



Educational contributions of London missionary society in Travancore

Sunny Raj A¹, Dr. Rexlin Jose²

¹ Research Scholar, MS University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

² Assistant Professor (DD & CE), MS University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Kerala will get the foremost place in the field of education in India. Cochin and Travancore enjoyed the status of the second most literate states in India during the colonial times. The London Missionary Society was formed in England on September 21, 1795 as a result of an evangelical revival which swept through England in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The purpose of the present study that has adopted analytical interpretative method is to examine the educational advancement of Travancore under the LMS. William Tobias Ringeltaube, the first LMS missionary in South Travancore, was responsible for the introduction of English education in Travancore. Charles Mead is known as the father of sourn Travancore. He spent much time to learn Tamil, visiting churches and inspecting schools (Letter from Mead, 1818). In 1818 when the Mission found ten schools, Mead shifted his headquarters to Nagercoil, from Mayilady (EMMC, 1822, P.36). The pioneering work 'imitated' by the missionaries may be regarded as a clarion call for the socio-religious reform movements that were accomplished by Vaikunda Swamikal, Sree Narayana Gur, Ayyankali and others.

Keywords: educational, LMS, Cochin and Travancore

Introduction

Education is the reconstruction of events that compose the life of the individual so that the new happenings and events become more purposeful and meaningful (John Dewey, 1972). If the education of the people is to be judged by the percentage of Literacy or by the number of pupils in the school or by the percentage of Literacy or by the number of pupils in the school or by the number of graduates sent out from college every year. Kerala will get the foremost place in the field of education in India. Cochin and Travancore enjoyed the status of the second most literate states in India during the colonial times. This enviable position has been achieved as a result of many years of dedicated work on the part of state as well as private agencies. Among the private agencies the Christian missionaries, activists, progress, and development of educations are remarkable thing.

Proselytization was the main aim of the missionaries. To achieve this aim only through education. At that time very few people would read. In order to make them read the Bible, the missionaries had to give training in reading. The London missionary society was formed in England on September 21st 1795.

Activities of missionaries

The advent of the missionaries opened a new phase in the education system in India, especially in Travancore. Travancore was a fertile soil for spreading their religion especially among the depressed classes. Proselytization was the main aim of the missionaries. But they could attain this aim only through education. Very few people would read among the lower sections. In order to make them read the

Bible the missionaries had to give them training in reading. Repetition -verify

The London Missionary Society LMS was formed in England on September 21, 1795 as a result of an evangelical revival which swept through England in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The establishment of the LMS was, infact, a bold step in the education matter. By the dawn of the eighteenth century southern part of Travancore had also witnessed wind blowing in favour of the British missionaries. The system of education introduced by the LMS helped a lot for the progress and prosperity of depressed section of the people of Travancore.

Educational contributions

The introduction of education by the missionaries of LMS in southern part of Travancore marked the beginning of many revolutionary activities. The LMS began its missionary activities in Travancore in 1806. The first missionary of the society to reach Travancore was Rev. William Tobias Tingeltaube. Kerala, which has today the highest rate of literacy in India, owes its advancement to the devoted service of these missionaries who worked for the cause of education in the state of many years. At a time when the state had no organized system of education, LMS took the initiative in organizing a good system including English education and thus brought about a drastic change in the field of education as well as society. So we cannot ignore the work done by missionaries.

The purpose of the present study that has adopted analytical interpretative method is to examine the educational advancement of Travancore under the LMS. William Tobias

Ringeltaube, the first LMS missionary in South Travancore, was responsible for the introduction of English education in Travancore. He started his gospel campaign in Travancore on April 2, 1806. He grasped a true picture of the social system of Travancore. The majority of the people were kept at bay of untouchability and unapproachability. They were ignorant of their rights. He wanted to redeem them from their miserable conditions. It was possible only through education (Agur, 1903). With the monetary help of his friend in England, Ringeltaube opened an English school at Mylaudy in 1809, which was the first English school in Travancore. Ringeltaube devoted his whole energy during 1806-1816 to evangelistic work and wherever he went he carried with him the mission of English education (Aiya, P.446). With his limited funds he succeeded in establishing 6 schools in Travancore for the education of Christians and non Christians. He gave instruction in the three R's (reading, writing, arithmetic) and catechism. Those who could read and pray fluently were recruited as teachers from congregations. But the difficulty experienced by Ringeltaube was that the people were reluctant to send their children to school (Yesudas, 1980, P.129) ^[6]. He focused his attention on the poor and depressed. The poverty-stricken oppressed people were reluctant to send their children to school preferred to train them in various trades which would help them to earn. So he had to work hard to get children for his schools.

Contribution of Charles Mead

The pioneering individual connected with the educational work in Travancore was that of Charles Mead. He was a very enthusiastic worker who threw himself heart and soul into the field of education till his death in 1873. Charles Mead is known as the father of sourn Travancore. He spent much time to learn Tamil, visiting churches and inspecting schools (Letter from Mead, 1818). In 1818 when the Mission found ten schools, Mead shifted his headquarters to Nagercoil, from Mayilady (EMMC, 1822, P.36) ^[6].

On September 29, 1818, Charles Mead was joined by Richard Knill, another Missionary of LMS. They together envisaged a plan by which they visited every village where there was a congregation (Letter, Richard Knill to Rev. James Small, 1819, P.203) ^[1]. The missionaries were fully convinced of the deplorable state of education in Travancore. Only very few were taught even the rudiments of knowledge. The remedy the missionaries proposed for such a deep-rooted malady was the establishment of good schools in all the principal towns and villages of Travancore (EMMC, Vol. 30, 1822, P.36) ^[6]. To attain these objectives, schools were established in most of the places where congregations were formed. They were open to all irrespective of caste and creed. Non-Christians were reluctant to send their children to the missionary schools, where Christians and backward class students studied. With a view to educate students belonging to such families, a school room was built in the Beazaar of Nagercoil, and named it the Bazaar school. It was a very successful experiment. The school was well attended by the students were from all types of families. Those who were willing were instructed to attend the catechism and scripture lessons, besides the usual lessons (LMS Report, 1822, pp. 83-84) ^[6].

With the support of native rulers the missionaries started new

enterprises. Nagercoil seminary was the result of the newly acquired confidence they had to offer free food and lodging for the students. In 1819 they established a seminary'. The purpose of this seminary was to impact education on Christian principles to the boys selected from either congregation (LMS Report, 1820, P.62). Knill had established five new schools in 1818 where converts lived. Hindus also sent their children to missionary schools.

Vocational education

Besides, the credit of establishing vocation based education in the state also goes to the LMS missionaries. In 1820, Charles Mead founded the school of Industry at Nagercoil for the purpose of promoting useful arts, instructing children of industrious parents and giving the means of subsistence and the advantages of Christian education to orphans and redeemed slaves (LMS Report, 1887, P.159) ^[2]. In the initial stages the trades taught were printing, book-binding and the art of tanning and carrying leather. The success of the school made the missionaries open similar schools at Neyyar and other places and in those schools different kinds of trade such as the manufacture of sugar and indigo were developed (EMMC, Vol. 2, p. 484). These industries were suited to the land and evoked an interest in industrial education among the people and Government. This led to the abolishment of 'School of Arts' at Trivandrum in 1862 (EMMC, Vol. 2, p.484).

The efforts made by the missionaries of the LMS in Travancore in the field of education attracted the attention of Swathi Thirunal invited Roberts, who was the headmaster of the LMS High School at Nagercoil to open an English School at Trivandrum. He did so upon the condition that he should be permitted to teach scriptures in the new school. The Maharaja was for, this school that the present University College has developed (Menon, 1878, p.415) ^[13]. The establishment of English School was followed by the opening of several other schools for the dissemination of accidental knowledge.

As early as 1821, LMS founded a station at Quilon and Smith was deputed for this station (EMMC, 1821, p.486) ^[6]. The arrival of Thompson opened a new era for Quilon mission. There were nine schools when he arrived (Missionary Chronicle, 1839, p.142) ^[5]. A mission station was started at Trivandrum and W.B. Addis was deputed for this station (Beegam, 1990, p.68). A few schools were opened in the neighbourhood of Trivandrum city were majority of converts resided. In 1838, Cox established four schools (LMS Report, 1839, p.68) ^[5]. As they were able to establish schools in the capital city the LMS strengthened their hold on south Travancore by 1840.

The missionaries centered their attention on establishing village schools. Many subjects were taught in village schools (T.D.C. Report, 1863, p.7) ^[3]. Each school was divided into 6 classes. In the schools the children both of heathen and of Christians were taught together (T.D.C. Report, 1865, p.8) ^[3]. Some of the students were forced to discontinue their studies because of the financial difficulty faced by their parents. Such peculiar situations compelled the missionaries to close some of their village schools. The Government established village schools. Profusely they were not admitting backward classes as the caste Hindu students were reluctant to sit with the

outcastes. By giving free education the missionaries were able to take a section of backward classes within the preview of village schools. Boarding schools were started for the students of higher classes. Scholars were selected for these schools from the highest classes of village schools (T.D.C, Report, 1862) ^[3]. To educate the adults, who worked in the daytime to support their families, evening schools were opened, which in a large measure catered to the need of the poor (LMS Report, 1835, p.66). They conducted night schools in jail also. In 1867 night schools were started at Trivandrum and Quilon jails (T.D.C. Report, 1872, p.5) ^[3]. Missionaries also started English schools for those who were willing to pay a small fee. The first English day school was started at Neyyur (T.D.C. Report, 1863, p.12) ^[3]. While some parents demanded vernacular language, in 1862 it was decided to discontinue English and substitute it by Tamil.

James Duthie, who was in charge of the institution from 1860-1908, obtained the sanction of the directors of the LMS to raise funds for a college in south Travancore. Some friends of the society promised large sum of money, the chief among whom being Septimus Scott, one of the directors, in 1893, the seminary was raised to the status of a college, affiliated to the University of Madras, and was named Scott Christian College (Franklin, 1967, pp.1-4) ^[15].

When the missionaries reached Travancore, the depressed class students were not allowed to get education in schools where upper caste students studied. They believed that the uplift of these depressed classes could be achieved only giving them education. LMS started its work for their emancipation right from the outset. Vedamanikkam, a member of the paraya caste, who took Ringeltaube to start among them evinced great interest in the emancipation of downtrodden. Mead continued the work of his predecessor Ringeltaube in uplifting them. Mead encouraged the admission of slave caste children by giving an additional monthly pay of one Panam for every slave girl to the teachers (Agur, 1903, p.892). And it is said that within a year after Mead had made this, new arrangement, more than one thousand slave children were collected and brought into education in all Neyyur congregations.

Ezhavas though they were depressed did not like to send their children to the schools established for the Kurava, Paraya, Veta etc (T.D.C, Report, 1883, p.10) ^[3]. At the same time Ezhavas were not admitted to most of the Government schools. One or two middle schools had been established by the Government for the use of Ezhava boys in some remote corners of the state, but the education given there was unsatisfactory and the teachers were inefficient. As this was the condition, the Ezhavas had no other way, but to approach the missionaries for establishing school.

Implementation of woman education

The missionaries of the LMS were also pioneers in the field of female education in Travancore. Before their arrival in the early years of the nineteenth century practically no education was given to women in Travancore as in other parts of India. The missionaries wanted to put an end to this state of affairs and improve the status of women by imparting education to them.

Johana Mead was the pioneer missionary in the field of

woman's education in Travancore. In October 1819, she stated a school for girls in Nagercoil. This was the beginning of the earliest systematic attempt in the field of female education in Travancore (Hacker, 1908). Martha Mault was the wife of Charles Mault who arrived in Nagercoil in 1819. In 1820, they opened a boarding school for the females amidst great opposition from the caste Hindus. The primary object of the boarding school for girls was to impart a plain education along with religious instruction (Zachariah, 1960) ^[17]. In 1825, John Cox established a boarding school with 5 girls at Kannamoola. This was the first girls school of the LMS missionaries in Trivandrum. By 1840 the number of students in South Travancore attending schools increased to 7,540 of whom 1,000 were girls (shering, 1884). In 1842, there were 14 schools for boys and 3 for girls at Trivandrum alone. In 1845, there were 15 village schools of which 12 were boys and 3 were girls. In 1852, there were 22 village schools of which 14 were boys and 8 were girls (Letter, John Cox to Tridman and Freeman, 1845). In 1890, a girls boarding school was started in Quilon. The statistics of 1865 shows that there were 47 schools for girls, which included 6 boarding schools all over south Travancore (Hacker, 1908).

After 1900 the number of schools in Trivandrum increased. At the beginning of the 20th century female education in Quilon also progressed. In 1902, two Anglo vernacular schools, one for boys and another for girls were started in Neyyur (LMS Report, 1902) ^[2].

Free and compulsory education]

The vernacular school at Nagercoil the number of pupils increased and in 1918 there were 500 girls, mostly children of Christianity. For a long time the missionaries tried to maintain the existing schools. Most of the schools in the villages had only one or two classes. The Travancore Government get up an education reform committee in 1932 which submitted its report in the next year. The committee proposed that grant-in-aid will be given by the government only to complete primary schools consisting of five classes. As a result of it many schools were abolished by the LMS and in 1934 there were 236 schools under LMS (Minutes of executive, 1939) ^[4]. In 1945, the Travancore Government decided to recast primary education throughout the state and bring it more fully within its own authority. An education reorganization committee was set up. This committee proposed for a uniform system of free and compulsory education for all children between the age of five and nine, and recommended the continuance of private schools within the system of a grant-in-aid basis (Goodall, 1954). During the year 1946-'48, many LMS primary schools were headed over to Travancore Government. All the primary schools in Thovala, Agasteeswaram, Nagercoil municipality and Trivandrum town were surrendered on lease for 12 years. The Travancore church council decided to "hand over to the Government as many as possible of the schools, under the same conditions as in the case of the schools already given" (TDC Report, 1946, p.29) ^[3]. In 1946, forty five schools were surrendered. According to the TDC Report of the Board for the year 1947-'48, the total number of scholars in the remaining schools of the LMS was 36,305 of whom 15,629 were girls and 20,679 boys. The process of transferring of the primary schools to Government which began in 1946. LMS

missionaries handed over or closed 158 schools and leased 120 building to the Government (Jacob 1990)^[11].

Conclusion

Educational advancement in Travancore was a byproduct of the evangelical activities of the Christian missionaries, particularly the LMS. Education both vernacular and western developed side by side with proselytization. Gradually it effected evolution of a new social consciousness. Consequently there developed a clamour for social and religious reforms powerful enough to break off the cast communal demarcations that had reached the vulnerable point of unseeability unapproachability and untouchability. In a sense, the pioneering work 'imitated' by the missionaries may be regarded as a clarion call for the socio-religious reform movements that were accomplished by Vaikunda Swamikal, Sree Narayana Gur, Ayyankali and others.

References

1. Manuscript Records of London Church History Archives, United Theological College, Bangalore. Letter, from Mead, dt. October 26, 1818, Letter, from Richard Knill dt. October 27, 1819.
2. Reports of London Missionary Society, London Mission Press, Nagarcoil – 1820, 1822 LMS, 1887, 1902.
3. Annual Reports of the Travancore District Committee in connection with the LMS, South Travancore. London Mission Press, Nagarcoil – 1862, 1863, 1865, 1872, 1883, 1946.
4. Minutes of the meeting of the executive committee, London – 1939.
5. Missionary chronicle, published by the Director of the LMS, London – 1839, 1850.
6. The Evangelical magazine and missionary chronicle, London Vol. 29(1821) Vol. 30(1822) Vol. 2(1824).
7. Aqua CM. Church History of Travancore, Madras; SPS Press.
8. Aiya Nagam V. The Trvancore State Mannual, III Vol. Trivandrum, 1900-1906.
9. Goodall Norman. History of Lond Missionary Society, London: Oxford University Press, 1895-1945.
10. Hacker IH. Hundred years in travancore, London: HR Allesen Ltd, 1806-1906.
11. Jacob JA. A history of London Missionary Society in Travancore, Nagercoil; Dioceses Press, 1990.
12. Lovett Richard. The history of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895-1899, London.
13. Menon Shangunny. A history of Travancore from earliest times; Madras: Higginbothem and company, 1878.
14. Sherring MA. The history of Pertestant Mission in India, from this commencement in, 1706-1881-1884, London.
15. Franklin AJ. The fifty years of the Scott Christian College, Platinum Jubile Souvenir, Scott Chesntirn College, Nagercoil, 1967.
16. Yesudas RN. The history of London Missionary Society in Travancore 1806-1908. Published Doctral Thesis, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1980.
17. Zachariah EK. Contribution of the CMS to the progress of Education in Kerala M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1960.