



Role of missionaries in Indian education

G. Vennila

Assistant Professor, The Standard Fireworks Rajaratnam College for Women, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

The freedom given by the Charter Act of 1813 had so far been taken advantage of principally by the missionary societies from the United Kingdom. But the Charter Act of 1833 brought missions from other countries also on the scene. Prominent among them were the German and American Missions. The Basel Mission Society began work at Mangalore in 1834 and soon extended its activities very largely in the Kannada and Malayalam territory. Other important German societies were the Protestant Lutheran Missionary Society (founded at Dresden in 1836) and Women's Association of Education of Females in the Orient (Founded in Berlin in 1842) both of which did considerable missionary work in India. Equally important was the appearance of the "well - manned and richly financed" American societies amongst which may be mentioned the American Baptist Union, the American Board, and the American Presbyterian Mission Board.

Keywords: Baptist, Education, English, Missionaries, Schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the period prior to 1833, the elementary schools teaching through the modern Indian languages formed the bulk of missionary educational enterprise. But between 1833 and 1853, the missionaries shifted the emphasis to secondary schools and colleges teaching through English. This change was dictated by two considerations: the first was the belief, already referred to, that a study of Western science and literature would inevitably be followed by a conversion to Christianity and the second was the desire to convert the upper classes of the Hindu Society. The missionaries knew that the upper classes desired to study English for the worldly advantages it brought and that they would not mind joining a mission school (which they otherwise disliked) for the sake of learning English. The mission schools and colleges, therefore, with their compulsory teaching of the Bible, gave the missionaries an excellent and probably their only opportunity to contact the boys and girls of the higher castes and to preach the Gospel to them. A lead in this direction was given by Alexander Duff, the greatest missionary of this period who himself started an English school in Calcutta in 1830. Duff's faith in the potential power of English education to secure converts soon infected almost all the missionaries working in the field of Indian education. Hence English schools conducted by missionaries began to multiply very rapidly after 1830. It was realized even then that the Indian pupils joined the missionary schools, not for the sake of religious instruction, but to learn English with a view to securing employment under Government. It was also soon discovered that the pupils put up with the compulsory Bible period as a matter of necessity and that they generally showed no interest in the teachings of Christ. But with the infinite patience and the incorrigible optimism that is characteristic of the missionary spirit, the workers of the Indian missions toiled in English schools in the hope that "some seed at least is sure a strike". The disillusionment came later-by about 1870-but, so far as the period under review was concerned, the hopes of a plentiful harvest of conversions through English schools ran high.

2. MISSIONARY EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE

The first to come out was the Baptist missionaries, Carey, and his colleagues. By that time the attitude of the East India Company towards missionary activities had changed. Throughout the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries the company's ships and other amenities. And many a missionary came to India either directly in the service of the Company as chaplains to their garrisons or independently but under their patronage. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, however, the Company's attitude towards missionaries underwent a complete change, they no longer looked with favor the proselytizing activities of the missionaries. It was that when in 1793 an attempt was made by missionaries and their supporters who were eager to bring the Gospel to the "Pagans and heathens" of this country and who had always looked upon India as a happy hunting ground for their missionary ventures,

3. TRANQUEBAR MISSION

Missionary Education in South India began at first in Tranquebar by two young pioneering Danish missionaries Bartholomeaus Ziegenbalg and Henry Plustschau. They established an institution in 1716 A.D for the training of teachers to be employed in the charity schools. These schools were opened for the children who become Christians. The missions also started separate schools for children of the Muslim community. The missionaries indirectly brought good results to the natives. They sought the help of the native teachers to teach in the schools founded by them in which they also taught under their able guidance. The native teachers learned systematic methods of teachings and western method of education were slowly imbedded.

Inspired by the Danish missionaries, in 1786 John Sullivan, the Resident at Tanjore suggested a plan for the establishment of English schools meant for the upper caste children. John Sullivan took up this task in order to break down the religious prejudice, which existed against the missionaries as a result, three English schools were set up in 1785 AD. At Tanjore, Ramanad, and Shivaganga.

4. DUTCH AND DANES

The Dutch and the Danes appeared on the Coast the bitter rivals to the Portuguese. Enterprising and cosmopolitan in their outlook and directed by their government to build forts and make alliances with the Asiatic powers, the Dutch challenged Portuguese supremacy from a position of strength. Their early experience in the Tamil Country was disappointing but as the result of determined endeavor, they asserted their influence in several areas.

In 1595 the Dutch set out with a fleet of four vessels from the Netherlands, reached the Malabar Coast and from there sent their ships to the East Coast. With the permission of Krishnappa Nayak of Senji, they in 1608 built a factory at Devanampatnam, which later on became an English settlement of Fort St. David. In 1610 they acquired possession of Pulicay from the local nayak and made it their stronghold. However, because of Portuguese intrigues against them, Emperor Venkata I directed the Nayak of Senji to destroy their fort at Devanampatnam. The English records refer to the raid by the nayak troops and demolition of this settlement. Subsequently, they again approached Krishnappa Nayak for permission to settle at Devanampatnam and Porto Novo but it was refused. Disappointed at this, the Dutch decided to retaliate in strength. They defeated the Portuguese fleet in the Battle of Malacca in 1606 and subdued the rival settlements, including Nagapatnam and Tutukudi. In 1689 they made Nagapatnam the capital of their possessions in India. They fortified their settlements, maintained their finances carefully and gained large profits. However, in later years they indulged in the slave trade and entered into intrigues in the royal courts. These made them unpopular. Due to British opposition in India and scope for lucrative trade in the East Indies, they gradually withdraw from the Tamil Coast and moved to the East Indies.

In 1620 King Christian IV of Denmark sent his Danes to Thanjavur. Ove Geede founded a settlement at Tarangambadi, which they called Danesborg. Motivated by commercial as well as religious considerations, they took interest in trade and founded the Danish Lutheran Mission. The Lutherans erected churches and presented a powerful challenge to the missionary activity of the Jesuits. However, as the supply of money and arrival of ships from their home country became irregular, they lost their influence as well as interest. As a result, they made no significant progress.¹

5. THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARY

The Protestant mission in the district, or indeed in any part of India, was founded at Tranquebar in 1706 by two young German pastors, Heinrich Plutschau and Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, who were sent out under the auspices of the king of Denmark. Claims have been made on behalf of a certain Danish political offender, who spent the last years of his life (1680 to 1691) at Tranquebar under sentence of transportation that he translated the Bible and preached in the streets; but no traces of his work seem to have survived him. From 1706 onwards, however, Protestant missionary effort proceeded without a break. Plutschau returned permanently to Europe in 1711; but Ziegenbalg (after a visit to his home between 1714 and 1716) devoted his life to his work, and died at Tranquebar in 1719 at the early age of 36. He is the author of a quaint but valuable description of the South Indian gods, which is still the only published account of the interesting subject of Tamil village deities. From Tranquebar the mission spread along the coast to Cuddalore, Madras, and Calcutta, and, in the interior, to Tanjore, Trichinopoly and Palamcottahⁱⁱ.

6. THE WORK OF THE DANISH MISSION

The Danish missionaries, who started their institutions in Tanjore, Madras, Cuddalore, Tinnevely, Trichinopoly, may be regarded as the torch-bearers of modern education in India. They started charity schools and taught the English language to Indian children and did not teach Christianity openly. They translated the Bible into Tamil and Telugu.

The schools established by these missionaries were different from those that existed in our country. The schools were organized on a new pattern and had more than one teacher on their staff. They had a clear-cut class system. Regular school hours were introduced with Sundays as holidays. They aimed at teaching the English language. The subjects of the study were Grammar, History, Geography, and religious instruction. For the first time text books for schools were written and published. Though the schools were meant for Indian children, Europeans and Anglo-Indians were given preference.

The missionaries rendered valuable service to the cause of Indian education because for the first time the masses were imparted elementary education through the medium of their own vernacular languages.

The missionaries used education not as an end in itself but as a means of evangelisation. The schools were regarded as fruitful media for preaching the principles of Christianity. Wherever the missionaries went they preached their own religion and struck at the root of the Hindu and Muslim cultures, criticised and defamed the religious faiths and social systems of the country.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Danes did not obtain a footing in India, most of the Danish missionaries who succeeded these pioneers “Substantially identified themselves with the English colonies in South India halting where they halted and advancing where they advanced”. Other missions that came to India later followed the same policy and, as Richter rightly points out, “modern missionary work in India has as its back ground and setting the Anglo – Indian Empire; it is intimately connected with the beginning of that empire and has extended along with it from one end of the country to the other.

Ziegenbalg and his colleagues did considerable missionary and educational work. For example, a printing press in Tamil was established in 1713. Ziegenbalg died in 1719 but his work was continued by other competent missionaries amongst whom may be mentioned the names of Grundler, Kiernander, and Schwartz. In Madras, Grundler started, a little before 1717, “a Portuguese school in the white town and a malabar school in the black” in 1742, Kiernander founded charity school for Eurasians as well as Indians in and near fort St. David. But even more important was the work of Schwartz who is looked upon as the pioneer of education in the province of Madras. They founded a school for European and Eurasian boys at Trichinopoly and an English charity schools at Tanjore with the help of the purse presented to him by Haider Ali of Mysore. With the assistance of John Sullivan.^{iv}

7. AMERICAN MISSION

As far as the foreign missionaries were concerned the American Board of Commissioners was the first American Missionary Society to work in India for the development of education and more particularly women education.

Women education in Nellore began quietly with a school opened by Mrs. Day on her bungalow veranda in 1841 AD. From that small beginning had grown up into a big chain of institutions viz., a training school for women, a model school, a high school for girls and a bible training school in a different part of Madras presidency.

A training school for women was started in 1842, in the Madurai district for the general and special education of women. Rs. 12,000 grant was given towards the building for the American Mission Training School for women in Madura by the Government of Madras presidency under the provision of the Charter Act of 1813.

The American Board of Commissioners first began work at Madurai in 1834 and opened a school, where instruction was given mostly through English on the Lancasterian plan. However, the Mission paid more attention to vernacular education and within two years there were thirty-five schools organized by the Mission with 1149 boys and 65 girls. Many outstations in places like Dindukkal, Sivaganga, Tirupuvanam, and Tirumangalam were soon started with good schools in all of them.^v It also had stations in Madras, Kolapur and Arcot. The American Reformed Church, having co-operated with the American Board from the beginning, started its work independently from 1858 and the Arcot Mission was handed over to it. It continued its educational work and founded several schools. By 1900 there were over 5500 pupils in its schools^{vi}. The American Baptist Mission started its educational work in 1836 in the Telugu country and later expanded its educational work to Madras. But its labor was confined to the Telugu speaking people and the schools run by it were only Telugu schools^{vii}.

8. SCOTTISH MISSION

Rev. John Anderson arrived in Madras in 1837. He was the first Scottish Presbyterian missionary. The Church of Scotland Mission had under its management five higher grade elementary schools for girls in the city of Madras at George town, Triplicane, Tana Street and Sundaram Pillai Street, Purasawalkam and Vepery with a staff of sixty trained teachers and 1500 pupils. To encourage trained teachers, the management initiated a provident fund for the benefit of these teachers in 1914.

9. THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MISSION

Though entering late into the field of missionary labors in India, the Church of Scotland Mission became one of the most important educational agencies. Inspired by Alexander Duff, John Anderson went to Madras and started the General Assembly's school in 1837. Anderson was the first missionary to South India who was entirely set apart for educational work. Anderson and the Mission in Madras exerted a tremendous influence on the educational development of South India. Unfortunately, there was a split in the Church of Scotland in 1843. The Madras Mission aligned itself to the Free Church of Scotland. The Mission was primarily an educational Mission and the activities of the Mission were extended to several mufusil areas like Nellore, Chingleput, Trivellore, Vellore, Wallajabad, and Trivellore. The Church of Scotland itself operated its own Mission in 1845 and started educational institutions in Madras, Vellore, and Arkonam^{viii}. Both the Missions were re-united in 1900 to become the United Free Church of Scotland.

Most of the Missions had established their educational programmes before the mid-Nineteenth Century. However, there were also a few Missions like the Schleswig-Holstein Evangelical Lutheran Mission (1882), The Hermannsburg Mission (1867) and the American Lutheran Mission (1869) who entered the field of missionary labors during the second half of the Century. Though they too started a few schools here and there, their contribution in this respect is not very significant.

Of all the agencies which provided education in South India, the Missions by far did the most for the people. The Education Commission of 1882 reports that in the Madras Presidency the missionaries were educating nearly 33,000 children while the government institutions were educating only 2,093 pupils^{ix}.

10. LONDON MISSION

In 1804, the London Mission opened schools in south India. In due course it maintained 317 elementary schools containing 7,802 pupils of whom 5, 116 were Christian and 2686 were Hindus. This society had a training institution of Palayamcottah. In 1957, this training institution was named as St. Ignatius College of education.

11. WOMEN MISSION

During the 18th and 19th centuries, female education was resisted. The native conditioned by the religious superstition did not allow their girl children to go to school. By this time, women missionaries came to India as an educationist. They took up the cause of removing illiteracy of women, in which they were successful in course of time. The Government female normal school was established by the women mission in 1870 AD.

In 1881 AD, Mr. and Mrs. Wyatt opened the first post graduate Training school for women teachers at Trichinopoly. There were 17 training schools for women, with 342 pupils in the Madras presidency. Among them St. John's Female Training Institution, Nazaraeth and Sarah Toker Institution, Madras occupied a prominent position. Although the women mission did nothing for the secondary teacher education, its work got recognition in the field of teacher education.

12. ENGLISH MISSION

Besides the missionary's efforts in the field of teacher training, East India company gradually felt the need of doing something in this direction. By 1793 the first normal school, a school specially meant for pupil-teacher was set up at Serampore as a collaborative effort between the Danish and English missionaries.

Special mention should be made here about the Calcutta Central School for girls organized by the Calcutta Ladies Society for training female teachers. Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of the Madras Presidency, (In his minute of 10th May 1826), firmly expressed his belief that no educational progress could be made in the province without, "a body of better instructed teachers". He therefore, advocated the establishment of a central school for the education of teachers. Soon Government institution for teaching teachers were established in the three presidencies and Madras has the distinction of having opened the first normal school under the government management and financed by it. This institution later developed into the present Presidency College.^x

The English mission in Tanjore city was founded in 1778 by Schwartz, acting on behalf of the S.P.C.K. Great success attended his efforts. This is not the place to describe his career or character. It is sufficient to say that he was beloved and respected by all classes of people, and was trusted alike by the native Rajas and the Madras Government. He was indeed employed by the latter as their emissary to Haidar Ali (whose good opinion he also won) and was frequently consulted by them about political matters in Tanjore; and he was entrusted by the dying king Tulsaji with the guardianship of the young Sarabhoji. Though he failed to engage more than the warm interest of these kings in the Christian religion, their patronage enabled him to make great progress in converting others. He died in 1798. Want of space forbids a detailed account of his and his successor's work. In 1820 the S.P.C.K. was presented by the head of the Tranquebar mission with the congregations and churches of that mission outside Tranquebar. In 1826 withdrew from foreign missions and surrendered its work to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. This body has been working in the district ever since. Missionaries belonging to it perform the services in the English churches at Tanjore and Tranquebar, and are paid allowances by Government for this duty. At present there are missionaries at Tanjore, Nagapatam and Naggur (near Tranquebar) and the whole district is divided among them. The congregations amount to rather over 2,000 persons. The work of the mission as an educational force is of importance, as it maintains the Saint Peter's first grade college in Tanjore, eight lower secondary, and 34 primary, schools in this district, 2800 pupils attending these institutions.^{xi}

13. ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION

Just hundred years before the arrival of other missionaries, the Roman Catholic fathers contributed to the education of Indian girls and boys while the Roman Catholic nuns performed a notable work as teachers of Indian girls. In South India they started their pioneering work in improving girl's education. St. Francis Xavier's High School in Palayamcottah become the practicing school for St. Xavier Training college which was opened in 1950 by the Society of Jesus which is a part of the Roman Catholic mission.^{xii}

14. WESLEYAN MISSION

This was founded in Madras in the year 1819, when Messrs. Squance, Lynch and close came from Ceylon to establish a mission there. In Ceylon schools had formed a most important part of the mission work, and have continued to flourish there from that day to this. Thus in the year 1819 when the Madras mission opened, the society maintained no less than 87 schools in Ceylon and Southern India. It was to be expected, therefore, that schools should form an important part of the early work of the Wesleyan Mission in Madras. Before the society had been a year in Madras it had established two schools, one at Royapettah and the other in Black town. The former was the origin of the present Royapettah Anglo-Vernacular School, which has enjoyed a continuous existence though not always in the same premises from that to this, and is therefore only second to the vepery Anglo-Vernacular School in point of age. In 1823 two new schools were opened at Nagapatam.^{xiii} The Wesleyan Mission began work in Negapatam in 1819, at which time no other societies shoed any activity in that part of the country. Three European missionaries are stationed at Mannargudi and two at Nagapatam. Their efforts are chiefly confined to the Nagapatnam, Mannargudi, Tirutturaippundi and Nannilam taluks. Four handsome churches are now owned by the mission, and its adherents amount to rather less than a thousand persons. It manages eleven schools for girls and thirty for boys, the attendance amounting to 1,050 and 2,150 respectively. Among these is a high school at Nagapatam, and a fairly large boarding school at Mannargudi. The mission also manages the Findlay

college at the latter place. In the same town there is a mission dispensary with an annual attendance of about 30,000. Besides maintaining schools, the Wesleyans employ several zenana teachers who give private instruction to nearly 400 pupils in Mannargudi and Nagapatam. ^{xiv}

15. GERMAN MISSIONS

Taking advantage of the freedom provided by the Charter Act of 1833 to missionary enterprise, many non-English Missionary Societies entered the field of education in South India. The Basel Mission and the Leipzig Mission from Germany, the American Baptists and the American Board of Commissioners from North America and the Church of Scotland Mission were prominent among them. The Basel Mission, commencing its work at Mangalore in 1834, mainly concentrated its efforts on the South Western coast of India stretching from the South Maratha region of Hubli, Dharwar, along the coastal strip of South Canara and Malabar to the Cochin border including places like Honovar, udipi, Mangalore, Kasargod, Cannanore, Telli- chery, Calicut and Palghat^{xv}. By the end of the Nineteenth Century the Mission had about 150 schools in twenty three stations providing education for about 10,000 pupils. It was one of the leading contributors to education of the West Coast of India.

The Leipzig Mission took over the educational work of the Danish Mission in 1847 and extended the programme in Tranquebar, Madras, Thanjavur, Pudukkottai, Tiruchy, Madurai and few other places. Its work was mainly confined to the Tamil region. The Mission ran about 150 schools with about 3700 pupils^{xvi}. The Swedish Mission functioned as part of the Leipzig Mission with Madurai, Pudukkottai, and Anaikkadu among its first stations, and had schools in all the stations^{xvii}.

16. CHARACTERISTICS OF MISSION SCHOOLS

During the period 1813 to 1833, a large number of primary schools were started by missionaries due to whom the education in India got re-organized. Modern schools were organized on the lines of the missionary schools. Their characteristics were as follows:

- Religious. The aims of these mission schools were religious propaganda so the teaching of Bible was essential.
- Regular. All the schools were running regularly with a set course of study. School hours were fixed and Sunday was a closed day.
- Vast-Curriculum. The curriculum of these schools was vast. It included Grammar, History, Geography, etc.
- Publication of Textbooks. These missionaries had arranged for the publication of textbooks. Due to their efforts dearth of textbooks was removed.
- Many Teachers. Previously, one teacher used to teach all the classes, but these missionaries arranged for more teachers. They started teaching through different teachers on the modern lines.
- Mother Tongue as Medium. The medium of education in these schools was local languages.^{xviii}

17. CONCLUSION

Side by side with the educational activities conducted by the company, a number of other educational activities were also organized by missionaries who ordinarily worked under the shadow of its political authority. Those institutions are of great significance in the history of education in modern India as pioneers of private enterprise in education and deserve detailed notice.

Before however, coming to their history proper, it is necessary to understand why the missionaries undertook educational activities as an integral part of their work in India. The first and foremost object of the missionaries was to convert people to Christianity and one could not expect them to start educational institutions or to work as teachers. In fact, there was a time in early missionary history when the Home Authorities of missions refused to support educational institutions and opened that the priests had no business to found schools. But the practical experience of the early missionaries soon convinced them that they had to start schools as an important means of proselytization.

In commencing their operations, missionaries have generally seen the propriety and importance of establishing schools. One reason for them is to educate the minds of the people so that they may be more capable of understanding and appreciating the facts and evidence, the doctrines and duties of the scriptures. Another reason for them is to increase the influence of the missionaries with the people by communicating some advantage which they can appreciate, and by showing that advantage which they can appreciate, and by showing that Christianity rests on an intelligent perception of its doctrines, and contains the reason for the performance of all its duties. And another reason for such an education is in its procuring means and opening ways of access to the people, and opportunities of preaching to them. One great difficulty which missionaries often experience, is in obtaining access to the people, in circumstances where Christianity can be made the subject of communication or conversation. In such circumstances schools become very important, as a means of communication with different classes of people, with children and parents with men and women.^{xix}

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