



PROGRESS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN TRAVANCORE SINCE 1800

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ABSTRACT :

A historical review of the educational efforts of the government and the private institutions prior to independence and after, is attempted herewith to highlight the different policy changes and reforms that helped the educational development in Kerala and also to point out the major objectives of education. During the initial phase of educational expansion, education got its prominence for its intrinsic worthiness and played the role of explanation and empowerment. Government initiatives through the policy changes and educational reforms facilitated the process of educational expansion in Kerala. This also paved the way for social interventions in education and education became a social process.

KEYWORDS : *policy changes and educational reforms , historical review.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is the most important weapon for human resource development. Educating women, therefore, occupies top priority among different measures taken to develop the status of women in India. In recent years, the focus of planning has shifted from equipping women for their traditional roles of housewives and mothers in recognizing their worth as producers, making a major contribution to family and national income. Efforts have been complete over the past three decades of planned development to register more girls in schools encouraging them to continue their education as long as possible, and to provide non-formal educational opportunities for women. The nineteenth century saw major advances in educational opportunities for women and girls, from the common school movement in the early part of the century to multiple opportunities in higher education at the century's close. In the 1800s, women began to play central roles in education-as teachers and as learners, in formal and informal education settings, on the frontier and in the cities.

2. WOMEN EDUCATION:

Government intervention in the field of female education begins only from 1860s. It was a neglected area except for a few boarding schools run by the Missionaries during 1819-22. Missionary efforts made an impact on the attitude of the society towards female education. They tried to influence public opinion by exhorting people to send their girls to schools. Government initiative towards female education is found in the words of Dewan Madhava Rao. "very little, if anything, has been done for female education. Government started its first school for girls at Karamana in Trivandrum in 1859. Vernacular schools separately for girls

were organised in 1867. Separate schools for girls removed the reservation on the part of the parents to send their daughters to mixed schools.

3. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION:

In 1864, the Travancore Government itself started the first government girl's school. The Mission, showed particular interest in the development of female education irrespective of caste or creed. Free boarding, food and clothing provided at the beginning was a blessing to the slaves and poor girls. The Missionaries and Government of Travancore was responsible for primary education to all children between the age of five and ten years. The government established a secondary grade college at Trivandrum in 1887. In 1903 M.E. (1907-08) all the girls' schools in the state were placed under the control of an inspector and four assistant inspectors were appointed. The policy of appointing women as teachers in the girls' schools was strictly adhered to in education. Music and drawing courses from IV standard were established in the English schools for girls.

4. ROLE OF MISSIONARIES IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION :

The Missionaries found that education was one of the means to raise women folk from their low status in the society. For higher education, Scott Christian College was established at Nagercoil and it provided higher education to women also. Amelir Baker was the pioneer of girl's education in North Travancore. She started a school for girls in Kottayam in 1820. This was the first girl's school of the Christian Missionary Society in Travancore. In Malabar, the first school for girls was opened by Julie Gunder of Basel Evangelical Mission, Society in 1839 at Nettoor in Kanpur District. A century back education of women was considered profane and immoral. Social prejudice against female literacy and education was widespread at the dawn of 19th century. This prejudice was strongly rooted in the socio, economic and religious conditions. Conditions prevailed at that time child marriage, caste prejudices, slavery, sati, ban on widow marriage, devadasi system and dowry system. At that time, even though there were some *ezhupallis* or mats for imparting education.

Girls and low caste children were not given admission in these schools. During the first quarter of the 19th century, several missionary societies worked for the cause of education for women in Travancore. The London Missionary Society, the Church Mission Society and the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, were prominent among them. The starting of separate schools for girls and the introduction of the boarding system were the two important contributions of missionaries to the development of education in Kerala. Though, their main intention was to propagate religion, their work indirectly improved the educational status of the women.

5. ROLE OF WOMEN TEACHER'S IN WOMEN EDUCATION

Teachers who were appointed in the management schools were treated like slaves. Their salary was an issue. Fixation was another matter and the managers had ensured that there was no security for their jobs. The teachers also started raising their issue through an organization of elementary school teachers. The role of women in the teacher's movement was very remarkable. Teachers like Yasodha Teacher, Lakshmi Kutty Teacher were at the forefront to organize teachers and demand their rights. The other teachers looked down upon them but still with the political awareness they gained through their exposure to the political field. They managed to mobilize women teachers and formed an organization.

Lakshmi Kutty Teacher belonged to an upper caste who got education and also married to a person who was also an activist in both politics and teachers' movement. It was easy for her to come out and organize women. She had the initiative and interest in doing so. So Yasodha Teacher belonged to the Ezhava community who were already depressed and denied education. She came to the political arena of her own. And through teachers' movement she was able to formulate a women's perspective to the whole Communist Movement in Kerala is remarkable. As far as intellectual activity was concerned India was stagnant in the 18th century. The scientific spirit that had rapidly been transforming the west had not reached the shores of

India. The India people know very little of their own history they had no grasp of geography, world history and science. The scope of education that was imparted in India was narrow and the curriculum limited. It is stated that no literary work of first rate importance was produced for a first hundred years from the middle of the 18th century.

This deplorable state of intellectual sterility however, was not destined to last longer. Several forces were at work which brought about renaissance. A band of capable English scholars like William John's and James Prince devoted themselves to research in Indian history and philosophy and achieved a lot. The cumulative effect of the achievement in these fields helped to a great extent. The reconstruction of the history of India's glorious past. The realization of the greatness of India's past inspired the Indian mind. Another important factor that contributed to the effulgence of the renaissance was the spread of English education. It broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into contact with western science, literature and history. A new world of ideas revealed itself to the wondering gaze of your young students in schools and colleges. In place of the extravagant mythical geography, legendary, history and pseudo - science with which they had been acquainted came sober and correct ideas about the configuration of the earth, the rise and fall of nations and the unalterable laws of nature.

6. ROLE OF EAST INDIA COMPANY IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION:

The effort of the East India Company for the dissemination of education may be said to commence from the charter act of 1813 by which the British parliament directed that a lakh of rupees should be annually marked for the "revival and promotion of knowledge of the science, among the inhabitants of the British territories". The fund was not spending for a few years because the Government wanted to promote. A committee of public instruction was appointed in 1823 to resolve the dead-lock.

Practical considerations such as the employment of Indians in the lower ranks of the services and exigencies of administration dictated the necessity of introducing English as the medium of education. On 7th March 1833 the issue was finally decided by a resolution that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India and that the funds appropriated for education would be best employed in English education alone". From this date onwards, English was recognized as the medium of education.

Two years later, the school was divided into two sections Junior and senior. It was section that gradually developed into Trivandrum College which was affiliated to the Madhava Rao observed this about the spread of English education in Travancore. When the Raja's school was started at Trivandrum other district schools were also established at Kayamkulam, Kottar and Chirayankizh. Some of these schools did not flourish and gradually closed down. When Rev. Mead became the superintendent of education, many Vernacular schools were amalgamated with the English schools in 1860.

7. BASIC RIGHTS OF EDUCATION

The Bill No. 93 which was passed by the Indian Parliament on 12th December 2002 provides that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age six to fourteen years in such a way as the state may by law determine. The history of education in Travancore is a long one which divides itself into the various stages by schools were encouraged and brought to fit with a well devised scheme of primary, secondary and collegiate education leading ultimately to the establishment of the Travancore University. It was established by Queen Rani Pavathi Bai.

Women of the middle classes had to knowledge in reading and writing. They obtained something orally from the study and recitation as the puranas and itihases. Her object was to give instruction related with Christian and moral education along with reading, writing and arithmetic. The girls were taught in knitting spinning and needle work. The employment of female teachers added to the popularity. The missionaries were not content with merely establishing schools. They also tried to influence public opinion publishing pamphlets which described the advantages of female education. A large number of mission schools were established throughout the state from the centres of missionary activities. Thus female

education spread throughout the state. The government however, did little for the spread of female education at that time. In the administration report of Travancore for 1038 M.E. (1862-63) Dewan T. Madhava Rao said "very little, is anything, has been done for female education.

8. CONCLUSION:

Women education has to be properly planned, developed for a country to achieve greatness. Since independence, women education is also one which drags our country back from moving towards happiness and prosperity. Education of the girls is considered to be as important as that of boys. The Kothari Education Commission rightly point out that "for full development of our human resources the improvement of house and for moulding the character of children during the impressionable years of infancy, the education of women of infancy, the education of women is of great importance that of men.

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