

Hindu Schools in S.India are more interested in success than militancy

Religion has become more militant in India in recent decades, and religious identities more divided. There is a concern that religious schools are stoking Hindu nationalism and Islamic militancy. A number of studies of Islamic madrasas have been undertaken, but until now Hindu schools have been more neglected. This research project directed by Professor Roger Jeffery, researched in India by Dr Aya Ikegame in 2009-10 and funded by [the Religion and Society Programme](#) sought to shed light by looking at schools in Karnataka in South India.



The Kalidasa Vidya Samste aims to provide quality education to poor children

Karnataka is distinctive in its high number of caste-based schools run by Hindu religious organizations (mathas). These have grown in number since the 1990s and expanded to include lower caste schools, often receiving government assistance. The educational market in Karnataka is now diverse and competitive. Aya interviewed students, parents, teachers, administrators and gurus in a metropolitan, high-caste school, a rural, middle-caste school and an urban, lower-caste one. She also conducted archival research.

She found that the 'Hindu-ness' of each of the three schools was important. Each had different ways of inculcating this identity, including through communal readings of sacred scripture. The faith dimension of what the schools had to offer added value in the educational market place. But far from being militant, it was more of a comfortable majoritarianism, a calm sense of superiority, and a 'banal', even taken for granted Hinduism which was being propagated, with no explicit anti-Muslim or anti-Christian aspects. The project found very little history, nationalistic or otherwise, or other religions being taught in the schools. Nor was there reflection or instruction on how to engage with a multi-religious society. Dr Ikegame also found that each school reflected and appealed to distinctive class and caste aspirations. The lower-caste school struggles to maintain sufficient student numbers for government aid, and mathas like those researched are in different ways contributing towards the disparity of Indian society, even though they may try to overcome class differences.

At the end of the day, what mattered most to these schools was the educational advancement of their pupils, and their own survival in a competitive market.

In May 2010 Dr Ikegame secured funding from the National Institute of Humanities, Japan, to continue her research on gurus and mathas in Karnataka. In February 2011 she became a research associate on an ESRC funded research project - 'OECUMENE: Citizenship after Orientalism' - at the Open University (UK) where she will contribute her research to a larger comparative project enquiring into citizenship and political subjectivities in the non-European world.

Find out more

- Listen to Roger Jeffery presenting the project at a Religion and Society Programme session at the April 2010 BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group Conference and view the accompanying PowerPoint slides: http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/publications/podcasts/show/roger_jeffery.
- Take a look at the programme for an international seminar on 'Hindu Organizations in Education, Healthy and Development' work held in New Dehli in March 2010 at which Aya Ikegame presented this project's findings and one of the matha's gurus responded: <http://www.indicstudies.org/article.php?artid=7>
- Email: Roger Jefferey r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk or Aya Ikegame aya.ikegame@ed.ac.uk.

You might also be interested in...

- The Religion and Society Programme funded project led by Dr Tej Purewal investigating shrines in West Punjab:
http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2011_01/1294134862_Purewal_Phase_1_Large_Grant_Block.pdf
- The policy briefing on community education for violence prevention in Kaduna, Nigeria produced from the Religion and Society funded project led by Dr Colette Harris:
http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2010_05/1274873458_Policy+Briefing+-+Community+education+for+violence+prevention,+Kaduna.pdf.
- The numerous other projects related to the subject of religion and education funded by the Programme including Professor Bob Jackson's about young people's attitudes to religious diversity in the UK:
http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/projects/phase_two/large_research_projects.
- The Public Representations of a Religion called Hinduism research network funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (the Religion and Society Programme's co-funder):
<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/hinduism/projectdetails/index.htm/>.

Project Details

Award Title

Learning at Swami's Feet: Hindu Youth and faith-based educational institutions in South India

Team

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Arts & Humanities
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