

Education Entrepreneurs of Missionaries for Women's Education in Punjab

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In the context of present portrayal of modern education, the implicit and unswerving contributions of Missionaries are unprecedented. The present research investigates the role of Christian missionaries as educational entrepreneurs in the Punjab. It moves beyond the conventional narrative of missionaries as mere religious propagators to analyse their work through the lens of social entrepreneurship. This study seeks to reframe the narrative by investigating the specific role of missionaries in launching educational infrastructure for women education. It argues that missionaries were visionary institution builders who identified critical social gaps, mobilized transcontinental resources, and introduced innovative pedagogies and administrative systems for the women education. The missionary curriculum was a product of strategic adaptation. While initially focused on Bible studies and vernacular languages, they quickly pivoted to meet market demands. They became purveyors of coveted Western knowledge, introducing English, mathematics, history, and the sciences. The girl child was the most vital enterprise of Missionaries. It not only challenged the darkness of societal male hegemony but also paved the way for the modern education of the most underprivileged partner of the society. Several reports had consolidated the untiring efforts of Missionaries in girls' education.

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Introduction

“You will find almost all the educated women in India who have made their mark in our day are native Christians, or were educated in the missionaries' institutions.”¹

The role of Christian missionaries as educational entrepreneurs in the Punjab is quite distinguished. It moves beyond the conventional narrative of

missionaries as mere religious propagators to analyse their work through the lens of social entrepreneurship. The study argues that missionaries were visionary institution builders who identified critical social gaps, mobilized transcontinental resources, and introduced innovative pedagogies and administrative systems. Their efforts catalysed the socio-cultural transformation of Punjab,

¹Mullens, Joseph. Statistical Tables of Protestant Mission in India; collected at the Close of 1881.

Calcutta : Baptist Mission Press, p.62.

particularly in pioneering female education, professional teacher training, and vernacular literacy.² The most glaring contribution was of women education. The missionaries contributed in the development of education by establishing various educational institutions for women.³

The early 19th century in Punjab was characterized by a traditional educational system deeply rooted in religious and agrarian life. Knowledge was transmitted through gurukuls (imparting Sanskrit and Hindu scriptures), madrasas (focusing on Islamic theology and Persian literature), and informal maktabas.⁴ This system, while rich in cultural and religious knowledge, was largely inaccessible to the masses, particularly women and lower castes, and did not engage with modern sciences, rational inquiry, or administrative skills. The arrival of Christian missionaries, beginning with the American Presbyterian Mission in Ludhiana in 1834, marked a paradigm shift.⁵

Figures like Rev. John C. Lowrie and later, Rev. Charles W. Forman, Rev. John Newton, and Rev. Robert Clark of the Church Missionary Society, acted as catalytic agents. They were not just evangelists but institution-builders who perceived education as a fundamental tool for social engagement and transformation.⁶ Their establishments, such as the Forman Christian

College (1864) and St. Stephen's College, Delhi (1881), which served the Punjab region, became incubators for a new class of professionals—administrators, doctors, journalists, and teachers.⁷ Their entrepreneurial model was unique: they combined philanthropic zeal with strategic acumen, securing funds from abroad, adapting curricula to local and imperial needs, and creating self-sustaining educational ecosystems that transcended communal boundaries. The missionaries rightly understood that learning should accompany conversion. Education alone could not deliver men and women from their suppressed and oppressed condition. The awakened worldview also enabled them to take up new possibilities by being freed from the bondage of local gods and deities.⁸ While the historical presence of Christian missionaries in Punjab is well-documented, their role as pioneering social entrepreneurs remains a critically underexplored dimension.⁹ Existing scholarship often pigeonholes them as agents of colonialism or proselytization. This study seeks to reframe the narrative by investigating the specific role of missionaries in launching educational infrastructure for women education. The research focuses primarily on formal educational institutions (schools, colleges, training institutes) and their systemic impact on women education. It does not delve deeply into theological debates or the purely evangelistic activities of the

² G. W. Leitner (1882), *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab since Annexation and in 1882*, Republican Books, Lahore, pp. 25-28.

³ Maninder Kaur (2018), *The American Presbyterian Mission in Colonial Punjab: Contribution in Social and Religious Fields (1834-1930)*, *Remarking An Analysis* VOL-3* ISSUE-2* May- 2018, p 102.

⁴ G. W. Leitner (1882), *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab since Annexation and in 1882*, Republican Books, Lahore, pp. 25-30.

⁵ John C. B. Webster (1976), *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India*, Macmillan, Delhi. pp. 68.

⁶ Maninder Kaur (2018), *The American Presbyterian Mission in Colonial Punjab: Contribution in Social and Religious Fields (1834-1930)*, *Remarking An Analysis* VOL-3* ISSUE-2* May- 2018, p 103.

⁷ "The Forman Christian College: A Retrospect," *The Punjab Mission News*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1909): 112-115.

⁸ Samuel, Vinay (ed.). *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003). p.120.

⁹ Jeffrey Cox, "Religion and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914**, ed. Andrew Porter (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 45.

missions, unless they directly influenced educational policy or practice.

The first ever educational efforts by the Protestant missionaries in India were made by the Danish missionaries (landed in 1706) who after having founded a few elementary schools established a seminary in 1710 at Tranqubar to train teachers. Grundker and Schulze were to start schools in India. They took special care for European and the anglo-Indian children through introducing their own Charity Schools which included those of Madras (1715), Bombay(1720), and Calcutta (1720).¹⁰ The first regular established by a missionary in Bengal was that of Rev. Kiernander, who on an invitation by Lord Clive from Madras had founded it in the premises of the old Church, Calcutta, in December, 1758.¹¹ The girls school was not established as such during the period, through the records revealed Ziegenbalg having admitted girls in his boys schools.¹² In 1809 the Serampore missionaries founded the first of their Benevolent

institutions at Calcutta. The missionaries kept rolling the torch of education high to emancipate the deprived sections of society by opening the schools for both boys and girls.

The early history of education in the Bombay Presidency is chiefly a record of the missionary enterprise.¹³ They worked through three agencies for women education viz. (1) girls day school, (2) boarding establishments, and (3) domestic teaching arranged in families of the middle and higher classes called *zanana* Work.¹⁴ In fact the missionary ladies took upon themselves the hazardous task of opening up schools for Indian girls, and older girls or ladies of high classes were taught at home. This technique of educating higher caste women called *Zenana* work, proved an eyeopener to the secluded *zenanas*. As early as in 1814, the American missionaries had started their first school in Bombay; and later had started the first school for the Indian girls in women India at Mahim.¹⁵ The following table depicts the significant presence of missionaries in India.¹⁶

Table-1. Distribution of Missionary Educational Institutions in Different Regions of India

Appendix – A

Comparative Distribution of Missionaries in India in Four Decades, 1851-1881

Provinces	Stations				Date of Commencement	Missionaries			
	1851	1861	1871	1881		1851	1861	1871	1881
Bengal	61	68	102	127	1799	95	106	106	125
N. W. Provinces	19	37	47	50	1813	45	64	62	57
Oudh	—	4	9	11	1858	—	9	12	10
Punjab	5	20	34	42	1818	10	40	38	52
Central India	3	9	22	24	1842	4	11	17	41
Bombay	23	33	37	49	1813	38	48	57	74
Madras	111	148	172	248	1706	147	201	196	217
Total in India	222	319	432	569		339	479	488	586

¹⁰Sherring, M.A. The History of the Protestant Missions in India, 1706-1881. London: The Religious Tract Society, 1884, p.8.

¹¹Carey, W.H. Good Old Days of honorable John Company. Shimla : The Agra Press, 1887., pp 74-76.

¹² Penny Frank. The Church in Madras. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1904 Vol. 1.p.189.

¹³ Sen, J. M. (1941), History of Education in India. Calcutta: The Book Company Ltd., p. 110.

¹⁴ Jonathan Masih (2015), Contribution of Missionaries Towards Education for India, Amos of the Indian Society Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi.p.180.

¹⁵Ibid.p.201.

¹⁶Ibid. p. 349.

The above table illustrates the noteworthy existence of Missionaries in the various zones of India. As the studies elaborates, instead of several hardships they continued to blowout the flicker of erudition. Their efforts to eradicate the

darkness of analphabetism from the roots made them warriors. They roofed almost all the provinces of India disregarding the conveniences and quantum of knowledge.

Table-2.

State wise Increase in Enrolment of Girls in Missionary Institutions in India by Level and Type of Education in four Decades, 184-196.)

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Contribution of Missionaries Towards Education in India

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Appendix - C

Statewise Increase in Enrolment of Girls in Missionary Institutions in India by Level and Type of Education in Four Decades, 1851-1881

P R O V I N C E S	Female Missionaries		Colleges and Schools for Females									
			1851		1861		1871		1881			
	Foreign	Native Christian	1871	1881	Day Schools	Boarding Schools	Pupils	Schools	Day Schools	Boarding Schools	Pupils	Schools
Bengal	90	114	64	26	690	797						
N. W. Provinces	21	140	21	8	213	9	27					
Oudh	20	391	48	18	119	173						
Punjab	28	211	9	4	30	40						
Central India	12	391	1	14	620	1033						
Bombay	46	1881	31	26	118	22						
Madras	121	1881	46	690	118	22						
Total	370	1881	46	1881	7	857						
	479	1881	48	690	2	8						
	837	1881	47	690	14	128						
	1643	1881	116	690	22	148						
	281	1881	7	690	1550	4431						
	285	1881	31	690	67	1182						
	8919	1881	1186	690	232	2324						
	86	1881	8	690	140	232						
	2274	1881	139	690	2	5						
	261	1881	27	690	14	105						
	12057	1881	1182	690	27	61						
	108	1881	7	690	654	3201						
	3912	1881	2986	690	117	495						
	26	1881	8	690	3	8						
	536	1881	211	690	78	128						
	664	1881	263	690	19	124						
	24078	1881	12736	690	438	3201						
	2905	1881	557	690	67	1182						

P R O V I N C E S	1881			
	1881			
	1881			
	1881			
Bengal	607	1094		
N. W. Provinces	331	1094		
Oudh	57	36		
Punjab	134	1303		
Central India	10	1258		
Bombay	102	592		
Madras	59	290		
Total	1300	40897		
	1997	1120		
	155	40897		
	6379	1120		
	2845	40897		
	1120	1120		
	40897	1120		
	7522	1120		
	9132	1120		
	56408	1120		

The above table describes the number of day schools, boarding schools, training schools, girls' schools, Zenanas houses of the said period. Although figures are very paltry but the gradual and consistent progress in the arena of education is conspicuous. Certainly the present status of women education owe to the arbitrary role of Missionaries. Total no. of 56408 literate women

till 1881 is a great figure in the history of modern education. The everlasting spirits of Missionaries even included those high class women (Zenanas) in the main stream of formal education. This effort further led to the positive permission and access to the girls of high class for education and edification.

Table-3. Number of Protestant missionary institutions with Enrolment in India by level, 184-196

Appendix – D Number of Protestant Missionary Institutions With Enrollment in India by Level, 1881-1882										
P R O V I N C E S	Art Colleges and Secondary Schools for Boys		Primary Schools for Boys		Girls' Schools		Theological and Training School for Men		Grand Total	
	No.	Pupils	No.	Pupils	No.	Pupils	No.	Pupils	Instit utions	Pupils
Madras	148	15,722	1813	50,818	434	23,414	18	781	2,413	92,655
Bombay	22	2,592	207	5,693	67	3,041	7	89	303	11,562
Bengal	50	6,512	577	14,789	326	9,609	19	216	972	33,450
N.W. Provinces and Oudh	60	8,377	189	6,352	270	7,081	3	50	522	25,250
Punjab	81	9,546	91	2,667	126	3,236	5	86	303	16,567
Central India.	24	2,500	143	4,441	52	895	4	13	223	8,168
Total:										
1871:	347	40,075	1912	54,241	664	24,078	70	1,205	3,019	122,132
1882:	385	45,249	3020	84,760	1275	47,276	56	1,235	4,736	187,652

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Contribution of Missionaries Towards Education in India

In 1861 in Madras and Chingleput, they had 2145 pupils under instruction. Of these, 668 were girls

attending nine schools. Ten years afterwards, in 1871, the number was 2233, and of these 818 were girls. In 1881 the Christian College contained 1166 pupils; the two vernacular boy's schools, 289; and ten girls' schools, 1066.¹⁷

The initial phase was one of experimentation and negotiation. The first schools in Ludhiana and Amritsar focused on vernacular education and Bible translation, aiming to create a literate indigenous base for religious instruction. However, they quickly realized the demand for secular, utilitarian knowledge. This led to the introduction of English, mathematics, and basic sciences. This period was characterized by a "Bazaar School" model low-cost, accessible

schools that served as a feeder system for more advanced institution.

Expansion and Institutionalization (1858–1910)

The post-1857 era saw a dramatic shift. The British Crown assumed direct control, and missionaries, now viewed with less suspicion by the state, expanded aggressively. This was the golden age of entrepreneurial institution-building. They established collegiate schools and full-fledged colleges, recognizing a demand for higher education among the emerging Indian middle class. A key innovation was the focus on teacher training institutes, like the ones in Jalandhar and Lahore, which professionalized

¹⁷ Hunter, Robert. History of the missions of the free Church of Scotland in India and Africa.

London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1873, pp. 247-48.

teaching and created a self-replicating workforce.¹⁸ The establishment of women's colleges was a radical entrepreneurial gamble that paid off, creating a new market for female education.

Women's Education: A Pioneering Enterprise

Missionaries identified the almost total neglect of female education as a strategic opportunity. Overcoming immense social opposition, they established Zenana missions where female teachers taught women in seclusion, and later, formal girls' schools and colleges. This was not merely charity; it was a transformative entrepreneurial venture that fundamentally altered the social fabric of Punjab, producing its first generations of female graduates, doctors, and teachers.

The Architecture of an Educational System

The missionaries did not merely establish isolated schools; they constructed a comprehensive, multi-tiered educational ecosystem. This system was designed for both depth and breadth, ranging from humble primary vernacular schools to prestigious English-medium colleges.¹⁹ The primary feeder schools, often operating in village bazaars or urban neighbourhoods, provided basic literacy and numeracy. Successful students could then progress to Anglo Vernacular middle and high schools, which offered a more robust curriculum, and finally to elite colleges like Forman Christian College and St. Stephen's. This pyramidal structure was a deliberate entrepreneurial strategy to identify talent early, create a pipeline of students, and build a loyal constituency across social strata.

¹⁸ Punjab Education Department Report, 1880-81* (Lahore: Punjab Government Press, 1882), 23-24.

¹⁹ Punjab Education Department Report, 1880-81* (Lahore: Punjab Government Press, 1882),

²⁰ Financial Statements of the Church Missionary Society,

Financial Innovation and Sustainability

A key to their longevity was the development of a sophisticated and diversified financial model. While initial capital often came from foreign mission boards, the institutions were driven towards self-sufficiency.²⁰ Their strategies included:

- **Grants-in-Aid:** Successfully lobbying the colonial government for grants based on performance and inspection, effectively leveraging public funds for private enterprise.
- **Sliding-Scale Fees:** Charging tuition fees, but on a sliding scale that allowed children from wealthy families to subsidize the education of poorer students and scholarship holders.
- **Local Philanthropy:** Cultivating donations from both Indian and European benefactors, thereby embedding the institution within the local economy and social fabric.

This financial acumen ensured that the missions were not merely perpetual dependents but self-sustaining social ventures. Missionaries secured government grants through performance-based inspection, implemented sliding-scale fees to cross-subsidize poor students, and cultivated local philanthropy to embed institutions within the regional economy.

Pedagogical Entrepreneurship: Curriculum and Pedagogy

The missionary curriculum was a product of strategic adaptation. While initially focused on Bible studies and vernacular languages, they quickly pivoted to meet market demands. They became purveyors of coveted Western knowledge, introducing English, mathematics, history, and the sciences.²¹ Furthermore, they pioneered practical and vocational training.

1875," C.M.S. Archives, G/CCI 13.

²¹Report of the American Presbyterian Mission, Ludhiana, for the Year 1840, (Ludhiana: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1841), 7.

Teacher training institutes (e.g., in Jalandhar and Lahore) were a masterstroke, creating a professional class of educators who could staff their expanding network of schools. Similarly, medical training for men and women at institutions like the Christian Medical College, Ludhiana, addressed a critical societal need while creating a new profession.²² From the beginning of the twentieth century missionaries started their efforts in the field of higher education and they were successful in achieving their goal by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century goal by establishing their first women 'scolle in Lahore.²³ The Christian Missionaries encouraged the women education and took it as a remedy for their miserable condition in Punjabi society. Women were thought of as the inferior individuals of the society. The missionaries spread the quality education for women. They helped through Kinnaird College for promoting the

female intellectual quality. This institution was an encouragement for the women to adopt professional careers after graduating.²⁴ This responsiveness to both student aspirations and societal needs was a hallmark of their entrepreneurial approach. The missions demonstrated innovative management of human resources. They recruited a mix of foreign missionaries, who provided leadership and international connections, and a growing cadre of Indian staff, including Christian converts and, increasingly, secular Indian teachers.²⁵ For female education, they deployed female missionaries and trained Indian women teachers for Zenana missions and girls' schools, navigating strict social customs to create a new professional space for women. This blend of foreign and indigenous, male and female, created a dynamic and adaptable institutional workforce.

Table-4. Report on the Progress of education in the Punjab 184-196

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CHAPTER VIII.
Education of Girls (Indian).

The following tables show the increase or decrease during the year in —

(a) the number of schools and colleges of all types together with the number of scholars;
(b) the expenditure on girls' education.

(a) Statement showing number of institutions and scholars.

Kind of institution.	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS.			NUMBER OF SCHOLARS.		
	On 31st March, 1940.	On 31st March, 1941.	Increase or decrease.	On 31st March, 1940.	On 31st March, 1941.	Increase or decrease.
Arts Colleges ..	5	5	..	745	844	+ 99
Professional Colleges ..	1	1	..	63	103	+ 40
High Schools ..	41	45	+ 4	15,038	15,315	+ 2,177
Anglo-Vernacular Middle Schools ..	23	20	- 3	6,620	6,343	- 277
Vernacular Middle Schools ..	391	308	- 17	45,489	48,082	+ 2,593
Primary Schools ..	2,085	2,196	+ 111	131,119	136,088	+ 4,969
Special Schools ..	79	66	- 13	3,463	2,802	- 660
Total (recognized institutions) ..	2,425	2,541	+ 116	200,56	209,477	+ 8,911
Unrecognized Institutions ..	3,137	3,197	+ 60	70,682	69,532	- 1,150
GRAND TOTAL ..	5,562	5,738	+ 176	271,248	279,009	+ 7,761

(b) Direct expenditure on girls' education.

Year.	From Government funds.	From District Board funds.	From Municipal Board funds.	Fees.	Other sources.	Total.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1939-40 ..	19,32,159	2,12,804	6,87,883	4,49,574	6,56,078	38,39,398
1940-41 ..	20,18,647	2,10,105	6,20,279	5,16,794	6,47,851	40,13,575
Increase or decrease ..	+ 86,488	- 2,699	+ 32,306	+ 66,917	- 8,227	+ 1,74,176

In recognized secondary schools there has been an increase of 18, with an increase of 4,493 in the number of pupils. This is not a very considerable increase in view of the number of girls

²² Ibid.p.8.

²³ Saleem Masih Asim (2024), Impacts of Christian Missionary Institutions in Panjab: A Critical Overview. *AMERICAN Journal of Science on Integration and Human Development*, Volume 02, Issue 01, 2024 ISSN (E): 2993-2750 p.1.

²⁴ Ibid.p.1

²⁵ Report of the Christian Education Commission on the Crisis Facing Christian Colleges in India (Nagpur: National Christian Council, 1958), p.12.

The above picture denotes the paltry progression in girl enrolment in two consecutive years. Moreover, the tiny increase in Government funds and total expenditure on girls' education was also conspicuous. Although the amount was very small but the initiative of British Government to upthrust girls' education was certainly commemorated to the efforts of missionaries.

The institutions led by the missionaries exhibited entrepreneurial resilience in a new era.

Faced with reduced foreign funding and increased competition, these institutions demonstrated remarkable resilience. Their entrepreneurial spirit adapted by:

- **Diversifying Revenue:** Increasing self-financing courses, launching alumni endowment campaigns, and engaging in community development projects.
- **Curriculum Innovation:** Introducing market-responsive courses in computer science, business management, and vocational training.²⁶
- **Reaffirming Social Commitment:** Strengthening outreach programs, scholarships for marginalized communities, and rural health missions, thus reinforcing their unique value proposition in a crowded educational landscape.

Missionaries reaffirmed their social commitment through targeted scholarships for marginalized groups and rural health missions, distinguishing their institutions in a competitive educational landscape. Institutions like Christian Medical College, Ludhiana, became national leaders in healthcare education, demonstrating the successful fusion of a Christian service ethic with national development objectives.²⁷

²⁶ Forman Christian College Self-Study Report for the University Grants Commission (Lahore: FCC, 1995), 45.

²⁷ A Healing Touch: CMC Ludhiana's 50 Years of Service," *The Tribune*, February 15, 2004.

²⁸ "The Forman Christian College: A Retrospect," *The*

Forging A New Middle Class

The most significant impact of the missionary enterprise was the creation of a modern, educated Punjabi middle class. The colleges and high schools became factories for producing a new elite: civil servants, lawyers, doctors, journalists, and teachers.²⁸ This class was characterized not by birth or landholding, but by professional merit and educational attainment. Alumni networks from institutions like Forman Christian College became powerful professional conduits, further cementing the missionary brand as a passport to social and economic advancement. This catalysed a shift in the social hierarchy of Punjab, where education began to rival caste and lineage as a marker of status. Certainly, it influenced the girls' education too.

The Most Radical Enterprise: Women's Education

Missionary work in female education was arguably their most radical entrepreneurial venture. By identifying and investing in a completely neglected market, they triggered a profound social transformation. Starting with Zenana missions, which brought education to women in seclusion, they gradually established formal girls' schools and colleges, such as the Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore.²⁹ This faced immense social opposition, but the missionaries persisted, arguing for women's intellectual and moral agency. The outcome was the creation of Punjab's first generations of female graduates, who went on to become teachers, doctors, and social reformers, fundamentally altering the domestic and public spheres.

Punjab Mission News, vol. 15, no. 3 (1909): 113.

²⁹ Janaki Nair, "The Home and the World: The Zenana and Missionary Education in Colonial India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 27, no. 17 (1992): WS-33.

Professional, Technical, and Industrial Education:

The development of professional, technical, and industrial education during the reported period shows a positive and progressive trend. Institutions under various government departments demonstrated overall improvement in both academic performance and institutional growth. Admissions to medical colleges increased significantly, and examination results were highly satisfactory. In particular, the performance of students from the Women's Christian Medical College, Ludhiana, was exceptional, reflecting the advancement of women's professional education. Despite a temporary instance of student unrest, the situation was effectively managed through a government-appointed inquiry committee, indicating responsible administrative intervention. Infrastructure development remained a priority, with proposed improvements under the King Edward Memorial scheme. Courses in traditional systems of education, such as Yunani at Islamia College, Lahore, and Vedic studies at D.A.V. College, continued with stable enrolment. Meanwhile, the Women's Christian Medical College exhibited continuous growth and development. The Veterinary College experienced a high demand for admission, highlighting the increasing need for trained professionals in this sector. However, limited capacity led to the rejection of several qualified candidates, emphasizing the necessity for expansion. Construction of new buildings was underway to address this need. Agricultural education witnessed reforms aimed at improving its relevance and attractiveness. Although initial enrolment was low, curriculum revision and practical training initiatives were introduced. Student performance remained satisfactory, and infrastructural improvements supported academic activities. Technical education also showed notable progress. The School of Engineering at Rasul gained popularity due to its practical training approach and strong employment outcomes. A high success rate in

examinations and positive employer feedback demonstrated the effectiveness of training. Similarly, the engineering department of D.A.V. College maintained consistent enrolments.

Overall, a distinguished academic excellence was recorded, increasing demand for professional education, infrastructural development, and a focus on practical training, indicating a strong foundation for future growth. The Government Clerical and Commercial School at Amritsar experienced a decline in enrolment compared to the previous year. According to the Lahore Inspector, the academic standard of students was not yet adequate to support effective commercial education. Similar vocational training initiatives were conducted through special classes in government schools at Lahore and Delhi, as well as evening continuation classes organized by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Lahore. In addition, two private commercial schools were established in Lahore, offering instruction in bookkeeping and typewriting. The London Chamber of Commerce examinations continued to be held in Lahore, attracting a moderate number of candidates. To further assess the scope of commercial education, a special grant was provided to the YMCA to engage an expert, Mr. Hume, who conducted a survey and consulted employers. His report suggested that, although conditions were not yet suitable for establishing a full-scale commercial college, there was potential for gradual development in specialized areas, provided that the teaching of English was significantly strengthened as a foundational requirement.³⁰

The development of women's education showed noticeable progress during the period under review. The total number of schools increased from 741 to 830, comprising 6 high schools, 33 middle schools, and 791 primary schools. Correspondingly, student enrolment rose from 37,445 to 42,740, reflecting an increase of over 14 percent. However, these figures exclude institutions such as the Normal School for

³⁰Ibid pp.20-21

Women and Queen Mary's College, Lahore.³¹ Regionally, the Lahore division emerged as the most advanced, with the highest number of schools and students, and districts like Gurdaspur demonstrating significant recent improvement. In contrast, the Rawalpindi division experienced setbacks due to administrative and staffing issues, including the appointment of inadequately trained personnel, which led to declining academic standards and discipline. Nevertheless, some expansion occurred with the establishment of new schools in Attock district.³²

In the Multan division, Jhang recorded strong attendance rates, while progress in female education was uneven. Hindu girls' education showed advancement in areas such as Lyallpur and Montgomery, whereas that of Muslim girls lagged behind. In the Jullundur division, aided schools performed effectively, but district board schools suffered due to insufficient financial support and administrative attention. The Ambala division showed relatively better outcomes, particularly in Rohtak, where local institutions played a key role in supplying trained teachers. Despite these regional variations, a common challenge across all divisions was the acute shortage of qualified female teachers, which significantly hindered further progress in women's education.³³

The passage highlights the gradual progress and persistent challenges in girls' education in Punjab. There was a noticeable increase in the demand for higher education among girls, reflected in the introduction of collegiate classes at Kinnaird High School, Lahore, and the preparation of students at Victoria School, Lahore, for university examinations. The number of candidates appearing for examinations, particularly at the middle school level, showed

significant growth, indicating rising educational aspirations. Efforts were made by the education department to design suitable curricula specifically for girls, recognizing that their educational needs differed from those of boys. Flexible and adaptable curricula were introduced, often emphasizing languages, music, needlework, and religious instruction, especially in middle schools.

However, disparities in educational quality were evident. Institutions like Queen Mary's College, Lahore, adopted modern teaching methods, whereas rural elementary schools lagged behind due to poorly trained teachers and outdated instructional approaches. A major concern was the shortage of qualified women teachers, particularly among the Muslim community, which contributed to stagnation in Urdu-medium schools. Additionally, lack of basic educational resources such as books and materials further hindered progress. But Missionaries kept on their efforts to engage female teachers for enhancing better girls' child literacy rate.

Teaching at the primary level was generally weak, as it was often assumed that anyone could teach young children. This led to ineffective classroom practices, lack of engagement, and absence of activity-based learning. To address these issues, efforts were initiated to improve teaching methods, including the appointment of experienced educators like Miss Hart to inspect and recommend reforms. The introduction of better methods of teaching the children in the primary classes being recognised to be greatly needed, Miss Hart, a lady of experience in this branch of education, was deputed to visit some of the principal schools and to advise and report on the question.³⁴ Practical education remained limited. While needlework was common, other forms of handwork and creative activities were

³¹ Ibid p.18.

³² Report of the progress of the education in the Punjab for the year 1913-14 Lahore: Printed by the Superintendent Government printing Punjab 1914. pp. 21-22.

³³ Ibid pp. 21

³⁴ Report of the progress of the education in the Punjab for the year 1913-14, Lahore: printed by the superintendent government printing Punjab 1914. p.21-22

rarely practiced due to lack of trained teachers. Domestic science was often taught theoretically rather than practically, though some mission schools provided comprehensive training in cooking and household management. Physical education was also neglected in many schools due to social prejudices and infrastructural constraints.³⁵ Zenana education (home-based instruction for girls in purdah) showed little success except were managed by missionary organizations. It faced issues such as lack of supervision, irregularity, and inefficiency. The system was considered ineffective unless structured into organized centres similar to formal schools.³⁶ The Christian missionaries in Punjab were, in the truest sense, educational entrepreneurs. Their work in 19th century demonstrates a sustained capacity for identifying social needs, innovating solutions, mobilizing resources, and building sustainable institutions that profoundly shaped the region's destiny. They moved beyond their initial religious mandate to become architects of modern education in Punjab, with their most enduring legacies being the empowerment of women, the professionalization of teaching, and the demonstration that education could be a force for inclusive social transformation.

Missionary institutions, driven by a theology that (in theory) valued all souls equally, often operated with a more inclusive admission policy than traditional or even government schools. They actively offered education and scholarships to students from lower castes and marginalized communities.³⁷ While conversion was a motive, the effect was the opening of avenues for social mobility that were previously closed. This created a tension within Punjabi society, simultaneously

challenging orthodox hierarchies, also provoking defensive reactions from other communities, such as the Arya Samaj, which launched its own educational counter-movement. Though conversion motivated missionaries, their work enabled social mobility for marginalized groups, simultaneously challenging orthodox hierarchies and provoking reformist counter-movements like the Arya Samaj's educational initiatives.

The pre-1947 legacy is one of profound contradiction. The missionaries were both anti-colonial in their occasional critiques of British policy and complicit in the colonial project by providing its administrative backbone. They were modernizers who championed rational inquiry and social liberation, yet their worldview was often paternalistic and rooted in a sense of religious superiority.³⁸ They sowed the seeds of a new, liberal social order based on individual merit, while also hardening communal identities through their evangelism. This complex legacy is not a flaw in the analysis but is central to understanding the multifaceted impact of these educational entrepreneurs on the region.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence, this paper presents several key findings that illuminate the profound impact of missionary education in Punjab. The Indian Education Commission 184-196 admitted that, "In fact the Government can hardly expect to undertake the education of females without the help of native Christian female legacy."³⁹ Firstly, the missionaries acted as system-builders, importing and adapting a complete educational ecosystem including standardized curricula, examination systems, and teacher certification that ultimately served as a model for the state. The reputation for quality and integrity they

³⁵Ibid pp.21, 22

³⁶Ibid pp.22

³⁷ Jeffrey Cox, "Religion and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*, ed. Andrew Porter

(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 48.

³⁸ Robert Clark, *The Punjab and Sindh Missions of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1885), 210.

³⁹ Indian Education commission, 1882-83, *The Report*, pp. 77-78.

cultivated became a powerful form of social capital, ensuring student enrolment, donor confidence, and institutional longevity for generations. Furthermore, these schools functioned as powerful engines of social mobility by consciously admitting students from diverse castes and religions and often providing scholarships, thereby fostering a new, educated middle class in the region. A central finding is that their success was rooted not in rigidity but in

strategic adaptation; they demonstrated a remarkable ability to evolve from evangelism to secular education, from foreign leadership to indigenous management, and from a colonial to a national framework. Finally, this legacy presents a paradox: while their explicit religious influence waned, their implicit values such as a commitment to critical thinking, public service, and ethical conduct became deeply embedded in the professional culture of modern Punjab.

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