

**CONTRIBUTION OF MISSIONARIES FOR THE GROWTH OF WESTERN  
EDUCATION IN SOUTH TRAVANCORE****Mrs.E.S.Mallika**

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The Christian Missionaries were the pioneers of Western Education. In 1818 A.D. Rev. Mead founded the Nagercoil Seminary in the neighborhood of Kalkulam Taluk. It was the first institution to impart regular English education in south Travancore. The present Scott Christian Higher Secondary School was established by Rev. Ringletaube in 1809. The growth and development of the school owes its growth to one Septimus R. Scott who generously donated 1000 pounds that he received from his aunt. In 1855A.D. Ringletaube was appointed as the Superintendent of Schools. During the year 1866 A.D- 1867 A.D the Travancore Government opened 11 English district schools. In 1877 A.D., the Maharajah's Government wanted to popularize Vernacular education also. It was decide that every poverty should have its own school. The teachers were paid at the rate of one panam per pupil taught. Prior to 1915, Malayalam was the only medium of instruction in all the categories of Vernacular schools in the whole state.

Key Words: Vernacular, Missionaries, communities, oppressed, Protestant, instruction, seminary, empowerment

**Introduction**

The London missionary society wanted to promote education in their field of activities besides spreading the gospel message as they taught the education is also important to sustain their effort. With this in mind they sent a few educational missionaries who devoted their time and effort for the cause of education. Their foresights found to be correct. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century South Travancore Society, people by and large longed for social equality and liberation from all manmade barriers. The dominant segment of society in South Travancore did not permit majority community of women appear in public places wearing upper cloth for a long. With the attainment of education and social awareness, the aggrieved people made upper cloth revolts in 1822, 1828 and 1858<sup>1</sup>. It marked the intensity of social disparity and disability and oppression of women. However, people's agitation, social reformation and enactment and enforcement of law and support of Missionaries put an end to such an abominable practice against women.

Education in the modern sense means the systematic instruction in a language or languages, trades, arts and sciences subsequently resulting in the development of characters and mental powers. The perfection or the growth of education in a region can be scaled by taking into account the number of educational institutions in the area, the involvement of the people in utilizing the institutions and the socio-economic development of the area. The importance of education was not realized by the people of South Travancore just like other parts of Travancore, due to the ignorance of the people, the caste barriers and the restrictions imposed on the low castes. Earlier the Government had not taken steps for imparting education to all the sections of people.

After independence education underwent marked changes not only in South Travancore but also throughout the state. The Government started schools here and there. But it did not satisfactorily fulfill the needs of the people for higher education. Understanding the backwardness of the people, most of the Christian organizations began to establish western education<sup>2</sup>. Both the Catholics and Protestants contributed much to the growth of education in South Travancore. They founded schools and colleges adjacent to their churches. This was followed by private individuals. In early times, the village schoolmaster known as Asan, imparted education through the village schools. Remunerated by the villagers, the Asan taught reading, writing, arithmetic and the elements of astronomy necessary for the simple calculations. In the old village schools boys and girls studied together. Later there were three agencies running the schools namely Government, aided private managements and private managements. Primary schools, Middle schools and High Schools existed in South Travancore for the promotion of education. Higher education developed only at a later period.

In the year 1878-79, the villages in South Travancore area were divided into three ranges namely Thovalai Range, Kalkulam Range and Vilavancode Range each headed by an Inspector. In 1893-94 the next important change took place in the field of primary education. In 1894, the Government tried to co-ordinate and controls the activities of various agencies and branches of education by means of the Travancore Education Rules and Grant - in - aid Code. A notable change took place in 1902, when a revised curriculum of studies of the state was introduced<sup>3</sup>. The classification of the schools that existed till then was done away with and a new pattern was introduced. Accordingly, the schools were classed as High, Middle, Upper primary and Lower primary. In the Upper primary and Lower primary vernacular was introduced as the chief medium of instruction while English was taught as second language, commencing with class III. The Vernacular Curriculum Revision Committee, was appointed in 1920 to examine the provisions of the Education Code and to suggest modifications, recommended the amalgamation of the two sets of schools -Vernacular and Anglo - Vernacular and stipulated that all primary schools should teach English and be free<sup>4</sup>.

The advent of the LMS Missionaries opened a new era in the history of south Travancore. The first missionary of the LMS in India was the Rev. Nathaniel Forsyth, who came in the first instance to Calcutta, and eventually settled down in Chinsura because of the opposition of the East India Company. William Tobias Ringeltaube, who was popularly called the Apostle of South Travancore, was sent to India by the London Missionary Society. He landed in Calcutta in October 1797. From Calcutta he came to Tranqubar. In 1806, he travelled to Travancore and reached Mylaudy in the month of April. He worked selflessly among the oppressed people in South Travancore<sup>5</sup>. He pleaded with the native Travancore Government for the redemption of taxes levied on the downtrodden communities during periods of severe drought. He established the First English School at Mylaudy in 1806. Within more schools came up the children

irrespective of caste or creed were given training in reading, writing and arithmetic. Ringeltaube prepared the way for making Travancore, a land of literacy. He built the first protestant church of Travancore in Mylaudy in 1810 having secured the gracious consent of H.H. Lakshmi Rani. Ringeltaube also started a school to train men to work as teachers and catechists.

In 1816 when Ringeltaube left the Mission, there were Christian congregations and schools in 7 villages. Rev. Charles Mead succeeded Ringeltaube as a London Missionary. His activities were mainly confined to strong Nadar centers. He took keen interest in their welfare. He was appointed as a civil judge at Nagercoil by Colonel Munro. In 1818, the Head quarter of London Missionary activities was shifted from Mylaudy to Nagercoil. Maharani Parvathi Bai of Travancore gave the Resident's Camp bungalow in Nagercoil as a gift to the Mission<sup>6</sup>. Charles Mead organized a seminary for boys here which came to be known as the South Travancore Seminary. Students were taught Catechism, Scripture, English, Tamil and Malayalam languages. But eventually, this Seminary was converted into a regular school, which later became Scott Christian College, now the premises house Women's Christian College.

Mrs. Mead launched a new scheme to educate girls in this State, where girls never went to school. She opened a Boarding Home quite close to the Seminary and took in a few girls as boarders. This was the first systematic attempt towards education of women in Travancore. In the initial stage teachers were brought from Tanjore. After this many missionaries of London Mission Society actively involved themselves in the social uplift of the down trodden. This they did along with their religious work. There was much difficulty in getting girls for the school. The parents had to be persuaded in the initial stages, since sending girls to school was contrary to custom. In spite of such handicaps, the school opened with 14 girls. The initial difficulties were soon overcome when clothing, lodging and boarding facilities were offered to the girls free of cost. Nearly one third of the students had been slaves. This is the school that has come to be known as Duthie Girls School named so in honour of Madam Beatrice Duthie<sup>7</sup>. In 1819 Mrs and Mr. Mault arrived at Nagercoil to do Missionary work. Mrs. Mault helped her husband in his missionary work. She found some young girls working as slaves in big houses. It was a kind of bonded labour. Their parents had been indebted to the well to do people. Just like cows and goats the slaves were bought and sold in the market. Such a heartless practice prevailed in Travancore. Till 1856 there was a slave market in Eraniel. In the beginning of the 19th century the price of a woman slave was Rs.4.24

After school hours, Mrs. Mead and Mrs. Mault taught the unfortunate slave girls embroidery, crochet, spinning and lace making. The last mentioned was made with locally made bobbin sticks on pillows stuffed with paddy straw. They also arranged for the sale of the Yard lace made by these girls to their own friends back home. Eraniel Taluk came to be the largest centre for lace making and embroidery in Travancore. Travancore lace was considered to be of superior quality and had won several medals and prizes at several Exhibitions held at Mysore, Chicago, Wembley, etc<sup>8</sup>. This enabled many of the girls to clear their debts and obtain their freedom. Mrs. Mault trained the girls in such a manner that they left the school more refined in appearance and character. A woman working for about 3-4 hours was able to make earnings of 3-4 annals per day.

The lace work done in the embroidery institute, having won golden medals for excellence in several exhibitions at home in India, could easily find a market in Europe too. Similar schools were established at all the head stations by the missionaries' wives. Mrs. Mead opened one at Neyyoor. Boarding schools for girls were established at Santhapuram, Parassala, Nedumangad, Marthandam, Thuckalay and other places. Ramavarma Kulasekhara Perumal, the Maharaja

visited these schools in 1834 and lauded her splendid service. Education was imparted not only to the Christians but also to the non-Christians. Children of all castes and creeds were taught without any discrimination. In 1820 a separate school was opened for both Hindus and Muslims. There were 50 students in this school in 1823. In villages where a majority of low castes lived a few schools were started separately for them. Dr. Warring along with Mr. Mead started the Pulayan Charity School. The Government gave free mid-day meals to these students<sup>9</sup>.

Mr. Mateer started an Ezhava School at Anjengo for High Caste Hindu girls. The First school for high caste Hindu girls was opened at Eraniel in 1872. Later it was upgraded into a Girls High School by Madam Mell Roy. Special schools were also set up for the benefit of certain communities like the Kshatriyas and Malayala Brahmins, who showed reluctance to send their children to common schools. In 1882 day schools were established in Thuckalay, Thiruvithomcode, Thalakulam and Neyyoor.

The LMS Missionaries were pioneers in starting vocational schools in Travancore too. A school of industry for giving vocational training was established in Nagercoil in 1820. Some of the children in the school were orphans and the others were children of industrious parents who wished their wards to be industrious. They were taught printing, book binding and other useful arts. In due course similar school was started in Neyyoor. Here they were taught printing, paper making, weaving, rearing of silk worms and manufacture of sugar.

Except a few slave girls, who were trained in the Boarding schools, many other slave children did not get the benefit of education. Mead had an innovative method to help them. He announced that every school teacher would be given one panam in addition to his monthly salary for every slave boy he brought to school and 1 ½ panams for every slave girl. Within a year more than 1000 slave children were enlisted in the school in the Neyyoor District. Education was thus made available to all classes of people. The girls showed great progress in various branches of learning. Eventually native prejudices against female education began to vanish. Other welfare measures for women were introduced by the missionaries. Mrs. Annie Lee Allan started a women's society called Daughters of the Court in the Nagercoil boarding school. She tried her best to make women give up betel chewing which would lead to cancer. She also made them swear not to enlarge the lobe of their ear. Mrs. Annie Lee Allan also felt the need for keeping a hold upon the senior girls after they left school. Most of them had been once slaves and dirt poor and could not be on their own. So she gathered a few of them and started the first Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in 1891 in the Girls School, Nagercoil, through this women's welfare measures were brought into the society. As a result of all these, the lower caste people began to be aware of their own humanity and their rights and privileges<sup>10</sup>. The schools had trained many of them to keep discipline, order, cleanliness, and to be industrious and engage in useful learning. It was only a matter of time before they began to assert themselves.

Education is the most important ingredient for human development and social change. The schools established by the Missionaries had the vision to create a society of equality, equity, morality and charity. Contribution to the educational activity of Missionaries from 1809 that south Travancore in the lead in literacy. The old students of the Missionary Schools are found in respectable position both in the public and private sectors across the world.

Every Missionary School is a symbol of sacrifice on the part of the Missionaries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century oppressive and uneven society, opportunity for education was not available for all. It was a shock to the Missionaries of love and service to see inhuman practices in the worst form. Despite the risk, they dedicated themselves to facilitate the liberation of people in spiritual,

educational, social and economic terms. The Missionaries did a lot for women empowerment by introducing self-employment ventures in lace making and needle stitching.

Thousands of young men and women were given the opportunity to serve as teachers and office staff in the schools established by the Missionaries. The teachers in turn taught lakhs and lakhs of children from the primary level to the Higher Secondary level. As on date over 700 teachers and 10000 students are on the roll of the 25 schools. A large number of the old students are today working as Advocates, Doctors, Engineers, Teachers, Administrators, Industrialists, Businessmen Public figures and pastors. The children of the employees working in the Missionary schools are well placed as professionals in India and abroad.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of Missionary education on the society is measurable and salutary in all respect. Spiritual attainment, social equality and equity, economic prosperity, intellectual accomplishment by way of education pursuit, growth of science and technology and charity to mankind in distress as seen today are attributable to the Missionary Education. The Missionaries also established medical missions and colleges in the district as elsewhere in the State and the Nation as well. It is against this back drop our nation is in its march towards global power status.

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