

## **Services of Christian Missionaries For The Promotion of Education in Tamil Nadu**

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The Christian missionaries took a pioneering interest in the promotion of education among the Tamils. Guided by humanitarian as well as religious motives, they followed a liberal system of education open to all the inhabitants, without any distinction of caste or religion. Eager to reach the common people, the missionaries imparted the education in Tamil and provided free feeding. At the higher level in the colleges they offered advanced courses in literature, science, history and other subjects.<sup>1</sup>

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1717 opened two charity schools in Madras to help the poor students. Because of the efforts of Rev. Scwartz, the mission started English schools at Tanjavur, Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga.<sup>2</sup> After the establishment of the American Madura Mission, it opened schools at Madurai, Dindugal and Ramanathapuram. In the deep south, the Protestant missions started educational institutions at Palayamkottai and Nagercoil. The educational efforts of Christian missionaries had been more successful among the Tamil population than in any other part of India.

The Church Missionary Society started schools and immediately began to revive missionary efforts among the Tamils. A missionary wrote to the C.M.S. that the inhabitants of this wild country were Nadars and they were inclined to embrace the Christian faith than any caste of natives. During the year 1820 twelve Nadar youths entered for teacher training, as the inhabitants of the Palmyra forest preferred Nadar Christians to teach them. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge

(S.P.C.K.) was responsible for the Tinnevelly mission. After that the number of Nadar teachers and native pastors grew rapidly in the district, in 1830, the Dharma Sangam or Philosophical Society was established for the purchase of lands and houses for the converts. Some of the sites were donated by people belonging to the mission. Others were purchased directly with mission funds.<sup>3</sup>

The Madras Diocesan Secretary sent home a very gratifying report of the progress of religion and education in that diocese. There were three missionaries, young, active and zealous, occupying the scenes of former missionary exertions, Tinnevelly. Entirely new stations had been formed at Madurai, Dindugal, and Kumbakonam while the circle has been greatly extended in the neighborhood both of Tanjore and Trichirapoly. Attempts had been made to establish separate mission at Pulicat. In 1836 there were thirty seven schools in Madurai and its neighbouring villages. It increased to 59 in 1837. Of those in the city three were exclusively for girls.<sup>4</sup> They were sixty in number and nearly all were Roman Catholics. Three more schools contained mostly Roman Catholic boys. The rest contained Hindus of all castes and a few for Muhamadans. Six of the city schools were run in the premises of Temples, four in bungalows built by the mission and the rest in the city. The number of mission schools in the city at this time was equal to that of all other schools.

The intention of the Board was to have one large printing press for all its Tamil missions, and it was organized in Madras. In 1838 it purchased from the Church Missionary Society a printing establishment consisting of eight iron printing presses.<sup>5</sup> In 1837 a Missionary named Anderson remarked that attempts were being made to print vernacular literature with the help of the mission. He added that from 1838 to 1841, 33,750,000 pages were printed in vernacular languages at the expense of Bible and Tract Societies.<sup>6</sup>

With the extension of the work of the mission organised at Dindugal and Tirumangalam in 1836. Tirupuvanam in 1838, and Sivaganga in 1839. Free schools were opened in various parts of the state and one was opened in Vattalagundu in 1844. The number of pupils increased to 3,653 in 1842, and then decreased until 1853 when this class of school was discontinued.

The period signified the growth of Tamil literature. Dwight edited a translation work into Tamil. Three more books were edited by him. The first was made up of tracts on the parables, 23 plain and practical expositions, which were first published in 1843 and then in 1844 bound in one volume of 386 pages, under the title "Parables of Christ Explained", and sold for 3 annas (coins). In 1845 he published a "Daily Text Book" of 216 pages.<sup>7</sup>

In the early stage the students lacked knowledge of the English language. So in 1849 Cherry and Chandler were appointed a committee to report a course of study for the school. For their business purpose, in 1850 they permitted to sell some of the old English books belonging to the girls' Boarding Schools.<sup>8</sup> In 1852 the Brother in charge of the school was allowed to introduce into the school the study of English to the extent of not over one hour a day as a stimulus to the more promising girls. During this time the Brahmins of Madura desired their daughters to receive the English education. So they started a girls school of their own and protected against Christian influences.

The mission Report of 1857 indicated that the English schools were important in several respects. They procured the confidence and good will of the higher class of natives. They were brought under the immediate influence. They became the channel of making known European Science.<sup>9</sup> Lucy Todd, the first missionary lady of the mission, felt the necessity of schools for native women. Because of her advantage Eckard opened a Girl's Day School at Madurai.

An Industrial school was started by Webb in 1852 and in 1855 the mission committee reported that 18 children connected with it and half of them being girls. With their lessons they worked, and earned Rs.100/- which was a one third of the expenses of the school. In 1860 William Yorke of the West Minister Training College, London, came out under the Christian vernacular education society to train teachers in South India. In 1862 he started a practicing school at Madurai. In 1866 this institution was transferred to Dindugal.<sup>10</sup>

The importance of training teachers was emphasized by the incompetence of many of the masters. In 1857 a school masters' class was conducted in connection with the semi-annual meetings of the mission workers. John Murdock, Secretary of the South India School Book Society spent three weeks in Dindugal. He gave the instructions to twenty teachers on the proper mode of conducting schools. The Board also came to the help of the mission and granted Rs.500/- for a training class teachers in Dindugal under Webb in 1858. The mission schools were almost exclusively for the children of the Christians. In 1858 they mourned at being shut out from opportunities of reaching Hindu children for them. This made up the gradual change in the Tamil society.<sup>11</sup>

The village schools for the Christians were started wherever ten Christian children could be found to attend. Day schools at the station centers were freely admitted and often formed the majority. These schools were generally under the supervision of the missionary ladies. A female boarding School in Madura, intended to raise up wives for the pastors, mission helpers, and the intelligent lady members of the church to supply teachers for the villages and station schools. In 1868 a flourishing Anglo-Vernacular School was established in Madura under a committee of management. It had 4 teachers, 3 Hindus with a Christian Headmaster, and more than hundred pupils.<sup>12</sup>

According to the report of Rendall, in 1852, there has been a great change in the common schools. In these schools they introduced the Christian education. Like that in

1857 the training schools were introduced for the school masters. In 1871 Chester's English School had quite outstripped the Government High School, having 7 teachers and 160 pupils. But Chester was not alone in pushing education for Hindus. In 1870 the mission report showed that all were moving in that direction. In 1871 Chandler started the first Hindu Girls' School in Madurai.<sup>13</sup> By January 1875 the mission granted permission to open a new class as the beginning of a high school. 20 boys were taken at mission expense and they went up to the matriculation examination in 1879. In November 1881 the first college was opened under the affiliation of the Madras University examination.

In 1871, at the request of Brother Chandler, for special reasons, the sum of Rs.184/- was granted to him for the payment of teachers in the Christian Anglo-Vernacular school in Madurai. In order to establish this institution, from 1877 the missionary gave Rs.300/- as additional aid. In the meantime, Sophia Chester started a school for girls at Dindugal. It was known as "caste school for girls". In 1879 one more school was started in another part of Dindugal. After two years Chandler opened a school for Hindu girls in the west gate. It was first started for Christians and then the Hindus also were admitted.<sup>14</sup>

The three Madura schools were managed in the name of the missionary of Madura station. According to the Annual Report of the Madura Mission, there were nine schools established. In these nineteen teachers worked and 524 students studied, all of them were girls. In 1882 the Mission spent Rs.3600/- for the building construction of a central school. It was constructed near an old gate of the temple and its Tamil name is Vitta Vasal, Abandoned Gate.

In 1886 a normal school was organised and reorganised by the Director of Public Instruction as qualified to educate all the three grades of teachers below the college grade. This made the fourth school and it had 253 students.<sup>15</sup> In Pasumalai the

missionaries started firstly a Christian school for general and religious education. Next a specialization for the sake of larger preparations to meet the needs of growing churches and evangelistic work was started. Then they started a separate theological school for the new Christian community.<sup>16</sup>

Though the Nadars were backward, Christianity promoted their education and enlightenment. Their position had been greatly improved and many spheres of useful, remunerative and honourable labour which were formerly closed against them were now almost as open to them as to any other class in the community.

The Missionary of Mudalur described the village authority with regard to worldly matters as self-supporting and self-controlled. A council of elders met once in a week to examine the complaints and troubles of the people. Another body consisted five members working as a court of appeal. These two bodies saved from entering needlessly into the worldly affairs of the people.

Bishop GEL. Cotton, of Calcutta illustrated the complete acquiescence of the people. He described the political knowledge of the children in Christian school.<sup>17</sup> From their answer in an inspection, he could understand how children gave respect to the missionaries. These education gave the knowledge of social equality and the rights of the people in the society.

## End Notes

1. Selected *papers relating to the Records of the East India House*, pp.60-62.
2. J.S. Chandler, *Seventy Five Years in Madurai Mission*, p.49
3. Paul Appasamy, *Centenary History of the C.M.S. in Tinnevely*, pp.22-23.
4. R. Caldwell, *Census Report of the Madras Presidency*, 1871, p.52.
5. Court of Directors, *Despatch Bengal Council*, 1854, p.12.
6. Anderson, *Quoted in H.R.Pate, Madras District Gazetteers, (Tinnevely)*, Vol.I,p.44

7. Madras Council, *Revenue Consultations, 1846*, Vo1.12, p.9
8. George Pattitt, *Tinnevelly Mission of the Church Missionary Society*, p.163.
9. *Letter from the Madura Mission to America dated, Madurai, 19 July, 1858.*
10. Court of Directors, *Educational Despatch to the Governor General in Council*, 858.
11. Robert Caldwell, *Ten years in Tinnevelly; a Missionary's Review, Mission Field*, XVII, October, 1872, p.303.
12. *Madurai District Records*, vol.533, p.82.
13. Report by G.Paranjoty, *Taruvel in Report of the Madras Diocesan Committee of the S.P.G 1877-1878, Madras*, 1878.
14. L.Besse, *History of Madura Mission*, p.24.
15. *Madurai District Records*, vol. 533, p.84.
16. Robert Caldwell, *Tinnevelly and the Tinnevelly Mission*, p.9.
17. Bishop G.E.L.Cotton, *The Tinnevelly Mission*, pp. 14-15.