted that the boys were unable to provide ‘perfectly straightforward answers’ to even simple questions. While this detracted from their evidence, memory lapses or confusion over events by the adult witnesses such as the Medical Officer were regarded as acceptable.¹³⁶ The De La Hey relatives themselves admitted that these ‘were Indian boys who were committed to giving witness against one of themselves before a strange and unsympathetic audience, does it cause surprise to read that the Chief Justice found that these boys gave their evidence in a hesitating, evasive and unsatisfactory manner?’¹³⁷ Furthermore, they argued that although Singampatti and both Urkaddus were aware of plans to murder De La Hey but failed to warn him, this did not mean that they were implicated. Rather their fear and susceptibility to influence was a result of their youthful immaturity, a theory that was not ‘impossible or even improbable’ someone ‘with any knowledge even of English boys would maintain. It is not an unknown thing for a boy to fail to put himself forward at a crisis’.¹³⁸ There is little doubt that a true ‘Tom Brown’ would have risked life and reputation for the sake of a dearly loved teacher, but the native child was perceived to be unable to demonstrate either that degree of courage or loyalty and thus failed doubly – as both children and as Indians.¹³⁹ This positioned childhood, as characterised by lack and inferiority, in binary opposition to an ideal of adulthood masculinity and courage.¹⁴⁰

Accurate evidence and truthful witness were essential to the outcome of the trial, and the failure to establish this was perceived to be linked to the minor zamindars on account of their age and race. Both the De La Hey relatives and Chief Justice agreed

¹³⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. MacLeod Summing Up 5/2/1920 p.9, 12, 15

¹³⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.51

¹³⁶ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings p.5

¹³⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition De La Hey Family 18/6/1920

¹³⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition De La Hey Family 18/6/1920

¹³⁹ Majumdar, ‘Tom Brown’ p.806

¹⁴⁰ Nandy, *Intimate Enemy* p.15

that 'the standard of truth at Newington apparently is not a very high one.'¹⁴¹ The Chief Justice went on to argue that:

Thalavankottai according to their own evidence was their champion liar. You do not have a champion unless you have competition. When you talk of one boy amongst others being called a champion liar you can only assume that regard for the truth amongst those others is not very great.¹⁴²

This reflected the defence argument that Thalavankottai was merely first amongst his peers in lying and that all their evidence could therefore be discounted.¹⁴³ In the trial Thalavankottai was challenged:

Question: You are known as the champion liar of Newington by the boys.

Answer: I won't tell so 'much' lies. I might utter lies for fun to deceive somebody, but I won't make fun in places like this. I did not go and tell Mr De La Hey about this affair when I heard it. If I went and told him, he would have taken me to be a liar. There had been no such precedent of this kind, so, if I were the only person to go and report, I might not be believed. It is not true that no one ever believed my word... I thought they might be uttering a lie after all. I do not know if all boys there are going to tell lies.¹⁴⁴

This was an attempt by a thirteen year old to prove he knew the distinction between minor falsehoods told to amuse friends and the calculated fabrication of a story in a court of law. Claiming that the idea to murder the headmaster was implausible, it was not unreasonable that Thalavankottai, the boy who was perceived to be different by the others, thought the older boys were playing a prank. However both Berikai and Chundi asserted that Thalavankottai 'was always in the habit of telling lies'.¹⁴⁵ Given that the testimonies of the wards were central to the prosecution's case, the counsel for the defence Wadia, aided by Dr Swaminadhan and V.L. Ethiraj of Madras, discredited the evidence by undermining the character of the wards. The defence was Indian and it seems unlikely that they intended to demonstrate that all Indian children were inherently untruthful. Rather, the minor zamindars were characterised in terms of lack, as a result of both age and social class. These lawyers were highly educated advocates of rationality and meritocracy, aware of the growing movement in the Madras Presidency against the continued dominance of hereditary political power and the

¹⁴¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition De Le Hey Family 18/6/1920, Trial Proceedings, MacLeod Summing Up p.27

¹⁴² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. MacLeod Summing Up 5/2/1920 p.9, 27

¹⁴³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition De la Hey Family 18/6/1920

¹⁴⁴ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp.47-48

¹⁴⁵ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Trial Proceedings pp. 66, 70

perceived collaboration between the landed aristocracy and the British Raj. Wadia's further claim that 'honesty and speaking the truth were not in the syllabi' was also a subtle jibe at the poor quality of colonial parenting.¹⁴⁶

Race, and the child as Indian, was important to the British rhetoric. The Indian child became a metaphor for the nation, and the disloyalty shown to De La Hey became symptomatic of wider nationalist disloyalty to paternalistic imperial power. The De La Hey relatives petitioned for a re-trial, arguing that beyond issues of personal justice, the government must recognise that the safety of European lives in India would be seriously compromised if murders of Europeans were allowed to go unpunished in a court of law with sufficient evidence to convict.¹⁴⁷ The alleged particular depravity of the Indian child was demonstrated in the sexual exploits of Berikai and Thalavankottai and thefts of Peddamerangi and Chundi, but was linked to race rather than age, such crimes being 'of trivial importance in Indian eyes,' reflecting wider missionary and official discourses.¹⁴⁸ The integrity of Kadambur's letter to Senior Urkaddu ending his engagement with Dorachi on the basis of her immoral conduct was questioned on racial terms:

As to Kadambur's letter I suppose the view taken of such subjects in India is very different from ours – it would be like a letter about having played Bridge for money...I suppose it is quite the thing for a young man in India to write a high minded letter to another – regardless of what he may be himself.

In other words, in India morality was assumed to be rare, sexuality immorality was expected, and there was an assumption that principles were not reinforced by a requisite moral character.

The De La Heys argued that calling the boys 'barbarous Tamilians' was 'not in any way sufficient – in European eyes – to lead him to murder' but the 'sudden impulse' to kill 'makes the position of a native more important'.¹⁴⁹ This view was supported in Lord Willingdon's memo, which argued that the idea of murder having a rational cause

¹⁴⁶ Guy 'The gunshot at midnight'

¹⁴⁷ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition De La Hey Family 18/6/1920

¹⁴⁸ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Petition from De La Hey Family 18/6/1920, Trial Proceedings p.90, Vallgård, 'Between Consent and Coercion'

¹⁴⁹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Correspondence Edward De La Hey 16/3/1920

was profoundly Eurocentric and inapplicable in the Indian context as ‘the ill-balanced and susceptible mind of the Indian youth can lose all sense of relative values’, and this was particularly linked to Kadambur’s caste, the *Maravars*.¹⁵⁰ An article in the *Morning Post* similarly suggested that radical political activity ‘seeks its tools chiefly from among immature boys attending secondary schools’.¹⁵¹ Again, this reinforced the discursive assumptions of Indian youth as cowardly, emotional and effete, on account of both age and race. Despite having authorised the transfer to Bombay, the Madras Government highlighted that the court was ‘unacquainted with the character and habits of the South Indian youth of the class educated at Newington,’ again emphasising the untrustworthy nature of a particular social class.¹⁵² Moreover, Singampatti’s assertions of his helpless terror of Kadambur were accepted by the government: ‘a state of mind which in a Madrasi boy of Singampatti’s age and disposition was not really surprising’.¹⁵³ Despite the attempted reformation of these boys, the necessary failure of colonial education was again located by both government and judiciary in the nature of the subject material.¹⁵⁴ Thus the failures of the Newington wards were intimately linked to their position as the unmanly representative of hereditary privilege as well as to their position as children, which implied they were weak, over-emotional, irrational and easily influenced. Not only was the lack associated with race, but also with age and with a particular aristocratic social class, revealing the full complexity of the power relations involved in dealing with these children.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered a very small group of privileged – and therefore atypical – children who were under the guardianship of the state as wards of court and at a particular instance of their interactions with the state in the murder trial of their head teacher. By 1890 there was a legal concept of ‘the child’ defined in the Guardian and Wards Act, which specified the age boundaries of childhood, and emphasised the duties of the state to protect the child particularly, in Madras, if they were from the

¹⁵⁰ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Official account 19/5/1920

¹⁵¹ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. *Morning Post* 12/2/1920 quoted Letter 24/11/1919

¹⁵² IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Official account 19/5/1920

¹⁵³ IOR: L/PJ/6/1638, File 7426. Official account 19/5/1920

¹⁵⁴ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, Chapter 6

propertied classes. In this the rights of the father – alive or deceased – were paramount, although there was an early concept of the ‘best interests of the child’ which would mirror later children’s rights discourses of the 1920s. While other legislation was introduced regarding children, the minor of the propertied classes remained legally a child until the age of majority at 21 years, and there is no evidence in the legal documents or surrounding discussions of any idea of adolescence.

The lived experiences of the wards highlight the difference between the rhetoric of the state as parent and the practical reality, even taking into account the fragmentary and limited nature of the official sources. The definition of the ward was more complicated than usually acknowledged in the secondary literature, including younger brothers, sisters and wives. While De La Hey was the quintessential embodiment of the parental power of the state, in reality most guardians were Indians. De La Hey symbolised the remnants of a paternalistic project of colonial control, whereas the Indian guardians were much more reflective of the growing influence of Indians acting as the state (as detailed in earlier chapters); the Government of India Act and murder of De La Hey being approximately concurrent. The intended aim was the production of the rational, self-controlled masculine body, who as becoming adult would continue to represent colonial modernity in their estate administration and remain political allies. In practice, education ensured the continuance of unmodern institutions and was founded on the maintenance of hereditary privilege and the production of a class which mimicked the masculinity of the Edwardian upper classes. The primary interest for the wards themselves seems to have been their personal interrelationships based on wealth, caste differences, sexual relations, historical family interconnections and friendships. Their evidence said more about the adolescent politics of power, desire and identity than about interactions with imperial power. De La Hey himself was merely one of a myriad of adults who peopled the wards’ lives, and social hierarchies of class, gender and caste were at least as important as race. Ultimately, the wards were focussed on ‘being’, or existing within their daily lives, a salutary reminder when focussing on the overarching colonial discourses of control, of childhood and of race.

The scenes in the courtroom give a fascinating portrait into the way childhood was viewed. The boys were recognised to be vulnerable at the point of sentencing, and there was a particular abhorrence of unjustly inflicting the death penalty on a child. However, the idea of the vulnerable child who needed protection in a court of law was given no consideration particularly when the victim was a member of the Imperial race. The wards were publically humiliated in front of the court and were subjected to vigorous cross-examination. There was no recognition of the personal trauma these children – some as young as twelve – had experienced, and the extent to which their lives had been disrupted with loss of a parental figure and closure of the school. The youth of the child was taken into account when the motive for murder was considered, and when the truthfulness of the witness was being established, although it was merely used to reinforce pre-existing discourses about the nature of the Indian child, or the Indian prince, as flawed. Looking at the murder trial foregrounds children as legitimate historical actors, and suggests again – in fragmentary ways - the disjunction between the discursive formulation of childhood by adults and the plans adults have for children, and the ways in which the boundaries and identities of youth, race, colonialism and social class were experienced and imagined by the children themselves.

(Chapter Eight) Memories of childhood

Autobiographies provide an insight into the experience of childhood in early twentieth century South India. As with the previous chapter, this chapter continues to move away from an analysis of statist discourse and adult intervention to a focus on the children themselves as historical actors. The record of children's voices and actions is 'muted' at best, but the 'act of listening' to this often ignored, but numerically significant, social group is methodologically important.¹ Autobiography, as 'straddling the elusive divide between personal narrative and objective truth', facilitates the study of the, albeit fragmentary, remembered experiences of children and enables the historian to look at the spaces and relationships within their lives, which in turn influenced their adult conception of what constitutes 'childhood'.²

Former missile scientist and President APJ Abdul Kalam recalled his childhood through 'beautiful memories of days of innocence and mischief and learning'.³ Investigating further these ideas of innocence, play and schooling reveals the ways in which normative discourses about childhood were constructed through adult autobiographical memory. These personal sources also provide mediated evidence of children's lives, such as their games, their educational opportunities and their family relationships. These provide an alternative perspective, or shift in emphasis, that contrasts with the sources produced by the state.⁴ Further, autobiographies provide a mediated insight into identity formation; the ways in which children perceived their identity as children, and the multiple and competing social identities and experiences of subalternity that they had to negotiate on a daily basis, and which reflected their gender, class and caste. The memoirs of 55 individuals are used, selected because the authors were born between 1910 and 1940 and lived their childhoods in South India, loosely defined as the Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam speaking areas. All

¹ Chakrabarty, 'Radical Histories' p.275, Sreenivas, 'Forging new communities' p.271

² David Arnold & Stuart Blackburn (ed.) *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography and Life History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004) p.4

³ APJ Abdul Kalam, *My Journey: transforming dreams into actions* (Delhi: Rupa, 2013) p.35

⁴ Jorge Rojas Flores 'Ursula: The Life and Times of an Aristocratic Girl' in Ondine Gonzalez and Bianca Prema, *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007) p.131

have been accessed in English but were published in India, reflecting middle-class adulthoods and the exceptional educational levels of many of the individuals. By contrast, four Dalit autobiographies were translated and were published in Britain as part of a wider Dalit literature project.⁵

The autobiographies are used as what Burton calls ‘archives-in-the-making’, literate sources which fulfil a particular narrative function detailing social and cultural change.⁶ Rather than a self-reflective genre as associated with the Western or Bengali tradition of autobiographical writing detailing the emergence of the individual self, most South Indian autobiographers portray their life as ‘individual destiny and the social matrix in which it is embedded’.⁷ This mirrors constructions of Tamil individuality, *tanittuvam*, as public individual and social being or self-in-society, different to Bengali or Western ideas of the self.⁸ The individual life is used by the authors as a ‘public’ source and as ‘a background canvas to portray these wider events’, described by Tamil scholar Swaminatha Iyer as having ‘immense documentary value, the picture of an age in the social and cultural history of South India’.⁹ This is a particular feature of Tamil and Keralan autobiographies, which historian Venkatachathapathy argues ‘excise the self’ and by doing so have ‘appropriated the genre of autobiography to write a history of the social transformation that they had experienced in their own lifetime.’¹⁰ The writers used this ‘idiom of non-uniqueness’

⁵ See M Dasan, V Pratibha, Pradeepan Pampirikunnu, CS Chandrika (ed.) *Oxford Indian Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), R Azhagarasan Ravikumar (ed.) *Oxford Indian Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing* (Oxford: OUP, 2012)

⁶ Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, Kathryn Hansen, *Stages of life: Indian theatre autobiographies* (Wimbledon: Anthem Press, 2011) p.27, Arnold & Blackburn, *Telling Lives*

⁷ APJ Abdul Kalam, with Arun Tiwari, *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* (Hyderabad: Universities Press, 1999) p.xiv. For the Bengali situation see RCP Sinha, *The Indian Autobiographies in English*, (New Delhi: S Chand, 1978), Prakash Tandon, *Punjabi Century 1857-1947* (London: Chatton & Windus, 1963)

⁸ Mattison Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices*: p.149. Contrasting Bengal context: Swapna Banerjee, ‘Child, Mother, and Servant: Motherhood and Domestic Ideology in Colonial Bengal’ in Avril Powell & Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, *Rhetoric and Reality: Gender and the Colonial Experience in South Asia* (New Delhi: OUP, 2006)

⁹ KRR Sastry, *Reminiscences of a jurist* (Madras: Jupiter, 1963) p.1, TS Avinashilingam, *Sacred Touch: An Autobiography* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1986), UV Swaminatha Iyer, *En carittiram: the story of my life* (trans. Kamil Zvelebil) (Madras : Institute of Asian Studies, 1990) p.ii, Chakrabarty, ‘Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History’ p.9

¹⁰ AR Venkatachalapathy, *In Those Days There was No Coffee: Writings in Cultural History* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006) p.175, RVMG Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me*, (London: Asia Publishing House, 1961) p.10

both to veil the self and by doing so to prove their historical authenticity as typical.¹¹

The childhoods of today and yesterday are structured around a binary of the difference between *antha kalam/intha kalam*, or ‘those days/these days’ which explicitly demonstrates change.¹² A small number write to demonstrate the foundations in childhood of their later success as adults, seeing the child as adult-in-the-making, and these are often more self-reflective in style.¹³ Mohanty, as a pedagogue, argues:

My objective in writing this book was to show the children the life and society during my childhood days. I wanted them to know how children particularly in the village grew up then, what difficulties they faced, what joy and sorrow they experienced, who was there to act as their guide and philosopher on life's puzzling path.¹⁴

This explicitly situates the memories of childhood, not in contrast to adulthood, but in contrast to the childhood of ‘today’. It thereby calls into question the idea of childhood as a universal condition, situating it in a particular time and place. This was reflected in the number of those who wrote specifically for their grandchildren.¹⁵ The binary between ‘today’ and ‘those days’ is reflected in many aspects of social life which affected children, including education, family life and relationships within the village community, but also mirrored the careers of the writers, many of whom moved from a rural community to the city for tertiary education. This description of wider social change was expressed by Veeraswami as the ‘chasm between my boyish days and now’.¹⁶

¹¹ Udaya Kumar ‘Subjects of New Lives: Reform, Self-making and the Discourse of Autobiography in Kerala’ in Bharati Ray (ed.) *Different types of history* (Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2009) p.307

¹² Venkatachalapathy, *In those Days* p.173, KPS Menon, *Many worlds: an autobiography*, (Calcutta: OUP, 1965) p.3, Kasthuri Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree: a partial autobiography* (Delhi: OUP, 1980) p.118

¹³ Santha Rama Rau *Gifts of Passage*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961) IOR: MssEur F341/157: Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi *Autobiography* (Madras, 1964), K Chockalingam, *Memoirs of the Last Sheriff of Madras*, (Chennai: Chockalingam, 1997) p.30, Malladi Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist: an autobiography of a social revolutionary* (Hyderabad: Booklinks, 1994), Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.xii. RK Laxman, *The Tunnel of Time* (India: Penguin, 1998)p.3, MJ Sargunam, *An Autobiography*, (Coimbatore: Palaniandavar Printers, 1978)

¹⁴ Jagannath Mohanty and Suhansu Mohanty *In Quest of Quality Education and Literature (An Autobiography)* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep, 2006) p.xiv, Basheer Ahmed Sayeed, *My Life, a struggle: an autobiography* (Madras: Academy of Islamic Research, 1983)

¹⁵ Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education*, Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me* p.7, AMN Chakiar, *The last smārtha vichāram: a victim's reminiscences* (Madras: Padma C Menon, 1998) preface

¹⁶ K Veeraswami, *The perils to justice: a judge thinks aloud* (Calcutta: Eastern Law House, 1996) p.351, Hansen, *Stages of Life* pp.38-39

Memoirs also offer an insight into the histories of groups underrepresented or even ‘silenced’ in the traditional archive.¹⁷ Both Subbamma, a feminist social worker, and Sattanathan, an activist for the rights of Other Backward Castes, explicitly use the genre as a campaigning tool to describe childhoods they perceived to be marginalised.¹⁸ Autobiography has also been used to destabilise current and historical power relationships by encouraging ‘an empowering construction of Dalit selfhood’.¹⁹ The memories recorded become both a private and a collective source, as the writers portray themselves as relational within the multiple subjectivities of gender, nation, race and class and the ‘evolving dynamic between individual and the community’.²⁰ By way of example, Bama, a Dalit woman, recounted the ‘pain and trauma of being treated as an untouchable’, which was both intensely personal but also a ‘common experience that binds individual Dalits together’; making the autobiography a ‘collective biography’.²¹ 22 (40%) of the 55 autobiographies used were written by Brahmins, only eight (14%) by Dalits and tribal peoples and nine (16%) were authored by women. This brings an inevitable element of bias, but many of the Brahmin writers were explicitly aware of their privileged position in society and their writing still provides a valuable insight into culture and education as a whole. Autobiography therefore provides a unique opportunity to access ‘snapshots’ of voices ‘muted’ in the traditional archive, but only as ‘critical intervention’ recognising the way the narrative performs both voice and silence.²² Using personal experiences, albeit deeply mediated through time and later experiences, provides a deeper understanding of the relationship

¹⁷ Arnold & Blackburn, *Telling Lives*, p.15, Radha Gayathri ‘Silent Voices: Women’s Perceptions about Self and Education in Late C19 India’ in Rao, *New Perspectives*, Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, Barnita Bagchi, ‘Two Lives: voices, resources, and networks in the history of female education in Bengal and South Asia’ *Women’s History Review* (19 January 2010)

¹⁸ AN Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking: A Sudra’s Story* (Oxford: Permanent Black, 2007) p.4, Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* p.2

¹⁹ Dasan (et al) *Oxford Indian Anthology*, DR Nagaraj, *The Flaming Feet and other essays: the Dalit movement in India*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011) p.211, Ravikumar, ‘Introduction’ in KA Gunasekaran, *The Scar* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009)

²⁰ Hansen, *Stages of Life*, Udaya Kumar ‘Autobiography as a way of writing history’, Partha Chatterjee and Raziuddin Aquil (ed.) *History in the Vernacular* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2008), Balagopalan, ‘Introduction: Children’s Lives’ p.295

²¹ Hansen, *Stages of Life* p.308 refers to Bama’s *Karukku*

²² Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive* pp. 26,144, Hansen, *Stages of Life* pp.303-309, Joan W Scott, ‘The Evidence of Experience’ *Critical Inquiry* 17:4 (Summer, 1991) p.780. Susanna & Lloyd Rudolph, *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh’s Diary, A Colonial Subject’s Narrative of Imperial India* (New Delhi: OUP, 2000)

between the ways in which childhood was constructed through adult memory, the experiences of children at school and at home, and the ways in which children understood their identities as children and as part of a wider community.

Days of Innocence: constructions of childhood

President Kalam's recollection of childhood as 'days of innocence' reveals his adult perspective, for innocence is defined by those who have themselves attained knowledge and experience.²³ It reflects too his later engagement with popular discourses of childhood through his involvement in educational work.²⁴ Childhood was constructed in the memory of adults as a time of intellectual curiosity, characterised by learning through the tangible and the visible.²⁵ For many others, childhood was regarded as a time of emotional security, being not just 'narrow, insulated' but 'real and meaningful', although Menon admitted that 'in the evening of one's life, one is apt to exaggerate the glory of the morning'.²⁶ By contrast, Panikkar saw childhood as the most 'distressing stage of life' defined by a lack of rationality and inability to self-regulate emotion appropriate to the adult world, particularly 'jealously, rivalry and greed'.²⁷ Similarly, childhood was remembered as a time of cruelty, selfishness and untruth – cheating, for example, was described as a 'childhood luxury' – from which children have to be regulated and moulded into adult norms of civilised behaviour.²⁸

Childhood is often constructed in the memoirs as a time particularly characterised by emotional immaturity and powerlessness. The novelist R.K. Narayan remembers childhood as a time of 'fears and secrecies and furtive acts' which are 'adopted instinctively for survival in a world dominated by adults'.²⁹ Children were powerless

²³ Louise Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* p.6

²⁴ APJ Abdul Kalam *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium* (New York: Viking, 1998)

²⁵ Ramamurthi, *Looking across 50 years* p.2, Nataraja Guru, *Autobiography of an Absolutist* (Fernhill: Gurukala, 1989) p.43

²⁶ PS Sundaram, *Simple Simon: An Autobiography* (Madras: Nirmala Sundaram, 1997) p.14, Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* p.6, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.115, Menon, *Many Worlds* p.26

²⁷ KM Panikkar, *An Autobiography* (Delhi: OUP, 1954) p.7

²⁸ RK Laxman, 'Through the Coloured Glass' in Ramnarayan, Gowri *Past Forward: Six Artists in Search of their Childhood* (New Delhi: OUP, 1997) p.39, Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me* pp. 8, 13. See Sen 'The Savage Family' and Nandy, 'Reconstructing Childhood'

²⁹ Narayan, RK *My Days: A Memoir* (Oxford: Picador, 1974) p.20

in the face of adult discipline, routine and authority. School routine, for example, had ‘to be borne because of my years’.³⁰ Ramarau agreed, detailing his experiences of the ‘tyranny of home’ in which ‘everything was ordered and regimented’, reflecting both his powerlessness as a child but also his position as heir-apparent to the Maharajah of Pithapuram.³¹ Irrational fear was a particularly important remembered childhood emotion.³² There were numerous instances of fear of animals, such as leeches, horned buffaloes, and lizards.³³ This failure to distinguish between imagination and reality meant that people, such as Hanuman performers, could be used as disciplinary strategies ‘to frighten children into good ways’.³⁴ Adults with the ability to inflict violence or harm - the policeman, the agents who supplied indentured labour, fortune-tellers, and local alcoholics - were feared, and remembered vividly.³⁵ Fear of the supernatural was often mentioned and Menon, later India’s first Foreign Secretary, detailed his ‘sheer terror’ at the local ghost stories.³⁶ Yet, Laxman argued that frightening children was essential to their normal psychological development and that ‘it is a wonderful experience to be frightened out of one's wits’, even if only to attain adulthood by learning to control such anxieties.³⁷

Familial events such as the death of a parent were recorded in autobiographies but discussed as loss rather than sorrow, with little description of the impact on the self, reflecting a narrative style which veiled the private.³⁸ While there is very little direct

³⁰ Narayan, *My Days* p.51

³¹ Ramarau, *Of men, Matter and me* pp.8, 28, 33

³² Malavika Karlekar and Rundrangshu Mukherjee (ed.) *Remembered Childhood: Essays in Honour of Andre Beteille* (Oxford: OUP, 2010) p.xi, Laxman ‘Through the Coloured Glass’ p.38

³³ Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* p.2, Gopal Ram, *Rhythm in the Heavens: An Autobiography*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957) pp.4-6

³⁴ Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* p.2

³⁵ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* pp.24-26, Narayan, *My Days* p.21

³⁶ Menon, *Many Worlds* pp.8-9, Rau, *Gifts of Passage* pp.10-12, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* pp.39, 70 Sundaram *Simple Simon* p.34, KA Gunasekaran, ‘Scar’ (trans Tara Murali) in Ravikumar, *Oxford Indian Anthology* p.204

³⁷ Laxman ‘Through the Coloured Glass’ p.37

³⁸ M Arjunamani, & M Dhanasekar, *A Tale of a Tamil Widow*, (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University, 2001), Mahadevan, *A philosopher looks back* p.4, Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.28, Sundaram *Simple Simon* p.7, Lakshmi Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane: Autobiography of a Woman*, (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1993) p.2, Das, *My Story* p.15, M. Subbulakshmi in Ramnarayan, *Past Forward* p.9, NG Ranga *Fight for Freedom: Autobiography* (Delhi: S. Chand, 1968) p.8, BKS Iyengar, *Light on Life: the journey to wholeness, inner peace and ultimate freedom*, (London: Rodale International, 2005) p.xvii, Reddi, *Autobiography*, Veeraswami, *Perils to justice* p.5, Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram* p.32

emotional reflection, the sensation of loss for a passing time or person is often linked to an aesthetic nostalgia, the smell or taste of food, the smell of the earth after the monsoon rains and mothers smelling of jasmine, henna flowers and sandalwood paste.³⁹ Rather than directly associating childhood with innocence, the autobiographers associate it with emotion, expressed through the senses, particularly of smell and taste, which although heavily imbued with nostalgia, they can better rationalise as adults. In the choice of memories to record, and ways in which they are recorded, emotional immaturity - and associated constructions of primitive savagery – is emphasised as a particular characteristic of childhood, in ways which juxtapose the child with rational adulthood.⁴⁰

Days of Mischief

To characterise childhood as ‘days of mischief’ demonstrates the centrality of play to normative constructions of modern childhood. It is difficult to assess the extent to which play is remembered as fitting into this expected construction and the narrative division of these days/those days, and therefore given undue prominence in the autobiographical writing.⁴¹ Play was viewed as a collective, rather than individual, experience, in which children were ‘gangs’ ‘a forgotten herd’ or ‘a happy bunch’.⁴² This could involve siblings, cousins or friends in the wider community.⁴³ Mohanty recounts the collective indignation, across caste boundaries, after a friend was punished:

Their children were our friends. We studied in the same school and played together. We shared our emotions. If the schoolmaster beat someone from amongst us, all the friends felt sorry for him.⁴⁴

However, outdoor activities were often highly gendered, and women recount playing at home, often engaging in gendered role play which particularly reflected life in a

³⁹ Mahadevan, *A philosopher looks back* p.3, Kalam, *My Journey* p.47, Menon, *Many Worlds* p.30, Das, *My Story* p.7, Ram *Rhythm in the Heavens* p.2, Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.28,

⁴⁰ Nandy, ‘Reconstructing Childhood’ p.57

⁴¹ Smrutika : *the story of my mother as told by herself* (Pune: Krishnabai Nimbkar, 1988) BL MssEur F 341/125

p.18, Ram *Rhythm in the Heavens* p.9

⁴² Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *Love and Blessings* (Varkala: Narayana Gurukula, 2000) p.2, Kalam, *My Journey* p.52, Viramma, Josiane Racine, Jean-Lus Racine *Viramma: life of an untouchable* (London: Verso, 1997), Narayan, *My Days* p.39

⁴³ Kalam, *My Journey* p.52, Viramma, *Viramma*, Ram *Rhythm in the Heavens* pp.8-9

⁴⁴ Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.5

rural community, acting out marriage festivals and domestic and agricultural chores.⁴⁵ Middle-class children appear to have been particularly encouraged to stay with their class companions.⁴⁶ Caste was also significant. Viramma, as a Dalit girl, worked in the local Reddi house, and afterwards played with the higher caste girls who lived there: 'I played at being a dog for them and run around on all fours while they chased me, laughing, with sticks in their hands. They often asked me to tell them stories: I knew a lot more than they did'.⁴⁷ The girls used role play to reinforce village power relations, using the Dalit child as not fully human, but also provided Viramma with a sense of self as being able to entertain them. She later assessed that rich children had a much more restrictive experience of childhood.⁴⁸

Memories of play provide an insight into the ways children experienced public spaces, particularly outdoors. Animals were often involved, ranging from grasshoppers, through chameleons and birds to more domesticated animals, such as peacocks, cats and dogs, to the exotic, such as R.K. Narayan's monkey or Menon's elephant.⁴⁹ Most activities were collective, such as climbing trees, picking wild berries, flying kites and team sports such as cricket or football.⁵⁰ Nijalingappa remembered the traditional Indian game *Chinni Dandu*, often played with broken earthen pots, while Vaidyanathan recalled *Gotti*.⁵¹ Sreenivasan's recollections included complicated competitive games with mango seeds and group swimming in the big irrigation wells, kept afloat by large pieces of floating cactus roots.⁵² On the other hand, reading books featured extensively in the leisure activities, sometimes as individuals, but often within the family.⁵³ The material culture of childhood was linked closely to the natural materials of the village and toys, such as Das' doll's house, Laxman's toy cars or

⁴⁵ Viramma, *Viramma* pp.4,5,14, Smrutika: *the story of my mother* p.18

⁴⁶ Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane* pp.36-37, Sundaram *Simple Simon*: pp.17, 39-40

⁴⁷ Viramma, *Viramma* p.8

⁴⁸ Viramma, *Viramma* p.14

⁴⁹ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.42, Laxman 'Through the Coloured Glass' pp.37-39, Kalam, *My Journey* p.52, Menon, *Many Worlds* p.9, Raman, *Daughter of the mountains* pp.43-44, Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me*, Narayan, *My Days* pp.21-24

⁵⁰ Narayan, *My Days* p.45, Laxman 'Through the Coloured Glass' p.38, Sastry, *Reminiscences*, Viramma, *Viramma* pp.4,5,14

⁵¹ S Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics: An Autobiography* (Delhi: Vision, 2000) p.18

⁵² Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree*

⁵³ Narayan, *My Days* pp.58-60, Laxman 'Through the Coloured Glass' p.38, Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* pp.2-3, Panikkar, *An Autobiography*

Sreenivasan's wooden pushcart, were particularly prized and often an indication of wealth.⁵⁴

Festivals, in particular Deepavali and Pongal, receive extensive attention. The writers often provide a 'snapshot' of a distinctive event, which fits well into the binary of these days/those days, and the wider interest in the recording of folk traditions. The festivals were experienced collectively, engaging children as a group and providing a sense of belonging to the community, with varying attention to the specific religious rituals.⁵⁵ In addition, they highlighted differences between adults. For example, entertainment was provided by outsider communities, such as dancing by cowherds or fishermen, Muslim wrestling, or epics provided by storytelling castes.⁵⁶ While the celebrations had material aspects - new clothes were important - the recurring and most recounted memories concern sweets.⁵⁷ Again, nostalgia seems encapsulated in a childhood memory of food and taste.⁵⁸ Children's memories of leisure demonstrate the different forms of inclusion and exclusion operating within public spaces, but the collective experience of play appears to be a particular feature of childhood. It is significant that play is central to children's lives in memoirs of all social groups, even those of the lower castes. This contests the idea that South Asian childhoods were non-normative, characterised by work and therefore 'lack', and that play only happened 'at the margins'.⁵⁹ Conversely, it is difficult to assess the extent to which adults chose to record these childhood experiences because of their awareness as adults of universalising discourses of play and childhood activity.

Days of Learning

Just as the introduction of compulsory education in Madras City institutionalised

⁵⁴ Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* p.3, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.16, Laxman *Tunnel of Time* p.3, Das, *My Story* p.6

⁵⁵ PC Alexander, *Through the corridors of power: an insider's story* (Delhi: HarperCollins India, 2004) pp.51-54, Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me* pp.15-21, Rau, *Gifts of Passage* pp.3-4

⁵⁶ Menon, *Many Worlds* p.26, Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram* p.77

⁵⁷ Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics* pp.18-20, Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.26, Raghumariah, *Hurricane* p.8, Subramaniam, *Hand of Destiny* p.36, Sundaram *Simple Simon*: pp.13,16, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.25, Narayan, *My Days* p.16, Alexander, *Through the corridors of power* p.55, Gunasekaran, *Scar* pp.4, 20

⁵⁸ Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* pp.5, 26

⁵⁹ Lal *Coming of Age in Nineteenth Century India*:

children primarily within the classroom (as discussed in chapters One and Two), so most memories of childhood relate principally to formal education. Only 33% of boys were in school in 1931; this highlights the unrepresentativeness of the autobiographies used, in which 87% authors continued to tertiary education.⁶⁰ Many were the first generation of their family, and even of their village, to be educated to secondary level. The narrative binary between those days/these days is mirrored in the clear binary between the *pial* school with its large classes, informal control and rote learning representative of the past, and the routine, equipment and discipline associated with more modern secondary education.⁶¹ The material life of the school re-emphasised this, contrasting the desks, slates, ‘extensive playgrounds and shady avenues of trees’ of the secondary schools with the palm leaf documents and literacy learned through drawing letters in the sand in the *pial* school.⁶² Memories of secondary schooling dominate the accounts, described as ‘easily the formative years of my life’, but only elementary schooling is considered here given the focus in the thesis on childhood.⁶³

In general, the autobiographers record one or two significant lessons. These were used to demonstrate the authenticity of their memories and to retain the reader’s interest, but were also sufficiently interesting to be remembered into old age. The lessons fall into three categories. A number of authors portray clear visual memories of pictures on the wall, drawings of the Himalayas and Western Ghats, and teaching via flowers, leaves and natural objects from the local area, perhaps reflecting the personal learning style of these pupils.⁶⁴ Others record poetry, which they claim was learned by rote, perhaps showing the long term benefits of rote learning as a pedagogical style. One song served to memorise the different ports in India, another praised the goddess of

⁶⁰ NLS: IP/25/PJ.3 DPI Report, Madras 1927-28 to 1931-32 p.83

⁶¹ Sargunam, *Autobiography* p.11, C. Subramaniam, *Hand of Destiny: Memoirs* (Bombay: Bharatiya Bhavan, 1993) pp.37-39, Sayeed, *My Life* p.12, Kalam, *My Journey* p.35, Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* p.10, Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* pp.30-44, Narasimhaiah, C ‘*N for Nobody*’ *Autobiography of an English Teacher* (Delhi: BR Publishing Corporation, 1991) pp.4-10, Narayan, *My Days* p.44, Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* pp.2-9, Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics* pp.16-21, Panikkar, *An Autobiography* pp.3-4, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* pp.29-49, Sundaram *Simple Simon*, Veeraswami, *Perils to justice* p.7

⁶² Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.36, Alexander, *Through the corridors of power* p.61, Reddi, *Autobiography* p.3, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.39

⁶³ Samban, *Autobiography of Prof AK Samban* (Madras: Sri Maruthi Graphics, 1994) p.19

⁶⁴ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.50, Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.31

learning, Saraswati.⁶⁵ The third group remembered stories, often moral tales, which fired their juvenile imagination. Sundaram recalled moral lessons based on heroes, such as Arjuna, Robin Hood and Napoleon, while Mohanty's recollections include writing the 'life sketch of an old banyan tree or that of an old beggar'.⁶⁶ It appears that engaging the imagination, either visually or through stories and poems, helped a child retain their learning beyond the classroom and even into old age.

The cartoonist R.K. Laxman described particularly detailed memories, amongst them his emotional response as a child to an early Kannada poem. His adult translation and re-evaluation of the pedagogical worth of the story is provided alongside:

'The parrot is not in its cage! Sister, on your advice I raised this little parrot. It played on my palm. It grew wings and learnt to say 'Rama! Rama!' Alas! A cat took it away.' I don't know which educationalist though this an edifying lesson for youngsters. My eyes smarted and became misty whenever I had to recite this sad poem.'⁶⁷

Laxman also recounted in vivid detail the Telegu/Kannada moral tale of the honesty and self-sacrifice of the cow Punyakoti.⁶⁸ He followed that with 'the other equally unforgettable poem known to all educated Kannadigas of that era' about a woodcutter's honesty in retrieving his old iron axe from the bottom of a pool rather than accepting the more valuable axes proffered.⁶⁹ Whether these stories were memories of schooling, or whether they reflected popular South Indian folklore which reinforced the childhood memories, is difficult to assess. The moral value of the tale for children was significant and a text of the Punyakoti story was given to another author, Narasimhaiah, as a reward for doing well at school.⁷⁰ The detail given is only paralleled by Kalam, who gained his 'vision for life' at age ten years when the teacher took his class to the shore to teach anatomy and flight through watching the seabirds.⁷¹ Pedagogically the use of 'practical examples' was effective, but the impact on Kalam's young life was immense: 'from that day evening, I thought that my future study has to

⁶⁵ Sargunam, *Autobiography* p.7, Appaswamy, *Bishop's Story*, Arjunamani & Dhanasekar, *Tale* p.8

⁶⁶ Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.33, Sundaram *Simple Simon*: pp.41-43

⁶⁷ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* pp.10, 12

⁶⁸ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* p.13

⁶⁹ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* p.14

⁷⁰ Narayan, *My Days*, Narasimhaiah, "N for Nobody" p.5

⁷¹ APJ Abdul Kalam: <http://www.abdulkalam.com/kalam/theme/jsp/guest/myprofile.jsp> [Accessed 6/11/2015]

be with reference to something to do with flight.’ Ultimately Kalam became India’s foremost aeronautical engineer, and the extent to which the memory became self-fulfilling in the light of his later career path is very difficult to judge. While the exceptional or the inspiring is recounted, this should be balanced by the uninspiring boredom of schooling and difficulty in rote-learning of scripts and spelling which was the most abiding memory for many.⁷²

Teachers

As demonstrated by Kalam, the teacher was a clear subject of childhood memory and often symbolic of all schooling. Elementary teachers fall into three categories. There were teachers recently trained in new pedagogical theories, who saw themselves as a modernising force in the rural community, mirroring the discourses of the Education Department seen in earlier chapters. These teachers saw education as a mission and were remembered as ‘young,’ disciplinarian, enthusiastic.⁷³ Influenced directly by the prose of the Public Instruction Reports, Sreenivasan’s teacher was enthusiastic about ‘civilisation through games and sports’, including village badminton games and a heroic attempt to teach the boys football.⁷⁴ The teachers encouraged participation in extra-curricular activities, particularly sport and boy scouts.⁷⁵ The modernising teacher was especially associated with drill, reinforcing both colonial masculinity and adult authority, and mentioned only in terms of hatred or ridicule.⁷⁶ Within the rural community drill class or ‘silly acrobatics’ became the focus of opposition as ‘a meaningless waste of time’ for the children. It became a site of battle between older and newer forms of pedagogy, its main value being to emphasise the distinction within the children between ‘sportsmen and scholars’.⁷⁷ This provides evidence of the ambivalence of local communities to the changing curriculum and pedagogy of the Education Department, in ways which a reading of official sources cannot provide.

⁷² Ranga, *Fight for Freedom* pp.10-11, Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram* p.44, Vaidyanathan, *Thoughts and Reminiscences*, (Chetput: Ananda Books, 1986) p.9

⁷³ Subramaniam, *Hand of Destiny* p.38, Santhanam, *Looking Back* p.13

⁷⁴ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* pp.49-51

⁷⁵ Narayan, *My Days* pp.44-45, Subramaniam *Hand of Destiny* p.39, Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* p.24, Alexander, *Through the corridors of power* p.62

⁷⁶ Narayan, *My Days*, Vaidyanathan, *Thoughts and Reminiscences* p.9, Mills & Sen, *Confronting the Body*; Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*

⁷⁷ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.48, Menon, *Many Worlds* p.16

The modern teachers defined themselves in opposition to the traditional teacher, characterised as semi-literate and brutal, a particular target for the pedagogues in Chapter Three. This reflected again the distinction between modern education and the *pial* school, between these days and those days. Sargunam, for example, remembered the village teacher as ‘old’ and ‘tardy in mental stature, but unduly rotund in the middle’ subtly linking both physical and mental agility in a way which reflected his later education.⁷⁸ Many teachers were remembered as ‘intellectually mediocre’, lazy and heavy drinkers, inclined to excessive physical punishment.⁷⁹ Later in life, Laxman remained ‘convinced that school-learning is unnatural and bad for human beings’ because it restricted their creativity, describing his early teacher as violent and smelly.⁸⁰ His elder brother Narayan remembered school as a place of fear, and described his teacher as intellectually lazy, violent and old.⁸¹ Their father was an intelligent, modernising secondary teacher, and both brothers appear to define the elementary school teacher in contrast to him, even though they attended different schools.⁸² A third group of teachers were recollected as exceptionally inspirational, to whom the author owed a ‘special debt’.⁸³ These were men who ‘had an absolute passion to teach and mould a young mind’, and were remembered as a ‘lasting influence’.⁸⁴ The teachers were admired for their ability to teach and for their personality. They were characterised, somewhat formulaically, as ‘a gentleman and a scholar’ and were not associated with any particular education system.⁸⁵ In general, these men were grandfatherly, ‘kind and considerate’ teachers, and respected within the village community as an integral part of it, not an outside authority.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ Sargunam, *Autobiography* p.5, Alexander, *Through the corridors of power* p.61

⁷⁹ Narasimhaiah, ‘*N for Nobody*’, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.50, Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics* p.21 Das, *My Story* p.21, Veeraswami, *Perils to justice* p.7, Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram* p.90, Reddi, *Autobiography* p.3

⁸⁰ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* pp.10-12

⁸¹ Narayan, *My Days* p.8

⁸² Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* p.4, Narayan, *My Days*

⁸³ Menon, *Many Worlds* p.19

⁸⁴ Narayan, *My Days*, Avinashilingam, *Sacred Touch* p.46

⁸⁵ Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* pp.30-31, Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics* p.6, Madevan, *Philosopher Looks Back* p.11

⁸⁶ Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* p.10, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.30, Nataraja Guru *Autobiography*

School was remembered as a place where children could express their own agency, as a child within a group of children. This was not an emergent ‘subaltern consciousness’ but a means of resistance to teachers and an oppressive system of learning and subordination.⁸⁷ This resistance was grounded in the everyday decisions of children, and their attempts to undermine or reshape adult authority. Mimicry and laughter were key tools for this, rather than outright hostility, enacted through caricatures on the blackboard, graffiti and practical jokes.⁸⁸ There were memories of whispered conversations, of throwing paper darts and pieces of chalk and fighting.⁸⁹ Opposition could also be a more conscious decision to resist. Despite later training as a teacher himself, Narayan viewed the school routine as ‘a never-ending nuisance’ which reinforced his sense of powerlessness in the face of adult authority.⁹⁰ He actively chose to miss drill class every Friday and received six cane cuts every Monday in punishment, but also attended scripture classes because the bible stories caught his imagination, despite explicitly rejecting the anti-Hindu rhetoric of the teachers.⁹¹ Truancy was common, and in a more overt stand against oppression, Sattanathan escaped first to home, and then to the nearest city by train at the age of eight years after he was ‘flogged mercilessly’ for copying homework.⁹² As an adult, Yati reflected that it was ‘normal and healthy not to conform’ but suggested instead that education should ‘give children as many opportunities as possible to be on their own, self-guided, and happy in their own way.’⁹³ Of minor significance in themselves, these events gave children a perception of themselves as having contemporary agency in a world of school where the focus remained on what they should ‘become’ through education.

Education outside the classroom:

Not all education happened within the context of the classroom. Some of the

⁸⁷ Stephen Humphries *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), especially Chapter 3

⁸⁸ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* p.11, Das, *My Story* pp.18-19, 39, Siddalingaiah, *Ooru Keri: An Autobiography*, (Bangalore: Sahitya Akademi, 2003), Rau, *Gifts of Passage* p.10, Nagaraj *Flaming Feet*, Homi Bhabha, ‘Of mimicry and man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse’ *October* 28 (1984) pp.125-33

⁸⁹ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* p.11, Narayan, *My Days*, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.39, Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me* p.10

⁹⁰ Narayan, *My Days* p.51

⁹¹ Narayan, *My Days* pp.41-42

⁹² Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* pp.40-46, Reddi, *Autobiography* p.1 Gunasekaran, *Scar* pp.17-18

⁹³ Yati, *Love and Blessings* p.22

autobiographers specialised in aesthetic subjects and were raised in a *guru-sishya* tradition receiving a limited education in school.⁹⁴ The singer M.S. Subbalakshmi gained literacy at elementary school, but spent most of her educational career under the tutelage of her mother, learning the skills and structures surrounding Carnatic music.⁹⁵ Most children learned religious traditions within the home, supporting the argument of politicians in Chapter One surrounding the Conscience Clause of the 1920 Education Act, that home was the primary site of religious learning and a place over which the state had limited authority.⁹⁶ The primary pedagogical method was storytelling - religious, moral and secular – within the extended family. Many authors remember ‘the old Tamil songs and stories’ and their impact on the imagination and ‘the aesthetic life’ of the child, as well as their emotional security.⁹⁷ Sreenivasan, consistently a more self-reflective writer than many, noted the impact on young children of observing a routine of communal prayer:

Every Hindu child absorbs the myths, the traditions, the superstition and the morality along with his or her mother’s milk. Participation in ritual and ceremonials is so much a part of one’s life from very early childhood that they enter the subconscious.⁹⁸

Yati recounted his grandmother reading the *Bhagavad Gita* in the evening:

Children gave up their pranks and grownups stopped gossiping. All sat and listened to the sonorous recitation of grandmother who was gifted with a musical voice. I did not understand what she was reading, but I liked the calm atmosphere and the picturesque setting of the evening prayer.⁹⁹

In both these accounts, the adult voice of the author clearly differentiated between the diversity of individual belief as adult, and the religiosity of storytelling and ritual as a

⁹⁴ Vijay Tendulkar ‘View from the balcony’ Ramnarayan, *Past Forward*, Semmangudi ‘Semmangudi’ *Frontline*, 15:22 Oct 1998) AJ Appasamy, *A Bishop’s Story* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1969) p.5, CS Lakshmi, *The Singer and the Song – conversations with Women Musicians* (New Delhi: Kali, 2000), CS Lakshmi, *Mirrors and Gestures – conversations with Women Musicians* (New Delhi: Kali, 2000)

⁹⁵ Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist*

⁹⁶ Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane* p.34, Sastry, *Reminiscences of a jurist* pp.2-3, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.58 Panikkar, *An Autobiography* p.4, Santhanam, *Looking Back* p.13, Avinashilingam, *Sacred Touch* p.43, Laxman ‘Through the Coloured Glass’ p.40, Kalam *Wings of Fire* p.8, Narasimhaiah, ‘*N for Nobody*’ p.4

⁹⁷ Narasimhaiah, ‘*N for Nobody*’ p.4, Sundaram *Simple Simon*: pp.32-36, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.17, Rau, *Gifts of Passage* p.1, Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics* p.20

⁹⁸ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.56

⁹⁹ Yati, *Love and Blessings* p.3

collective experience which stimulated the imagination.¹⁰⁰ In particular, the experience strengthened a sense of belonging and emotional security in childhood, which reinforced both the family community and the hierarchy of elders within the family.¹⁰¹ The memories were often gendered; they were frequently linked to older, illiterate females, particularly to grandmothers.¹⁰² This association with those days of grandparents, religiosity, emotion and a pedagogy based on repetition, is positioned in stark contrast to these days of a modern education system and the rational, progressive, but less secure, world of the modern child.¹⁰³

Storytelling as pedagogy contributed to a knowledge system assumed to be losing validity in the modern world of education. Oral knowledge was often linked to people who transgressed social norms or were perceived as socially inferior, such as older widows, servants or lower castes.¹⁰⁴ Only occasionally were the differences between these knowledge systems analysed as oppositional. The journalist and writer Sanatham remembered his pious grandfather's ability to expound from the Sanskrit scriptures, but admitted 'he did not teach me to memorise even a few of these beautiful verses' because it was modern education which was perceived to be important for worldly success. His argument that 'looking back... I feel that I was not properly educated in my childhood' reflects the reality of his childhood home life, and his nostalgic longing for a cultural link to the past.¹⁰⁵ Sattanathan, on the other hand, argued that knowledge of the epics made him emotionally and intellectually 'richer and better' than his contemporaries.¹⁰⁶ His father 'although an unlettered person' had an 'astounding' knowledge of the Hindu epics, but after attending school, it was Sattanathan who would read a chapter of the epics every day for the family.¹⁰⁷ This demonstrated the extent to which participation in even a very limited modern education

¹⁰⁰ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* pp.54-55, Reddi, *Interview*, Menon, *Many Worlds* pp.4, 8

¹⁰¹ Rau, *Gifts of Passage* p.13, Ranga, *Fight for Freedom* p.4, Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram* pp.59, 61

¹⁰² For example Panikkar, *An Autobiography* p.3, Menon, *Many Worlds* p.4

¹⁰³ Sundaram *Simple Simon* p.35, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree*, Subramaniam, *Hand of Destiny* p.35

¹⁰⁴ Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane* p.33, Ram *Rhythm in the Heavens* p.3, Ranga, *Fight for Freedom* pp.11-12,

¹⁰⁵ Santhanam, *Looking Back* p.13

¹⁰⁶ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.81

¹⁰⁷ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* pp.79-80

provided status and skills which threatened the traditional generational hierarchies within the family.

Children not only learned at home, but also contributed their labour. The introduction of compulsory education, detailed in chapters One and Two, contributed to an emerging discourse which equated childhood, learning and school. Despite the predominance of their numbers, 'working children' appear as a transgressive category falling short of what was increasingly perceived, in discursive terms, to be the universal standard of childhood.¹⁰⁸ The autobiographies are not representative, despite a number of authors engaging in agricultural work on a seasonal basis, for example in the betel leaf plantation, paddy harvest or the brick kilns.¹⁰⁹ Sattanathan reflected both on his 'special privilege as an educated person' which meant he could help calculate the wages and produce, and his happiness as a younger boy when delegated to keep birds from the harvest – 'a delightful change for the little boy from school'.¹¹⁰ Kalam, on the other hand, recounted his exhaustion but also pride in being 'a working boy at eight' as he contributed to the family income by fitting his newspaper delivery job around his school schedule.¹¹¹ Often these activities were remembered not as a failure of the family to provide, but as enhancing the child's feelings of self-worth as a contributor.¹¹²

Children from disadvantaged groups were more likely to be engaged in work. Many high caste girls remained engaged in a range of domestic duties: looking after the house and the younger children or even producing handicrafts to sell.¹¹³ The first female *Badga* politician, Akkamma Devi recalled learning her lessons outside the school building while caring for her baby brother. She documented her elder brother's access to school and her father's efforts to secure a place for her at the local convent school, which significantly increased her mother's workload.¹¹⁴ Similarly Viramma, a Dalit

¹⁰⁸ Balagopalan, 'Constructing Indigenous Childhoods'

¹⁰⁹ Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* pp.17-18, Sattanathan *Plain Speaking* p.57, Narasimhaiah, 'N for Nobody' p.5, Gunasekaran, *Scar* pp.23, 30, 34, 84

¹¹⁰ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* pp.57-58

¹¹¹ Kalam, *My Journey* pp.23-26

¹¹² Sreenivas, 'Telling different tales' p.31

¹¹³ Smrutika: *the story of my mother* pp.18-20, Kalam, *My Journey* p.52, Gunasekaran 'Scar' p.203

¹¹⁴ Raman, *Daughter of the mountains* pp.3, 9, 13, 18-19

girl, was expected to look after the younger children, later working in the paddy field and harvesting vegetables without any opportunity of attending school.¹¹⁵ All the Dalit autobiographies remembered menial work as a child: for example Gunasekaran sold mangos or neem seeds, or helped his mother collect dung from the bullock-carts of villagers outside the cinema.¹¹⁶ Most childhood memories of work highlight its menial character, and the ways in which contributing as ‘mini adult’ to the family income was important to the child’s self-worth.¹¹⁷ All the autobiographers situate childhood work as a feature of ‘those days’, often to demonstrate the comparatively privileged position of the modern children of ‘these days’, ignoring the continuing presence of child labour in South India.¹¹⁸ All see modern education as the primary solution to inequality, thereby reinforcing the institutionalisation of the ‘normal’ child within the school and reinforcing their contemporary commitment to education and modernity, claiming an authentic opinion on the basis of their own lived experience as children.¹¹⁹ The autobiographies establish the multiplicity of childhood experiences, in opposition to a growing universal norm of modern childhood which was increasingly influencing state-level discourse and interventions regarding the child, but also reveal the commitment of the autobiographers to that universal norm.

Days of Family

The 1920 MCA and Elementary Education Act demonstrated a changing relationship between the state and the family, in which the state claimed the right to intervene and to have a direct relationship with the child. There remained, however, a tacit recognition that the parents or guardians were the ultimate authority in children’s lives so that compulsory education was extended through persuasion and the absolute authority of parents in religious matters was recognised. The Indian home became a part of the modernising project, alternatively conceptualised as a site of ignorance, corruption and threat, or as the private area for the preservation of Indian cultural and

¹¹⁵ Viramma, *Viramma* p.9-12

¹¹⁶ See Gunasekaran, ‘Scar’

¹¹⁷ Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996) p.41

¹¹⁸ Burra, *Born Unfree*

¹¹⁹ Morrison, *Childhood and colonial modernity* pp.102, 122

religious purity.¹²⁰ In the autobiographies the home and the family were synonymous, the home being primarily the space for relationships within an extended family. The father was portrayed as an authority figure, often a source of spiritual comfort and guidance, usually revered and respected, and the site of non-demonstrative affection.¹²¹ This may reflect reality, or may represent what Judith Walsh highlights as a textual formula in which filial obedience and traditional deference to paternal authority are important.¹²² Equally, the criticism expressed by Ramarau and Sattanathan of their harshly disciplinarian fathers and lack of personal freedom was unusual but demonstrated the authority of the father within the family.¹²³ The mother had a different role, portrayed as a source of emotional support, hard work and self-sacrificing piety, often badly educated.¹²⁴

The danger of extrapolating too far from personal experience is demonstrated in the parallel autobiographies of the brothers, and later colleagues, R.K. Narayan and R.K. Laxman. As oldest child Narayan lived in Madras with his grandmother, who formed the most significant adult in his early years. He remembered being scared of his father, having little relationship with his mother and even struggling to communicate with his siblings on his holiday visits because he spoke Tamil, while the family spoke Kannada.¹²⁵ Laxman remained with his parents in Mysore, being much younger in the family. He was also frightened of his father, and both brothers described him as 'formidable' or 'grim' like a Roman senator. Laxman was particularly close to his mother, whom he adored and who was a fantastic story teller.¹²⁶ As the brothers reflected on the relationship with the other, Narayan recounted playing with his siblings and being adored by them, while Laxman remembered that his strict big brother both disciplined him, and then proceeded to write a story about the incident. In other autobiographies siblings are often mentioned, being particularly significant as

¹²⁰ Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*

¹²¹ Kalam, *My Journey* p.4, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.28, Amjad Ali Khan 'Speaking Strings' in Ramnarayan *Past Forward*: pp.48-50, Avinashilingam, *Sacred Touch* p.44, Das, *My Story* p.2 Laxman, *Tunnel of Time*, Narayan, *My Days*, Yati, *Love and Blessings* p.7

¹²² Walsh, *Growing up in British India*: pp.25-27, Ram *Rhythm in the Heavens* p.x

¹²³ Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me* p.8, Ram *Rhythm in the Heavens* p.21

¹²⁴ Kalam, *My Journey* p.46-52, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.15, Raman, *Daughter of the mountains*, Avinashilingam, *Sacred Touch* p.44

¹²⁵ Narayan, *My Days* pp.30, 37

¹²⁶ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* pp.4-6, 37

playmates.¹²⁷ Older, usually married, sisters were frequently cited, often assuming a role as ‘assistant mother’ or ‘effective guardian’ and providing accommodation, food and support to their younger brothers, particularly when they left home for secondary education.¹²⁸ Former President Kalam described in detail his much loved older sister Zohra who married his friend and mentor, Ahmed Jallaluddin, and who provided emotional and financial support through school and college.¹²⁹

At the level of state discourse authority was situated in ‘parents’, perhaps assuming a nuclear family structure becoming increasingly popular among the Bengali bhadralok.¹³⁰ By contrast, in the memories of youth, it was often the role and authority of the extended family which was of significance.¹³¹ Grandparents were remembered as the recognised site of secular and religious wisdom on account of their age, experience and piety.¹³² A number of grandmothers had the final decision over school attendance and were responsible for introducing the child to the alphabet and early numeracy, as well as being particularly associated with storytelling and religious knowledge.¹³³ Grandmothers and widowed great-aunts were important in socialising younger women into appropriately gendered forms of behaviour including pre-marital chastity or sex education.¹³⁴ In particular, the grandmother was often remembered as a particular source of emotional comfort and love during childhood, even in defiance of male authority.¹³⁵

The uncle was a significant source of authority over the children within the extended family. Both Laxman and Siddalingaiah were enrolled in school by their uncles, apparently without the prior consent of their parents.¹³⁶ The attention took a variety of forms - financial, emotional and practical - and often included active participation

¹²⁷ Narayan, *My Days*, Laxman, *Tunnel of Time*

¹²⁸ Menon, *Many Worlds* p.15, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* pp.34-38, Iyengar, *Light on Life* p.xix, Alexander, *Through the corridors of power* p.60

¹²⁹ Kalam, *My Journey* pp.51-55, Kalam, *Wings of Fire* p.8

¹³⁰ Newbiggin, *The Hindu Family*

¹³¹ Rau, *Gifts of Passage* p.3, Gupta *Early Childhood Education* p.113

¹³² Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.42, Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram*

¹³³ Narayan, *My Days* p.12, Panikkar, *An Autobiography* p.3

¹³⁴ Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* p.22, Viramma *Viramma*

¹³⁵ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.15, Das, *My Story*, Narayan, *My Days*, Avinashilingam, *Sacred Touch* p.43, Panikkar, *An Autobiography* p.3, Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me* p.10

¹³⁶ Laxman, *Tunnel of Time* p.7, Siddalingaiah, *Ooru Keri* p.11

in the decision-making about a child's future.¹³⁷ It was Raghuramaiah's 'uncles who were proud that we were the first educated girls in the family' and her mother's younger sister who was her primary caregiver in her early years.¹³⁸ Often when children moved for education from village to town, it was an uncle who provided security and practical support.¹³⁹ Sreenivasan, a member of a high caste Nair family, remembered family decisions made by his fifteen uncles under the control of his grandfather, although he suspected that the conclusions reached in the all-male discussions had often been decided beforehand by his aunts.¹⁴⁰ Gunasekaran, a Dalit folk artist, remembered the disputes between his parents on account of the money sent by his father to support his nephew through medical college, 'whether they had money for their own family expenditure or not.'¹⁴¹ Similarly, many of his childhood memories came from his time in the village, staying with his *periyamma* and *chinnamma*.¹⁴² After independence, Nehru identified himself as *chacha*, self-consciously positioning himself as a form of avuncular authority which worked in parallel to the authority of parents with the children's best interests at heart.¹⁴³ This pseudo-familial authority and right to intervene appears to be reflected in the social reformers and politicians of the 1920s and 1930s.

If the family was the place of emotional security, leaving that environment could be an experience of intense trauma. For boys this usually meant continuing studies in the town, while for girls this more often meant marriage. Only social reformer Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi and the novelist Santha Rama Rau used their autobiographies to demonstrate their principled opposition as females to early marriage.¹⁴⁴ The opposition of male autobiographers to 'the ruinous impact of early marriage' was based

¹³⁷ Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane* p.27, Sayeed, *My Life* p.12, Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics* p.22, Sastry, *Reminiscences of a Jurist* p.3, Sundaram *Simple Simon* p.12, Das, *My Story*, Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram* pp.115-6, Ramarau, *Of men, matter and me* p.74, Walsh, *Growing Up in British India*

¹³⁸ Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane* p.4

¹³⁹ Panikkar, *An Autobiography* p.6, Subramaniam, *Hand of Destiny* p.37, Vaidyanathan, *Thoughts and Reminiscences* pp.10-11

¹⁴⁰ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* pp.12-14, 35-38,

¹⁴¹ Gunasekaran, *Scar* p.64

¹⁴² Gunasekaran, *Scar* pp.20-33, 34-39, 58

¹⁴³ Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away*:

¹⁴⁴ Reddi, *Autobiography* pp.5-7, Rau, *Gifts of Passage*

on personal experience of emotional trauma, particularly linked to early childbirth.¹⁴⁵ These memories were exceptional, and very few men mentioned their emerging sexuality, marriage, wives or children in any detail. This appears to reflect a conscious veiling of private life from the public gaze. The gendered nature of memory is demonstrated in the more extensive details of marriage, sex and children provided by the female autobiographers.¹⁴⁶ Rather than remembering childhood as a time of innocence with a clearly defined end, childhood was described predominantly as a time of physical and emotional security, particularly linked to the extended family. The family was remembered as a nostalgic space of safety and protection left behind in ‘those days’ for an uncertain, modern adult world.

The Politics of Identities in Childhood

The earlier chapters detail the incoherence between the growing rhetoric surrounding the universal aspects of childhood, and the division in practice of children into educational communities based on identity. The autobiographies provide a further insight into these communities and into the way identity was experienced, contested and learned by children, particularly within the public space of the school and village community. Experiencing anxieties about identity and alienation from peers form vivid childhood memories, which differ from childhood bullying and teasing.¹⁴⁷

The overt politics of colonial difference and racial hierarchy were remembered in only a few autobiographies, reflecting the rural setting of most childhoods with little contact with the white community. Das wrote that Indian children were treated with physical cruelty by their white and mixed race peers at school and were regarded as inferior by staff, while Nataraja Guru recalled frequent fights between differing racial groups.¹⁴⁸ Rau recounted vividly her brief experience at school aged five years, which terminated when her older sister walked out, objecting to the British teacher’s assertion that all Indians cheat in exams. Renamed Cynthia to suit her teacher, as an adult she explores

¹⁴⁵ Sargunam, *Autobiography* p.34, Veeraswami, *Perils to justice* p.9

¹⁴⁶ Smrutika: *the story of my mother* p.20, Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* pp.10-14, Raman, *Daughter of the mountains* p.63, Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane*, Das, *My Story*, Viramma, *Viramma* p.32

¹⁴⁷ Menon, *Many Worlds* p.5, Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* pp.7-8

¹⁴⁸ Das, *My Story* p.13, Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* p.4

her reluctance to take on the new identity prescribed for her.¹⁴⁹ A number of the writers studied in mission schools; however the teachers appear to be Indian converts or Syrian Christians – a product of the indigenisation of mission work.¹⁵⁰ The experience varied: some mission teachers were associated with benevolent paternalism, while in other schools non-Christians paid tuition fees and were faced with the constant delegitimisation of Hindu culture.¹⁵¹ Other children, by contrast, ‘simply did not see any difference’, reflecting Sen’s argument that childhood was a time when it was ‘easier’ to ‘walk in the shoes of the recognised Other’.¹⁵² Ultimately, the school appears to have had little lasting impact on religious belief and reveals the extent to which the debates over the Conscience Clauses of the Education Act reflected parental and political anxieties, rather than having an impact on the children themselves.

The growth of Hindu-Muslim antagonism was politically important by the 1930s. Kalam described his personal experience of religious discrimination as a Muslim in both his autobiographies, using this incident to contribute to his campaign as President of India for the peaceful co-existence of religions.¹⁵³ Although his father was Imam of the local mosque, Kalam’s three best friends were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families, an extension of his father’s close friendship and regular contact with the local Hindu and Catholic priests.¹⁵⁴ Kalam recounted that in 5th Standard a new teacher separated him from his friend after noticing the material symbols of their religion – the Muslim cap and the Hindu sacred thread. In the first account, the father of his friend, the Imam, rebuked the teacher ‘that he should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children.’¹⁵⁵ In the second account, all three religious leaders confronted the teacher concerned about intolerance being allowed to ‘infect the minds of the youngest members of society’,

¹⁴⁹ Rau, *Gifts of Passage* pp.6-12

¹⁵⁰ Alexander, *Through the corridors of power*. Also Christopher Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), Norman Etherington (ed.) *Missions and Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 2005)

¹⁵¹ Chandy, KK *Quest of Community and Dynamic non-violence*, (Delhi: CiSRS, 1990) p.10, Arjunamani & Dhanasekar, *Tale* p.7, Narayan, *My Days* p.41

¹⁵² Raman, *Daughter of the mountains* p.35, Sen *Traces of Empire* p.80

¹⁵³ APJ Abdul Kalam: <http://www.abdulkalam.com/kalam/theme/jsp/guest/myprofile.jsp> [Accessed 6/11/2015]

¹⁵⁴ Kalam *My Journey* p.33, Kalam, *Wings of Fire* pp.8-9

¹⁵⁵ Kalam, *Wings of Fire* pp.8-9

causing the teacher to apologise.¹⁵⁶ While the two versions demonstrate subtle differences, they also re-emphasised Kalam's personal belief that children accept difference and that prejudice is a learned behaviour. This was a 'strategic use' of childhood to make a political claim that the shared experience of childhood was sufficient to overcome adult violence - whether physical or intellectual – as well as the adult structures of caste and religious identity both inside and outside school.¹⁵⁷ Alexander, later Governor of Tamil Nadu then Maharashtra, remembered not only the celebrations of his own Syrian Christian community but also participating in other religious festivals. This 'culture of religious tolerance and communal harmony...greatly influenced' his outlook in later life.¹⁵⁸ The suggestion that differing identity groups were natural, but intolerance was learned, mirrored the discourses at state-level. These sought to protect the differing identity groups, as specified by parents, assuming that this was in the best interests of the child, but failed to deal with competition over the finite resources of the state. The descriptions of 'those days' reflects the rupture of partition in 1947, and the extent to which the adulthood of the nation was associated with communal tension, in contrast to a nostalgic memory of its harmonious past that middle-class Indian politicians were eager to perpetuate.¹⁵⁹

Gender was a particularly obvious form of educational difference. Both the secondary literature and the official reports suggest that attendance of girls at school was comparatively low.¹⁶⁰ This is not reflected in the autobiographies, in which only four remembered that there were no girls in their local school.¹⁶¹ The writers frequently mentioned the attendance of girls at elementary level in the village school, all in the context of co-educational schooling, making them invisible from the Public Instruction statistics.¹⁶² Girls such as Muthlakshmi Reddi or Akkamma Devi were exceptional,

¹⁵⁶ Kalam, *My Journey* p.39

¹⁵⁷ Sen, *Traces of Empire*, Karlekar and Mukerherjee, *Remembered Childhood*, Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.5, Morrison, *Childhood and colonial modernity* p.102

¹⁵⁸ Alexander *Through the corridors of power* p.55

¹⁵⁹ Menon, *Many Worlds* p.26, Sugata Bose & Ayesha Jalal *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away*

¹⁶⁰ Gayathri 'Silent Voices' Raman, *Getting girls to school* Seth, *Subject Lessons*

¹⁶¹ Nijalingappa, *My Life and Politics* p.16, Sargunam, *Autobiography* p.6, Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.29, Veeraswami, *Perils to justice* p.4

¹⁶² Panikkar, *An Autobiography* p.3, Santhanam, *Looking Back* p.13, Subramaniam, *Hand of Destiny* p.38, Kalam, *My Journey* p.35, Arjunamani & Dhanasekar, *Tale* p.7, Das, *My Story* p.13, Mohanty, *In Quest of Quality Education* p.32, Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* p.2, Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane* p.25,

both educated to college level and later involved in politics. This reflects their personal commitment and the insistence of their fathers, despite maternal concerns about the effect on their marriage prospects.¹⁶³ Opposition was more likely to come from other students rather than the teacher.¹⁶⁴ Of the female authors, only Viramma did not attend elementary school, but all were formally educated outside the home to a higher level than their mothers. Most ended their education after cohabitation once their husband's education was finished.¹⁶⁵ This reflects the middle-class nature of autobiographical writing.

Caste appears to be the most significant marker of identity in the autobiographies. This may be a result of the predominantly male authorship, the relatively small Muslim population within the Madras Presidency, or the continuing potency of caste politics in the postcolonial period of writing, particularly regarding reservation of educational and employment opportunities.¹⁶⁶ The school emerges as a space in which children came to learn the practical implications of their caste identity. High caste children played with their peers but began to realise that they were an 'educational aristocracy'.¹⁶⁷ The material symbols of the classroom, including stools near the teacher or a 'mat of palmrya leaves' were used to underline this, cutting across the lines of friendship.¹⁶⁸ Nataraja Guru remembered Brahmin boys receiving silver coins as ceremonial religious gifts. This was internalised by fellow children as demonstrating the government's particular interest in Brahmins.¹⁶⁹ As an adult, he likened the caste system to apartheid in South Africa, revealing both his condemnation but also betraying his intended international readership.

For many lower-caste children formal education became the space where the

Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* p.10

¹⁶³ Reddi, *Autobiography* pp.6-7

¹⁶⁴ Chandy, *Quest of Community*, Reddi, *Autobiography* p.5, Raman, *Daughter of the mountains* pp.37-38

¹⁶⁵ Arjunamani & Dhanasekar, *Tale* p.7, Raghuramaiah, *Hurricane* p.25, Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* p.10, Smrutika: *The story of my mother*, Rau, *Gifts of Passage*

¹⁶⁶ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking*, Ravikumar 'introduction'

¹⁶⁷ Vaidyanathan, *Thoughts and Reminiscences* p.16

¹⁶⁸ Chandy, *Quest of Community* p.10, Yati, *Love and Blessings* p.28, Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* p.20, Vaidyanathan, *Thoughts and Reminiscences* p.16

¹⁶⁹ Nataraja Guru *Autobiography* p.9

inferiority that came with low caste status was learned in new ways and was an abiding and painful childhood memory. By the 1930s it appears that lower castes were not prevented from accessing school, but were subject to systematic discrimination and humiliation when they attended, explaining why so few remained for four years schooling.¹⁷⁰ Dalit children were often forced to sit outside on the verandah, or to supplement their learning with chores such as collecting firewood, encouraging the children to truant.¹⁷¹ Gunasekaran remembered a clerk who forced Dalits to stand to receive their scholarship forms:

Even now it hurts to think about those times when we had to stand up in front of the others in the class, shrinking and cringing. They would reinforce caste identities by labelling us Pallars, Parayars and Chakiliyars in front of our friends who never knew what caste was.¹⁷²

Despite his father being a teacher, discrimination was further underlined by the midday meals provided to poor pupils, although only in exchange for dung-cakes or firewood, and by the lengths his father had to go to get the scholarship form signed by the higher caste village headman.¹⁷³ Sattanathan, a Sudra who was later Chair of the 1971 Other Backward Caste Commission, remembered the Brahmin teachers' attitudes of condescension and contempt, notwithstanding their own poor socio-economic status.¹⁷⁴ He recalled his orthodox Brahmin Tamil teacher, an 'obscene petty tyrant' who would 'taunt' lower-caste pupils when they made a mistake and 'produced in me almost a revulsion towards learning Tamil'.¹⁷⁵ Elayaperumal, a Dalit, remembered his Brahmin teacher asking another pupil to mark his work, fearing caste pollution if he touched his slate.¹⁷⁶ His comment, 'Though I felt hurt, I did not have the strength or courage to raise my voice,' illustrates the power of hegemonic norms and the difficulties in contesting discrimination when combined with other relationships of power as teacher-pupil or adult-child. School emerges as a site where children learned power relationships, by discovering what an already existing identity meant in practice and in relationship to the identities of others.

¹⁷⁰ Subbamma, *Fearless Feminist* as exception

¹⁷¹ Siddalingaiah, *Ooru Keri*. Das, *My Story* p.43

¹⁷² Gunasekaran, *Scar* p.5

¹⁷³ Gunasekaran, *Scar* pp.9, 18

¹⁷⁴ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.32

¹⁷⁵ Sattanathan, *Plain Speaking* p.52

¹⁷⁶ Elayaperumal, L 'The Flames of Summer' (*Cithirai Neruppu*, trans. D Venkataramanan) in Ravikumar, *Oxford Indian Anthology* p.184

The school was situated within the wider caste relationships of the village. Similar to Mohanty and Kalam's views of religious tolerance, 'those days' were remembered by Veeraswami as days of 'amity' 'irrespective of their caste, creed, community or religion', but clearly situated in the past.¹⁷⁷ However, most memories were characterised by pity for those less fortunate, rather than an active desire to treat other castes as equals.¹⁷⁸ Equally, none expressed a wish to become a Brahmin, whose lives were perceived by the other children as rigid and austere.¹⁷⁹ Subramaniam, from a dominant Vellalar caste, remembers that the stigma of untouchability was evidenced in all aspects of village life requiring ritual purification 'and naturally the children carried on this tradition'.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, Sreenivasan, from a wealthy Gounder family, considered the extent to which 'every child in the village, including myself, absorbed these social values as part of one's nature, without being aware of it'.¹⁸¹ Sreenivasan argues that children subconsciously or unconsciously assumed loyalties within the framework of the caste system, to community, village and family. As a child, this made him unwilling to question his beloved grandfather, who refused to eat food cooked by his low caste concubine.¹⁸² Chakkir recounted how, at the age of eleven years, he and his siblings were suddenly rejected as high caste Namputiris and became low caste Chakkirs after his father's alleged extra-marital affair and subsequent suicide. Yet, it was only after his retirement that he protested against this.¹⁸³ This was also true of Dalit children: L. Elayaperumal had strong memories of spatial distinctions within the village and the death from cholera of his father after the Panchayat Board officers refused to spray their houses or provide inoculations in their neighbourhood.¹⁸⁴ He presents a story of dispossession, orphan status and poverty, in which he was encouraged to accept his fate as the only means to some economic security.¹⁸⁵ The enforced acceptance of social norms as a child, and the slow internalisation of these

¹⁷⁷ Veeraswami, *Perils to justice* p.4, Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.116

¹⁷⁸ Das, *My Story* p.17, Menon, *Many Worlds* p.23

¹⁷⁹ Menon, *Many Worlds* p.24

¹⁸⁰ Subramaniam, *Hand of Destiny* p.35

¹⁸¹ Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree* p.18

¹⁸² Sreenivasan, *Climbing the Coconut Tree*

¹⁸³ Chakkir *Last smārtha vichāram* pp. introduction, 115, 146

¹⁸⁴ Elayaperumal, 'The Flames of Summer' p.185

¹⁸⁵ Elayaperumal 'Flames of Summer' p.185

values, made it difficult to overcome that childhood fear as an adult. Whether in a position of power or powerlessness, the experience of being children is remembered as characterised by acceptance, and the contestation of social norms is perceived as a sign of adolescence or adulthood.

The daily experience of caste distinction was a significant memory for Dalit adults, although often recalled with the purpose of evidencing discrimination.¹⁸⁶ Kamal Pokkudan gained ‘new understanding’ when paying for tea from a local Congress Member after he was forced to drop his payment in a glass of water. This avoided making the individual ritually impure, but Pokkudan ‘learnt something new’, that even though the individual was a member of the Harijan Welfare Committee he continued to maintain purity-based separation.¹⁸⁷ In a further incident, Kamal Pokkudan recalled delivering prawns, having lunch with the recipient and drinking from the same glass of buttermilk. Too late he realised the caste implications of this and decided to lie about his background. When discovered, he was warned ‘better run! Or they will beat you to a pulp’.¹⁸⁸ These memories are characterised by a fear of caste boundaries, but predominantly by the memory of betrayal and of double standards. Both incidents are characterised by the initial unconscious neglect of caste difference and the immaturity of his response when he remembers; escaping/running from an uncomfortable situation being the most immediate option for a child. This emotional immaturity as characteristic of childhood was also demonstrated by Rettamalai Srinivasan who studied at a school in Coimbatore, but avoided contact with the other children through fear of revealing his caste background.¹⁸⁹ Srinivasan wrote how ‘Pondering over the pain of not even being able to play with other children, I used to get upset and think constantly about how to overcome this problem’. Although aware of his caste background in the town, Gunasekaran’s position in society was reinforced when visiting relatives in a rural area. He was beaten on a number of occasions for minor

¹⁸⁶ Ravikumar highlights the dangers of a ‘strategy of liberalisation to convert the Dalit sorrows into assets’ in *Oxford Indian Anthology* (2012)

¹⁸⁷ Kamal Pokkudan *My Life, Ende Jeevitham* in Dasan et al (ed.) *Oxford Indian Anthology* p.185

¹⁸⁸ Pokkudan *My Life* p.187

¹⁸⁹ Rettamalai Srinivasan ‘A brief history of my life’ in Ravikumar, *Oxford Indian Anthology* p.177

infringements of caste boundaries.¹⁹⁰ This suggests that children were aware of their caste identity, but the practical implications of difference were a learned experience.

Contesting dominant discourses through the obscene, the comic and the colloquial has become a distinctive feature of low caste writing in Tamil.¹⁹¹ Mimicking the teacher was a form of protest that enabled fears to be banished not by anger or pity, but by comedy. This resistance reflects children's opposition more generally to adult authority within the classroom. Children, however, appear to grow into the identities prescribed for them. Despite the common humanity of the infant, Chockalingam, a doctor, argues that 'We give this child a language, a religion and therefore any other division we want.'¹⁹² Acceptance of the social norms and identities imposed or accepted by authority figures seems to be a common experience, even as children were socialised into the boundaries of these identities.¹⁹³ While children often transgressed the identities set for them by adults, especially in their friendship groups, this was done unknowingly and in spaces, such as playgrounds, infrequently inhabited by adults.¹⁹⁴ It is the adolescent and adult voice that rationalises and questions these identities, and the power structures that support them. At the same time, the painful process of learning categories and the searing memory of discrimination remained with many of the writers forever. It is Kalam's experiences of communal harmony which appear to be in the minority.

Conclusion:

Looking at the autobiographies of Indians who were children in the 1920s and 1930s adds subjectivity to the historical record and modifies the larger claims of the state about the nature of childhood itself and the interventionist rights of the dyarchal state. The autobiographies, for example, show no awareness of compulsory education

¹⁹⁰ Gunasekaran, *Scar* pp. 21, 25, 43, 51, 81

¹⁹¹ Hepzibah Israel 'Contemporary Tamil Dalit literatures in Translation: the political force of swearing and obscenity'. Seminar 24/4/2016 University of Edinburgh, Nagaraj, *Flaming Feet* p.193, Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and man'

¹⁹² Chockalingam, *Memoirs* p.29

¹⁹³ Chakiar *Last smārtha vichāram* p.27

¹⁹⁴ Gunasekaran, *Scar* p.42

although most of the children went to school.¹⁹⁵ They reveal the extent to which children attended co-educational schools, and demonstrate the limitations of the state-based rhetoric on physical education and its implications for the formation of a new Indian masculinity. They also reveal the variety of ways in which children may have experienced teachers. The memories about schooling indicate that the lessons remembered into old age, apart from basic literacy and numeracy, were ones which were reinforced in popular culture – as in the case of Punyakoti the cow – or which captured the child’s imagination. That said, for most of the authors schooling was one of the most important memories of childhood and one of its defining features. The child as institutionalised within the classroom remains a constant theme in state and personal discourses long before the Indian constitution established free and compulsory education for all children in 1950.

The modern state claimed a relationship directly with the child, and a new authority to intervene in their lives, both in educational and juvenile justice discourses. However, the autobiographies support the analysis of both politicians and social reformers that it was unwise, in the event of conflict, to enforce intervention in the family. There remained a continued reluctance to question the authority of parents, particularly in religious education. The personal testimonies reveal the extent to which moral and religious guidance came from the family, most notably in the oral discourses of the grandparental generation. This was not defined in terms of personal belief, but was remembered as contributing to emotional stability and a sense of belonging to the community. While in statist discourse the family was increasingly imagined in a nuclear form, the more intimate sources demonstrated that most children were part of a joint family in which authority, wisdom, and often financial control, was much more widely dispersed. Uncles, for example, appear to have a combined affective and interventionist role. These relationships also allowed social reformers and politicians to imagine their own interventions as lying within, and remaining respectful to, the boundaries of the extended family.

¹⁹⁵ Compulsory education is only mentioned by Siddalingaiah, writing in the 1960s. Siddalingaiah, *Ooru Keri* p.11

The legislators and practitioners increasingly categorised children into educational communities. This facilitated comparison of numbers and resources. Simultaneously, there was a growing engagement with the idea of the universal child, and a childhood common to all. The resulting tension is negotiated within the autobiographies, and most of the authors appear aware of communal divisions of religion and caste even as a child, and of the behaviours associated with these distinctions. Both at home and school, childhood was characterised by a dual process of acceptance of an identity labelled by adults, and of socialisation into performing the norms of that identity. This was despite the romanticised nostalgia for a time when distinctions were less politically potent. Contravention of these identity boundaries as well as resistances at home and in the classroom seem to be a confrontation with adult authority: an objection to the subaltern status of all children as much as a contestation of identity. Most authors appear to have been conscious of their generational status; and of their identity as child defined in contrast to adulthood.

Childhood was remembered as a time of plasticity, of learning knowledge and skills, even if the specifics differed considerably. Childhood was envisaged as a time of play, of mischief, and of subversion in relation to adult authority. It was also described as a time of emotion, dominated by fear, trauma and the need for emotional security. In remembered experience, if not in reality, the memories of material objects such as sweets and of sensual experiences helped to differentiate children from the disciplined and rational adult self.¹⁹⁶ The broad commonality of these memories to all children, despite the diversity of background and life trajectory, demonstrates the ways in which the distinction between children and adults was being constructed at a personal level. At the same time, the autobiographies reveal the widely divergent experiences, and the ways in which children's lives were informed as much by other identities - of gender, caste, rurality and wealth - as by age.

Conclusions: children, childhood and the growth of the avuncular state in South India

The post-independence Indian constitution of 1950 is often assumed to have fundamentally altered the relationship between the child and the state. This thesis demonstrates that many of the principles contained within it, for example access to elementary education for all children as a right guaranteed by the state (Article 45), were part of a much longer trajectory. In fact, the 1920s and 1930s were a time of radical change in regard to childhood in India. Considering this change within the specific circumstances of the Madras Presidency, this thesis makes a number of substantial findings that challenge previous assumptions on the nature of the late colonial state and contribute to the research already available on childhood in South Asia.

This thesis has discovered that the 1920s were the era when the political and social elite began to accept childhood as a universal social category distinct from adulthood, which deserved state protection and investment. This contrasts with much of the existing historiography which defines the political and social events of the era primarily in terms of racial conflict and national distinctiveness. This consensus in discursive terms was not matched by political energy in implementation, and the claim to a modern view of childhood contributed more to the self-identity of a modern elite than to improving the life chances for real children. This contributes to our understanding of the historical evolution of the disjunction between rhetoric and reality that continues to characterise Indian state policy regarding children today. It suggests that norms of governance which emerged when Indians participated as the state under dyarchy have had a long-lasting impact on the nature of state intervention in the family. Furthermore, despite the new discursive importance of age as a social category in the legislation, other identities based on gender, religion, and caste were equally if, not more, important to children's self-identity and to their personal opportunities and success when policies were implemented. This meant that in practice, to be a (universal) child was to be male, Hindu, Tamil speaking and non-Brahmin.

This thesis suggests another dimension to our understanding of constitutional reform and highlights the need for a much wider historiographical engagement with dyarchy and political devolution in its own terms, not teleologically through the lens of eventual independence. It argues that seeing the state under dyarchy as Indian (in areas related to children) fundamentally changes our understanding of the relationships between the child, the family, the citizen and the state. I suggest a new understanding of state intervention as ‘avuncular’, as intervening within the familial sphere but without contesting the authority of the parents.

Finally, the thesis makes a number of methodological arguments. It re-emphasises that taking children’s agency and the minutiae of their lives into account significantly complicates our understanding of adult discourses of childhood. Additionally, it demonstrates the benefits of narrowing our geographical scope from the political centres of Delhi and London and situating research in the specific politics, economics and culture of the Madras Presidency. This allows us to widen the thematic range to see parallels across public health, juvenile justice and education by focusing on the child as the target. This transcends the usual categories of historical research (it is rare, for example, to see education and public health discussed together) and facilitates a more detailed comparison between discourse and implementation than is usually possible. The remainder of this conclusion will elaborate these arguments in more detail.

Imagining universal discourses of childhood

The 1920s and 1930s were the time when universalising discourses surrounding the modern child began to have real discursive and legislative impact in the Madras Presidency. While these ideas had been gaining ground among missionaries in the early twentieth century, the Madras Children Act and Madras Elementary Education Act in 1920 were among the first legislative provisions to put these new ideals into practice. This was mirrored by provisions in other presidencies, although the emphasis varied across British India. The shift was linked to the growing participation of Indians in emerging modern global discourses surrounding childhood, and a new consensus on the child as learner, physically vulnerable, sexually innocent, characterised by play,

and distinct from adults, rather than an inferior form of adulthood. It also marked a growing recognition of state responsibility for the welfare of the child. This indicated an awareness of childhood as distinct from adulthood and therefore requiring particular protection, and a belief that the educational institution was the legitimate and primary space for the interaction between the schoolage child (aged between five and twelve years) and the modern state. As demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, through compulsory education more children were brought into relationship with the state and in the rhetoric of compulsion the school became the normal space of childhood.

The emergence of this new construction of the modern child reflected changing global discourses. The extensive impact of the New Education movement on pedagogical discourses, seen for example in an analysis of the journal *Educational India* in Chapter Three, demonstrates the ways in which pedagogy was linked to a construction of the ‘normal’ child as an active learner. International agreements to prioritise the ‘best interests of the child’ and new international organisations to facilitate comparisons embodied a discourse that claimed universal features for children regardless of geographical space. Similarly, legislation introduced in Britain such as the Children Act 1908 received international attention, and formed the basis for new legislation in the Madras context, as seen in Chapter Five. An important factor in this were the personal networks of social reformers (such as Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi) who as global participants transferred knowledge and ideas between diverse sites across the world, including Geneva, Sydney, Cape Town and Madras as well as Delhi, Calcutta and London. The assertion of universality for the Indian child was used to bolster the Indian middle classes’ claim to a full share, as equals, in the perceived modernity of the West and to cement their position as equal scientific experts on the global stage. At a time when the political sphere was dominated by agitation for self-determination, the rejection of cultural specificity as Indian children was particularly radical. This reflects what Tanika Sarkar calls ‘interactive universalism’: not the unproblematic acceptance of a newly powerful discourse, but a new set of discussions and constructions in which Indians participated through a variety of global entanglements within their own areas of expertise, whether nutrition, juvenile justice or pedagogical

theory.¹ In view of the current anxieties surrounding global child rights legislation (and the UNCRC in particular), the historical participation of Indians in these networks, and in the formulation of universal ideas about the child, demonstrates that child rights legislation was not a colonial imposition. It was instead a global process in which Indians participated from the outset as equals.

The emergence of a new consensus on childhood

To date, the historiography has emphasised the extent to which childhood was a site of conflict, focussing on the competition between middle-class adults to represent and control the bodies of Indian children.² This has been chiefly seen in racial terms as a clash between colonial experts and Indian nationalists and social reformers. The introduction of compulsory education at all-Indian level has likewise been seen as a battleground between the modern and conservative elements of the Congress Party.³ By contrast, this thesis has demonstrated how a broad consensus emerged regarding childhood, and the particular needs of children for protection and education. There was a consensual approach across party, wider political and indeed racial divides, with consensus increasingly shared by practitioners, theorists and legislators. This was based on a claim that ‘certainly an Indian child is of no less value than an American [or European] child’ and should be equally entitled to the same protection and treatment.⁴ Unlike in the late nineteenth century, race was a negligible aspect of these discussions. This consensual adherence to a universal ideal was reflected too in the absence of distinctively Indian theoretical writings on specifically Indian answers to problems of juvenile delinquency or even progressive educational methods. Rather, the claim to equality and universality overrode a claim to national or racial specificity, despite the surrounding impact of anti-colonial agitation and nationalist claims to Indian distinctiveness.

The Indian child was viewed in debates as both valuable and vulnerable, characteristics shared with children across the globe. The boundaries of childhood were hazy,

¹ Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation*: p.249

² Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, Vallgård, *Imperial childhoods*.

³ Rao, *New Perspectives*

⁴ Manshardt, *Delinquent Child* pp.293 - 295

although increasingly numerically defined and, in contrast to Ishita Pande's argument, there were clear attempts in the MCA to define children in specific numerals of age in 1920.⁵ Central to these interventions, however, was a claim to modernity; the state was characterised as protector of the vulnerable but there was also an explicit acknowledgement of the child as future citizen. Throughout the period, the child in education, the hungry child or the destitute child was seen predominantly for his/her worth as future citizen of the new nation, or at least as a future ratepayer. They thus merited government and municipal investment. The discourse might reflect the child as 'being', but investment was on the basis of future potential, in their 'becoming'. At the same time, the expectation of future citizenship, not subject-hood, revealed assumptions about the nature of the future state as Indian, the child's practical and emotional investment in it and emerging discourses surrounding citizenship and rights.

Practical implementation of new legislation

The provincial governments of Madras were more interested in being seen to protect childhood, than in protecting real children. The legislative provisions for protecting the child 'in danger', facilitating the rehabilitation of 'dangerous children', and providing education for all children were modern and progressive. Undoubtedly within the debating chamber the legislators and councillors were genuinely interested in the welfare of vulnerable children and shocked by the conditions in which some children lived. Looking at implementation and practice, however, reveals that while the new claims to authority and to responsibility had political significance, there was little political commitment to raise taxation to pay for these new protections. It appears that the self-identity of the elite as modern was more important than a practical engagement with social conditions. No provisions were made to execute the MCA apart from a reorganisation of the Certified Schools. Juvenile Courts and a system of probation were debated, but there were no attempts to enact the provisions until civil society organisations such as the MCAS took the initiative and forced government action (see Chapter Six). Similarly, Chapters One and Two evidence that the commitment to compulsory education for all children and condemnation of parents whose children worked was significantly undermined by the lack of provision of

⁵ Pande, 'Coming of Age'

school buildings, the limited attempt to improve educational standards or resources, and the constant reduction of teachers wages, which made teaching an unattractive career. The constant competition and blurred accountability between the municipal councils, Legislative Assembly and DEC's revealed an extreme reluctance to commit financially or to take responsibility for raising taxes. This contrasts with the extensive financial compensation given by the Madras Corporation to the more politically vocal aided schools when free education was introduced. Even the consistently low quality of food provided under the Midday Meals Scheme and alacrity with which the budget for school medical inspection was reduced, both discussed in Chapter Four, questions the commitment to improve the health of poor schoolchildren.

This disjunction between ideals and reality demonstrates a methodological need in South Asian historiography to move away from a reliance on discursive sources and political debate in order to understand social reform.⁶ Perhaps it also reflects the continuing disjunction between the Indian and Tamil Nadu state governments' commitments' to vulnerable children, and the undisputed claims that India remains one of the worst global offenders for malnutrition, child labour and low educational achievements. It suggests that the experience of state power by Indians during the 1920s and 1930s had long-term and widespread impact on norms of governance which affected policy-making and implementation after 1947, although this does not undermine the radicalism of the initial rhetoric.

Children and identity

The limited attempts to implement legislation also undermined the assertion that Indian children could be seen primarily as 'child', with universally shared characteristics. In access to the new provisions, other social identities proved equally, if not more, important. Many schemes were premised on a new identity, that of the 'poor child', which conveniently conflated socio-economic disadvantage, likelihood of conflict with the law and rhetorical assumptions of sympathy.⁷ When compulsory education was introduced in Madras city, the schools directly managed by the Madras

⁶ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, Seth, *Subject Lessons*

⁷ Kannabiran & Singh (ed.) *Challenging the Rule(s) of Law*: p.195

Corporation explicitly aimed to provide for the poorest sections of the population. The provision of rice at midday was seen in those terms too – even to the extent of choosing food types based on the normal diet of the poor. Child labour was also a particular problem for the ‘poor’ family. The education provided was aimed to deliver basic literacy, numeracy and citizenship skills that would enable the production of more disciplined citizens, but there was no corresponding commitment to an education of sufficient standard to enable social progression. It is significant that the schools were described as for the poor, even though the schools themselves were recognisably for Dalit pupils.

Similarly, in juvenile justice discourses the difference between delinquent and destitute children was discursively important, although it had little practical effect on whether individual children entered the probation system or were sent to Certified Schools. The definition ‘poor’ appears to have been important in the Juvenile Court or Boys Clubs, seen in Chapter Six. Within the discourses of saving vulnerable children, ‘the poor’ became an important identity, highlighting the often ignored class-based nature of politics in Madras, and the instincts of a reforming, philanthropic middle-class, couched again in the terms of liberal intervention.⁸ For girls in the juvenile justice system, sexual innocence was a clear marker of the boundaries of what constituted female childhood; the sexually active girl-child was categorised and regulated as female mini-adult. The focus on poverty, often rather than structural inequalities based around gender or caste, was intended to put children in Madras on a level with the vulnerable in other areas of the world, and position the child-saving efforts on a similar level too.

In sharp distinction, the administrative decisions of the Madras bureaucracy, and in particular the Departments of Public Instruction, of Education and of Labour, were founded on ideas of communal difference. The Labour Department’s target community were Dalits, and other departments sought to quantify educational expansion through a statistical monitoring of different religious, caste, gender and language groups. Compulsory education was introduced for all children, but with

⁸ Weiner, *The Child and the State in India*, Sarangapani, *Constructing School Knowledge*

specific exclusions according to identity. There emerged an increasingly popular normative construction of 'the child' in school who was middle-class, male, caste Hindu, non-Brahmin and Tamil speaking. Children outside this implicit normative definition, who were numerically the majority, were categorised into distinct educational communities, which reflected other social identities such as gender, caste and religion.

In practice belonging to one, or a number of, marginalised educational communities became a more significant indicator of childhood experience, opportunities and boundaries than biological age, despite the discursive claims of universal childhood. Educational divisions contributed to producing a political system of interest groups based on caste, religion and even language, which would come to particular prominence in the post-independence period.⁹ Similarly, although the sources are limited, Chapter Three reveals that teachers implementing progressive education schemes, either in the Children's Garden School and in the schools attached to the teacher training colleges, not only made the new methods suitable to the material surroundings of the children but negotiated the lived experience of identity and community on a daily basis. The rhetorical construction of the Indian child as sharing universal characteristics often became very different when the policies were implemented in practical reality.

The State and the Child

By looking at the relationship between the state and children in the Madras Presidency, this thesis makes a number of wider claims about the nature of state intervention in the 1920s and 1930s. Stated plainly, colonialism was not very important to any but a tiny handful of children.¹⁰ This is not only based on the personal information contained in autobiographies and the court records, but also in the state and local council records. State intervention operated within 'the social': a consensual, depoliticised sphere distinct from the political realm of contestation located at the intersection between the state, the family, the administration, expert professionals and an increasingly active

⁹ Chiriyankandath, 'democracy' under the Raj' p.54, Kumar, 'Childhood in a Globalising World' p.5

¹⁰ For a wider discussion of the limitations of colonialism see Indivar Kamtekar, 'A different war dance: state and class in India 1939-1945' *Past & Present* 176 (2002) pp.187-221

and vocal voluntary sector, often associated with the women's movement.¹¹ Although funding decisions were scrutinised along party lines and there was some limited low-level political conflict, most decisions – for example compulsory education – received broad support across the legislatures and in the realm of professionals and civil society. Some, often highly gendered, social issues such as birth control and age of consent for marriage, remained under British control and were highly politicised. However, the English language archives would suggest that in the sphere of transferred subjects such as welfare, education and juvenile justice there was surprisingly little reference to the British Raj, and very little disagreement between Indians.¹²

Children were constructed as objects of social action at the mercy of a number of organisations with shared goals and visions.¹³ This was not merely the expansion of the middle classes' control of the poor. Instead, there is evidence of specific alliances and networks of Indian 'child savers' who had different agendas, whether of feminism, religious philanthropy, progressive pedagogy or nationalism. They shared a common understanding that liberal intervention was both legitimate and necessary. Active supporters and financial donors included the MCAS, the Theosophists, the WIA, Honorary Magistrates, pedagogues, political parties (both Justice and Congress), the Trade Union movement, city councillors and officials. The entangled and interconnected organisational and personal networks of the child savers reveal the emergence of consensual decision-making and the growth and acceptance of a universal ideal.

This has wider historiographical implications. Too often historians, such as Satadru Sen or Manu Bhagavan, have studied social reform in the late colonial period to delineate another aspect of the political sphere, which was characterised by bitter confrontation, violence, a rejection of imperial hypocrisy, and a superior claim to modern, liberal citizenship through national self-determination.¹⁴ Every sphere in life is assumed to be influenced by both colonial power and opposition to it, and all actions,

¹¹ Garland, *Punishment and Welfare*, Donzelot, *Policing of Families*

¹² Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints*, Anandhi 'Women's Question'

¹³ Cox, *Gender, Justice and Welfare* pp.7,13,168

¹⁴ Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*

reformist or otherwise, are seen in the terms of hostility to colonial governmentality and a colonial rule of difference based primarily on racial superiority. Focussing on the social - whether social reform, childhood or education - as merely political obscures the growth of consensual decision-making and misunderstands the importance of changing governmental structures. My suggestion is that there is a need for more histories of childhood or education in South Asia more akin to the methodologies of European social history, for their own sake, rather than to demonstrate something further about the nature of the colonial state.

Emergence of the Indian welfare state

A key contribution of this thesis is its engagement with dyarchy, including the period of further power 1935-1942. It aims to raise questions about the nature of constitutional reform, and attempts to move the historiographical debate beyond the middle-class binaries of the 'public' and the 'private' which in themselves reflected the categories of colonial rule and had much less relevance under dyarchy.¹⁵ It also argues that dyarchy should be considered on its own terms as a form of state power, not just teleologically through the assumption of eventual political independence. Dyarchy was undoubtedly a limited, and generally unpopular, political compromise. Indians remained constrained by the overarching power of both Delhi and London. However, seeing dyarchy only as transitional and as political ignores that the devolved departments, although politically insignificant, were the departments that were interested in children (the majority of the population), and comprised the social. This was more than a 'negotiated space of power' allowed by the British (like the Princely States).¹⁶ Rather, the era was characterised by fundamental changes in the relationship between Indian society and state power.¹⁷ Crucially, in the departments which dealt with children, the state was Indian in personnel, in ideas, in character, in motivation and even in budgetary responsibility. Within the administration, including Education, Public Instruction, Public Health and even the Court of Wards, very few of the senior administrators were British, and the lower levels were staffed by Indians.

¹⁵ By contrast see Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*,

¹⁶ Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spaces*

¹⁷ Newbiggin, *The Hindu Family* p.2

At a political level, the Madras Legislative Council was dominated by Indians, and the implementation of a bicameral legislature in 1935 further increased the representation of Indians. Indians could now propose, debate and implement legislation, whether in the MLC, as part of voluntary associations, or as government officials. While there were a few international feminists such as Dorothy Jinjaradasa active in civil society bodies like the MCAS, these organisations too were led, financed and guided by Indian men and women. If this was true at legislative assembly level, it was acutely the case in the municipal councils. Indians had long populated these, discussed Indian ideas, and implemented schemes of their choice, such as compulsory education. While this does not dispute the political rejection of British imperialism by almost all the Indians cited, it questions its relevance in this context. Indians chose to model the MCA closely on the British Children Act of 1908, apart from the clauses that dealt with the exploitation of children within the home, as the best example of its time. This raises questions about political devolution that requires work on other Presidencies and other target communities. However, seeing the state as Indian fundamentally changes our perception of state intervention.

State and Family

The child as distinct from the family, rather than a resource of the family, is central to modern views of childhood and the state. New legislation enabled intervention into the domestic sphere in unprecedented ways, potentially justifying the removal of children ‘in danger’ from their parents. The underlying principle of compulsory schooling was intended to force parents to send their children to school, preventing them from contributing to the family income and introducing the teacher as an alternative authority figure in their lives. The introduction of welfare measures such as midday meals was philanthropic but included a claim to responsibility for the child in areas that had previously been the preserve of the family. This contrasted with the opposition when the colonial state attempted social reform in Reserved matters, such as the Age of Consent debates in 1929. This reflected concern that the British were encroaching on personal law, and revealed the gendered nature of the private. However, there is little evidence that anyone queried the new claims to authority and responsibility made by the dyarchical Indian state. There was little attempt to limit to

interventionist power of state actors, perhaps because as part of ‘the social’ and as ‘Indian’ they were non-threatening.

During the nineteenth century, colonial administrators and Christian missionaries sought to ‘orphan’ children, removing them from families because of the perceived damaging impact of native nurture. As scientific discourses of racial hierarchy became more politically important, the nature of the native as inherently flawed and incapable of reform became more discursively prominent, and the Indian home was seen as a site of danger and threat. While nationalists and social reformers tried to reclaim the middle-class Indian home, as private and outside the gaze of the state, there remained deep unease about domestic influences, such as older females and religious devotion, particularly within the poor home. These were seen as undermining the growth of modern rational education. There was a clear distinction between politicians, teachers and civil society actors, who shared anxieties about the working-class or poor home as backward, and the professional experts. Those reformers who claimed authority based on rational scientific expertise - pedagogues, nutritional experts or doctors like Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi - were decisively more dismissive of the home and the family as sites of scientific unreason and threat to children’s health, educational attainment and morals, than those who were politically accountable, such as city councillors, or those who worked with children on a daily basis. In practice, this meant that Public Health Department, backed by extensive quantitative analysis, was noticeably more prepared to enforce its opinion than the Education or Home Departments.

The assertion of a new relationship between the state and the child, and the characterisation of the Indian home and family in terms of ‘lack’ was more important in rhetoric than in practical reality. Chapter Four reveals that only 5,000 children received food at schools, while parental choice was quickly re-established when the scheme to assure equality of educational access through abolishing school fees in Madras city was abandoned in 1932 (Chapter One). Attendance Committees established to enforce compulsory education lacked adequate resources and, apparently, even the desire to seriously challenge parents who opposed sending their children to school (Chapter Two). In moments of confrontation the authority of the

parents remained intact. This was evidenced most clearly in the introduction of a religious ‘conscience clause,’ exempting children from religious education based on the views of the father. Care was taken to respect Muslim educational views, and the age for compulsory education varied according to community. Additionally, the existence of parents was the key determinant of whether a child who appeared before the juvenile courts was taken into care in the Certified Schools, regardless of criminal responsibility or socio-economic distress. Corporal punishment or fines continued to be the preferred means of control. The authority of parents was rarely questioned in practice.

My argument here is that we need to formulate a new understanding of the state, and my suggestion is that we need to see this state as having aspired to be ‘avuncular’: the new welfare state claimed authority to act in the best interests of the child and pragmatically recognised the limits of using that authority. (This contrasts with the more aggressive paternalism of the colonial state, embodied most clearly in the Court of Wards and Clement De La Hey, the murdered headmaster of Chapter Seven.) Many of the autobiographies in Chapter Eight demonstrated the role of uncles and aunts in the lives of children: they provided another source of authority; they were involved in financial and educational decisions regarding the child; they accepted responsibility for the growth of the child but worked with, rather than challenged, the authority of the father. Very often these uncles were also remembered as educated, modern and professional and were particularly associated with the child’s move from rural to urban areas for secondary education. Tamil language includes a number of terms for aunts and uncles differentiated by their sex and relationship to parents. The terms themselves (*periyappa*, *chitappa*, *periamma*, *chithi* as big-father, small-father, big-mother, small-mother, respectively) reflect both their significance in Tamil culture and the near-parental responsibility of the role.

Nehru, as Prime Minister of independent India, explicitly conceptualised his own relationship with the nation’s children as that of *chacha* or uncle. This embodied his authority, but also the familiar and the familial, in conscious opposition to the

detachment of the colonial state.¹⁸ The identification gave legitimacy to intervention, yet honoured the cultural allegiances of both nuclear and extended families, without challenging the position of the family patriarch. Balakrishnan argues that a relationship-based approach to state intervention similar to that of *chacha* is necessary for the progress for children's rights post 2000. This envisages the state as 'distant but familiar' and blurs the line between the private and the public.¹⁹ It also complicates the assumption that state intervention should be seen as 'state paternalism'.²⁰ My argument is that while 'avuncular' was not used explicitly as a term, the evidence from educational, juvenile justice and medical discourses is that social reformers during the 1920s and 1930s - who were of course Nehru's contemporaries - can be seen in similar terms. The sentiment was echoed in the Madras Corporation in 1931 when, to laughter across the chamber, a Justice Party councillor asked 'Have they not any Godfathers in this Council?'²¹ State and civil society actors - warders, teachers, legislators, local councillors, pedagogues, guardians and tutors, health inspectors - claimed authority to intervene in the lives of individual children through welfare legislation. Yet they implicitly saw themselves in kinship terms as uncles and aunties, characterising themselves as part of the extended national family, rather than as an interventionist Indian state. This allowed them to respect the ultimate authority of the parents, while claiming a particular role as familial in contrast to the more formal rule of the British Raj, which prioritised detached justice rather than relationships and negotiation.

This suggests that political independence in 1947 was not a crucial turning point concerning social welfare for children, but that the expansion of state provision was an extension of what had begun in the 1920s. Indians participating in dyarchy, which in itself had predecessors in earlier municipal council reforms, chose to make the new state structures a significant moment for child welfare in South India. They did so in ways that boosted the authority of adults versus children and combined state and familial authority, reflecting the formation of a new culture of governance among the Indian elites, and contributing to a distinctively Indian welfare state. Whether this

¹⁸ Ranabir Samaddar 'Crimes, Passion and Detachment: Colonial Foundations of the Rule of Law' in Kannabiran and Singh (ed) *Challenging the Rule(s) of Law* pp.451-462

¹⁹ Balakrishnan, *Growing Up and Away* pp.99, 220-1

²⁰ Menon '*Parens Patriae*' p.286

²¹ MCA: Proceedings 1/4/1931 p.39

was the case in other Presidencies requires further investigation, but it has clear parallels in the approaches of modern politicians, for example Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa. It is a modified type of state paternalism softened by familial associations and therefore distinctively Indian.

Listening to children

The thesis makes a distinctive methodological argument that historical constructions of childhood cannot be understood properly unless we accept the impact real children had on historical events, and on the construction of childhood itself. This is not new within the history of childhood, but is rarely acknowledged, or even contested, in the South Asian context.²² Despite the adult authorship of the documents and paucity of the source material, the act of looking for the child yields surprising results. Children's preferences sometimes changed council policy. For example the decision to provide *sambhar* and rice for the Midday Meals Scheme in Chapter Four was explicitly guided by children's opinions, and a 'deputation of children' was credited with changing the approach to a reorganisation of teachers in Chapter Two.²³ When eleven-year-old Gullipalli Yerrayya used an inspection by a Committee of Visitors to query the terms of his incarceration in Bellary Junior Certified School it caused considerable disquiet, particularly regarding the scientific verification of children's ages and the collection of appropriate evidence before their court hearing (Chapter Five).²⁴ In their evidence to court, the minor zamindars in Chapter Seven actively resisted the suggestion that Indian childhoods were particularly characterised by dishonesty and lying. Listening to children's voices thus questions the definition of children as merely powerless and in need of protection, and reflects the emphasis on participation rights in the UNCRC.

The evidence produced by children, however mediated, also changes our views on childhood. A clear example of this is in education. Not only do adults detail memories of defying the teacher through jokes and caricatures, but memories of childhood reveal that the home - and particularly the grandparents - were an important source of practical, emotional and religious education. These areas had a profound long term

²² Bowen & Hinchy, 'Introduction' p.319, Crook, *Transmission of Knowledge* p.23

²³ MCA: Proceedings 24/1/1939 p.35

²⁴ TNSA: GO2160 Home 6/9/1943 Committee of Visitors Bellary 28/12/1942

impact on the child's understanding of the self, and of their relationships with family and society. This directly contradicts medical and pedagogical discourses which see the home as a site of threat. Rather, the autobiographies summarised in Chapter Eight describe children moving flexibly between a multiplicity of sites and methods of learning, and their daily negotiating a plurality of knowledge and belief systems, which as children they participated in but did not attempt to intellectually reconcile.²⁵

Memoirs also reinforce the conclusion that while childhood was generally characterised by subordination to adult authority at home and in work and school, for many children age was not the most important marker of their social identities. Often religion, caste and gender were equally, if not more, important to their experience of power and powerlessness. The example of the Newington school in Chapter Seven demonstrates the complexities of power relationships based on wealth, caste and hereditary allegiance. For example the central role of master-servant relationships circumvented the assumed dominance of children by adults. Memories of childhood demonstrate the ways in which the adult identities were perceived and how children became aware of their own class, caste and gender identities. In Chapter Eight Gunasekaran, for example, details the disjunction between his awareness of his identity as Dalit and the moment he became aware of the practical implications of untouchability when he visited his aunt in a small rural village. Likewise, Chapter Seven demonstrates that while in the colonial documents the headmaster of Newington was an all-powerful surrogate parent, later personal testimonies in his murder trial reveal that these aristocratic minors were more interested in sport, sex, gossip and the distinctions of class and caste. Their headmaster was only one of a number of important adults in their lives. This illustrates the limited impact of colonial domination on children. It problematises even the most basic details of their lives as revealed in colonial administration reports, such as the relationships between major and minor wards, and the position of their wives, sisters and illegitimate siblings.

The act of listening for children's voices is politically significant because it recognises that children have a right to be respected as historical actors, instead of merely acted

²⁵ Kumar, *Politics of Gender, Community and Modernity*

upon. It is historically significant because it reveals another dimension to our understanding of the way power is constructed and functions in South Asia. Only by looking at the fragmentary evidence of children themselves can historians really begin to understand the impact of adult actions, and to appreciate the limitations of discursive constructions of modern childhood in the lives of real children.

Map 1. Madras Presidency, British India. JG Bartholomew *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1909). [Accessed Wikicommons 12/9/2016]



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Map 3. Map of Madras City. Karl Baedeker *Indien: Handbuch Fur Reisende*, (Wagner & Debes, 1914). [Accessed Wikicommons 12/9/20]



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