



The Role of Christian Missionaries in Madras Presidency – A Historical Study

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT Education is a key for development. Indians education sector is one of the largest sectors in the world. In India the development of education was taken at various steps/periods. But the modern education was introduced by the Christian Missionaries under the British rule. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the historical development of education in India under the Christian Missionaries in Madras Presidency

Introduction

Education is key for development. The major development of education in India was taken by Britishers. The British presence in the south centered around Madras. This settlement began originally as Fort St. Gorge. Madras grew into a city of 250,000 by 1800. It was a centre of trade and commerce controlled almost totally by Englishmen. European economic dominance did not slow this expansion and the city reached 400,000 by 1881. Yet its composition was somewhat different from either Calcutta or Bombay. Few outsiders were attracted to it and nearly three quarters of its inhabitants were born within the city, overwhelmingly Tamil-Hindus. Madras had only 12% Muslims and 10% Christians.¹ Its culture was that of Tamil country with the overlay of Anglicization that grew from the introduction of English Education.

A new era in Christian endeavor began in the wake of the Evangelical Revival which was sweeping the west during the closing years of the 18th century. Under the impulse of this religious awakening, new societies sprang up in Britain and America, some of which were anxious to carry their message to the distant parts of Asia.²

A) The Role of Christian Missionaries in Madras Presidency:

In South India, this new drive was spearheaded by five societies, namely, the society for the propagation of the Gospel, London Missionary society, Church Missionary Society, Wesleyan mission and the Free Church Mission of Scotland.³ Possessing a sound organization and considerable financial resources, the missionaries soon established a wide network of stations, seminars, schools and printing houses in the various districts in Madras and Andhra.

In 1717, the East India Company established a school at Cuddalore. In the same year, missionaries of the society for the propagation and Christian knowledge opened two charity schools in Madras.⁴ The missionaries added to their Educational efforts in 1784 with a school aimed at educating Anglow-Indian children. But the progress was slow and English education was mainly in the hands of the missionaries and the Christian missionaries imparted love, kindness, moral values, social service, prayer, Education, Discipline. In 1787, the Church of St.Catherine was built in the fort of Masulipatnam by a French company.⁵ The village of Firangipuram in Guntur district was obtained by the Roman Catholic mission from the Zamindar of Repalle during 1782-84 for the proselytizing activities.⁶ French Company sought permission from the priests at Goa to have a Church in Mudigubba in Anantapur district. Later, they set up stations at Bukkavaram of Nellore district and another fifteen places on the border areas of Nellore and Guntur districts and converted several Kammas into Christianity.⁷ The Jesuits paid good attention to the Telugu language and made translations of Biblical his-

tory into Telugu poetry and got the work written on paper or palmyrah leaves.⁸

The other mission's assault on Hinduism was to be directed through the agency of western education. This strategy was based on the assumption that western education would attract students from the higher caste Hindus, and that young minds were most susceptible to the teaching of the Gospel. In the early stages thus, the Catholic missionaries concentrated on the spread of Christian Literature. In contrast, the protestant missionaries undertook the spread of education as a means to propagate the Gospel.⁹

The Christian missionaries occupy the most important place in spreading education among the public. Catholic and protestant missionaries, hailing mainly from Britain, America and Germany, worked with great success in Andhra region. They were the first to open educational institutions in towers and villages. Particularly in 1805 London missionary society started a Church functioning at Jammala Madugu (Kadapa). Likewise in 1835 American Baptist society in Rayalaseema region and in 1841 Church mission society at Krishna and Godavari districts and in 1845, Gospel mission at Kadapa and Kurnool districts started their activities and established Churches for propagation of their faith.¹⁰

The London missionary society by denomination which was set up in 1795 sent its first missionary, the Rev.Mr.Forsyth, to India in 1798. The London missionary to follow him to the Madras presidency was the Rev. George Crane and the Rev. Augustus Des Granges. They commenced their work in Madras by opening a school in 1805, and another school for the children of Europeans and Indians at Visakhapatnam in 1806, at a time when the East India Company was strongly opposed to educational activities of the Christian missionaries.¹¹

B) Missionaries Schools in Andhra:

Simultaneously, they launched a successful agitation against the restrictions which the East India Company had imposed on their work in Andhra. The missionaries, who arrived in increasing numbers during the early decades of the 19th century, were very different in temperament from their predecessors. Thus Andhra got missionary schools which were set up in different regions.¹² In Ballary district, which was then considered as part of Andhra region but at present in Karnataka, the London missionary society set up a mission in 1810 under the Rv.J.Hands. The mission established a native school and a Charity school along with a Church at Ballary. The work of the London missionary society was the first attempt to set up school in the Andhra region.¹³ In 1815, Rev. James Dawson came and worked for a years for the mission. In 1827 there were 12 schools with 525 students in Vizagapatnam (Visakhapatnam) under the London missionary society. The Ballary branch of the London missionary society did an

excellent work, in which Joseph Taylor a worker for missionary activity took an active part in 1819.¹⁴

In 1835, J.H.Gordon of the London missionary society set up two Boarding schools at Visakhapatnam. The Godavari Delta mission was found by W.Bowden and George Bear at Narasapur in 1837.¹⁵ In 1840 Doctor John Hei founded Anglo Vernacular School at Visakhapatnam. This school was the first school to Chennai capital. In 1840 German - Christian Missionary. In 1851 American Lutharin Mission propagated religious activities at Rajahmahendravaram.¹⁶

Joseph Taylor worked for the establishment of a mission in Belagaum, now in Karnataka, a tract Society, was formed and Howell helped him in establishing a Telugu mission in Kadapa. From 1827 onwards, eminent and successful missionaries like Samuel Flevel, Reid Thompson, Ward law and Coles went to Ballary churches schools and outstations were set up by the missionaries in good numbers.¹⁷ In Andhra area, after the death of Cran and Granges of the London missionary society, the work was taken up by the Rev.John Gordon Pritchett. Lee set up a Branch mission at the town of Ganjam, now in Orissa. The New Testament was translated from the original Greek in to Telugu by the Rev. Pritchett. Gordon and Pritchett prepared a version of New Testament, which was printed in the Madras commercial press about the year 1818.¹⁸

The London missionary society started a new branch at Kadapa in 1824. Besides, the society for the propagation of Gospel at Kadapa, the American Baptist mission at Visakhapatnam, the Godavari Delta mission at Narasapur in West Godavari district, the North German missionary society at Rajahmundry East Godhaveri district, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Guntur, the Church mission society, Masulipatnam (Machilipatnam) in Krishna district were the other important missions in Andhra.¹⁹ The London missionary society at Kadapa commenced its work under the guidance of Rev. W.Howall schools were opened and, new converts were baptized in Kadapa and their number increased later.

The initial missionary thrust was directed against British religious policy in Madras. Their main grievance here was the apparent support which the Madras authorities were giving to Indian religions under the so-called policy of religious neutrality. The missionaries argued that the religious policy of Madras Government was not neutral, either in theory or in practice. Under regulations VII of 1817, the board of Revenue was to supervise the management of Indian religious institutions and their large endowments. In practice official intervention extended to minute details from the supervision of festivals to scrutinizing the finances of temples.²⁰

C) The Role of the missionaries and Western Education :

The London missionary society, an already established Christian organization, opened its branches at several places in Andhra. They set up girl's schools, mixed schools or congregational schools boarding schools, English or Anglo-Vernacular schools, high schools and colleges. The charter Act of 1813 relaxed the Rule of non-entry of the missionaries into India with they, the missionaries, started their activities in full swing in the Andhra district. Their proselytisation campaign went hand in hand with their educational activities. The fact of the matter was that educational activity was an appendage to their evangelical programme.²¹ Consequently, there followed a great missionary activity from 1813 onwards in all parts of the company's dominions in India, including Andhra. Armed with the company government permissions, the missionary's society, which has already been existing in India, intensified its activities.²²

The missionaries established standard schools, both for boys and girls and published books in Telugu. Though education was their main interest, they were also running orphanages, medical centers and industrial establishments. Also indica-

tive of the trend towards educational diversification was the growing popularities of medicine and engineering. The Madras medical school, established in 1835 to train subordinate medical staff, was unpopular among some Hindu castes during the early years because of the opposition to Western medical science and ritual taboos associated with the profession as such. Despite the abstention of the Brahmins, a total of 603 students passed out of the institution between 1835 and 1851 and entered service as Hospital assistants and apprentices.²³

In 1857 the establishment of the medical college at Madras, however, the long duration of the course and the preference shown to those graduating in English Universities checked the progress of the college and only eleven candidates succeeded in taking the degree between 1858 and 1878.²⁴

The motives of the untouchables falling under the influence of missionaries were to gain a status in society, which was denied to them by the caste Hindus down the ages and to win the favors of the government through the intercession of the missionaries. With a conscious motive of spreading Christianity, the Bible was necessarily taught in schools and colleges, and scripture stories were narrated in the classes' regularly.²⁵

The Christian missionaries occupy the most important place in spreading education among the public. Catholic and protestant missions, hailing mainly from Briton, America and Germany, worked with great success in Andhra. They were the first to open educational institutions in towns and villages. Though their main aim was to help Christian convents and spread the Gospel, a number of non-Christians, were also benefited by their services in the field of education. In their educational endeavors they were far ahead of the government.²⁶

D. Introduction of English Education by the British Govt. in India.

Lord Macaulay minute 1835.

The William Bontiek resolution of 1835 based on Macaulay minute was still an experiment and a matter of contradiction in the education policy in India under the company rule. Secondary Education began at the middle schools and ended in the high schools, which prepared students for matriculation. Instruction here was increasingly in English while pupils were given limited opportunities to pursue technical and scientific studies. As Macaulay rightly points out, it was these secondary schools which "Constituted the basis of the English educational pyramid which was crowned by the universities."²⁷

The Madras Government sent the least amount for the education department owing to the lack of mutual understanding, amidst many other reasons, between the company Government and the supreme Government in England. During the period between 1835-54, regardless of what kind of policy was followed by the Madras Government and the East India Company, missionaries continued their educational activities in Andhra.²⁸

The Madras Presidency College, all others were Arts colleges offering instruction in the liberal arts or sciences subjects up to first Arts (F.A) or Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A). In the Madras Presidency college, however, degree courses were also available in law, medicine and engineering, as well as facilities for postgraduate training in these fields.

The functions of examining and awarding degrees were entrusted to the University of Madras, set up in 1857. Modeled upon the University of London, this institution, through its senate, ensured that there was uniformity in the curriculum, teaching methods, and academic standards of its various affiliated colleges.²⁹

Mary Carpenter, who was then in Calcutta (Kolkata), con-

vened a fresh meeting on her return and secured support for a memorial to the Madras Government calling for the establishment of female normal schools. The Authorities agreed provided that part of the maintenance costs were met from private sources. An appeal for public contributions generated little response, and the fate of the project hung in the balance until the Maharaja of Vizianagaram offered to subscribe Rs. 12,000/- annually.³⁰ The Female normal schools were started in 1869, with admission restricted to girls from the higher castes and classes. Conscious of the impetus which colleges had to higher learning in their immediate environs, the director of public instruction advocated in 1876 the establishment of colleges in every district of the presidency. The first fruit of this new policy was the decision a year later to elevate the Rajahmundry college to the status of a first grade institution within a decade it become, "a nucleus for the high Education over a large tract of country", drawing its students principally from the surrounding Telugu districts.³¹ At the sometime second – grade colleges, training students for the F.A examination, sprang up in rapid succession in other Telugu centers, namely Vizianagaram in 1877 and in 1878, Coconada in 1884, and Guntur in 1884.³²

The natives of Andhra Districts reverted to the old system of primary education and higher learning in Sanskrit. But their needs and aspirations for the new system or the western education were met and fulfilled by the several missionary institutions.³³

Conclusion

The main aim of Christian Missionaries in Madras Presidency was to introduce English education as well as English culture and tradition. The Missionary school have done wonderful job. They inculcated moral values and spiritual values in students. Missionaries were established many schools, colleges and higher education institutions at various places of present Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. At present majority people of these regions are working in USA, UK and other foreign countries. All these things are because of English education. English education is a key for modern development. All credit goes to Christian Missionaries. It is born for regional as well as national development.

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