

Lighting the lamp of literacy by the Missionaries in South Travancore

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the development of school education in south Travancore. General education was started in south Travancore only by missionaries. Before that the high class Brahmins only conducted schools. The caste rigidity did not allow the low caste to have education. The Christian Missionaries brought revolutionary changes in the life of the people of Travancore through education. These changes reflected in socio, economic, religious, political life of the people of Travancore.

Key Words

Congregation, Ringletaube, Correspondent, Protestant Christianity, Missionary.

Introduction

School Education is the basic instrument for social change. The secret of good education consist in enabling students to realise their talents and aptitudes and to develop them trust to achieve proper social adjustment. In a democracy the individual is an end in himself and so the primary purpose of education is to provide him with widest opportunities to develop their potentialities to the full. Educational opportunities at all levels is a major instrument for social change, transformation and development.

St. Joseph's Primary School, Mulagumoodu

The St. Joseph's Primary School, one of the oldest educational Institutions of South Travancore was started in the year 1885 by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kottar. At first this primary school was established inside the St. Mary's Church campus, Mulagumoodu. Later on it was shifted to the St. Joseph's Higher Secondary School campus at Mulagumoodu, very near to the St. Mary's Church. The school records reveals the fact that the school was upgraded as Middle School in the year 1968 and as High School in 1976 and finally as Higher Secondary School in 1983. This school is functioning under Corporate Management of Roman Catholic Schools, Diocese of Kottar. Generally the Mulagumoodu Vicariate Parish Priest serves as the Correspondent of the school. He donates one share of his salary for the development of this school. It was the only one boys school and also the only one diocese school of this village at that time.

Infant Jesus Primary and High School, Mulagumoodu

This school is one of the oldest and the first educational institution started by the Immaculate Congregation Missionary Sisters on November 1897 with the help of bone factors from Belgium. This school began to function from 22nd January 1899, with Sr. Marie Ursule as the Headmistress and flourished in all spheres.. In the year 1920, this school was upgraded as high school. Consequently, this school was separated from the high school in separate building but located in the same campus. After that this school got permanent recognition for I to V standard classes from the Kerala Government on April 1930. This school is the only primary school for girls situated in Thiruvithancode village. Usually the ICM sisters alone appointed as the Headmistress of the school, from the starting year itself. It is considered as a popular educational institution not only within the village but also in Kanyakumari district. In 1980's, this school was credited with the Best School Award in Kanyakumari District. The Infant Jesus Primary School, the High School and the Teacher Training School are functioning in the same compound..

St. Joseph's Convent Hr. Sec. School, Nagercoil

The St. Joseph's School for girls was started by the Belgian Missionary Sisters of St. Augustine now known as the ICM Sisters – Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Sr. Marie – Louise De Meester, the founder of ICM Congregation started St. Joseph's Convent and Primary School were started in the year 1910. Late Paul Vedamanikam Daniel was one of the very fine benefactors of the school who helped mother foundress in the difficult task of procuring the land for the school. Mr. D. G. I. Thomas was followed as Head Master by Mr. Gnanapragasam (1914 -1920) , Mr. Prosper (1921- 26) , Mr. S.A. Ahea (1926-28) and Mr. Prosper again from 1928 to 1930. Meanwhile an English Middle School was introduced in 1920 with Mr. Louis as headmaster.

Mother Marie Gonzague took up the charge as Headmistress of the English school in 1923 and year by year the classes were upgraded. Gonzague's living faith, courage, optimism and devotion to duty built up the tradition of the school which is kept alive even today. The Tamil Medium School and the English High school were in the same campus. The former was upgraded in 1944, with Mr. Swaminatha Pillai as headmaster. This was the only school in the district with the trilingual media of instruction – English, Tamil and Malayalam. Special training was given in music, needlework and drawing by ICM nuns specialised in this field. Mother Gonzague was followed by Mother Marie Bavo Marian in 1944 , a teacher in maths and Geography as the headmistress , later as Superior and Provincial. In 1951, the mantle of administration fell on Mother Marie Patrick Watson, a born teacher, her English pronunciation and accent were excellent and her History and English classes unforgettable.

.Duthie Hr.Sec. School, Nagercoil

In the year 1819, Mrs. Johanna Mead, the wife of Rev. Mead started a small boarding school for girls, the first of its kind in the whole of Kerala. She collected a few girls, mainly the children of their household helpers and the catechists. They were offered free food and clothing and taught to read and write. Only spiritual and moral books were allowed. Martha Mault, an English Missionary who is remembered today as “ The Mother of Female Education and Liberation in South India “ assisted Johanna Mead in the small boarding school after 1819. During the Duthie period starting with 1856, his two daughters Florence Lee and Beatrice Duthie worked among the women as full time missionaries. When Florence Lee married the young missionary Allan, He built the southern bungalow (the recent Allan Memorial Hall) in the school campus and lived there. Mrs. Allan lived in the campus and supervised the lace work and the school with the profits of lace industry . One important development during his period was bifurcation of a

Christian girls school at Nagercoil. This school had been divided into two sections. Of these two sections one was an English girls school . women teachers were appointed to each schools, Mrs. Allan taught English. Mrs. Allen built a spacious boarding home in the new campus and a bungalow for them to live (The present lace office). She moved the boarders into the new boarding school and began to shift the higher classes to the new campus in the buildings step by step. As there was opposition to this from the other missionaries Mrs. Allan resigned.

Miss. Beatrice Duthie worked with her parents, Dr. James Duthie and Mrs. Duthie. She supervised the lace industry and the industry became very popular. She utilised the funds received by selling the lace materials to Europe to build the Duthie Girls Hr. Sec. School. She took great interest to acquire the property east of the Summer Palace of the Travancore Raja, the present collectorate. She was the founder of the school.Duthie School bears her name. She was unmarried and died in 1919 at the age of 49. She left a large amount of money from lace industry for the school. The money was used to build a new school in April 1927, the new building was completed. All the classes were shifted to the campus in May 1927. The first headmaster of the English school was the Rev. John M. Kesari , who later became the first Indian District Minister of the South Travancore Mission. The next was the renowned Mr. P. Devasahayam, who was the strong backbone of the school. The first Missionary principal was Miss. Gladys Harris. He left the school in 1934. Then Miss. Olive Morton, to stamp her personality on the lives of many young women. When she retired in 1937, the Indian Principal Miss. A. H. Daniel took over.

LMS Girls Higher Secondary School,Marthandam

This is the first Girls Higher Secondary School in Vilavancode Taluk. Rev. James Emlyn started three schools at Marthandam in April 1882. One among them was an Elementary school for girls. This school was developed into a Middle school in 1912. In the year 1919, Rev. Sinclair took steps to upgrade the school and also encouraged Girl's education. Good school buildings were constructed and it was opened by Rev. L.H Hacker. In 1949, Mrs. Kanaga Bai Joshua was appointed as the Head Mistress and then in the year 1955, the school was upgraded into High School with the efforts of Rev. Trowell. After the long effort of managing committee, in the year 1978 the school was upgraded into Higher Secondary School.

The development of the school to the present status is due to the untiring efforts of the correspondents, Head Mistresses, the well - wishers of the public and the sacrificial efforts of the teaching faculty. At present this institution mainly caters the enlightenment of rural children. Even now the vision of Missionaries is not allowed to fade in helping the poor girl children.

Scott Christian Hr. Sec. School, Nagercoil

It is one of the oldest higher secondary schools in Kanyakumari District. It is the first English Medium Hr. Sec. School in south Travancore. And it was established in the year 1810. It was established by Rev. Ringle taube of London Missionary. Many great scholars and great statesman have studied in this school. The school is named after its magnanimous donor, Rev. Septimus R.Scott. It was Known only as seminary. Rev.Scott visited the seminary and donated thousand pounds to the seminary. This handsome donation paved the way for the evolution of the school which was named after the donor Rev.Scott. (Chruch of South India,Kanyakumari Diocese, Corporate Management Schools, Sovenir – 2009)

Rev. William Tobias Ringeltaube , Pioneer Missionary of the L. M. S in Travancore arrived in Mylaudy, a small village in South Travancore in 1806 and with the help of a local convert established a small Christian Congregation. In 1809 he built a school, where besides Tamil and Malayalam, English was also taught. In 1818, Rev. Charles Mead , the successor of Ringel Taube transferred the mission headquarters from Mylaudy to Nagercoil. In 1828, the school was shifted to Neyyoor, and again transferred to Nagercoil the next year. It was moved again to Neyyoor in 1834, from where it was shifted back to Nagercoil in 1838 and has continued to remain here ever since. In 1830, Mr.John Robert was appointed as Head Master. He with Rev. Charles Miller, the first educational missionary sent by the Mission had great ambitions about the future of the school. With the intention of making the seminary a” General School”, they admitted the most intelligent and diligent pupils picked up from the Mission schools in the villages. Teachers from Travancore and Tanjore were appointed.

Carmel Higher Secondary school, Nagercoil

The school was established at Ramanputhur in Nagercoil town with the help of carmelite nuns by the Bishop Benzigar of Kollam Diocese as an English medium Middle school in 1922. The building was blessed by Fr. Lucas, O. C. D, the prior General of the Carmelites. It

began with the Preparatory classes under the management of Bernard Gonsalvez. Mr. Antony Pereira was the first head master of this school. In 1925 he was succeeded by Paul and Martin Fernandez. By then it was functioning as a Middle School. Aloysious Benzigar ,O.C.D, the Catholic Bishop of Quilon, undertook to open an English school together with boarding for the use of Catholics of southern portion of the diocese.

After the formation of Kottar Diocese, in 1936 the first Bishop of Kottar, Rev. Lawrence Pereira, enlarged the school to the status of a high school. From 1936 to 1946 the Brothers of Charity from England managed the school. From 1947 to 1950 the Salesians of Don Bosco took over the school, then they returned it to the Diocese of Kollam in 1950. From June 1959 Jesuits from Madurai Province took charge and added the Higher Secondary divisions of the school.

Conclusion

Travancore has to its credit long and rich traditions of education, language and literature compared to the other states in India. Even during the pre-British Period educational facilities had been quite widespread in almost every region of Travancore. Therefore this unique position of South Travancore in the educational map of India is not the result of sudden activity in the field of education in recent times, but the climax and culmination of the enlightened work of missionaries from the early centuries.

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