



## BENEFACTION OF MISSIONARIES TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRICHINOPOLY DISTRICT

**\*K.BALASUBRAMANIAN**

*\*P.hD, Research Scholar (Full time), Department of History, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.*

### INTRODUCTION

The local Puranas have mentioned the word Trisirapalli which latter was termed as Tiruchirapalli, the European writers mention it as Holy Little Town (Tiru-china-palli). The Britishers started calling it as Trichinopoly<sup>1</sup>. Trichinopoly is centrally located inland district, which is situated in the heart land of Tamil Nadu, which has no coastal land. The District was well irrigated by Cauvery, Coleroon, Nandiyar, the Amaravati rivers, these rivers irrigate about 1,13,600 lakh acres of land leaving the land fertile. The District might have been an ancient seat of civilization on the banks of Cauvery, as Tamil Literature, mentions in its verses “She never fails in her course even if the sky”<sup>2</sup> (rain). As the region lies on the fertile river bed the civilization that thrived in the region had rich cultural heritage.

Trichinopoly District shines as a prominent centre of Education in TamilNadu on par with other important places in India<sup>3</sup>. The Chola courts at Uraiyyur and Jeyamkonda Cholapuram served as places where learned courtiers, elder scholars and poets converged; the Srirangam Temple was the religious centre which propagated Vedas and Hindu Scriptures. It has been understood that Rock Fort housed a Jain Monastery filled with Jain teachers and philosophers. Karur which was an integral part of the district, has served as the capital of Sangam Cheras, was the place where the famous Tamil Epics Silappathikaram and Manimekalai were compiled<sup>4</sup>. The

above fact bear ample testimony to the fact that it has been, since remote past, a glorious centre of learning had been in existence in and around Trichinopoly.

The region witnessed heightened political activity during the Chola rule. There was greater political turmoil in Trichinopoly during the Nayaka rule which was succeeded by the Muhammadan rule under the Nawabs of Arcot. With the transfer of the district under the British Rule in 1801 the area witnessed political stability.

### **FOOTSTEPS OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN TRICHINOPOLY**

Education, if looked at beyond conventional boundaries, encompasses our life, stimulates our mind and provides deeper understanding of all actions. Education in Pre-colonial India was based on Varna System; the curriculum was mainly oriental in nature pertaining to the Vedas, Upanishads, Astronomy, Astrology etc<sup>5</sup>. With the coming of British Rule in India, the efforts of socio-religious reform movements the scenario changed, as the cleavage within the society was opposed and attempts were made to irradiate it. The Charter Act of 1813 assured in an era in Indian History. The Act permitted the Missionaries to setup Churches across India for the cause of Christianity and further provided state funding for the impetus of Education in India. Before the enactment of the Act education was provided to the Indians through Gurukula System, Mathas, Gaticas.... Etc. Further the clause 43 of the Act clearly states that:

“... a sum of not less than one lac rupee in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literate and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India”<sup>6</sup>.

Thus the act was an eye opener, as there was no state intervention in the education here before, but with this the Company started intervening in the administration and management of education with public revenue. After the Charter Act of 1833 the Christian Missionaries, apart from the propagation of religion played a major role in bringing Western and Scientific Education for the cause of Indians by setting up many institutions.

In the field of Modern Higher Education in India the Christian Missionaries were pioneers in many respects. They were to a large extent, instrumental in creating an educational ladder of the western type. Higher

Education of western model developed in India gradually and it became increasingly popular chiefly due to the medium of instruction i.e., English.

A beginning in Modern Education was made by the Christian Missionaries in Trichinopoly to propagate the religion through Educational Institutions. The Tranquebar Danish Mission was the pioneer in spreading education in the district<sup>7</sup>. As early as in 1756, two of the missionaries, tracked many places in the district, founded schools in Srirangam and Trichirapally. The famous Missionary Rector Schwartz who belonged to this mission came to Trichirapally in 1761 where he was welcomed by the English garrison. He stayed at the town raised subscriptions, obtained donations from the Nawab of Arcot the then nominal ruler of the country and founded a school and a church therein 1772. In 1854, the Society for the Propagation of Gospel (SPG) in foreign countries, supported not less than 186 schools, the majority of which were in the district of Trichirapally and composite districts of Madurai, Thanjavur and Tirunelveli. The missionaries took keen interest in education at the time when the government did very little to shoulder the responsibility in this regard<sup>8</sup>.

### **PROGRESS IN EDUCATION WITH THE ONSET OF COLONIALISM**

The Indian education when compared to the system in developed countries like U.S.A. and U.K. has a longest history and oldest traditions. One can observe for periods of development in the history of Indian education: Ancient, Mohamedan, British and Post – Independence.

Before the nineteenth century the Indian culture and social organisations were at their lowest ebb. When the British came to this country, they found themselves in an educational vacuum. Learning and enlightenment were more or less non-existent; and the native of the country steeped into a deplorable state of ignorance, conservatism and superstitious beliefs.

The East India Company was primarily a commercial concern and was unwilling to accept a direct responsibility for the education of the Indians for a long time. Even the outmoded traditional learning was the monopoly of a few privileged communities. The missionary clause inserted in the Charter of 1679 directed the Company to take a chaplain in every ship and maintain schools in all the garrisons and factories, mainly for the company servants<sup>9</sup>.

When the Company became a territorial power in 1765, it established two institutions in higher learning – the Calcutta Madarasa (1782) and the Benares Sanskrit College (1791). They encouraged the oriental learning in Sanskrit and Arabic, but did not like to undertake the financial liability of running schools for the children of the Indian people, for it was bound to reduce their dividends. Under such circumstances, it was the missionaries who lifted up the torch of mass education and became pioneers of the modern education in India.

They tried to uplift the social, cultural and economic conditions of the Indian Christians. The situation became all the more urgent because neither the indigenous nor the government schools could admit all the Indian Christian children and they would have remained without any education if the missionaries had not organized schools of their own. It is out of this realization that the mission schools of modern India were born.

The drawn of era was marked by new thoughts, new institutions and new visions.<sup>4</sup>The man who was commonly credited with the introduction of western education in English was *Thomas Babington Macaulay*. He came to India as a member of the Governor-General's Council in December 1834 and his primary task was to compose the *Indian Penal Code*. He was also appointed as the President of the General Council of Public Instruction in 1834 and in that capacity he played a very important role which had great impact on the entire system of education<sup>10</sup>.

At the time of Macaulay the question of medium of instruction became a highly controversial topic.<sup>7</sup> Scholars and administrators were sharply divided into two uncompromising groups. Those who were in favor of the English as medium were called the Anglicists and those who preferred Sanskrit and Persian came to be called as the Oreintalists. The great names who came under the Orientalists were William Jones, H.T. Colebrook, William Carey, James Princep and H.H. Wilson and those who jealously identified themselves as the Anglicists were Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor-General, Lord Macaulay, C.H. Trevelyan and Alexander Duff.

Between 1835 and 1853 the Government and private educators had thrice made educational experiments, but met with no success. Therefore in 1853 the Charter of the East India Company was to be renewed and the need for defining the educational policy had become necessary<sup>11</sup>. As a result, the Education Dispatch of 1854 was

issued. It is also known as the Wood's Dispatch named after the President of the Parliamentary Committee, Sir Charles Wood, and later Lord Halifax.

It provided for the system of grants-in-aid. Taking advantage of the Government's decision to pay substantial grants to any one preparing to establish schools and to teach secular subjects with reasonable efficiency, the missionaries decided to found still more schools. This made it possible for them to achieve three objects:

- a) Christians could find employment as teachers and Christian Children could receive education which they found difficult to obtain elsewhere owing to caste prejudices.
- b) The Christian Village School was a valuable mean of contact with non-Christians.
- c) Christian teachers could also be employed as catechists to watch over local congregation.

With these aims schools were started in all the Christian centers. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were three principal agencies for the spread of western education namely Government, Missionary and Private<sup>12</sup>.

### **SOCIETY FOR PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL (SPG) (OR) BISHOP HEBER COLLEGE**

SPG College was established in 1873, this was the first college to be established in Trichinopoly. This college has the distinction of being the first college in the district. The wish of Rev. Frederick Schwartz came true by the year 1873, when the school was converted into a secondary grade college. Now the native of the district could obtain a liberal education. The FA class has 30 students. A Line of 12 English Principals piloted the college for the next six decades locating it on the academic map of Tamil Nadu. The First decade saw three Principals Margoschis, Creighton and Pearce who lovingly nurtured the institution in the nascent years<sup>13</sup>.

Principal Williams (1886-88), Dodson (1888-96), Smith (1896-1901), Malim (1901-04) rendered their yeomen service to the college. The college was 31 years old when Principal Walsh began to shape the New Hostel with 75 inmates. 1906 was the year of the jinx. The Arbuthnot Bank crashed and the college was in the dire straits. However, the SPG pulled the college out of the financial hole. Principal Sharrock nursed the institution for the next three years.

Then stepped in Principal Gardiner who masterfully guided the college for 18 long years. By 1919 there were 637 students – 449 Brahmins, 86 non-brahmins, 86 Christians and 16 Muslims. The Golden Jubilee Function of the college witnessed the rechristening of the college as Bishop Heber College in 1926. The then Governor of the Madras Presidency Lord Goshen presided over the celebrations. Honours courses in Mathematics and History had already been started in 1925<sup>14</sup>.

By the year 1928 when Principal James was in charge retrenchment began, the Lindsay Commission on Christian Higher Education recommended for the merger of the Bishop Heber College with the Madras Christian College. But the college owing to certain administrative reasons made its eclipse from the district for three decades since 1933 to 1966. And during the time it was merged with the Madras Christian College (MCC) Tambaram.

## **ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE**

In the field of education St. Joseph's College has an important role in imparting higher education in this region. It was established in 1844 by the Fathers of Society of Jesus at Nagapattinam. The college at Nagapattinam from the first a double establishment, one for the European and Eurasian Catholics of the Coromandel Coast<sup>15</sup>.

St. Joseph's College is situated in the north-west corner of the fort near Main guard Gate and is the largest collegiate institution in the Presidency outside Madras. It has grown out of the school opened at Nagapatnam by Rev. Audibert, S.J. in September, 1844. It was originally intended to be constructed at Trichinopoly which was the head quarters of the newly revived Jesuit Society. Unfortunately an epidemic then broke out and the death of the Superior General from an epidemic then residing at Trichinopoly raised a suspicion that the town was unhealthy. The new building was therefore converted into a mission house which now forms a part of the residence of the Bishop of Trichinopoly and another site was looked for. It so happened that at this time a number of old employees of the East India Company residing in many of the stations along the East Coast made an appeal to the Fathers to provide a place of education for their sons. Hence the Superior decided to start a college at Nagapattinam.

## **TRANSFER FROM NAGAPATTINAM TO TRICHINOPOLY**

---

The foundation of European College at Puducherry and the consequent fall in the number of European boys in the Nagapattinam College led to the abolition of the European section in 1858. Soon Nagapattinam became a inconvenient place for the college. The Strength of the institution did not increase. Indeed the numbers of the institution did not increase. Nagapattinam was at the extreme end of the Thanjavur district which made it troublesome and expensive for the pupils from other districts to attend the college there. Trichinopoly had by this time become an important railway junction. This had become a central place connecting railway lines as well as the head quarters of the Mission. The expense of the transfer was very heavy but it was fortunately largely met by a gift of two lakhs of rupees from a charitable French gentlemen. The college was shifted to Trichinopoly by 1884 and had been affiliated with University of Madras since 1866.

The boarding house and the college department were established by Fr. R. Rector Faseuille S.J. near Main Guard Gate. Hostels had always formed an important adjoin to College life. In 1903 the old educational policy and methods were giving way to new courses and systems by Fr. Bess. Fr. Sewell's connection with the syndicate led to some changes in the management<sup>16</sup>.

It has developed into a first grade college imparting instruction in four languages (Tamil, Malayalam, Sanskrit and Latin) and four science and Arts divisions. By 1911, the college was offering Intermediate, B.A. degree and Honours courses in the subjects like Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, History and Economics. St. Joseph's was the only Mofussil College which started honours courses then.

With the opening of the honours courses, the well equipped laboratories, the well-stocked libraries and the availability of eminent professors, the number of students enrolled went up by leaps and bounds. The 400 students of 1910 soon increased to 500, then to 800 and then to 1000 and more. By 1957, there were 1800 students within the campus<sup>17</sup>.

The college is equipped with full-infrastructural facilities such as buildings, hostels, library, book-banks and laboratories. Four units of N.S.S. and three units of N.C.C. are functioning in the college. Each unit of N.S.S consists of 100 volunteers and N.C.C. 50 corps.

The institution has completed 75 years of its educational service by 1994. Many educationists were associated with the growth of the college as a reputed institution and among them Prof.V. Sarnathan, who served as the Principal of the college, for more than 25 years deserves special mention.

## **HOLY CROSS COLLEGE**

Holy Cross College for Women is the oldest in Trichinopoly and has magnificent History. It was started for the benefit of them young girls of Trichinopoly as early as 1923 when higher education for women was considered almost a transgression against the age old respected customs and Indian Ideas. The College rose to its present position as a First Grade College from humble beginnings. Started as a Primary School in 1901 in St. Mary's Tope, Trichinopoly, it became a Lower Secondary School in 1902. After a short while the School was shifted to main bazaar Road and raised to a High School in 1905. In the years that followed, there was a growing public demand for a College for Women in Trichinopoly. There was no such institution in this part of the Presidency, South of Madras city. In response to that demand it rose to the status of a Second Grade College and was affiliated to the University of Madras in 1923. The College was elevated to the full status of a First Grade College in 1933<sup>18</sup>.

One of the earliest colleges in Tamil Nadu started exclusively for girls, this college was started with 4 girls on its roll which rose to nine 1925, thirty one in 1930 and 148 in 1940. In 1923 when the college was started the intermediate course was introduced in the Department of Economics and it has established B.A Economics with specializauon in kurai management course. The Department of English was established in 1923 to teach English to the students of Intermediate Classes. In the stream of Science the subjects such as Mathematics (1933-34), Chemistry (1935), Biology(1935) were introduced. The College also ran course for Religious and Moral Education and a separate department for it was created in the year 1923.

The Institution received help from St. Joseph's College in the close Proximity of which, it is situated and it owes its growth and welfare partly to the above Institution. Every effort is directed to the formation of character, the instilling of good manners, in fine to the intellectual, moral and spiritual culture of the young girls entrusted to the care of the Sisters of the Holy Cross<sup>19</sup>.



Autonomy was made use of, to restructure courses in Economics, Physics, History, English Literature and Commerce with an accent on Vocationalisation. The Vocationalised undergraduate courses have a built-in component of on-the-job training, paving the way for institutional linkages with Business Establishments, Industries, Governmental and NGO Organizations. The Courses on Rural Management and Rehabilitation Science are unique and they led to the development of manpower to meet the needs of the Nation and to develop the marginalized.

The College which started with five students and five staff members has grown from strength to strength with 4208 Students, 249 Teaching and 115 Non-teaching staff. Academic excellence, value based education, highly motivated teaching and supportive staff, well planned, socially oriented, extensive our each programmes and outstanding performance in sports, games and fine arts are unique features of Holy Cross College.

The College in all its glory now owes a lot to the Sisters of the Cross and the devoted Principals it had during this period of 87 years. Rev. Mother Sophie Descombes (1923-1949) was the first Principal and Founders' of Holy Cross College. The steady progress of the Institution was due in great measure to the pioneering Spirit of Mother Sophie who labored for the great cause of education. In 1945, Mother Sophie was awarded the Kaise-I-Hind Medal for her work as an educationist<sup>20</sup>.

“The aim of the College has been to inculcate in the minds of the students the value of life dedicated to God and the glory of motherhood, the sense of discipline and duty, for spiritual and moral development and for the social uplift of Women. Over 80% of its students are drawn from among the low income groups. This is social and educational up life indeed!”

The College also ran Hostels to cater the needs of the women students. Different blocks of Hostels were inaugurated in 1923, the blocks such as Catholic Block, Little Flower Block, Maria Villa Block, Holy Family Block, St. Joseph's Block and Shanthi Illam are note worthy. These hostels helped the students to further their studies and to cultivate the habit of hard and consistent work<sup>21</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

---

The Christian Colleges have been pioneers in Indian Higher Education for the past One Hundred Fifty Years. Even critics of Christianity acknowledge the countries indebtedness to the Christian Colleges, particularly in the past when the show obviously played a role for out of proportion to the number of Christians in the overall population.

The missionaries were pioneers in many respects. The First University College, the First Medical School and the First Training College for the Women were all established under the auspices of the Christian Missionaries.

The nineteenth century occupies a very important place in the history of India, for it was during this period that a new India was emerging under the rejuvenating influence of the West. Everything began to undergo a change for the better. There was an awakening in the field of education, and in socio religious life of the country.

## END NOTES

1. Census of India 1961, Trichinopoly District, Madras, 1963, p9.
2. T. Sundararaj, History of Tiruchirappalli, Ist Ed, Sundar publications, Tiruchirappalli, 2003, p14.
3. K.S.K Velmani, Gazetteers of Tamil Nadu, Tiruchirappalli District, Vol. II, 1999, p1385
4. Census of India, Report of Tiruchirappalli District, vol. II, 1961, p2 671
5. P.N. Chopra, History of South India, S.Chand and Company Ltd, New Delhi, Ed-I, 2003, p. 74.
6. K.A. Nilakanda sastri A history of south India, oxford University press Chennai, Ed. IV, 1978, p. 320.
7. F.R. Hemingway, Tiruchirappalli District Gazetteer, Madras 1909 p.44.
8. Joseph's. C. Houpert S.J. A south Indian Mission St.Joseph's Industrial school press, Tiruchirappalli, 1937, p-163
9. Kaye, J. Administration of the East India Company, Smith Elder and Co, London, 1959, p-58.
10. S.N Mukerjee, education of India, Today and Tomorrow, Acharya Book Depot, Baroda, 1959, p.63.
11. Anima Bose, Higher Education in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 1878, p-28.
12. Basu Aparana, The growth of education and political Development in India, 1892-1920, Madras oxford press, 1974, p-3.
13. Bishop Heber's college Silver Souvnir Magazine 1966-1991 Tirchirappalli.
14. Ibid., p.68.
15. Arumairaj, st joseph's college Magazine, Tiruchirappalli 1999, p-21.
16. Sundarajan, St Joseph's college Magazine, Tirchirappalli, 2001, p-12.

17. Ibid, p-12.
18. Lewismore, Tiruchirappalli District Gazetteer, New Delhi, p-112.
19. Ibid, p-12.
20. T.Vintor paul, Tiruchirappalli Diocese Magazine 1998, p-31.
21. Ibid, p-31.