

Community Profile of Primary Education in Madras Presidency in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Part I: 1825–85

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Probal Roy Chowdhury¹

Abstract

In this article, we trace in two parts the changing community profile of boys studying in primary schools in Madras Presidency during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. We first present a summary of the community profile of boys studying in the indigenous schools in the different linguistic regions of the Presidency as recorded in a detailed survey conducted by the Presidency government during 1822–25. We then discuss the growth of primary education in the Presidency under the new governmental education system during the period 1835–85. Our study is based on the annual Reports of the Department of Public Instruction (RDPI), which are available from the year 1855, the Census reports of 1871 and 1881, and the Report of the Education Commission of 1881. During 1883–90, the RDPI also give detailed district-level data that enables us to compile the community profile of boys studying in the primary schools in different linguistic regions of the Presidency for the year 1884–85 and compare it with the profile of boys studying in the indigenous schools in ca. 1825.

Keywords

Indigenous education system, primary schools in Madras Presidency, community profile of boys studying in schools, Mahatma Gandhi, Beautiful Tree, Dharampal

¹ Assistant Professor (Senior Grade), Amrita Darshanam International Centre, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (Deemed University), Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

Corresponding author:

Probal Roy Chowdhury, Assistant Professor (Senior Grade), Amrita Darshanam International Centre, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (Deemed University), Coimbatore 641112, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: emailprobal@gmail.com

Introduction

With the rise of Indian nationalism during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, it was noticed that large sections of Indian society had little or no participation in the modern education system. From the decadal Census returns, it also became clear that a large number of communities had a very low percentage of literates and even lower percentage of those literate in English—the latter was an absolute prerequisite for a government job or a professional career those days. The British administrators and scholars, however, attributed all this to the low status—social, economic as well as educational—which these communities allegedly had in traditional Indian society for millennia.²

However, some of our leaders at the helm of the national movement clearly expressed a differing view. Mahatma Gandhi was the foremost and the most articulate among them. In a speech made at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in London on 20 October 1931 (while he was on a visit to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference), Mahatma Gandhi talked about his vision of education for an independent India. Gandhiji asserted that the literacy levels which prevailed in India ‘fifty or a hundred years ago’ were better than what was prevailing then under the British system of education. He drew his audience’s attention to the widespread indigenous system of education, which was functioning even after the onset of British rule in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Referring to this indigenous system of education as the ‘beautiful tree’, Gandhiji said that the British uprooted this system and left it to wither away over time. ‘Our state’, Gandhiji claimed, ‘would revive the old village schoolmaster and dot every village with a school for both boys and girls’:

I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully, that today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root, and left the root like that, and the beautiful tree perished. The village schools were not good enough for the British administrator, so he came out with his programme. Every school must have so much paraphernalia, building, and so forth. Well, there were no such schools at all. There are statistics left by a British administrator which show that, in places where they have carried out a survey, ancient schools have gone by the board, because there was no recognition for these schools, and the schools established after the European pattern were too expensive for the people, and therefore they could not possibly overtake the thing. I defy anybody to fulfil a programme of compulsory primary education of these masses inside of a century. This very poor country of mine is ill able to sustain such an expensive method of education. Our State would revive the old village schoolmaster and dot every village with a school both for boys and girls.³

² In an otherwise fairly objective account on *The History and Prospects of British Education in India* (1891), the British indologist F.W. Thomas states:

Until 1882 what are known as the ‘low castes’ were practically excluded from the Government schools.... It is obvious that with the present funds to be devoted to education there is little hope of, at any rate, soon making any considerable advance.... The rules of caste are as rigid as ever. The exclusiveness, which has reigned for three thousand years, is as rampant as before. Of anything like public feeling and mutual confidence and help there is no hope for many a year. It is not conceivable that knowledge should under these circumstances filter down. (pp. 136–38)

³ Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XLVIII, pp. 199–200 (1971).

Gandhiji's statement challenged the very basis of the so-called civilising mission of British rule in India. He squarely laid the blame for the prevalence of illiteracy among the Indian masses to the policies of the British rule.

However, interestingly, in the early decades of the nineteenth century itself, the British government in London seems to have been well aware of the widespread system of indigenous education that still prevailed in large parts of India. For instance, the Public Despatch from London to Bengal Presidency, dated 3 June 1814, observed:

We refer with particular satisfaction upon this occasion to that distinguished feature of internal polity which prevails in some parts of India, and by which the instruction of the people is provided for by a certain charge upon the produce of the soil, and other endowments in favour of the village teachers, who are thereby rendered public servants of the community.⁴

This brief allusion to the indigenous education system also highlights an important feature of the pre-British Indian polity that had been taken note of by various British officials in India and their masters in London: that a portion of the agricultural produce, which was the mainstay of Indian economy, was ear-marked by the village community for public spending on services like education. The despatch also mentions that there were other endowments too, which in South India were in the form of *maniyams* or assignments of the revenue, due to the government, from an agricultural land. It is also notable that the despatch refers to teachers significantly as 'public servants'.

The despatch of 1814 was based upon the observations of various British officials who had served in India for long. For instance, there is the evidence of Thomas Munro before a House of Commons Committee, which refers to the fact that there were schools established in every village which imparted essential primary education to the children.⁵ The fact that there was a widespread indigenous system of education, amounting to almost a school per every village, was noted in other parts of India too. Also, there is the instance of G.L. Prendergast, a member of the Governor's Council in Bombay Presidency, who recorded in a minute of 27 June 1821, that almost every village in the Presidency had a school where the boys were taught reading, writing and arithmetic.⁶

During 1820–35, following instructions from authorities in London, various provincial governments in India carried out detailed surveys of the indigenous education system prevalent in their provinces. The survey in Madras Presidency, which was perhaps the most detailed, was conducted during 1822–25. A survey in some selected districts of the Bombay Presidency was first conducted during 1824–25, followed by another similar survey in 1828–29.⁷ In 1835, on instruction from the Governor-General

⁴ Howell, *Education in British India Prior to 1854, and in 1871–72*, p. 6; also, Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, p. 67 *fn.*

⁵ Hansard, *The Parliamentary Debates from 1803 to the Present*, Vol. XXV, p. 786. Major General Sir Thomas Munro (1761–1827) served in South India for almost half-a-century in various capacities: first as an army officer, then as collector of various districts, and finally as the governor of Madras Presidency during 1820–27.

⁶ *House of Commons, House of Commons Papers: 1831–32*, Vol. 9, p. 468; also see Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, p. 58.

⁷ The Bombay Presidency surveys which were carried out in 1824–25 and 1828–29—unlike the Madras survey—were not complete. The renowned educational historian R.V. Parulekar has compiled all the documents related to the survey of indigenous education in the Presidency of Bombay in his book, *Survey of Indigenous Education in the Province of Bombay 1820–30*.

William Bentinck, William Adam conducted a survey of indigenous education in five districts of the Bengal Presidency: Birbhum, Burdwan, South Bihar, Tirhut and parts of Murshidabad.⁸ Adam also personally carried out a detailed statistical survey of the area under the thana of Natore in the district of Rajshahi (presently in Bangladesh).⁹ We shall be concerned here only with the results of the extensive survey of the indigenous education system conducted in the Madras Presidency during 1822–25.

The Widespread Indigenous Education System in Madras Presidency in ca. 1825

From the detailed reports of the collectors of various districts, it was found that there were 11,575 schools in the Presidency of Madras with 157,195 students¹⁰ studying in them; these reports also noted that there were in all 1,094 ‘colleges’ or centres of higher learning with 5,431 students studying in them. An important feature that emerged from the survey data was the widespread extent of the indigenous system of education, as evidenced by the number of boys who were undergoing instruction. This was highlighted by Sir Thomas Munro, the governor of Madras, while reviewing the information collected in the survey, in his minute of 10 March 1826:

It is remarked by the Board of Revenue, that of a population of 12½ millions, there are only 188,000,¹¹ or 1 in 67 receiving education. This is true of the whole population, but not as regards the male part of it, of which the proportion educated is much greater than is here estimated: for if we take the whole population as stated in the report at 12,850,000, and deduct one half for females, the remaining male population will be 6,425,000; and if we reckon the male population between the ages of five and ten years, which is the period which boys in general remain at school, at one-ninth, it will give 713,000, which is the number of boys that would be at school if all the males above ten years of age were educated; but the number actually attending the schools is only 184,110, or little more than one-fourth of that number. I have taken the interval between five and ten years of age as the term of education, because, though many boys continue at school till twelve or fourteen, many leave it under ten. I am, however, inclined to estimate the portion of the male population who receive school education to be nearer to one-third than one-fourth of the whole, because we have no returns from the provinces of the numbers taught at home. In Madras that number taught at home is 26,963, or about five times greater than that taught in the schools. There is probably some error in this number, and though the number privately taught in the provinces does certainly not approach this rate, it is no doubt considerable, because the practice of boys being taught at home by their relations or private teachers is not infrequent in any part of the country.¹²

⁸ William Adam (1796–1881) was born in Scotland and came to India in 1818 as a Baptist minister. He later resigned his position as a Baptist missionary and started the Calcutta Unitarian Society, along with the Indian reformer Raja Rammohan Roy, in the early 1820s. His *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal in 1836 and 1838* are in three volumes, which were published from Calcutta in 1835, 1836 and 1838 respectively.

⁹ Thana is the local word for a police station in the greater Bengal region.

¹⁰ Most of the students studying in the indigenous schools were males. The survey showed only 4,023 girls studying in these schools. It is possible that a considerable number of girls were instructed at homes.

¹¹ This number includes the total number of students, male and female, who were undergoing instruction in the indigenous schools and the colleges (including also those who were instructed at home in the district of Madras).

¹² Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, pp. 248–49. The full text of the Minute of Munro, dated 10 March 1826 is in the *Revenue Consultations*, Fort St. George, of the same date.

Based on the aggregate data of the survey, Munro highlights the fact that there was a school for roughly every 500 males. By estimating the number of boys in the school-going age group of five to ten years to be 1/18th of the total population, Munro concludes that 'a little more than one-fourth' of the boys of school-going age were undergoing instruction in these indigenous schools.

Another crucial fact that emerged from the reports of the various collectors was that, there was almost a parallel system of children being educated at homes.¹³ However, it was only the collector of the Madras district, L.G.K. Murray, who gave detailed information on the number of boys who were so instructed at home. In his first report of 13 November 1822, Murray mentions that there were 5,699 students who were studying in 305 schools and seventeen 'charity schools' of the Madras district.¹⁴ Murray also submitted another report on 12 February 1825, which he considered 'to be more correct', where he repeated the aforementioned figures for those who were instructed in schools, but, in addition, also mentioned that 26,963 students received 'tuition at their own houses'.¹⁵ Thus, the number of those who were instructed at homes was nearly five times the number of those who were instructed in the schools.¹⁶

In his Minute written one year later, on 10 March 1826, Munro seems to be intent on downplaying the fact that there were a large number of students who were receiving instruction at home. He therefore makes the invidious suggestion that 'there is probably some error in this number' reported by the collector of Madras.¹⁷ Munro still has to concede that 'the number privately taught in the provinces does certainly not approach this rate, it is no doubt considerable, because the practice of boys being taught at home by their relations or private teachers is not infrequent in any part of the country.'¹⁸ Hence,

¹³ The fact that, apart from those studying schools, a large number of students were being instructed at home, was also noted by Adam in his survey of indigenous education in Bengal (Adam, *Second Report on the State of Education in Bengal: District of Rajshahi, 1836*, pp. 32–35).

¹⁴ Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, p. 113.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 226, 232–33.

¹⁶ It may be noted that of the total of 5,699 students studying in the schools, 5,523 were boys and 176 girls. Of the 26,963 who were studying at home, 26,446 were boys and 517 girls. In Tables 1–3, only the data on boy students is included.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 248. As Dharampal notes in this connection:

The data from Madras regarding the number of boys and girls receiving tuition at their homes is equally pertinent. In comparison to those being educated in schools in Madras, this number is 4.73 times... Furthermore, the Indian part of Madras city at this period was more of a shanty-town. In comparison to the older towns and cities of the Presidency, it was a relatively badly organised place, the status of its Indian inhabitants being rather lower in the social scale than their counterparts in other places like Madura, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, etc. It may be quite probable, therefore, that the number of those privately educated in other districts, if not some 4 to 5 times more than those attending school as in Madras city, was still appreciably large. The observation of Thomas Munro that there was 'probably some error' in the number given of 26,903 being taught at home in Madras city, which incidentally has been made much of by later commentators on the subject, does not have much validity. If the number had been considered seriously erroneous, a new computation for the city of Madras, to which alone it pertained, would have been no difficult matter, especially as this return had been submitted to the Governor a whole year before this comment. It was perhaps required of Thomas Munro as head of the executive to express such a reservation and it undoubtedly was the sort of comment which the makers of policy in London wished to hear. (Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, pp. 33–36)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

Munro makes a modest increase in the estimate of the number of boys of school-going age who were receiving instruction, when those who were being instructed at home are also included: 'I am, however, inclined to estimate the portion of the male population who receive school education to be nearer to one-third than one-fourth of the whole, because we have no returns from the provinces of the numbers taught at home.'¹⁹ This suggestion of Munro is clearly a gross underestimate of the number of boys who would have been receiving instruction in ca. 1825 under the indigenous education system. If it is assumed that the number who were instructed at home in the other districts were also as large (nearly five times) in comparison to those who were instructed in the schools as was reported in the case of the Madras district, then it would result that almost all the boys of school-going age would have been receiving instruction either in the schools or at home! Even if it be assumed that the number of boys instructed at home was just about twice the number of those instructed in the schools, then it would result that nearly two-thirds (or around 65%) of the boys of schools-going age would be under instruction, instead of one-third as suggested by Munro.²⁰ This, of course, would be the lowest estimate of the percentage of boys of school-going age who were undergoing instruction either at the indigenous schools or at home in 1822–25.

In his *Minute*, Munro did not take any note of the detailed data on the students belonging to different communities that was provided in the reports of the collectors. In the next section, we shall present an overview of the actual data presented by various collectors on the number of students belonging to different communities.

Before going into an analysis of the community profile of boys studying in the indigenous schools, we may briefly comment on some of the other information that can be gleaned from the reports of the various collectors regarding the indigenous education system prevalent in the Madras Presidency in ca. 1825. We have already alluded to the fact that, while a significant proportion of boys of school-going age were undergoing instruction, there were indeed very few girls who were reported to be studying in the indigenous schools. Another important feature that emerges from the reports of the collectors is that a majority of the schools were imparting instruction in the local or regional language.²¹ As regards the actual duration of schooling, in most districts it varied from five to eight years, while in some of them it was reported to be of even longer duration.²² All the collectors reported that the students were primarily instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic. There is not much information on the actual curriculum of study. The collector of Rajahmundry gave a list of books used in the schools and colleges of his district,²³ which again shows that primary importance was given to

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ In fact, in the district of Madras, as may be seen from Table 3, it was true for all the communities that the number of boys receiving instruction at home was indeed more than double the number of those studying in the schools. While, in the case of Brahmanas, the number of those who were receiving instruction at home was nearly nineteen times than those who were studying in schools, this ratio was indeed large also for Muslims (eleven times), 'Other Castes' (eight times) and Vaisyas (seven times); even in the case of the Sudras, the number of boys who were receiving instruction at home were more than double of those who were studying in the schools.

²¹ Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, Ref. Table on p. 23.

²² *Ibid.*, Ref. Table on p. 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

the learning of regional language (Telugu) and arithmetic. Instruction in language was through the study of works of high literary standing (such as the *Itihasas*, *Puranas* and *Kavyas*) which also served the purpose of imparting the necessary moral and cultural instruction. The collector of Bellary provided a list of books studied in the colleges which together with the list provided by the collector of Rajahmundry shows that, in the institutions of higher learning, the subjects taught included grammar, lexicography and poetics, philosophy, mathematics and various other *sastras*.

It is important to recall that, by 1820, most areas of Madras Presidency had been under the British rule for several decades. As has been extensively documented, the onset of British rule in different parts of India invariably led to a large-scale disruption and virtual decimation of all the indigenous institutions and arrangements which took care of the administration, and developmental and cultural activities at the local level. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that almost all the collectors of the Presidency reported that there was no public funding assigned for supporting the indigenous education system, and that it had become completely dependent on the fees collected from the students. Most of the collectors, in their reports sent to the governor at Madras, also indicate that the indigenous education system was in a much better and flourishing condition earlier, meaning before the onset of the British rule. A detailed account of the fiscal arrangements, that prevailed in several parts of India until the onset of British rule, by which each village in the traditional Indian polity supported a large number of religious, cultural, economic and administrative services (including the locally managed indigenous system of education), has been presented by Dharampal based on his extensive survey of archival records of the period.²⁴

Community Profile of Boys Studying in Indigenous Schools of Madras Presidency in ca. 1825

The communication, dated 25 July 1822, from the Board of Revenue of Madras Presidency to the collectors of various districts, instructed them to carry out a survey of the indigenous system of education in their respective district following a standard format for the collection and compilation of the information. The information sought included the total population, and the number of schools and colleges in each district. The collectors were also asked to give the number of boys and girls studying in these schools and colleges under each of the following community heads: 'Bramin Scholars', 'Vysea Scholars', 'Sooder Scholars', scholars of 'All other Castes', 'Grand Total' (total Hindu scholars), 'Mussulman Scholars', 'Total Hindus and Mussulman' scholars, and the 'Total Population'.²⁵ In some cases, the collectors gave the number of students belonging to the 'Chatreya' (Kshatriya) community also.²⁶ There is no clear specification as to what was meant by the category of 'All other Castes'. It was left to the discretion of the various district collectors to include under this category all those who, as per

²⁴ Dharampal, *Some Aspects of Earlier Indian Society and Polity and Their Relevance to the Present*, pp. 19–25).

²⁵ Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, pp. 86–87.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Table 1. Boys under Instruction in the Indigenous Schools 1822–25

Linguistic Region	Total Population	Boys in Age Group of 5–10 Years	No. of Schools	Boys Studying in Schools	Percentage under Instruction
Odiya-speaking	332,015	18,445	255	2,965	16.07
Telugu-speaking	4,029,408	223,856	3,454	38,160	17.05
Kannada-speaking	959,469	53,304	551	7,194	13.50
Malayalam-speaking	907,575	50,421	759	11,963	23.73
Tamil-speaking	6,622,474	367,915	6,556	92,890	25.25
Presidency Total	12,850,941	713,941	11,575	153,172	21.45

Source: Dharampal (1983, 87–247).

Note: The number of boys of school-going age is estimated to be one-eighteenth of the total population.

their sources of information, did not come under the aforementioned *varna* classification; it must have included most of those who are classed as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) today.

The detailed information provided by the collectors was summarised in a communication, dated 21 February 1825, from the Board of Revenue to the chief secretary to the government at Fort St. George, Madras. Some of the data of this survey, including extracts from the Minute of Governor Thomas Munro, got published as part of *House of Commons Papers* in 1831–32 (Volume 9). However, the detailed district-wise data on the community profile of students was not published either in any of the government reports or in any of the scholarly investigations on the subject for more than 150 years. The reports of all the collectors, along with the tabulation of the data sent by them following the prescribed format, were compiled and published for the first time in 1983 by the renowned Gandhian thinker and historian Dharampal (1922–2006) in his seminal book *The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century*.

Table 1, which is based on the source tables given in *The Beautiful Tree*, presents the aggregated total number of boys who were undergoing instruction in the different linguistic regions (Odiya, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil) of Madras Presidency during 1822–25, and for the entire Madras Presidency as a whole.²⁷ The table gives the following data for each linguistic region: total population, the estimated number of boys in the school-going age of five to ten years (considering the school-going population of boys to be 1/18th of the total population), total number of boys under instruction in the indigenous schools and the percentage of boys of school-going age who were

²⁷ As may be seen from the source tables provided in *The Beautiful Tree*, the Odiya-speaking region of Madras Presidency comprised of the lone district of Ganjam; similarly the Malayalam-speaking region comprised of the lone district of Malabar; while Vishakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Machilipatnam, Guntur, Nellore and Cuddapah districts constituted the Telugu-speaking region of the Presidency; the districts of Bellary and Srirangapattanam constituted the Kannada-speaking region; and North Arcot, South Arcot, Chengalpattu, Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Salem and Madras districts constituted the Tamil-speaking region of the Presidency.

under instruction in the indigenous schools. The data on the total number of indigenous schools is also included in this table.

Table 1 clearly reveals the important fact that the indigenous education system was widespread. The total number of boys studying in schools in Madras Presidency was 153,172. Following Munro's assumption, that one-ninth of the male population (or 1/18th of the total population) roughly corresponds to the boys of school-going age (which he assumed to be between five and ten years), the aggregate percentage of boys of school-going age who were studying in schools in Madras Presidency, as a whole, turns out to be 21.45 per cent, as can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1 also shows that the percentage of boys of school-going age who were studying in schools in the Tamil-speaking region of Madras Presidency was 25.25 per cent. In the Telugu speaking region, 17.05 per cent of the boys of school-going age were studying in schools. In Malabar, the lone Malayalam-speaking district of Madras Presidency, 23.73 per cent of the boys of school-going age were attending school; while in Ganjam, the lone Odiya-speaking district of the Presidency, 16.07 per cent of the boys were being instructed in the indigenous schools; whereas in the Kannada speaking districts of Bellary and Srirangapattanam, 13.50 per cent of the boys of school-going age were found to be under instruction in the indigenous schools, according to the 1822–25 survey.

Table 2, which is also based on the source tables given in *The Beautiful Tree*, presents the data on the community profile of boys studying in the indigenous schools in the different linguistic regions of the Madras Presidency.

The data in Table 2 pertains to the public system of education. As mentioned earlier, it was noted by several collectors in their reports that a large number of students were being educated at home. It was only the collector of the Madras district, L.G.K. Murray, who sent a detailed tabulation of the number of students of different communities being educated at home. This is presented in Table 3 along with the data on boys of different communities who were undergoing instruction in the public education system in the district of Madras. As may be seen from Table 3, while the total number of boys who were studying in schools in the district of Madras was around 5,500, the number of those who were instructed at home was indeed nearly five times larger at around 26,500. This also seems to imply that almost all the boys of the school-going age in the Madras district were undergoing instruction, either at home or in the indigenous schools.²⁸

We shall now consider the community profile of students undergoing instruction in the indigenous education system as compiled in Tables 2 and 3. While ordering the survey, in his minute of 25 June 1822, Thomas Munro expressed the view that the indigenous education system was perhaps largely confined only to a few sections of the society:

In some districts, reading and writing are confined almost entirely to Bramins and the mercantile class. In some they extend to other classes and are pretty general among the Patails of villages and principal Royets.... The mixed and impure castes seldom learn to read, but as a few of them do, columns are left for them in the Form.²⁹

²⁸ The 1822–25 survey reported the population of Madras district to be 462,051. Considering the number of boys in the school-going age of five to ten years to be 1/18th of the total population, the estimated number of boys of school-going age works out to be 25,670.

²⁹ Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, p. 83.

Table 2. Community Profile of Boys Studying in the Indigenous Schools of Madras Presidency 1822–25

Linguistic Region	Brahmanas	Kshatriyas	Vaisyas	Sudras	Other Castes	Total Hindus	Muslims	Total Male Students
<i>Odiya</i>								
Number of students	808		243	1,001	886	2,938	27	2,965
Percentage of total	27.25		8.20	33.76	29.88	99.09	0.91	
<i>Telugu</i>								
Number of students	13,893	121	7,676	10,076	4,755	36,521	1,639	38,160
Percentage of total	36.41	0.32	20.12	26.40	12.46	95.70	4.30	
<i>Kannada</i>								
Number of students	1,233		1,004	3,296	1,332	6,865	329	7,194
Percentage of total	17.14		13.96	45.82	18.52	95.43	4.57	
<i>Malayalam</i>								
Number of students	2,230		84	3,697	2,756	8,767	3,196	11,963
Percentage of total	18.64		0.70	30.90	23.04	73.28	26.72	
<i>Tamil</i>								
Number of students	11,557	369	4,442	57,873	13,196	87,437	5,453	92,890
Percentage of total	12.44	0.40	4.78	62.30	14.21	94.13	5.87	
Presidency Total								
Number of Students	29,721	490	13,449	75,943	22,925	142,528	10,644	153,172
Percentage of total	19.40	0.32	8.78	49.58	14.97	93.05	6.95	

Source: Dharampal (1983, 87–247).

- Notes:**
1. The number of boys in school and the total population of districts are taken from *The Beautiful Tree*.
 2. The 1822–25 estimate of the total population of the Telugu-speaking district of Nellore is incorrectly entered in *The Beautiful Tree* as 839,647. This is corrected to 439,647 as noted in the Board of Revenue's letter dated 21 February 1825 to the Government of Madras.
 3. For each linguistic region, the 'Percentage of Total' gives the percentage share of the boys of each community among the total number of boys studying in the indigenous schools of that district.

The data of the Madras Survey of 1822–25 as summarised in Table 2, presents a completely different picture as regards the participation by various communities in the indigenous education system. It shows that all the sections of the society were being instructed in these schools; in fact, the majority of the students in most of the districts were from the so-called non-*dvija*³⁰ communities. As Table 2 shows, the non-*dvija* Hindus comprising of Sudras and the 'Other Castes' constituted about 65 per cent or nearly two-thirds of all the students studying in the schools. While the non-*dvijas* constituted only 39 per cent of the total students in the Telugu-speaking districts, their percentage was much higher at 54 per cent in the Malayalam-speaking Malabar, 64 per cent in the Odiya-speaking Ganjam district and 74 per cent in the Kannada-speaking Bellary and Srirangapattanam districts; in the Tamil-speaking districts, the non-*dvija*

³⁰ The Sanskrit word *dvija* means 'twice-born' and it has traditionally been associated with those belonging to the Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya communities.

Table 3. Community Profile of Boys Undergoing Instruction in Schools and at Home in the District of Madras 1822–25

	Brahmanas	Vaiśyas	Sudras	Other Castes	Total Hindus	Muslims	Total
Instructed in schools	410	835	3,678	447	5,370	153	5,523
<i>Percentage of total</i>	<i>7.42</i>	<i>15.12</i>	<i>66.59</i>	<i>8.09</i>	<i>97.23</i>	<i>2.77</i>	
Instructed at home	7,586	6,132	7,589	3,449	24,756	1,690	26,446
<i>Percentage of total</i>	<i>28.68</i>	<i>23.19</i>	<i>28.70</i>	<i>13.04</i>	<i>93.61</i>	<i>6.39</i>	
Total (school + home)	7,996	6,967	11,267	3,896	30,126	1,843	31,969
<i>Percentage of total</i>	<i>25.01</i>	<i>21.79</i>	<i>35.24</i>	<i>12.19</i>	<i>94.24</i>	<i>5.76</i>	

Source: Dharampal (1983, 21, 34–35, 232–33).

- Notes:**
1. The percentage of boys of school-going age is estimated to be one-eighteenth of the total population.
 2. The 'Percentage of Total' gives the percentage share of the boys of each community among the total number of boys studying in the various schools and at home in Madras.

students, indeed constituted an overwhelming majority of 77 per cent of the total student population.³¹

It is also important to take note of the community profile of the students who were studying at home as given in Table 3. As was noted earlier, this information is available only for the Madras district, and the number of boys who were reported to be studying at home (26,446) was nearly five times the number of those studying in the indigenous schools (5,523). It is interesting to see that of the 26,446 boys who were being instructed at home, a substantial number, viz. 7,589 (about 27%) belonged to the Sudra community and 3,449 (about 13%) belonged to the 'Other Castes' (or what are today classed as the SCs and STs). Thus, under the indigenous education system, what may perhaps thought of to be a privilege of being instructed at home was widely enjoyed by the Sudras as well as the 'Other Castes'.

Introduction of English System of Education and Its Elitist Bias as Inherited from the British Background

In 1813, the British House of Commons, while renewing the charter of the East India Company, witnessed a major debate on the state of India and the alleged duty of the British government to lift the Indian masses out of 'darkness' and 'superstition'. This debate was led by William Wilberforce, who managed to get a clause included in the act

³¹ Since the reports of the collectors do not provide the total population of each community in the districts of the Madras Presidency, it is not possible to estimate, community-wise, the percentage of boys of school-going age who were undergoing instruction in the districts of the Presidency. However, approximate estimates of community-wise total population and the percentage of boys of school-going age who were undergoing instruction can be worked out on the basis of the data pertaining to a much later period as reported in the first detailed Census of the Presidency conducted in 1871. (For further details, see Roy Chowdhury, *Changing Profile of Community Participation in School Education in Madras Presidency: 1820–1920*.)

allowing for the propagation of Christianity in India.³² The Charter Act of 1813 passed by the House of Commons also stipulated that a sum of a lakh of rupees may be kept apart for ‘the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences.’³³

At this time, there was no intention on the part of the British government to get involved with popular education or the education of ordinary people in India. It seems that, by then, the authorities in England were also fairly acquainted with the existence of a widespread indigenous system of education which was supported by the local communities themselves (but surprisingly the Act does not make any mention of this fact).

The scholarly histories of English education in India have paid considerable attention to the so-called debate in the 1830s between the Orientalists and the Anglicists in shaping the policy on Indian education. Here, it is important to note that while the Orientalists and the Anglicists did differ substantially regarding the role that was to be played by the Indian languages and the indigenous institutions of higher learning in imparting ‘useful knowledge’ to the elite classes of Indian society, they both agreed, and agreed very vehemently, that the aim should be to impart the new or modern European knowledge which was infinitely superior to the entire corpus of indigenous learning. They were equally vehement in their agreement on the principle that, while initiating a policy for Indian education, the government should be exclusively focused on the education of the elite classes of Indian society and not be concerned, at least initially, with the popular education of the masses.

This debate on the policy to be adopted for the education of India became more acerbic after the arrival of Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59) who was to present the Anglicist view with greater vigour. Macaulay, however, was equally vehement in agreeing with the Orientalists that the new system should not burden itself with the education of the masses, but should exclusively concern itself with the creation of an elite class. As is well known, Macaulay’s views carried the day, and his policy on education was adopted by the Government of India.³⁴

The policy that was decided upon by the Government of India received full support and approval from their masters in London. The rulers in England and the authorities in India were equally clear that the new English system of education was to be exclusively directed towards the upper classes of Indian society. Lord Auckland, the successor of Governor-General Bentinck, pointed out that, it was the case even in Europe that government’s involvement with popular education came only in the nineteenth century, several centuries after the establishment of institutions of higher learning and

³² This debate has been reproduced by Dharampal in his book *Despoliation and Defaming of India: The Early Nineteenth Century Crusade*. Dharampal also notes:

[W]hile the purpose and programme was of Christianization, by persuasion or by coercive means, the clause itself camouflaged this programme by the term ‘that such measures ought to be adopted, as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement’. It is in the context of this wording that the post-1850 reports on India were stated to be on India’s ‘material and moral improvement’. (p. 58)

³³ Zastoupil and Moir, ed., *The Great Indian Education Debate*, p. 91.

³⁴ Macaulay’s famous minute of 22 February 1835 received the concurrence of Governor-General William Bentinck on the very same day.

their feeder public schools catering to the elite classes; so, how could one conceive that it could be done in anyway, differently, in India.³⁵

The Halting Growth of the Governmental Education System in Madras Presidency: 1835–81

Even prior to all this debate on government policy on education, in the 1830s, a ‘Board of Public Instruction’ was created in the Madras Presidency, following suggestions made by Thomas Munro in 1826; and under its supervision, fourteen collectorate and eighty-one tehsil schools were started. A school for training of teachers was also established in the Madras city. However, since the ruling establishment in London did not approve these initiatives, all these schools were wound up, within a decade, by 1836—except for the teacher training school in Madras which was made into a high school. The Board itself was later replaced by a ‘Committee for Native Education’. In 1840, the then governor, Lord Elphinstone, appointed a ‘University Board’ which could not have concerned itself with the education of the common people as the President of the Board, as also the governor, were strongly in favour of restricting government schools to the higher classes of the society.

Thus, until about 1855, there were hardly any governmental initiatives in the sphere of elementary education in Madras Presidency. However, from around the middle of the nineteenth century, there seems to have been a shift in the policy of the government in London, as it began to envisage some widening of the base of the governmental system of education in India. Such a shift may be seen for instance in the Despatch No. 49 of 19 July 1854 from the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London to Lord Dalhousie, the then governor-general of India. This document, more popularly known as the Wood’s Despatch, after Charles Wood (1800–85), the then President of the Board of Control of the East India Company, starts by reiterating the larger mission of civilizing India that Providence had placed in the hands of the British. As regards the specific details of the policy to be followed, the despatch notes:

[39] It is to this class of institutions [of higher education and allied schools] that the attention of the Government has hitherto been principally directed, and they absorb the greater part of the public funds which are now applied to educational purposes.... [All this] has led, we think to **too exclusive a direction of the efforts of Government towards providing the means of acquiring a very high degree of education for a small number of natives of India, drawn for the most part, from what we should here call the higher classes.**

...

[41] **Our attention should now be directed to a consideration, if possible, still more important, and one which has been hitherto, we are bound to admit, too much neglected,**

³⁵ Governor-General Lord Auckland’s minute about ‘Native Education’, dated 24 November 1839, is recorded in the General Department (see Zastoupil and Moir ed., *The Great Indian Education Debate*, pp. 304–31). Incidentally, it is not widely appreciated today that state involvement with popular education in England started only around 1833. As the eighth edition (1855) of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* noted:

Popular education in England is almost entirely the creation of the present [i.e. nineteenth] century. Before 1801, the total number of public and private schools was only 3,363 ... The records of the condition of society a century or even half a century ago describe a state of ignorance. (p. 746)

namely, how useful and practical knowledge, suited to every station in life, may be best conveyed to the great mass of the people, ... and we desire to see the active measures of Government more especially directed for the future to this object, for the attainment of which we are ready to sanction a considerable increase of expenditure....

[60] A more minute and constant local supervision than would accompany the general system of grants in aid will be necessary, in order to raise the character of the 'indigenous schools', which are, at present, not only very inefficient in quality, but of exceedingly precarious duration, ... (emphasis added)³⁶

Thus, the despatch of 1854 clearly acknowledged that the government policy, funds and initiatives were, until then, focused more or less exclusively on providing a higher degree of education to a very select elite among the 'Natives'. The despatch suggested that some attention should now be directed, if possible, to the education of 'the great mass of the people'. It also mooted the policy of incorporation of the indigenous schools into the governmental system by gradually bringing them under a suitable 'grants-in-aid' scheme. In spite of the changes in policy advocated in the despatch of 1854, it seems that the ground situation did not alter much until the 1870s.

Detailed statistics on the number of institutions and the number of students studying in them during the years 1855–56, 1870–71 and 1881–82, is presented in Table 4, which is based on the data compiled by the Education Commission of 1882. From the table, it may be seen that in 1855–56, the indigenous school system continued to flourish with 12,498 schools in which 161,687 students were undergoing instruction.³⁷ On the other hand, there were only eighty-three primary schools with 2,093 students under the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).³⁸ In all, there were reported to be 13,766 institutions with 204,856 students. Thus, it was the indigenous school system which formed the backbone of public education in the Presidency in 1855–56.

Table 4. Indigenous Schools in Madras Presidency: 1855–81

Year		Indigenous Schools		Departmental	Total
		Aided and Inspected	Extra-departmental	Primary Schools	All Schools and Colleges
1855–56	Institutions	–	12,498	83	13,766
	Pupils	–	161,687	2,093	204,856
1870–71	Institutions	NA	12,624	98	16,749
	Pupils	NA	149,003	5,463	263,685
1881–82	Institutions	8,436	2,828	1,263	18,136
	Pupils	185,072	54,064	46,975	441,659

Source: *Report of the Education Commission, 1882* (1883, Part I, p. 33), and 2); *Report by the Madras Provincial Committee with Evidences before the Committee and Memorials addressed to the Education Commission* (1884, p. 70).

³⁶ Zastoupil and Moir, ed., *The Great Indian Education Debate*, pp. 375–76 and 380–81.

³⁷ It is interesting to note that the number of indigenous schools (i.e., 12,498) in 1856 was in fact larger than the number of indigenous schools (i.e., 11,534) reported in the 1822–25 survey.

³⁸ The DPI in Madras Presidency was created in 1854 with Mr Arbuthnot as its first director.

Even in 1870–71, it was again the indigenous school system that continued to be the mainstay of elementary education in the Presidency. There were 12,624 indigenous schools which catered to the education of nearly 0.15 million students, which constituted more than 50 per cent of all the students who were undergoing instruction in the Presidency.

As can be seen from Table 4, some notable expansion in the governmental education system took place for the first time during the decade 1871–81. By 1881–82, the network of primary schools under the Department had expanded considerably, both as regards the number of schools as well as the number of students studying in them. This expansion was facilitated mainly by the incorporation of nearly 8,500 indigenous schools under the ‘aided and inspected’ category of the DPI. At the same time, the number of extra-departmental indigenous schools had come down (again by nearly 10,000) from 12,624 in 1872 to 2,828 in 1882.

The fact that it was the indigenous schools which contributed in a major way to the expansion of the governmental education system was also acknowledged in the *Report by the Madras Provincial Committee* to the Education Commission of India (1882):

It appears from these two statements that 8,436 schools of an indigenous character, with about 185,000 pupils, have been brought into connexion [sic.] with the department... The great increase in the number of schools connected with the Department of Education has been due mainly to the gradual absorption of such indigenous schools ...³⁹

Community Profile of Boys under Instruction under the Governmental System of Education: 1861–80

In Table 5, we have compiled the community profile of boys under instruction (in the governmental schools as well as colleges) in the Madras Presidency, based on the data given in the annual Reports of the Department of Public Instruction (RDPI) for some selected years during the period 1861–80.⁴⁰ In this table, the number of boys under instruction for each year has been given community-wise.⁴¹ The rows titled ‘percentage of total’ give the share of boys under instruction from each community as a percentage of the total number of boys under instruction.

From the table, it follows that almost 60 per cent of the boys under instruction in the governmental education system in 1861–62 belonged to the Hindu community,

³⁹ Education Commission 1882, *Report by the Madras Provincial Committee with Evidences before the Committee and Memorials Addressed to the Education Commission*, p. 71.

⁴⁰ An attempt is made in this article (and in its sequel) to compare the community profile of students under the English education system during the second half of the nineteenth century and later, with what prevailed under the indigenous education system in ca. 1825. As was seen in the earlier section on indigenous education, boys constitute the overwhelming majority of students receiving instruction in the indigenous schools of the Madras Presidency. Therefore, for the sake of meaningful comparison, our tabulation of the community profile of students under the English education system, in this, as well as subsequent sections, is also restricted to the class of male students only.

⁴¹ Such a community-wise break up is given only for the aggregate total of all the boys under instruction, who were studying in schools or colleges. No community-wise data is available for boys studying in schools prior to 1881.

Table 5. Community Profile of Boys under Instruction in Madras Presidency: 1861–80

Years		SCs & STs	Total		Native		Total
			Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Others	
1861–62	Boys under instruction		14,934	890	2,910	1,263	25,062
	Percentage of total		59.59	3.55	11.61	5.04	
1864–65	Boys under instruction		26,813	1,429	4,815	2,080	35,137
	Percentage of total		76.31	4.07	13.70	5.92	
1870–71	Boys under instruction		89,572	4,296	8,403	2,756	105,027
	Percentage of total		85.28	4.09	8.00	2.62	
1871–72	Boys under instruction		106,214	5,523	8,952	3,000	123,689
	Percentage of total		85.87	4.47	7.24	2.43	
1872–73	Boys under instruction	87	155,131	9,779	9,926	2,888	177,724
	Percentage of total	0.05	87.29	5.50	5.59	1.62	
1873–74	Boys under instruction	1,244	184,179	15,258	11,268	3,003	213,707
	Percentage of total	0.58	86.18	7.14	5.27	1.41	
1879–80	Boys under instruction	1,696	200,038	18,077	18,057	2,925	295,467
	Percentage of total	0.71	83.66	7.56	7.55	1.22	

Sources: *Report of the Department of Public Instruction in Madras Presidency (hereafter RDPI) 1861–62*, p.3; *RDPI 1864–65*, p.5; *RDPI 1870–71*, p.8; *RDPI 1871–72*, p.11; *RDPI 1873–74*, p.12 for the years 1872–73 and 1873–1874; and *RDPI 1879–80*, p.8.

- Notes:**
1. The data for each year is taken from the corresponding annual reports of the Department of Public Instruction. The figures for 'Europeans and Eurasians' has been included under 'Others' in the table.
 2. The number of Native Christians, Hindus and Muslims noted against 1861–62 are exclusive of 5,065 boys attending the Gospel Society's Village Schools. The *RDPI 1861–62* has not arranged them under different communities.
 3. There is no mention of 'Pariah students' in the *RDPI* Volumes till 1872–73. Reports from 1872–73 to 1877–78 give data for 'Pariahs' separately from the Hindus. The numbers listed under the category 'Pariahs' in the *RDPI* volumes have been tabulated under the category 'SCs & STs' for the years 1872–73 to 1877–1878. These are also added to the number listed under 'Hindus' in the *RDPI* volumes to obtain the number of 'Total Hindus' in the above tabulation.
 4. For the years 1878–79 and 1879–80, the *RDPI* volumes combine the data for 'Others' and 'Pariahs' together under the category 'Others including Pariahs'. Since the numbers listed under 'Others' are less than fifty for the earlier years (1871–77), these numbers are tabulated under 'SCs & STs' and they have also been included under the 'Total Hindus'.

which share rose to about 85 per cent by the 1870s. The Muslim boys constituted about 3.5 per cent of the boys under instruction in 1861, which share rose to 4.1 per cent by 1871 and further to 7.6 per cent by 1879. More importantly, the Native Christians, who constituted only about 1.54 per cent of the total population as per the 1871 Census, accounted for about 12 per cent of the boys under instruction in 1861. The number of Native Christian boys under instruction went up from nearly 3,000 in 1861–62 to nearly 5,000 in 1864–65 and their share among all the boys under instruction went up to nearly 14 per cent. Though the number of Native Christian boys under instruction went up further to around 8,500 by 1870–71, their relative share came down to nearly 8 per cent as there was a considerable increase in the number of Hindu boys under

instruction from around 27,000 in 1864–65 to nearly 90,000 in 1870–71. In 1879, there were over 18,000 Native Christian male students and they constituted 7.6 per cent of all the male students.

The annual RDPI in Madras Presidency start giving information on the number of 'Pariah' students from 1872–1873 onwards. Reports from 1872–73 to 1877–78 give data for 'Pariahs' separately from the Hindus.⁴² They also present information on students from other communities (such as Parsis, Jews, etc.) who are classed together here under the single category 'Others'. In Table 5, the numbers listed under the category 'Pariahs' in the RDPI volumes have been tabulated under the head 'SCs & STs' for the years 1872–73 and 1877–1878. These are also added to the number listed under 'Hindus' in the RDPI volumes to obtain the number of 'Total Hindus' in the table. For the years 1878–79 and 1879–80, the RDPI present the figures for 'Pariahs' and 'Others', combined together, under the category 'Others including Pariahs'. Since the numbers listed under 'Others' in the earlier years (1871–77) are rather small (less than fifty), the combined figures given in RDPI for 'Others including Pariahs', for the years 1878–79 and 1879–80, have been tabulated under 'SCs & STs' in Table 5, and they have also been included under the 'Total Hindus'.

The crucial fact which emerges from the data compiled in Table 5 is that the SCs and STs (who were classed under the category 'Pariahs' in the RDPI) had little or almost nil representation in the governmental education system until 1873. From Census 1871, it can be seen that 'SCs & STs' constituted about 23 per cent of the population of the Presidency. As noted earlier, the category 'Pariahs' appears in the community profiles provided by the annual reports of the DPI only from the year 1872–73. In that year there were only eighty-seven 'Pariah' boys undergoing instruction. By 1877–78, the number of male students from the SC and ST communities went up to 2,305, which constituted only about 1 per cent of the total boys under instruction. By the end of the decade, in 1880, the SC and ST boys constituted only 0.71 per cent of the total boys under instruction. Another important fact which is indicated by this data is that, during this period, the government policy on education seems to have strongly favoured the Native Christian community, and also the Muslims, over the majority of the population.

While discussing the history of educational deprivation of the SCs and STs, it is very important to note that in the English education system introduced under the British rule in India, the SC and ST communities had no presence at all in the schools until the 1870s. The negligible presence of what the DPI referred to as the 'lowest castes' in the governmental educational system until the 1880s was also acknowledged in the annual RDPI for the year 1881:

The small number of children of the lowest castes reading in schools is deplorable, and shows how true the statement is that the present educational system has hitherto failed to reach the lowest classes of the population, the very classes for which in Europe popular elementary education is more especially designed. The classes who are taking advantage of schools, public and private, throughout the country, are the well-to-do classes hitherto in the main

⁴² The British policy of classifying the SCs (and also the STs) outside of the Hindu-fold, at various times in the Census and other official records, was a part of the imperial strategy of dividing the majority Hindu society and also to promote conversion away from the majority religion.

grossly ignorant, and not the masses of the labouring population, except to a very small extent in Tinnevely, Malabar and Madras.⁴³

That the number of SC and ST students in the departmental schools ultimately reached up to nearly 1,700 by 1880, was perhaps mainly due to the incorporation of the indigenous schools under the grants-in-aid scheme during the period 1870–80. The representation of the SC and ST students in the governmental educational system in the districts of the Madras Presidency during 1884–85 will be discussed in the next section.

Community Profile of Boys Studying in Primary Schools in Madras Presidency in 1884–85

In the decade of the 1880s, the DPI of Madras Presidency initiated a new trend of collecting and compiling more information on the community-wise break-up of students (especially the break-up of the Hindu students into different *varna* groups) undergoing instruction at various stages. Their annual reports for this period also provide detailed community-wise break-up of students undergoing instruction in every district of the Presidency. The most detailed data is to be found in the seven annual reports starting with the report of 1883–84 and ending with the report of 1889–90. After 1889–90, and in all subsequent years, the annual RDPI present the community profile of the students in the Presidency as a whole, but do not give the disaggregated community-wise data for the various districts separately.

The report for the year 1883–84 mentions that, '[t]he statistics relating to the education of Brahmans have been separately prepared for the first time.'⁴⁴ The annual RDPI, for 1883–84 and the following six years, present the community profile of the students undergoing instruction under the following seven heads: (a) 'Europeans and Eurasians', (b) 'Native Christians', (c) 'Muhammadans', (d) 'Hindus–Brahmans', (e) 'Hindus–Vaisyas and Sudras',⁴⁵ (f) 'Hindus–Others' and (g) 'Others'.⁴⁶ The 1883–84 report also notes that the category 'Hindus–Others' includes 'other Hindus including

⁴³ Education Commission 1882, *Report by the Madras Provincial Committee with Evidences before the Committee and Memorials addressed to the Commission*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ *Report of the Department of Public Instruction in Madras Presidency* (hereafter RDPI), 1883–84, p. 9.

⁴⁵ This scheme of broad categories under which the information regarding the community profile of students was compiled in the RDPI happens to be a typical instance of the British imperial strategy of dividing the so-called 'caste Hindu society' into the two groups: 'Brahmins' and 'Non-Brahmins'. While some information is provided in the annual reports of the period 1883–90 on the students (boys and girls together) belonging to Vaisya and Sudra *varnas* separately, the detailed data on boys and girls studying at various levels in different districts of the Presidency is available only for Vaisyas and Sudras together as a single group. The annual RDPI continue with the same categories while presenting the data on the community profile of the students in the subsequent decades also, until the time of Independence. The policy of dividing the 'caste Hindu society' into 'Brahmins' and 'Non-Brahmins' seems to have had a significant impact leading to the emergence of the anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, the large scale educational and other deprivations suffered by a large number of *jatis*/communities (which was indeed a major consequence of the policies of British government) became the focal point of the various backward class movements, both prior to and after Independence.

⁴⁶ The category 'Others' included Parsis and Jews, as in the DPI reports of the 1870s, and also perhaps Buddhists and Jains.

Paraiyas'.⁴⁷ The 1884–85 RDPI refers to the 'Hindus–Others' category as comprising of 'Paraiyas and kindred castes'.⁴⁸

The annual RDPI for the seven years from 1883–84 to 1889–90 also give estimates of the population of boys and girls of school-going age for each of the seven community groups listed earlier. This information, as the report of 1883–84 notes, is based on the Census of 1881. In the annual RDPI, the population of boys of school-going age for each community is taken to be 15 per cent of the total male population of the community, which is supposed to give an estimate of the boys in the age group of five to twelve years.

Since the Census enumerations also present detailed data on the age distribution of the population, a more accurate estimate can be made of the boys in the age group of five to ten years, which is what is needed for arriving at the enrolment ratios for boys studying in primary schools. From the Census enumerations, it is seen that boys in the age group of five to ten years constituted 14.69 per cent of the male population of Madras Presidency in 1871⁴⁹; this share became 13.80 per cent in 1881 and 13.91 per cent in 1891.⁵⁰ Hence, during the decade 1881–90, it may be assumed that boys in the age group of five to ten years constituted about 14 per cent of the total male population. The same percentage may be assumed to give, on the average, the share of the boys of the relevant age group hailing from different districts and communities.⁵¹

In Table 6, we have compiled the data on the estimated number of boys in the school-going age group of five to ten years along with the total number of boys reported to be studying in primary schools in each of the major linguistic regions of the Madras Presidency during 1884–85. There, the column titled 'percentage under instruction' gives the percentage of boys of school-going age who are studying in the primary schools in each of the linguistic regions.

From Table 6, it may be noted that, in 1884–85, 320,643 boys were studying in the primary schools. They constituted only about 15 per cent of the total number of boys in the relevant age group of five to ten years. On the face of it, this percentage falls short of the figure of 21.59 per cent which was the percentage of boys in the age group of five to ten years who were reported to be studying in the indigenous schools as per the survey of 1822–25.

While comparing the data compiled in the annual RDPI during 1884–85, with the data reported in the survey of 1822–25, a few important points will have to be kept in mind. First, the survey of 1822–25 was a one-time exercise and cannot be compared with the later systematic enumerations reported either in the decadal Census volumes or in the annual RDPI. The 1822–25 survey reports of the collectors were perhaps based on statements from various *thasildars* or other *taluk* officials giving

⁴⁷ *RDPI 1883–84*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *RDPI 1884–85*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ *Census of India* (hereafter *COI*) 1871, Madras, Part I, Chapter IX, p. 86.

⁵⁰ *COI 1901*, Madras Part I, Chapter IV, p. 62.

⁵¹ We had earlier note that in 1825 Thomas Munro estimated that the boys of age group of five to ten years constituted one-ninth or 11.11 per cent of the total male population. As per the Census enumerations, this share was one-seventh or around 14 per cent in 1881 and 1891. Since the longevity of the population seems to have come down significantly between the 1820s and the 1880s, Munro's estimate may not have been off the mark. Currently, as per Census 2011, the share of boys in the age group of five to ten years is reported to be 9.4 per cent of the male population for the whole of Indian Union.

Table 6. Boys of School-going Age Studying in Primary Schools in 1884–85

Linguistic Region	Male Population	Boys in Age Group of 5–10 Years	Total Male Students	Percentage under Instruction
Odiya	868,467	121,585	23,418	19.26
Telugu	4,469,067	625,669	73,837	11.80
Kannada	679,400	95,116	15,939	16.76
Malayalam	1,174,273	164,398	29,802	18.13
Tamil	7,613,793	1,065,931	169,866	15.94
Presidency Total	15,277,233	2,138,813	320,643	14.99

Source: RDPI 1884–85, Appendix, pp. 157–60.

- Notes:**
1. The column titled 'Male Population' present the male population of each region by making use of the data given in the Reports of DPI which take 15 per cent of the total male population of the community (as enumerated in the Census of 1881) to be an estimate of the number of boys of the school-going age.
 2. The column titled 'Boys in Age Group 5–10 years' give the estimate of the boys in this age group, which is taken to be 14 per cent of the male population of the community based on the age distribution of the population as given in Censuses of 1881.

their estimates of the number of schools and the number of students; and there is a great chance of these estimates being biased more on the lower side than otherwise.

The second important point that has to be borne in mind is that the final figures reported in the 1822–25 survey admittedly did not include the number of students instructed at home. The only district for which this information was compiled and reported was the district of Madras; and there it was found that the number instructed at home was nearly five times the number of those instructed in the schools. Munro tried to incorporate this discrepancy by suggesting that the percentage share of boys of school-going age who were receiving instruction was more likely to be one-third rather than the one-fourth who were reported to be attending schools. As was discussed earlier, this is clearly a gross under-estimate as it in no way reflects the large numbers of those instructed at home as reported in the case of Madras district. In fact, as was explained earlier, the percentage share of boys who were undergoing instruction in ca. 1825, either in the schools or at home, was at least 65 per cent or more.

Another important issue that should be kept in mind is that the 1884–85 data on the enrolment of students in primary schools in itself does not give the correct picture of the number of students receiving an adequate basic education. This is mainly because the vast majority of the students did not study for the full five years in the primary schools as may be seen from the drop-out rates prevailing even much later in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁵²

⁵² As we shall note in Part II of this article, the drop-out rates were well over 70 per cent even during the period 1921–35. This is in marked contrast to the situation that seems to have prevailed under the indigenous education system in ca. 1825, as may be gleaned from the reports of the various collectors. As per the tabulation given in *The Beautiful Tree* (p. 25) it seems that the average period spent by each student in the indigenous schools was more than five years at that time.

Now, a comparison of the figures in Tables 1 and 6 shows that the Odiya and Kannada speaking regions of Madras Presidency reported slightly higher levels of enrolment (19.26% and 16.76%) in 1884–85 than was reported in the 1822–25 survey (16.07% and 13.50%). On the other hand, the Telugu, Malayalam and the Tamil regions reported considerably lower levels of enrolment in 1884–85 compared to the 1822–25 figures. The Telugu speaking region of the Presidency reported an enrolment level of 11.80 per cent in 1884–85 compared to 17.05 per cent recorded in 1822–25. The Malayalam speaking region of the Presidency reported an enrolment level of 18.13 per cent in 1884–85 compared to 23.73 per cent recorded in 1822–25. Finally, the Tamil speaking region of the Presidency reported an enrolment level of 15.94 per cent in 1884–85. The same region had reported a much higher enrolment level of 25.25 per cent in 1822–25. Furthermore, as was noted earlier, the enrolment figures of the 1880s as presented in the RDPI are rather deceptive as the reports do not give any data on the large dropout rates among the school students prevalent then.

We now consider the community profile of the boys studying in the primary schools in Madras Presidency in 1884–85. As was mentioned earlier, the annual RDPI, for the seven years from 1883–84 to 1889–90, also present detailed community-wise statistics on the number of boys and girls undergoing instruction in the primary schools, in the secondary schools, and in the colleges for each of the then twenty-two districts of Madras Presidency. The aggregated data on the total number of boys belonging to various communities studying in the primary schools of different linguistic regions during 1884–85 has been compiled and presented in Table 7. In the table, the rows titled ‘percentage of total’ give the share of the number of boys of each community, as a percentage of the total number of boys studying in primary schools.

We may now compare the community profile of boys of enrolled in the primary schools in 1884–85 as given in Table 7 with the community profile of boys studying in the indigenous schools of 1822–25 as presented in Table 2, for the various linguistic regions of Madras Presidency. For the Presidency as a whole, it is interesting to note that while the ‘Other Castes’ or the SCs and STs accounted for almost 15 per cent of the total boys studying the indigenous schools in 1822–25, their share among boys enrolled in the primary schools in 1884–85 had come down drastically to 6.5 per cent. The decrease was fairly pronounced in the vast Tamil-speaking region of the Presidency, where the share came down from 14.21 per cent in 1822–25 to 5.51 per cent in 1884–85. It was much more pronounced in the Malayalam (23.04%–10.09%), Kannada (18.52%–1.12%) and Odiya (29.88%–3.66%) linguistic regions of the Presidency. The decrease was somewhat marginal only in the Telugu-speaking region (12.46%–9.92%).

The data compiled in Table 7 also shows that the same phenomena that were noticed in the case of the Presidency as a whole was more or less replicated in all the linguistic regions also. The Native Christians enjoyed a much greater access to primary education (compared to their share in the population) than other communities; and so did the Muslims. The share of Muslim boys among those receiving primary education in the 1880s was somewhat larger than what it was in the indigenous schools in ca. 1825. On the other hand, it was the share of the SC and ST boys studying in primary schools in the 1880s which showed a sharp decline and was abysmally low in the 1880s in comparison to what seems to have prevailed in most regions of the Presidency in ca. 1825 under the indigenous education system.

Table 7. Community Profile of Boys Studying in Primary Schools in Madras Presidency in 1884–85

Linguistic Region		Vaiyas & Sudras			SCs & STs	Total			Total
		Brahmanas				Hindus	Muslims	Native Christians	
Odiya	Boys in primary schools	5,688	15,970	858	22,516	232	90	580	23,418
	<i>Percentage of total</i>	24.29	68.20	3.66	96.15	0.99	0.38	2.48	
Telugu	Boys in primary schools	13,807	43,379	7,326	64,512	5,805	3,331	189	73,837
	<i>Percentage of total</i>	18.70	58.75	9.92	87.37	7.86	4.51	0.26	
Kannada	Boys in primary schools	1,072	12,777	179	1,737	14,028	116	58	15,939
	<i>Percentage of total</i>	6.73	80.16	1.12	10.90	88.01	0.73	0.36	
Malayalam	Boys in primary schools	1,183	18,988	3,007	23,178	5,704	845	75	29,802
	<i>Percentage of total</i>	3.97	63.71	10.09	77.77	19.14	2.84	0.25	
Tamil	Boys in primary schools	14,517	121,072	9,353	144,942	10,671	12,931	1,322	169,866
	<i>Percentage of total</i>	8.55	71.28	5.51	85.33	6.28	7.61	0.78	
Presidency Total	Boys in primary schools	38,418	215,513	21,104	275,035	24,624	18,732	2,252	320,643
	<i>Percentage of total</i>	11.98	67.21	6.58	85.78	7.68	5.84	0.70	

Source: RDPI 1884-85, Appendix, pp. 157–60. The figures for 'Europeans and Eurasians' have been included under 'Others'.

Note: The rows titled 'Percentage of Total' give the share of the number of boys of each community as a percentage of the total number of boys studying in primary schools.

Conclusion

In this article, we have traced the changing community profile of boys studying in primary schools in the Madras Presidency during the nineteenth century. We first summarised the data on the widespread indigenous education system as brought out in a detailed survey conducted by the Presidency government during 1822–25. It is seen that nearly 22 per cent of the boys of school-going age were being educated in these schools; and, if account is taken also of those who were being instructed at home, then at least 65 per cent of the boys of school-going age were undergoing instruction either in the schools or at home. Another important fact that emerges from the 1822–25 survey data is that around 65 per cent of the boys studying in the schools hailed from communities which were not classed under the Brahmana, Kshatriya or the Vaisya *varna*. This is in marked contrast to the situation that came about in the second half of the nineteenth century under the new governmental system of education. Based on the detailed data presented in the various annual RDPI, it is seen that until the 1870s, boys belonging to communities which are classed under the SCs and STs today, had no representation in the governmental education system. Their share among the boys studying in schools was below 7 per cent even in 1885, which was less than half the share that they had in 1822–25. It is also seen that in 1885, only about 15 per cent of the boys of school-going age were studying in the primary schools of the Presidency. Considering the large dropout rates which continued to prevail until the 1930s, the percentage of boys who received adequate basic education would indeed have been much smaller.

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