

PART 2

Emotional and Trained

Bodies, Emotions, Labor: The Jamia Millia Islamia and the New Education Movement

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Abstract

The movement for New Education emphasized the importance of the body and bodily work over forms of learning centered only on books and their intellectual processing. From its beginning, the movement has been transnational. This chapter traces the encounter of Zakir Husain, Abid Husain and Muhammad Mujeeb, foundational figures of the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi, with German New Education during their student days in Berlin. Though they always claimed that what they had learned from Spranger and Kerschensteiner was central to the pedagogy they implemented at Jamia, the chapter shows that it was the American project method of Dewey and Kirkpatrick that shaped the everyday teaching at Jamia and which entered into the conversation with Gandhi's ideas on education in 1937.

Keywords: New Education; Jamia Millia Islamia; History of Emotions; Global History; Body History; Project Method; Wardha scheme; Basic Education

The scheme is a revolution in the education of village children.

It is in no sense an importation from the West.

—M. K. Gandhi, Foreword to the Report on Basic
National Education, (1938, CWMG, 73, 202)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, men and women in different regions of the world started to think about education in new ways. They discussed methods of teaching that no longer relied exclusively on books and rote learning imparted to children, who sat silent and motionless at their desks. Instead, intellectuals and pedagogues were looking for ways to use and develop the children's faculties in a holistic approach, involving their minds and their creative powers, but also engaging their emotions and their bodies—their head, heart, and hand, as the contemporary motto went. This search was not just an intellectual movement but led to experiments with different educational practices. At the same time, it was a

truly global movement in which theoretical reflections and practical experiences were shared across countries and continents. After the First World War, it found its institutional form in the New Educational Fellowship, which also brought out journals in different languages to facilitate communication among its members and beyond.¹

Given the centrality of the body for New Education, it is surprising that there is not much literature focusing on this aspect. For South Asia especially, research has centered on the disciplining of the body, inside and outside of schools, as a significant aspect of colonial rule.² This is important and the research work is excellent, but it does not tell the whole story of twentieth-century Indian educational reform. In this chapter, I will focus on the multiple practices of incorporating the body into education through labor and handicraft. These practices shifted the attention from the imparting of knowledge by teachers to its acquisition by pupils. They changed the ways knowledge was learned and the very content of what was learned. Moreover, the pedagogues devoted close attention to the habitual emotions that resulted (or were at least hoped for) from this education. I take the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi as my case study. Established during Gandhi's first non-cooperation campaign as a national educational institution, Jamia operated at the margin of the colonial state. The founders of Jamia certainly had to work within the overall framework of colonial rule, but they neither accepted state funding nor worked towards having their degrees recognized by the state. This left them with comparably more freedom to experiment with new ways of educating the young.³ These experiments were pursued in dialogue with other educationists, and especially with practitioners of New Education, in India and beyond.

This framework allows us to complicate several binaries. First, New Education never encompassed a homogenous corpus of knowledge or practices, nor did it exist in stark distinction from more traditional forms of education. While it started as a movement around the turn of the century, its roots went much deeper—notably, Rousseau and Pestalozzi have not only been claimed as ancestors by the new educationist but had also already been incorporated into schools as a “new education before New Education.”⁴ On the other hand, New Education still held on to a number—smaller or larger—of traditional practices. Only for very few educational thinkers and for almost none of the practitioners was there ever a choice between

¹ Brehony, “New Education”; Fuchs, “Networks”; Hofstetter and Schneuwly, *Passion*; Bagchi, Fuchs, and Rousmaniere, *Connecting Histories*.

² Mills and Sen, *Confronting the Body*; Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*; Seth, *Subject Lessons*; Topdar, “Knowledge and Governance”; Tschurennev, *Empire*.

³ Hasan and Jalil, *Partners*; Talib, “Jamia Millia Islamia”.

⁴ Oelkers, “Reformpädagogik”.

the book and the body, the education of the intellect or the body, the emphasis on the pupils' initiative or the cultivation of discipline—although the strategies to practically deal with these binaries, or even to overcome them at a conceptual level, differed to a considerable extent.

Second, the different strands of New Education not only communicated closely but also shared a language and several practices, notably the incorporation of handicrafts and bodily labor into schooling. This, however, did not lead to a shared vision for the future or a common political agenda.⁵ On the contrary, the similar language and practice could draw just as easily from a critique of modernity—seeking salvation in a vision for a future marked by villages, handicrafts, and guilds—as it could from an enthusiastic acceptance of the rapid changes of the present and helping children to not only cope with, but contribute to said changes. Education through bodily work could aim at emotions like devotion and a willingness to sacrifice, which would stabilize existing social hierarchies, but it could also create the self-confidence needed for future citizens in a democratic state.

Third, New Education was, as already mentioned, a global movement with a multitude of centers, which were in communication with each other. This globality could be consciously embraced by the actors as a form of cosmopolitanism, but they could also brush it off as irrelevant in comparison to the national roots of the movement. Moreover, subscribing to cosmopolitanism rarely meant taking a stand against nationalism, though it might have led to arguments in favor of a different, less exclusionary form of nationalism.

Overcoming binaries—those created by the historical subjects, but also those of our own making—is an important move to complicate an all-too-neat picture. But it still leaves us questioning what structured the field and what guided the choices of the historical subjects. Of course, not every New Educationist communicated with everyone else, and not every practice traveled in every direction. However, the selection processes are anything but self-explanatory. Nor do the explanations the historical subjects themselves offer always provide a satisfactory answer. My argument is that emotions played a central role in two respects. Emotions validated the creation of pedagogical knowledge and rendered it plausible. Moreover, emotions, being at the center of the communication processes, provide explanations as to why certain forms of knowledge and certain practices resonated and therefore traveled well, globally or along certain specific channels, and others did so to a lesser extent or even not at all.⁶

⁵ On this approach see Danilina, *Ethiken*. I have learned more than I can say from our discussions over the years.

⁶ The role emotions play in global history can only be alluded to in this article. It will form the subject of a separate article that Frederik Schröer and I are working on.

Jamia's Primary School: A Vignette

After the First World War, the non-cooperation movement under Gandhi's leadership appealed to the nation to withdraw from all involvements with the colonial state and, notably, from its legal and educational institutions. As elsewhere, this call struck a chord with the students at Aligarh, the renowned Muslim university. However, as Zakir Husain, one of the young teachers, explained to Gandhi, it would only have a chance if an alternative education were to be offered to the young men.⁷ This idea led to the foundation of the Jamia Millia Islamia in October 1920 in Aligarh. In the early days, its set-up was not only highly improvised but also more politically motivated than the result of pedagogical reflections. It was set against colonialism rather than against modernity and aimed to teach the students morality through an emphasis on religion rather than on manual labor or handicrafts (though some crafts were taught from the beginning).⁸ The aim was to raise young Muslims who would take a leading role in the national movement and who were as pious as they were nationalists.⁹

This changed in the middle of the 1920s when Jamia moved from Aligarh to Delhi. While primary education had formerly been but an annex to the training of college boys, it now started to gain increasing importance. One reason for this was the lull in the nationalist movement after Gandhi had called off the campaign; at least as important was the fact that Zakir Husain, Abid Husain, and Muhammad Mujeeb, the future leading trio of the Jamia, had moved to Berlin for their higher education. Zakir Husain pursued a Ph.D. in economics, Abid Husain in psychology, and Muhammad Mujeeb studied printing, but all three took a passionate part in the contemporary discussions on New Education. They shared their new knowledge with Jamia in Delhi, writing articles for the monthly journal *Jamia* and spreading information about the new ideas. Once they returned in 1926, Zakir Husain became the *Shaikh ul Jamia* (corresponding to the position of Vice Chancellor in the state-funded institutions) and quickly brought together a team of like-minded colleagues to reform the school.¹⁰

Abdul Ghaffar Mudholi had joined Jamia as a student in Aligarh, slowly working his way up. In 1930 he took over the direction of the primary school. Combining a passion for teaching and for the collection of archival material, he was for many decades Jamia's quasi-official chronicler, penning volume after volume in which he described not only the history of the institution but also its pedagogical practices in

⁷ Faruqi, *Dr. Zakir Husain*, p. 58.

⁸ Ansari, "Hindustani".

⁹ Mudholi, *Jamia ki kahani*; Husain, "Shazrat".

¹⁰ Mujeeb, *Zakir Husain*.



Figure 4.1. Teaching at the primary school. © Jamia's Premchand Archives and Literary Centre, reproduction from the title page of Sughra Mehdi, *Hamari Jamia*.

great detail. As he tells in his history of the primary school, when he was appointed there were only a few children left. In a radical break from traditional practices, Mudholi began not by teaching the alphabet but by showing the children pictures and toys and asking them about their homes and families. Stories were then disaggregated into sentences and words, written on the blackboard. To involve the senses, the word “crow” was written in black while “perroquet” was written in green, and the latter’s multi-colored feathers were reflected in the writing. The children had fun, but they also learned to copy the words. Next came the letters, and here the bodies came into play as the children tried to enact the shapes of the letters, stretching to form an *alif*, forming a fist to show a *wa*, and enthusiastically shouting the sounds of the letters. This free movement was facilitated by the fact that Jamia could not yet afford desks. Instead, the children sat on the floor or jute bags—whatever was available.¹¹ This meant a different engagement with the body than the traditional one premised on the forms of disciplining involved in sitting at a desk, as motionless as possible, for long hours. Body movements were no longer either restricted or synchronized, but allowed for individual expressivity. This did not exclude discipline, but what (ideally) powered the learning process was an active engagement of the children: learning could be and should be fun.

¹¹ Mudholi, *Madrassa-e ibtida'i*, pp. 12–15.



Figure 4.2. Pupils of the primary school working on the Garden Project © Jamia's Premchand Archives and Literary Centre

For the children of the fourth standard, at roughly ten years, the involvement of the body became even more systematic. Jamia was located at the periphery of Delhi, where land was still mainly used for horticulture and farming. Jamia had access to enough land to keep all the boys busy at the same time.¹² Mudholi started a discussion with the boys about what they wanted to grow. As neither the pupils nor the teacher had much knowledge on the subject (or if Mudholi did, he did not tell them), they needed to find out which plants would best grow in the soil, when and how they needed to be planted, and how they should best set about the irrigation. The pupils asked around among the gardeners of the neighborhood, but they also started to put together a small library with books they considered helpful for finding answers. Whatever they decided, they had to put it into practice through their own labor, in the process establishing ownership in the project—intellectually as well as emotionally. This ownership and the emotions that went with it were not just a top-down result of the teaching process, but constitutive of the learning experience. What the children learned, they learned with the help of their bodies and emotions.

¹² Girls entered the formal education system at Jamia only after Partition. The role of women at Jamia is sadly under-investigated. Nishat Zaidi and I are working on a special issue of the *Journal for Urdu Studies* focused on the contribution of Jamia's women to education, social work and literature.

Once the planting season was over, the pupils started to document the process in writing, drew charts for the different tools they were using, inquired about prices, and calculated profits. This meant that after the harvest they were ready to sell their products. For this, they established a small shop on the premises of Jamia, an enterprise which they later expanded to non-agricultural products as well. The initial profit was invested in buying books for the library, but every pupil also received some money for his efforts. To encourage and facilitate saving, the pupils founded a bank. All of this taught them not only gardening, shop-keeping, and banking, but also reading, writing, and mathematics, involving their bodies just as much as their minds. Even more important: they learned to solve real-life problems without the help of a teacher, through a joint effort, using a multitude of oral and written sources but also checking them through their own experience.¹³ While excitement about and pride in their achievements ranked highly—notably when their efforts were personally validated by Zakir Husain, who inspected their harvest and accepted a gift of vegetables, and who deposited money at their bank—bodily labor was also experienced as hard work, more so in the heat of summer, when a whole day of work left their feet hurting from thorns and blisters and their heads tired from carrying loads for the whole day.¹⁴ New Education at Jamia did grant importance to children's joy and even boisterous fun, but involving the body was not only about giving in to the more pleasant emotions. The children's freedom to have their own experiences and the need for discipline were not perceived as mutually exclusive.

The Educational Thought of Jamia: Beyond the Dichotomy of India and the West

These were new ways of instruction. As Zakir Husain, Muhammad Mujeeb, and Abid Husain acknowledged the influence of their academic teachers and their encounter with German New Education until the end of their lives, it is a valid hypothesis to look to these scholars as inspiration and models. Eduard Spranger, Abid Husain's Ph.D. supervisor, was an influential educationist in Germany until he died in 1963 and beyond. Shortly after his return to Delhi, Abid Husain translated his teacher's opus magnum, the *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Psychology of Youth), into Urdu. Some chapters were published as a pre-print in the *Jamia* journal and the complete book came out in 1928 under the title of *Nafsiyat-e unfuwan-e shabab*.¹⁵

¹³ Mudholi, *Madrassa-e ibtida'i*, pp. 19–31; Mudholi, *Baghbani Project*.

¹⁴ Mudholi, *Ek Mu'alim*, pp. 107.

¹⁵ Husain, *Nafsiyat*; Khan, "Entanglements".

However, this book raises more questions than it answers. Spranger held a chair not for pedagogy but for psychology. Though he was interested in the reform of education and saw himself as part of the broader movement, he had never worked as a teacher, nor was he in regular contact with the young people he wrote about. The *Psychologie* deals extensively with the emotions of young men (with a rare side glance at young women, which relies on secondary literature and does not influence the overall interpretation). Unlike Sigmund Freud and Siegfried Bernfeld, from whom he emphatically distanced himself, he sought to anchor psychology in the humanities, not in the natural sciences, by emphasizing the category of understanding—for Spranger the sole category capable of uncovering the internal structures of the psyche and their meaning.¹⁶ These structures, he explained further, are neither individual nor universal but profoundly bound up with the objective spirit as it finds its expression in the nation-state. Therefore, the book has a restricted scope, its topic is nothing but the “psychology of the German youth of our cultural epoch.”¹⁷ Some of this might also be valid for French or American youth, but already for German Jews other rules apply—not to speak of the Russian soul.¹⁸ While dwelling lengthily on the emotions of young German men—the hunger of their feelings, their longing for being understood, their desire for redemption—the book does not give much space to the body as a tool for education and learning. If the body is mentioned, it is a racialized body. Emotions are linked to the body but only in so far as race creates potential and delimits the possibility for the experience of certain emotions. The depth and intensity of German feeling, for him, is simply not available to others.

Spranger’s casual racism was more than a slip of the pen. He was deeply involved with *völkisch* and right-wing groups within the education movement and shared their worldview—be it the faith in authoritarianism, the profound veneration for the Prussian state and the military, or anti-Semitism.¹⁹ Already long before 1933, keywords like “command”, “obedience”, and “authority” marked his writings. For Spranger, democracy was not a value in itself. Rather participation in the political process had to be restricted to those who have learned to think and feel from the perspective of the state, to an extent that their inner being had merged with the state.²⁰ His position after 1933 has given rise to controversy. His vocally expressed sympathy with the new regime found its limits when the NS youth organization disrupted his classes and challenged his authority—a conflict that had less to do

¹⁶ Spranger, *Psychologie*, pp. 17–21.

¹⁷ Spranger, p. 38.

¹⁸ Spranger, p. 39.

¹⁹ Himmelstein, “Konstruktion”, pp. 53–72.

²⁰ Spranger, *Volk, Staat, Erziehung*.

with the content of his teaching, than with the struggle for supremacy between the old *völkisch* and the Nazis. However, he quickly withdrew his protest once it became clear that this would have led to serious consequences. Rather than choosing inner emigration and keeping silent, Spranger spent the subsequent years as an ambassador for the regime's policy.²¹ As for many others, his career went on without a hitch after 1945, when he was honored as the grand old man of German pedagogy.²²

Neither Spranger's political positions, which were in stark opposition to everything Jamia as an institution, or Abid Husain as an individual stood for, nor his reflections on the emotions of German young men can easily, if at all, be seen as the inspirations for Jamia's teaching.²³ Spranger's close friend Georg Kerschensteiner is a more probable source. Though it remains to be proven that Abid Husain or his friends personally met him,²⁴ they certainly knew his writings. Unlike Spranger, Kerschensteiner had many years of practical experience as a teacher before he rose to become inspector of schools and director of education in Bavaria and then a member of the German Reichstag. He is known for developing a model of the working school which aimed at the integration of schools and vocational training, starting with basic handicrafts in primary school and providing full training for artisanal professions (*Handwerker*, hand workers, in German) by the time the pupils left school at the age of 14. This education vied for the economic advantages that practical training provided both for young men and their future employers, but it went beyond this. Being confronted with an object they had to produce required the pupils to measure themselves against visible goals outside their own minds—the body was central to this. This only was possible if the children's labor was oriented towards a well-defined result.²⁵ This contributed not only to a better work ethic but also improved their morality. "*Sachlichkeit ist Sittlichkeit*" was Kerschensteiner's motto—it was the focus on an object, the original meaning of objectivity, that not only created but was morality.²⁶ The friendship and mutual admiration between Spranger and Kerschensteiner notwithstanding, concerning emotions and the body they were worlds apart: while Spranger dwelt at length on youthful passions but refused to link them to the materiality of the body,²⁷ even in the chapters dealing with juvenile eroticism and sexuality, the body was at the core of Kerschensteiner's

²¹ Ortmeier, *Eduard Sprangers Schriften*.

²² Ortmeier, *Mythos und Pathos*.

²³ Though both Abid Husain and Zakir Husain acknowledged his formative influence: Oesterheld, "Zakir Husain", pp. 75–76.

²⁴ Mujeeb, *Zakir Husain*, pp. 35–36.

²⁵ Gonon and Kerschensteiner, *Arbeitsschule*, p. 38. For a good introduction to Kerschensteiner's ideas in English see Gonon, *Modern Vocational Education*.

²⁶ Gonon and Kerschensteiner, *Arbeitsschule*, p. 37.

²⁷ Spranger, *Psychologie*, p. 37.

pedagogy. *Sachlichkeit*, not a dwelling on the psychological intricacies of the soul or the passions and desires, was to be central to the work of the teacher. *Sachlichkeit* is the outcome of the encounter of the body and the external object, the *Sache*, and hence can only be imparted by work involving the body. *Sachlichkeit*, in turn, will lead to joy in work (*Arbeitsfreude*) and an emotional attunement to the national state. Though emotions are powerful enough to guide the course of the pupils' activities, in school and beyond, they are toned down and lack exuberance. Challenging yet one more binary, they might be called rational emotions.

Kerschensteiner emphasized the world of traditional artisans, almost completely ignoring the conditions of factory workers. He warned against the moral dangers of the big cities and believed that common people needed guidance as they were apt to misuse their freedom for license.²⁸ All this could have struck a note with young Indians under the influence of Gandhi. However, where the teaching at Jamia's primary school most clearly differs from Kerschensteiner's model is the promotion of the children's own initiative and their taking ownership of the projects they devised. Teaching democracy by practicing it in school, wherever possible, was not something Kerschensteiner would have deemed appropriate. He remained a monarchist, only grudgingly accepting the changes brought about in Germany through the revolution of 1919. To no lesser extent than for Spranger, it was the state, and not the child, which was at the center of his reflections. If practical work involving the body enhanced the development of the child's personality, this was an advantage only in so far as it contributed to the well-being of the state.²⁹

Despite the assertions of Zakir Husain and Abid Husain, the influences explaining the pedagogical practices at Jamia's primary school, as described above, have to be sought elsewhere. Once Jamia's focus had shifted towards a primacy on educational issues, the enthusiasm and willingness of the teachers were no longer considered a sufficient qualification and had to be supplemented by training. While the Jamia leaders were in close conversation with Khwaja Ghulam us Saiyidain, principal of the teacher training college at Aligarh, it was to Moga, in the Punjab, that they sent Jamia's aspiring teachers for a year, one young man at a time. At Moga, American Presbyterian missionaries, who had trained in New York with John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, had opened an experimental village school after the First World War, combining learning through the project method with vocational training for the lowest strata. As their model quickly drew interested observers from all over India, they opened a teacher training school, which offered one-year courses combining an introduction to pedagogical theory with hands-on

²⁸ Kerschensteiner, *Staatsbürgerliche Erziehung*.

²⁹ Gonon and Kerschensteiner, *Arbeitsschule*, pp. 14–17.

teaching experience in the village.³⁰ Abdul Ghaffar Mudholi was among the first Jamia sent to Moga, and, as always, he provided a detailed narrative about his experiences.³¹

Teaching methods in Moga—as in the other places inspired by what came to be called American progressive education—aimed at overcoming two binaries. First, it neither opted for a teacher-centered pedagogy, in which the children became active only in ways and according to goals previously set by the teacher, nor did it leave the children to follow their inclination without guidance or accountability. Though children learned from every experience, Dewey explained, not all the lessons were equally valuable—some led nowhere, and others even promoted socially inadequate behavior. Teachers thus had the responsibility of setting up a frame that would provide the right kind of experience.³² Second, experience in itself did not yet amount to teaching, but only once the mind and the body came together, identifying a problem before setting out to solve it, actively experimenting with possible solutions, and finally evaluating the results of the experiments and correlating them to the initial problem, deciding whether the goals of learning had been achieved. Books did not substitute for experience but helped in its interpretation. This method, Dewey explained, not only allowed integration of school and society, breaching the gap between the experience the pupils had inside and outside of the school, but it also provided a model for continuous learning. The most valuable thing pupils learned was to solve problems on their own, a quality which could not be valued enough in a rapidly changing society.³³ It is here that we find the greatest difference to Kerschensteiner's model. While both relied on manual work (Kerschensteiner a little more, while for Dewey a project could also resolve an intellectual problem), Kerschensteiner envisioned a society with stable hierarchies in which the elite provided the required guidance in society and state and in which change occurred slowly, if at all. Dewey embraced modernity and its rapid social and economic changes and never left a doubt that democracy was the only form of government that could master these challenges.

More than anything else, however, Jamia has always seen itself as a Gandhian institution.³⁴ It was in response to his appeal that the institution had been founded,

³⁰ Bara, "Christian Missionaries"; Zimmerman, *Innocents Abroad*. See also Harper, "Training School", pp. 13–25; Singh, "School Gardening", pp. 151–159.

³¹ Mudholi, *Ek talib*, pp. 94–121. See also the dissertation William J. McKee, former principal of the school at Moga, wrote under the supervision of William Kilpatrick: McKee, *New Schools*, especially chapter 9, "A Day in the School at Moga."

³² Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

³³ Dewey, *School and Society*; Dewey, *Democracy and Education*.

³⁴ Gautier, "Laboratory"; Gautier, "Jamia Millia Islamia". A huge thank you to Laurence for sharing this article before its publication and for our ongoing discussions on Jamia.

and Gandhi had been a stalwart supporter, both politically and financially, in its early years. Throughout his life, he made it clear that he regarded Jamia as his family, whom he could visit without invitation or announcement. During his time in Germany, Zakir Husain saw himself as a Gandhian ambassador, spreading his political message and regularly spending hours at the spinning wheel.³⁵ The influence of Gandhi's educational program on the actual teaching practices at Jamia, however, is more complicated. Since his early "experiments with truth" in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century—which owed as much to aspects of Indian traditions as to global influences, from Tolstoy to Ruskin and Emerson, from British vegetarians to Theosophists—the body was at the core of Gandhi's search for an old-new moral engagement with the world as a precondition for salvation, both individual and civilizational.³⁶ Moral force, he held, could only be created through bodily practices which aimed at the control of the senses. This implied the traditional ascetic routines of fasting and sexual abstinence but also the overcoming of bodily desires through manual labor. If they disciplined their bodies in this manner, Gandhi exhorted his followers, they would be able to face suffering and even death without fear and without resorting to violence or even anger. This would not reduce their virility—on the contrary, perfect control of the body and emotions would enhance their manliness and the manliness of India as a nation.

Labor in the Gandhian ashrams in South Africa had encompassed a variety of forms, ranging from farming or working the printing presses to the tasks traditionally deemed degrading, like making sandals and cleaning latrines. From the first non-cooperation campaign onward, spinning held pride of place and for a time became mandatory for each member of the Congress party. Spinning, Gandhi explained, combined all the virtues required for the national struggle. It not only reversed the destruction of the Indian cottage industry by the colonial power and liberated the country from the domination by British industry, but it also overcame the division between the villages and the cities as well as between the classes; it was a remedy against rural unemployment and poverty, and finally, it created the disciplined body and mind required for a non-violent struggle for Swaraj.³⁷

Gandhi's experiments with education started in South Africa when he assumed responsibility for teaching not only his own family and the inmates on the farm but for some time also the children of the imprisoned Satyagrahis. Given his emphasis on moral education through the disciplining of the body, intellectual training, and to an even greater extent knowledge acquired through books came a very distant second. Work was the pedagogical tool of preference; but Gandhi also provided oral

³⁵ Husain and Ehrentreich, *Botschaft des Mahatma*, photo 74.

³⁶ Parel, "Introduction"; Alter, *Gandhi's Body*; Howard, *Gandhi's Ascetic Activism*.

³⁷ Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*.

instruction whenever he had time—on the way to the train station, or after lunch, though he admitted that more often than not, both he and the children fell asleep from exhaustion.³⁸

Though at first sight, there seems to be a resemblance between Gandhi's focus on work and Kerschensteiner's working school, and even Dewey's ideas, the differences are as important as the similarities. The emphasis on orality allowed Gandhi to create an immediate bond with the children and to teach through his example and his personality as much as through what he said. What it did not allow the children was to learn how to acquire knowledge on their own and to compare and evaluate knowledge from different sources. Though Gandhi did not subscribe to a static model of truth, but throughout his life rather experimented with different ways to approach truth, this did not translate into a mode of teaching that would permit children to conduct their own experiments. There was a stark divide between those who were allowed or successfully claimed the right to use their bodies for experiments and those whose bodies were submitted to an external discipline. For the latter, education led to pre-set results, whether in the shape of a moral character, in the ability to perform certain work, or even in the knowledge they acquired from Gandhi's instruction. They were active insofar as they moved their bodies to an extent unimaginable in traditional schools, but they were at no stage participating in the formulation of goals.

Even after the end of the non-cooperation movement and during the time of a growing distance between Gandhi and his erstwhile supporters from the Khilafat movement, Jamia remained steadfast in its allegiance to the Congress. Rather than with Mohammed Ali, who had been central to its founding and its early days in Aligarh, they threw their lot in with the Congress Muslims Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr Ansari, who both acted as the *Amir-e Jamia* (corresponding to the office of Chancellor) for several years. Though the institution's dependence on the financial contributions of the Princely states, notably Hyderabad and Bhopal, precluded it from officially taking part in political activities, there were always several teachers and students who joined Gandhi in his campaigns and followed him to prison—with the blessing of Jamia and to its pride. On a more mundane level, Jamia's pupils regularly spent time at the spinning wheel, though spinning was never the only handicraft that the school taught.

While many teachers wore *khadi* daily, the pupils followed suit at least for important public events.³⁹ At first glance, the poverty Jamia willingly accepted looked deceptively like Gandhi's asceticism. But for the Jamia *biradari*, denying themselves bodily pleasures was not so much a matter of principle but rather a

³⁸ Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 350; Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 225.

³⁹ Mudholi, *Madrassa-e ibtida'i*, p. 53.



Figure 4.3: Spinning classes on the roof of the primary school. © Jamia's Premchand Archives and Literary Centre.

question of setting priorities straight: Jamia was constantly starved for funds, to the extent that the survival of the institution hung in the balance more than a few times. Under these circumstances, reducing costs was the only option—this went for the teachers' salaries as well as for the schools' equipment and the funding available for running projects. In other areas, too, Jamia was ready to discipline the body where required. As Mudholi's earlier description has shown, children were expected to cope with bodily fatigue during projects and to overcome their reluctance for certain kinds of labor. But this never led to asceticism as a value in itself, or to a deprecation of aestheticism and the quest for beauty, wherever it could be found. Nearly all of the projects conducted in the primary school involved the drawing of posters and charts, which were to be hung on the bare walls of the school's simple accommodation (see fig. 4.1 above). This search for beauty was all the more important for events to which Jamia's benefactors and the general public were invited, and where aesthetics was an important element of making the guests feel welcomed. Striving for beauty with reduced means also prevented the aesthetic experience from re-inscribing class boundaries and made it accessible both to the lower-class visitors from the neighborhood as well as to the influential and well-off patrons from the city and beyond.

Beauty was not only sought in the visual realm but to an even greater degree in language. Even the youngest students already listened to poetry and wrote their first

poems.⁴⁰ This acculturation into the exquisiteness of the Urdu language continued until the young men were old enough to take part in Jamia's *mushairahs*, poetical debates that regularly brought together India's finest poets under the auspices of the Urdu Academy.⁴¹ Though poetry had undergone quite a transformation since the nineteenth century, and the song of the rose and the nightingale, of desperate lovers and their cruel beloveds, no longer held pride of place, the ideal of the man of heart, of a subject able to feel deeply and to be moved to tears by beauty, remained deeply ingrained. Learning to appreciate beauty in all its forms was part of the education of a moral subject. In this respect, at least, Jamia was closer to Tagore's Shantiniketan than to Gandhi's ashrams, though this was not reflected in reciprocal visits or other forms of actual exchange.⁴²

Once again, it is not tenable nor does it make sense to uphold binaries. Jamia's teaching overlapped with the Gandhian model in several significant aspects: the importance accorded to vocational training, the use of labor to overcome distinctions of class and caste, and the emphasis put on moral education. These aspects were shared with many of the proponents of New Education all over the globe. The German focus on the state did not make sense in a situation where the state still belonged to the colonial sphere and where the state's inherent link to physical violence left Gandhi and his followers uncomfortable. Concepts of the nation (*qaum, watan*) or even society (*samaj, ijtema'*), as an entity larger than the individual partially replaced it. The emotions of love or sacrifice with respect to the motherland were as important to Gandhi as they were to Jamia. The same holds for the importance both accorded to fearlessness, though the reference to death and dying is less ubiquitous in Jamia than in Gandhi.

What did constitute a difference was the playfulness of Jamia's pedagogical experiments. Mudholi was just twenty-five years old when he took over the primary school and became responsible for reforming its teaching, and even Zakir Husain was no more than thirty-one years old when he returned from Berlin and became the *Shaikh ul Jamia*. They did not yet have ready-made systems they wanted to apply but collectively tested what worked best. From the beginning, the pupils were involved in these experiments. They did not decide whether or not horticultural labor was to become part of the curriculum, but, as shown above, they did have a decisive voice in what to grow, where to sell it, and what to do with the money. For these decisions, they had to move beyond the oral instruction of the teacher and find things out for themselves, be it through books and articles, by asking

⁴⁰ See for instance the regular column devoted to children's writings and to their poems in Jamia's children's magazine, *Payam-e Ta'lim*. See Pernau, "Education".

⁴¹ Tasks for an Urdu Academy to be founded: Husain, "Musallmanon"; [Husain], "Mushairahs".

⁴² Ganguly, *Tagore's University*.

specialists in the neighborhood, or through conducting experiments. Together, the playfulness and the autonomy given to teachers and pupils balanced the harsher aspects of discipline—which nevertheless remained present.

Wardha

The end of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement in 1931 and the Round Table Conferences held in London to discuss the future constitutional development in India led to a flurry of debates on the future of education. Even if the British might still have wanted to hold onto their power in areas like foreign policy, military, police, and several economic issues, education was certainly among the subjects to be transferred completely to Indian control. An editorial in the *Jamia* from July 1933, probably penned by Abid Husain, voiced this sense of urgency: though the love for the motherland (*hubb-e watan*) and the passion for freedom (*hurriyat ke josh*) was burning in the hearts of the *Jamiawalas*, the editorial read, they felt as if their present sacrifices were not enough and envied those who were able to take the path of politics. But their task lay in education, and this was what they had to focus their inadequate forces on. Notably, they had to develop an encompassing system of education for the Indian Muslims, considering the requirements of the community and the nation, and testing it in practice. The editorial concluded that this model could then be taken up by others throughout the country.⁴³

Gandhi came in a little later with a series of articles in his newspaper *Harijan* in 1937, in which he outlined his vision of education for an independent India. Further elaborating on his earlier ideas, he focused his plan on the reconstruction and reform of Indian villages. This meant that education had to be conducted in the children's mother tongue and through manual labor. Given the way he had worked towards transforming spinning into a national symbol and practice, one which held the nation together across regions, religions, and classes, the earlier variations of engaging the body gave way to a focus on spinning as the central and even the only educational activity. It was through spinning that other subjects would be taught if they were to be taught at all. He aimed at a seven-year compulsory and free education for all children. This, he explained, could be financed if the schools were to become self-supportive, i.e., if the children produced enough marketable yarn to finance the salaries of their teachers.⁴⁴

⁴³ Editor, "Shazrat".

⁴⁴ Gandhi, *Educational Reconstruction*. This publication contains the articles in *Harijan*, the proceedings of the Wardha conference and the report of the Zakir Husain Committee.

To further discuss these proposals, a conference of educationists met with Gandhi at Wardha in October 1937. Zakir Husain represented Jamia while Khwaja Ghulam us Saiyidain brought his experience from the Aligarh Teacher Training College. Many of the participants came from different Gandhian schools, notably from his ashram at Sevagram. In his inaugural address, Gandhi underlined the fundamental originality of his ideas: what he suggested was not teaching handicrafts side by side with liberal education but transforming the entire system so that every form of teaching would happen through manual labor.⁴⁵

Zakir Husain was the first to take the floor, and he respectfully contradicted Gandhi—to the consternation and annoyance of the latter's devoted followers. The ideas that Gandhi presented were not very new to those working in education, Zakir Husain explained, nor were they necessarily linked to certain political programs. They were at the core of the American project method as well as the Russian complex method, and they worked in cities as well as in villages and whether one subscribed to non-violence or not. Neither was teaching through a handicraft as easy as Gandhi had made it look, a point which raised the question of training teachers. Nor could every subject worth teaching be imparted in this way. Finally, Zakir Husain identified a danger in making education self-supportive, as the emphasis might well shift from learning to earning and convert the teachers into slave drivers exploiting their pupils.⁴⁶

In a clever move to diffuse the tensions, Gandhi appointed Zakir Husain as the chair of the committee set up to further develop these ideas. Zakir Husain knew that if he wanted the chance to spread Jamia's educational ideas, it would only be by aligning with Gandhi's program. Substantial differences notwithstanding, the areas of overlap were extensive enough to make this collaboration look like a viable proposition. The report agreed on education in the mother tongue and through handicraft, though the formulations chosen were notably softer than Gandhi's demands, leaving open the possibility to add other crafts or to shift the emphasis from vocational training to relating knowledge to life and exploiting "for educative purposes ... the resources implicit in craft work."⁴⁷ Moving beyond binaries, this was both particular, a scheme designed exclusively for Indian children and radically different from the West, and universal, drawing on the unanimity of modern educational thought.⁴⁸ The report left open the question of financing the proposal. In the end, a compromise was effected in which the yarn spun by the children would be bought by the state and constitute one source, among others, financing the schools.

⁴⁵ Gandhi, *Educational Reconstruction*, Gandhi's Inaugural Address, pp. 46–52.

⁴⁶ Gandhi, Zakir Husain, pp. 53–55.

⁴⁷ Husain, *Basic National Education*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ Husain, pp. 11–12.

Once the report was published, Jamia quickly became caught between the fronts. In an unusually tense article, Zakir Husain warded off the criticism coming from the left. Without naming the critics or refuting their arguments, he suggested that the progressives (*taraqqi pasand*) were reacting not so much against the scheme as such as against Gandhi himself, whom they saw as a conservative force (*qadamat pasand*) while overlooking the fact that he sometimes supported modern ideas.⁴⁹ The critique of the progressives hit all the harder given that *Jamia* had been regularly publishing articles on village development since the mid-1920s, a trend which went in a noticeably different direction than Gandhi's idea that all it would take to solve the problems of rural poverty would be to teach the villagers morality, cleanliness, and spinning. Instead, the articles focused on questions of rural indebtedness, the system of heritage that led to the division of the holdings beyond a level where agriculture could still support a family, and the social structure in the villages. Refusing to be drawn into that debate, Zakir Husain instead explained in great detail the advantages of educating children through work and the involvement of the body—a method that no one, from the left or the right, had challenged and which had been gaining ground even in the state-funded schools since the beginning of the 1930s.⁵⁰ Even more dangerous for *Jamia*, but less interesting for a discussion on educational goals, were the attacks from the Muslim League and from other Muslim organizations that saw *Jamia* as giving in to Gandhi's philosophy. If the education of Muslim children was not kept separate, they claimed, grave religious, linguistic, and political dangers for the children and the community would result.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the Indian National Congress accepted the suggestions of the Zakir Husain Committee at its next session.⁵² Education through the body and manual labor thus became the model for rural education, first in the Congress Provinces, and after 1947 in the whole of India.

Conclusion

Irrespective of what Gandhi claimed, this form of education cannot be neatly classified in the binary of authentically Indian or imported from the West. The article has shown that the pedagogical practices involving the students' bodies and emotions through manual work had multiple origins and *Jamia* did not adopt any of them

⁴⁹ Husain, "Wardha", paraphrase p. 236.

⁵⁰ Bureau of Education, *Education*, pp. 49–52.

⁵¹ Oesterheld, "National Education".

⁵² Desai, *Report*.

without critical adaptation; the same holds for Gandhi's ideas and experiments. More interesting than where the practices "really" came from and belonged to is the question of how ideas about what children needed to know, how they learned, and the practices of teaching in the classroom and beyond travel.

The inquiry into what Zakir Husain and his friends claimed to be the German roots of their pedagogical faith has shown that only a rather superficial reading of the works of Spranger and Kerschensteiner can point to them as inspiration for Jamia. Spranger's faith in the Prussian state and its military and bureaucratic representatives, his development of psychology to counter the body-centered interpretation of Freud and Bernfeld, his belief in race and blood, his authoritarianism, and his anti-Semitism could not be farther from the political and social aims that Jamia stood for. Less starkly, Kerschensteiner's nostalgia for a world of artisans and obedient subjects also makes for an awkward comparison with Jamia's devising of a pedagogy, that would work for the village but also for the city and for the industrial settlement and would prepare all of the children for democratic citizenship.

My suggestion would be that emotions play a far bigger role in global history than they have been credited with. Not only did emotional norms and styles of feeling travel, but emotions were also the carriers of more complicated processes of encounters and appropriation.⁵³ Germany in the interwar period, and especially the reformist circles of educationists, had developed a longing for India as a space of salvation, which can only partially be interpreted through Edward Said's Orientalism.⁵⁴ Indian students were open to the German self-interpretation as a partially colonized country after the Treaty of Versailles. This created a resonance and an attunement which allowed them to sympathize in the word's original meaning of feeling together. Many intellectual propositions could travel through this bridge—others, like the *völkisch* ideas, were either not seen, discarded as unimportant, or re-interpreted as popular. Ludicrous as such a mistranslation may seem from today's vantage point, the contemporaries, Indian and German, could have imagined it pointing to a romantic love for the *Volk* and the people, which they shared. In the case of Kerschensteiner, it probably was the idea of vocational training that created an emotional resonance with Gandhian ideas of linking manual labor and education. In turn, this emotional resonance made it easier to engage with Kerschensteiner's ideas and to select those that were emotionally in tune with Gandhi without necessarily already being well-developed or present at all.

This is not to say that for Zakir Husain and his friends, feelings got in the way of a rational investigation of the matters at hand—rather, the all-too-neat distinction between emotions and rationality itself, often linked to the body-brain duality, is

⁵³ Pernau, *Emotions and Temporalities*, pp. 8–12.

⁵⁴ Marchand, "Eastern Wisdom"; Horn, "New Education".

one of the most important binaries we have to challenge. Instead of assuming that the creation and vetting of knowledge is something in which emotions can only have a disruptive power, it is by looking at their multiple entanglements that we perceive how knowledge traveled and how new knowledge was created.

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