



ROLE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES TO PROMOTE THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN TAMIL NADU – AN OVERVIEW

R. Kavitha¹ and T. Asokan²

¹Lecturer in Tourism and Travel Management, Bharathidasan University Constituent College, Perambalur.
Part Time Research Scholar, Department of History, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli.

² Assistant Professor & Head, Department of History, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli.

ABSTRACT:

This shows that there was no consistency in their strengths. Education did not make considerable progress in the Madras presidency, due to the existence of diverse difficulties. The policy of the government was to limit the provision of purely state education and to give encouragement to the grant-in-aid system. In this connection, an order of the Madras Government was issued (GO No. 37, Education Department dated 17th April, 1868). But there was no improvement in the education of Christian Missionaries. The education makes satisfactory or impressive progress in any aspect of education, primary, secondary, higher or collegiate or professional. Though the Missionaries made a lot of efforts to educate the peoples the result was satisfactory.

KEYWORDS – Christian Missionaries, work, Missionary Efforts, Professionalising Medical Practice.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Missionaries who came to India in 16th century contributed much for the growth of education. Prominent among them were the Jesuit missionaries. They constructed numerous schools with a view to provide education to common people. Popular among them was the school constructed by Fr Fernandez at Madurai, Fr Nobili also rendered meritorious service for the growth of education. He came in Madurai with another Christian missionary who visited Madurai was Fr Bemande. He visited the school at Madurai and presented gifts to the students with a view to encourage them. He also started a school at Mylapore and taught Tamil and Telugu to the students.

Gradually, the activities of the Christian missionaries developed in Madurai. So they extended their work in all parts of Tamil Nadu. In 1567, Fr Henry started a school at Punnamkayal in Tirunelveli district. The primary aim of the school was to educate Tamil to Christian evangelists. One Louis, a Christian convert served in this school as Tamil teacher. This place served as a centre for the missionary activities. From there they spread the Christian ideas to other places. They also started a printing press at Punnamkayal in 1577 with a view to print religious books and pamphlets, 'Gnanaupadesa Churukkam' was the first work printed in this press. Most of the books published from this press were religious. They spread religious principles among the common people. They also founded a school at Chandragiri with a view to educate the children of the nobles.



WORKS OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

When the English East India Company was unwilling to accept a direct responsibility for the educations of Indian people, the Christian Missionaries came forward as pioneers to establish schools and colleges

(Richard Dickenson, 1967). The company's policy was that, "the light must touch the mountain tops before it could pierce to the levels and depth" (Hunter Education Commission Report, 1882). It means that education had to be given to the rich Brahmins and from them it had to filter down to the common people. But it did not work well. The missionaries took keen interest in education at a time when the government did little to shoulder responsibility in this regard. Being a missionary centre, Tiruchirappalli became the meeting ground of all the missionary forces. The spread of Christianity through education brought many in the fold of Christianity.

The New Madura Mission managed by the French Jesuits took keen interest in education. The Tranquebar Mission whose branches such as the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of Gospel (SPG) under Fr Schwartz made a beginning (Naik J. P). He was the pathfinder of the missionary education in Tiruchirappalli. He founded the Vestry School at Tiruchirappalli in 1772 (Sarguru Dhas, 1963). This was the first missionary school at Tiruchirappalli in western pattern. Fr Schwartz established an English and Tamil school, which was maintained out of his own salary (Lewis Moore, 1898). The Tamil branch of the School, which survived in the form of an elementary vernacular school in Tennur, was transferred to the Fort in 1864 (The Third Tour of Arthur Lawley to Madurai and Tiruchirappalli, 18th and 26th November 1906). The Gospel Society's School at Erungalore was converted from a boarding to a day school during the year 1870. The Roman Catholic Mission managed about 12 schools. The SPG had eight schools in the different parts of Tiruchirappalli. They were sufficiently well managed and worked up to the standard of the second-class taluk schools (Third tour of Arthur Lawley, 1906).

In 1872, there were two high schools in Tiruchirappalli managed by the missions. The Wesleyan Mission High School was situated in a less popular area about two miles away from the SPG. All the upper classes of that school were weak in point of the number of pupils. The Roman Catholic Missions and Gospel Society had specially distinguished themselves in the line of improving education (Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, 1883). Each mission strove hard to outshine the other in educational and missionary activities.

The Gospel Society's High School gradually developed into a college in 1873 and affiliated to the University of Madras. In 1883, it was upgraded to the position of a first-grade college. The strength was ten for Bachelor of Arts and thirty for the fine arts. There was an unhealthy rivalry between St Joseph's and the SPG in Tiruchirappalli, which caused a reduction of strength in the SPG College. The cost for the maintenance of the college amounted to Rs 15,273. The fee received was Rs 5,365 and the government grant was Rs 4,931. The strength of the college increased to 250 in 1904. The College gave hostel accommodation for about seventy-four students.

The college received a grant from the Provincial funds, and yet it worked on a deficit balance (GO No, 218, Education Department, 1905). In 1926, it was named as Bishop Heber College after the name of Bishop Heber (Bishop Heber, a distinguished missionary drowned in a tank in Tiruchirappalli in 1826). The Bishop Heber College was closed down because of the recommendation of the Commission on Christian Higher Education in India with effect from 1934 (Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency during 1936 – 1937). The Mission did not have sufficient funds to run the College.

St Joseph's College was originally planned to be established at Tiruchirappalli owing to an epidemic and the consequent death of six priests the venue had been shifted to Nagapattinam. The College was opened in 1866 and in the same year, it was affiliated to the Madras University (The Madras Year Book, 1923, p. 121). It did not receive full salary assistance from the government. The College was long debarred from receiving government aid because the fathers being under a vow of poverty received no salary and the government grants were calculated on the salaries of the teachers.

The College of Nagapattinam afforded to the European families in the south, the means of procuring to their children, the benefit of higher education. It was established and regulated on the same principles as the other colleges of the same society in Europe (Memorandum submitted to the Collector, 17th January 1845). The course of education comprised of English, French, Latin, Greek, History and Philosophy. Eminent

professors were there to teach. The age of admission was from seven to fourteen students who could read and write were admitted (**Memorandum submitted to the Collector, 17th January 1845**). At the time of the admission of their wards, parents had to testify to the qualities of their children. The first three months after the admission were considered as the probation period. During this time the boy's behaviour in the institution would be watched and if he did not prove suitable to the regulations of the house (Memorandum submitted to the Collector) parents would be requested to take him away (House refers to the residence of the Jesuit Fathers with whom the students used to stay).

Once in every three months, details regarding health and progress of the boys would be intimated to the parents. During 1882 – 1883, the college was transferred to Tiruchirappalli. The College took special care in strengthening the potentiality of the staff and provided the fine building in keeping with the dignity of the institution. They believed that higher education should be associated with noble and impressive surroundings (**Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, 1882 – 1883**). The strength for the degree classes increased from 15 to 53 and fine arts 30 to 64 after the transfer. In the High School department attached to the college, the strength had been doubled since the transfer (Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, 1882 – 1883).

St Joseph's College was one of the best in the presidency with European professors and a large number of qualified local teachers. The College department cost Rs 59,628 and the fees received amounted to Rs 17,411 while the government grant was Rs 10,976 (**Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency 1882 – 1883**). The college under the management of the Society of Jesus (SJ) made rapid progress. The strength of the college in 1883 – 1884 was 136 and in 1903 – 1904, it increased to 343. The institution occupied an almost unique position among the aided colleges in point of efficiency and influence (**GO No. 85, Education Department (Misc.), 15th February 1905**).

The College got the building grant of one-third of the total expense under the rule of grant-in-aid code. Till 1904, the school department of the college got the grant of Rs 21,000 (**GO No. 85, Education Department (Misc.), 15th February 1905**). The amount for physical apparatus to the college was sanctioned under the rule 126 of the grant – in – aid code of the government (**GO No 81, Education Department (Misc.), 12th February 1900**). The college met the expenses involved in the classes from the provincial funds given by the government. It became an art and science college in 1911. The college became one of the best institutions of the Madras Presidency. In 1925, the college acquired 1.24 acres of land in Chinthamani village for the purpose of playground for which the government had sanctioned Rs 1932 (**GO No 1020, Education Department (Misc.), 4th May, 1925**).

MISSIONARY EFFORTS

Thus State efforts were necessarily slow; even in England, Government did little for education in those days. But the missionaries were more energetic. In 1711, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) offered to maintain one or more charity schools at Madras through the agency of the Danish missionaries at Tranquebar, of whom the famous Ziegenbalg was the chief. The missionaries arrived in 1717 and in the same year they were given permission to erect two charity schools in the city, one for the Portuguese in the English town and the other for 'Malabars' (Tamils and other local people) in the black town. Thus, the first efforts to educate Indians came from missionaries and not from the company. The first missionaries taught German chiefly, and this caused disapproval from the company's officers. At first, the S.P.C.K. was unable to persuade any Englishman to go out to India as the schoolmaster, and therefore the German missionaries themselves learnt English and taught it in their schools.

Geister was the first of these teachers, but later the mission itself seems to have become 'anglicised' (**Sengupta K. P, 1971**). However, the school for 'Malabars' established in the Fort soon ceased to exist, as there was not much public appreciation for it, owing chiefly to the fact that the Hindu parents were averse to sending their children to a school definitely Christian in character. The school, however, was reopened in 1726 by the Missionary Schedule and attracted many students. This subsequently became the Vepery Anglo-Vernacular School which has enjoyed almost a continuous existence ever since.

The Catholic Mission also began their efforts early, but their progress in the city was slow. Between 1746 and 1748, the French under Dupleix were in possession of Madras and they gave permission to a wealthy Armenian Catholic merchant to build a church and mission house at Vepery. A building was soon erected. When the British regained Madras, the Armenian merchant and his followers were suspected of intriguing with the French and the mission house at Vepery was confiscated by the government. In 1752, this building was presented to the Protestant Mission. It then stood where today St Mathias Church stands. Compensation was however given to the Catholics, who were allowed to build a church close by (St Andrew's). The first Catholic School, however, was only founded in 1837 at St Mary's Seminary, Armenian Street.

The first printing press in the city was set up in 1761. When the English in their turn occupied the French town of Pondicherry (1761), they found there a printing press, and they took it as booty to Madras and presented it to the S.P.C.K. then working at Vepery, and thus came into being the well-known S.P.C.K. (later called Diocesan) Press (**Gopal S, 1965**). The Press was not a very profitable concern in the beginning and had to be closed in 1810, as there was no means of paying the workmen; but it was however revived in 1850, owing to the vigorous efforts of the District Committee of the S.P.C.K.

In 1748, the S.P.C.K. established a school for the education of Anglo-Indian children in Madras and maintained a schoolmaster at an annual cost of \$50. This developed into the Vepery Grammar School. It was subsequently enlarged several times and was the chief educational agency in Madras till the establishment of the Free Church Mission. Under Bishop Corrie, it became the 'Madras Grammar School'. The Mission also kept a charity school for girls at Vepery. Subsequently, the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Mission established schools in Madras. The Wesleyan Mission dates from 1890 and this was the origin of the college at Royapettah. A school at St Thomas Mount was also established in 1812 (**Heimsath C. H, 1964**).

Hartog Committee (1928-29)

In May 1929 the Simon Commission appointed an Auxiliary Committee popularly known as the Hartog Committee, after its chairman, Sir Philip Hartog who had served for several years in India as a member of the Calcutta University Commission and as Vice-Chancellor of the Dacca University. The Committee submitted its report in September 1929. The Committee concluded that expansion in the field of education had been gained at the cost of quality and that the immediate need for the hour was to improve quality rather than strive to increase the number still further. The Committee condemned a policy of 'hasty expansion' and recommended 'consolidation and improvement.'

Professionalising Medical Practice

The year 1924 saw an important change in the history of health care in the Madras Presidency. For the first time, a scheme specifically designed to deliver health care to the rural people was introduced. This does not mean that prior to 1924 there were no dispensaries or hospitals in rural areas. The basic objective of this new scheme, called the Subsidised Rural Medical Relief Scheme (SRMRS), was two-fold: "to bring medical relief within easy reach of the rural population" and at the same time to encourage the private practitioners to settle down in rural areas. It was an attempt to attract private medical practitioners to rural areas by giving them monetary incentives instead of appointing permanent government medical officers (**Muraleedharan V. R, 1992**). By early 1920s, the government realized that the existing facilities in rural areas were extremely inadequate: there was one medical institution of about every 250 square miles of area, each serving about 77,000 people in the presidency.

There were 510 medical institutions (dispensaries and hospitals), excluding those in Madras city and agency area) (**GO 1606, Public Health, 22nd November 1921**). The vast majority of the rural population had no opportunity of coming into daily contact or even an occasional contact with 'qualified' medical practitioners. The government, therefore, felt that "amelioration of the conditions of the masses was urgent and that immediate steps should be taken to bring medical aid within comparatively easy reach of the villagers" (**GO 1522, Public Health, 22nd October 1924**). This new scheme, it was thought, would not only be

“substantial (but) would not mean expenditure beyond the funds available” with the government (Muraleedharan V. R, 1992). Alternative modes of health care were discussed but the SRMRS was finally considered feasible as it appeared to be the “cheapest and at the same time the best from many points of view” (Muraleedharan V. R, 1992). As a result, the rural medical relief scheme was begun in 1924, as the best way to expand the health care delivery system in rural areas.

It was essentially a scheme of subsidizing private practitioners who agreed to settle down in villages. The scheme offered a subsidy of Rs. 600 per annum for graduates and Rs 400 per annum for licentiates, with an additional amount of Rs. 100 per annum for payment towards midwives if employed by them. In addition to this, the local boards concerned were to supply medicines worth Rs. 360 per annum to each of these subsidized dispensaries, to be given free of cost to the patients. The total cost of maintaining such a dispensary was estimated to be about Rs.1000 per annum. This was shared between the provincial government and local bodies in a ratio of 3:2. By this measure, it was expected that a large number of private practitioners now overcrowded in urban areas would be attracted to rural areas. By 1925, about 40 per cent of the 3,000 - odd allopathic medical practitioner including the graduates and licentiates in the presidency were employed as either assistant or sub-assistant surgeons in the medical department.

The rest were presumably practising privately in urban areas. The government felt that the subsidy should be “low enough to compel the medical men to earn themselves and earn the confidence of their neighbours, and high enough to serve as an attraction in the initial stage until they are able to build up a practice” (GO 1522, Public Health, 22nd October 1924). The main conditions of the scheme were that (a) the medical practitioners should agree to settle down in a village specified by the local boards; (b) they should treat the ‘necessitous poor’ free of charge and (c) they would not be considered as government servants. The scheme commenced in 1924 with subsidizing about 200 new dispensaries. This was, in essence, the basic framework of the new rural medical relief scheme in the Madras Presidency (Muraleedharan V. R, 1992).

The Madras Government was the first in British India to extend the course to five years; it was also the first government to abolish the course. With this decision, the future of the subordinate medical service (which employed as sub-assistant surgeons) was hanging in balance. Before the Congress ministry could decide as to what should be done to protect the interests of those already in the service as well as those who were about to complete the course, it resigned.

The avowed policy of the Government of Madras to develop an independent medical profession remained at best a pious hope. In fact, it left the independent medical profession, which consisted largely of the licentiate, if anything, highly dissatisfied and a disgruntled lot. The independent medical profession although large in size, was not healthy. There was a bitter rivalry between them and the graduates. The licentiates whose services were utilized to fulfil the object of minimizing the government’s expenditure on health-care often found them highly discriminated. But it should be noted that the origin of the divisions within the ‘scientific western medical profession’ in colonial India lay in the government’s policy of maintaining two standards of medical education in order to have a cheaper mode of delivering health-care (Muraleedharan V. R,1992).

CONCLUSION

This shows that there was no consistency in their strengths. Education did not make considerable progress in the Madras presidency, due to the existence of diverse difficulties. The policy of the government was to limit the provision of purely state education and to give encouragement to the grant-in-aid system. In this connection, an order of the Madras Government was issued (GO No. 37, Education Department dated 17th April, 1868). But there was no improvement in the education of Christian Missionaries. The education makes satisfactory or impressive progress in any aspect of education, primary, secondary, higher or collegiate or professional. Though the Missionaries made a lot of efforts to educate the peoples the result was satisfactory.

REFERENCES

- Bishop Heber, a distinguished missionary drowned in a tank in Tiruchirappalli in 1826.
- C.H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform (Calcutta, 1964), p. 198.
- GO 1522, Public Health, 22nd October 1924.
- GO 1606, Public Health, 22nd November 1921.
- GO No 1020, Education Department (Misc.), 4th May 1925, pp. 1-6.
- GO No 81, Education Department (Misc.), 12th February 1900.
- GO No, 218, Education Department (Misc.), 4th April 1905.
- GO No. 37, Education Department dated 17th April 1868.
- GO No. 85, Education Department (Misc.), 15th February 1905, p. 2.
- House refers to the residence of the Jesuit Fathers with whom the students used to stay.
- Hunter Education Commission Report, 1882, p. 6.
- Jesuit Educational Association of India, Delhi, 1970, p. 181.
- K.P. Sengupta, Christian Missionaries in Bengal, 1793-1833 (Calcutta, 1971), pp. 101-105.
- Lewis Moore, A Manual of the Trichinopoly District in the Presidency of Madras, Tamil Nadu Archives, Govt. of Tamil Nadu (Madras, 1878), p. 212.
- Memorandum submitted to the Collector of Tanjore the first Rector and Principal Fr Audibert SJ of St Joseph's College, 17th January 1845.
- Memorandum submitted to the Collector.
- Muraleedharan V. R (1992), "Professionalising Medical Practice in Colonial South-India", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Jan. 25, 1992), pp. PE27-PE30+PE35-PE37
- Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency 1882 – 1883, p. 52 & 69.
- Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency during 1882 – 1883, p. 10, 32, 39 & 58.
- Report on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency during 1936 – 1937, Volume I, p. 53.
- Report on the Public Instruction of the Madras Presidency, 1924 – 25, p. 13.
- Richard Dickenson (Ed.), The Christian Colleges and National Development (Madras, 1967), p. 22.
- S. Gopal, British Policy in India 1858-1905 (Cambridge, 1965), p. 92.
- Sarguru Dhas, Educational Policy in the Madras Presidency 1800 – 1900, Unpublished PhD thesis (Madras University, 1963), p. 153.
- The age of admission was given. Though School classes were conducted in the beginning of St Joseph's the institution ever since its inspection was called St Joseph's College.
- The Madras Year Book, 1923, p. 121.
- The third tour of Arthur Lawley to Madurai and Tiruchirappalli, 18th and 26th November 1906, p. 119, 200 – 202 & 270.

**R. Kavitha**

Lecturer in Tourism and Travel Management, Bharathidasan University Constituent College, Perambalur.

Part Time Research Scholar, Department of History, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli.