

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF MISSIONARIES IN MARTHANDAM

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ABSTRACT

The traditional Gurukula system of education existed in Kanyakumari District, till the arrival of the British. The privileged high caste pupils benefited by this system. The religious oriented schools taught Vedas, Puranas, Epics, Dharmasastras, Grammar, Astrology, Medicine and Astronomy to the students. In those days varandha of the house of the Guru, Mandapams of the Temples and Monasteries were acted as school. It provided education only a limited students, particularly the high caste people. The unprivileged majority people in the society were neglected by this system. The Gurukula system only benefited the high caste people. Under these circumstances people who had been as low castes and out castes could not think of acquiring knowledge. The London Missionary Society of eighteenth century who had established schools in Travancore impart modern secular education and technical education to the native children. The London Missionary Society Missionaries had been carrying out more tangible work in the field of education over since the introduction of English education in Travancore by William Tobias Ringle Taube. His aim was better their condition through the means of education which could make remarkable changes in the entire social setup.

Key Words: Gurukula system, education, Kanyakumari District, London Missionary Society, modern secular education, English education

Introduction

Education is derived from the Latin word “Educare” means to bring out. Education is to bring out the hidden talent of the learner. The credit of introducing modern education system in the country rightly goes to the British Government of India. But the forerunners were eighteenth century Christian Missionaries. The Christian Missionaries had also succeeded in cultivating personal virtues in the Kanyakumari District people by establishing high standards of personal purity. The sudden development in education brought many changes in education, social, political and economic fields.

Missionaries Activities

The Christian Missionaries were the pioneers of English education in the erstwhile Travancore state. However, their Educational involvement was a deep rooted affair particularly in South Travancore. That area presently forms the Kanyakumari District. The Portuguese and the Dutch who came to the erstwhile Travancore state even prior to the British were the Roman Catholics. They did little towards the cause of education. But the Protestant Missionaries who arrived later were the first to introduce English education in the district.

Ringle Taube the first Protestant Missionary laid the foundation for the Western mode of education in the Mylady Mission centre in 1806, following the establishment of the work at Mylady, new spread in every village of South Travancore. Where ever the L.M.S Missionaries started their evangelical work there they constructed a church and a school.

In 1834 Charles Mead purchased a plot at Marthandam and in that site Abbs put up a shed for mission work and conducted prayer. The early Missionaries established village school along with the church for the educational development of Marthandam region. The Parassala Mission report of the year 1861 gives the information that there existed two village school in Nalloor and Thoduvetty respectively, In these schools Scripture, History, Geography, Tamil Grammar and Human Physiology were taught. Emlyn started English school at Kuzhithurai for Brahmin Hindus which was opened to Christian Children in 1871.

James Emlyn wanted to teach English language to the children. So he started Anglo-vernacular school in Marthandam on 15 April 1882. The Anglo-vernacular school marked a new era in the educational history of Marthandam. It was middle school for Boys in which English Malayalam and Tamil were taught. Hither to there was no scope for female education. So Emlyn started Girls elementary school in 1882. In that school, Tamil, Malayalam and English were taught.

In 1894 Marthandam became one of the main centers of education in the Parassala Mission district. At first in 1895 five girls were sent for Madras lower secondary examination held at Nagercoil. It was very difficult to the girls to attend school regularly due to poverty and other difficulties in their houses. So Mrs. Knowels transferred the girls school Boarding school to Marthandam which was formerly located at Parassala in 1886.

The Marthandam English Lower Secondary school has about 250 students in 1898. Marthandam English Girls Lower Secondary School had 80 students. J. Knowels succeeded on obtaining Grant-in Aid. Year by year the students strength of the school increased. In 1901 Twenty seven teachers worked there in the schools and all of them were Christians. In 1919 the Local Middle School was handed over to the Government and today it functions as the Government Boy's Higher Secondary School Marthandam.

R. Sinclair came to Marthandam and assumed the charge as manager of two schools in 1919. He saw the existing Girls School building weak and unprotective. The leakage of rain water inside the classroom gave permanent hindrance to the students and to their studies. He constructed a new one and was dedicated by I.H. Hacker on 5 June 1922. Now it forms the present L.M.S Boys Higher Secondary School Office Block building. Sinclair saw the Boys school and Girls Middle School and Girls Middle School standing door to door. Therefore he wanted to keep two schools away from each other. In view of that he built another school building for Girls at a distance of 300 miters away from the Boys School in 1929. It is the present L.M.S Girls

Higher Secondary School office block building. Sinclair started a Tamil Teacher Training School in May 1932 in the old Girls School building. The Training School functioned upto 1945 only.

In 1947, the Vernacular school was about to be vanished and a new type of middle school was introduced in Travancore. Trowell, the manager of the Marthandam Mission Schools amalgamated the boys and girls middle school into new middle school. After completing the middle school education the pupils had to Nagercoil or Neyyoor for higher studies. It became very difficult to the poor students of the Marthandam region knowing the difficult of those students Kanagam Josua, the then headmistress of the school took the necessary steps to upgrade it into High School for the first form in 1948, third form in 1949 and fourth form in 1950.

At first the High School was functioned as the co-educational institution. In 1955 Madras State Education Department issued an ordinance disallowing to function any school as co-education institution. So Marthandam Mission High School had to be split into two. It paved the way for the emergence of two new schools of the L.M.S Girls High School and another the L.M.S Boys Middle School on June 1955.

L.M.S Girls Higher Secondary School, Marthandam

In June 1955, L.M.S Girls Higher Secondary School began to function as a separate entity. Mrs. Kanagam Joshua was the first Headmistress of the Girls Higher Secondary School. She saw some poor students attending the afternoon class without taking food. So she arranged noon meals for the poor students.

L.M.S Boys Higher Secondary School, Marthandam

L.M.S Boys Higher Secondary school was started on 6 June 1955 as middle school for boys. Before that the school was developed as a Model School by the efforts of Headmasters like Henry Nayakam, A.S. Jasper, R. Daniel Ranja, D. Dennison and N. David Solomon. There was no High School for boys at Marthandam Mission compound. In order to provided higher education to the boys 9th Standard was added to this school in 1960. To upgrade the school into High School +1 was started in 1962.

In the academic year 1979-1980 the school celebrated its Silver Jubilee. D.T. Raja became its Headmaster. He wanted to upgrade the school into Higher Secondary School. By didn't of his industry the school became the higher secondary in 1980-1981 academic year. In this year D.David Salamon came as the first Headmaster of the L.M.S Boys Higher Secondary School. He got the Government sanction to start the groups consisting of Mathematics, Commerce and Science with English as medium of instruction in the Higher Secondary level.

Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School

Joshua Knowel knew that the Elementary education alone could not improve the living condition of the female children. He wanted to give higher education to them. Accordingly he started Anglo-Vernacular girls middle school for women. At first in 1895 five girls sat for Madras lower secondary examination held at Nagercoil. To make the pupils enthusiastic, Scholarship, was awarded to the needy girl students. Marthandam English Girls lower secondary school had 80 students. The school was started in August 1963 as High School. After it was upgraded unto Higher Secondary in 1980.

Govt. Boys Higher Secondary School

In 1919 the local Boys Middle school was handed over to the Government and today it functions as the Government Boy's Higher Secondary School Marthandam. A definite standard of instruction for each state ie, Primary, Middle and High Schools was also framed.

When the district was formed and merged with the Madras State, the Government of Madras opened some new schools. Most famous private Schools we started and running successfully. Some of them are Christhuraaja Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Good Shepered Matriculation Higher Secondary School and Hindu Vidyalaya Higher Secondary School – These are very important private Higher Secondary Schools. In addition to these schools at Marthandam many Matriculation High Schools are there. White Memorial Matriculation School, Seventh – Day Adventist Matriculation School, Vidya Jothi Matriculation School are important and are very helpful to the Marthandam area pupils.

Nesamony Memorial Christian College, Marthandam

In the year 1868, Rev. James Emlyn from new castle, U.K., an LMS Missionary bought the land where the college is located now. Rev. Robert Sinclair, who succeeded Rev. James Emlyn in the year 1910, built a bungalow and started a Boarding School on the campus measuring 32 acres.

After independence the long felt need for a college at Marthandam resulted in the starting of the Christian College in June 1964 by the Kanyakumari Diocese of the Church of South India. The executive Committee of the Diocese, which met on 04-01-1964, entrusted the responsibility of raising funds for the buildings needed to an adhoc committee consisting of Messrs. N. Dennis Ex.Mp(Convener), G.A. Ambrose, J.Nesamony, P.S. Wilson and Rev.. M. Amose. The Diocese set apart sufficient extent of wet lands as endowment to satisfy the University requirement. The public, in and around Marthandam, the parents, students and members of the teaching and non-teaching staff took keen interest in the growth of the college and contributed substantially at different stages for its development.

With the permission of the Madras University the Pre-University course was started in 1964 with 171 students. The college was inaugurated on the 6th of August 1964 by the then Bishop Rt. Rev. I.R.H. Gnanadason, with Dr. John D.K. Sundar Singh as the first Principal. In June 1965, the College introduced undergraduate courses with Mathematics, History and Economics as major subject. From the year 1966, the college was an affiliated institutions of the Madurai University which was later renamed as Madurai Kamaraj University. The college became a Post Graduate Institution in the year 1980-81 with the introduction of M.Sc. in Physics. A Ph.D Research centre in History was started in the year 1997 in the regular scheme. The College now offers 18 U.G., 13 P.G., 12 M.Phil., 11 Certificate courses & 8 Ph.D courses. The present student strength is 3507. At present 185 teaching, a chaplain and 99 non-teaching staff members are working in this college.

In the year 1991, the college became an affiliated college of the then newly formed Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. In the marvelous growth of the college, God has guided and blessed us immensely. With faith in divine guidance and co-operation from the public, it is hoped that the college will grown further into a fruitful centre of learning. The college is an accredited institution with 'A' Grade awarded by the NAAC for the period 2014-2019.

In June 1984, the college was re-named as Nesamony Memorial Christian College in recognition of the yeomon services rendered by the late Thiru.A. Nesamony, M.A., B.L., to the Kanyakumari Diocese of the church of South India.

Conclusion

Marthandam has a chequered history in the antiquity of the Tamil Country. Its Geographical location backed by physical features make the place so conspicuous in the region. Though its history takes one back to very ancient part, its progress through ages backed by chronology is not so clear. The name of the place Marthandam is a older one. But it may be viewed as a recent development also, because, few years ago Thoduvetty was the common name of the area. This name Thoduvetty was changed into Marthandam through the efforts of various forces and persons of the place for various reasons. Any how today Marthandam is the widely known name of the place. Under this name the place stands as a fast growing centre, and a centre of attraction of many in between Nagercoil and Trivandrum. Existence of many educational institutions from Nursery School to a very good first college with in the radius of few yards make Marthandam a Mini Oxford.

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