

CONTRIBUTION OF I.H. HOCKER TO EDUCATION IN SOUTH TRAVANCORE - A STUDY

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General education was started in South Travancore area only by missionaries. Before the arrival there was no school or educational system in this area. Only the Brahmins conducted the Varanda School in those periods. The only so called high class pupil could study. There was no tool to continue their education. They have sat at the Varanda and houses and wrote the alphabets on the spreaded sand. The caste rigidity did not allow the low caste to have education. So they were not admitted in the schools. Only by the arrival of missionaries who constructed churches and beside the church they started primary schools. The most important name connected with educational work in the state was that of Rev. Hocker. He was a very enthusiastic worker in the field of education¹. Rev. Hocker fought with higher community to relieve the low caste people from the bondage of slavery. The first step of his mission was to educate the poor low caste people. Thus during his period of mission he started many schools in various villages of South Travancore. There he admitted all children without any caste or religious restriction.

Nagercoil Seminary

Rev. Ringel Taube started a school at Mylaudy which functioned for some years. Rev. Hocker made a plan to educate the Christian and non Christian Children and Youths. He hoped and believed the youth. Thus he trained them and used them as the means of introducing the principles of Christianity all over². Rev. Hocker constructed a building near the mission bungalow and established Nagercoil seminary on October 1819 for boys³. It was the first institution to give regular English education in south Travancore⁴. In an attempt to add strength to the school Rev. Hocker opened a boarding to the boys⁵. In fact his wife rendered more help to organize the Central school or Seminary for boys in Nagercoil⁶. Mrs. Hocker arranged 30 scholars, the number of boys limited to 30 and their expenditure was met with the profit produced from the mission land⁷. Old seminary building stood on the right of the present New Port street. The subject introduced in this institution were according to the circumstances of the day. The languages taught were English, Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. He employed teachers from Tanjore. Mr. Mcally, mr. Christian Pillai, Mr. Ash-ton, Mr. Rayappan and Mr. Siva Subramanian were the main teachers from Tanjore⁸. The first ten students were permitted to go to their houses and come back next morning. Rev. Hocker paid them to and fro of the ten boys⁹. Some European students also enrolled their name in this seminary. The best students from the seminary were sent Tanjore, Tranqubar and Chennai for their higher education¹⁰. The school was called the Nagercoil seminary and popularly known as the Pulimood school because, there was a large tamarind tree grow in front

of it¹¹.

On the year 1834 the seminary was shifted from Nagercoil to Neyyoor and it continued until 1839¹². Mr. W. Charles miller was the first principal of the school. Further it was shifted to Nagercoil in 1839¹³. Poor students were also admitted in the seminary. This seminary in south Travancore taught English, Tamil, Sanskrit and Greek. This seminary developed steadily till today it is a leading college namely, scott Christian College Nagercoil.

Bazaar School

Rev. Hocker decided to start a school at Bazaar, because non - Christian did not like to attempt the school which was in the mission compound. So they started the school at the corner of the Bazaar in Nagercoil¹⁴. The school was built in the most public part of the town of Nagercoil. In the beginning he opened the school at a village near the Bazaar at Vadasery¹⁵. This was called the Bazaar school. The Bazaar had more suitable place than the mission compounds. It was started to rectify the prejudice of the Non Christians¹⁶. Maharasan Vethamonikam was the first school master¹⁷. The school was organized well, the children were from non Christians like Muhamedan and Hindus. Hocker even appointed Muhamedan and Hindu scholars to teach the students. As a result of that Secularist and casteless approach, the standard of studies ran high¹⁸. In 1822 they had forty children and in 1823 the number increased to 50 of whom several were Brahmins. Their progress in learning was creditable¹⁹.

The School of Industry

Rev.Hocker established several institutions including school²⁰. The school as he formed in the year 1820 to give the means of advantage of a Christian education²¹. Most of the Christian who converted to Christianity were brought up from ignorance idleness and vice. Some of the children of industries, parents who wish their children become useful members of the society and to have the means of supporting themselves in life. The children in the school learn a part. They were taught native work on the mission premises²².

The first master of the school was Gnanapragasam²³. This institution proved itself with in two years to be useful arts, several boys made progress in printing and book binding and other learnt the art of tanning leather²⁴. In this useful branches of manufactures the natives trained with extra-ordinary efficient. They were trained to improve their industry with European tools. Rev. Hocker organised an industry established in Neyyoor. Here he introduced printing, paper - making, weaving, rearing of silk - worms, manufactures of sugar etc²⁵. This was one of the useful establishment to many poor Christian family. Thus they became the useful and productive citizens of that area.

Girls Education

The poor girls were utilized cultivation. Their parents also feared to send their female children to school because they feared that female education would endanger their culture.²⁶ Rev. Hocker strongly decided that only female education could bring change in the society, and he established school from Kodenkulam to Thengapatinum²⁷. Rev. Hocker spent more than half Century in educational work in South Travaneore²⁸. He was also the pioneer of female education in Travancore²⁹. Rev. Hocker and his wife understood the precarious conditions of the female children. So Rev. Hocker and his wife opened a Girls school at Nagercoil in the year 1819³⁰. This school was the first girls school in Travaneore³¹. With great difficulty a few girls were collected. Parents were unwilling to send their girls to school. Hence, the missionaries removed the blind belief and prejudices among the parents. Mrs. Hocker had to convince the parents about the usefulness of western education and made them to send their daughters to school. In spite as such discouragements the school began with fourteen Girls students³². The advantages of food and clothing were, provided rice was supplied from the yield of mission fields³³. It marked the beginning of female education in the whole Travaneore. Orphans were also collected, the students were taught Christian religious and moral education³⁴.

After the school hours, Mrs. Hocker taught them sewing, spinning and Knitting etc³⁵, the girls encouraged to wear decent dress. In the year 1821, he introduced the pillow lace industry where lace making was gradually enlarged in a greater facilities. In course of time this industry became source of support to the institution. This mission work widely known in India and abroad very soon and got prizes in madras, London, Paris, Chicago and other famous exhibitions³⁶. The girls were making improvement in the various branches of learning. They improved the habit and appearance. Within a couple of decades after the opening of the first Boarding school for girls at Nagercoil, similar school³⁷ were established at all head stations³⁷.

Girls Education in Neyyoor District

On 1827 Rev. Hocker took charge of Neyyoor District. Rev. Hocker and his wife started a school for girls at Neyyoor in the year 1828³⁸. The Maha Rani helped him with property and finance for erecting new buildings for the school³⁹. Mrs. Hocker was forced to open boarding school where female children were boarded and clothed at the expense of the mission. Besides the scriptures knowledge of history, Geography, Arithmetic and Elements of natural Philosophy were taught. Moreover a number of village schools were started. In 1837 there were fifteen girls schools containing 361 girls and in the year 1840 the two district of Nagercoil and Neyyoor contained 7540 children out of which 998 were girls⁴⁰. After completing their studies the ladies were engaged in teaching in the school that were opened in the villages⁴¹. Thus Rev. Hocker and his wife laid the foundations for female education in South Travancore.

Neyyoor District Schools

Rev. Hocker was a great believer in education. The importance of education can be seen from the number of schools established at Neyyoor. First there was the "Home Schools" where 86 girls and 84 boys were clothed, fed and instructed⁴². Then there was the 'Carlton School, the first Girls school at Neyyoor where the old age girls were taught. Beside the regular studies they were taught sewing, knitting, spinning and other general domestic duties⁴³. The "Letitia Bona - Julia Knill schools" where a number of girls were educated and sent to villages to start separate Girls schools⁴⁴ Boys school, Tamil and English were taught. There was also a temporary school' giving a plain and useful education. They were also other schools, where teaching, printing,

binding, tailoring and arts were taught. Another useful institution was the infant School' and the 'Hoxton orphan school. Where infant and orphans greatly benefited⁴⁵. In addition the Villages Day Schools' for boys and the ' village day school for girls were also organised.

Slaves Education

Rev. Hocker had great concern of slave education the social and political subject of importance mooted by the missionaries led by Rev. Hocker who approached the Government of Travancore with a memorial pleading for the entire emancipation of all the slaves in Travancore⁵⁰. Rev. Hocker also successfully introduced a scheme for the education of slave children. The few slave girls who were trained in the Boarding schools, no effort had been made to bring these children into day schools to educate⁴⁷.

The gathering of slave children to the schools in the south began at a very interesting manner. The School master Ponnarai; adjoining the Manalicaud church took much interest to admit the slave boys in his school⁴⁸. When Rev. Hocker the superintending missionary of Neyyoor District went through the monthly attendance list, he noticed this new name, that of a slave boy. He made some enquiries with regard to this pleasing fact published it as a rule that all school masters who collected slave children would get an addition monthly "pay" of one 'Fanam' for every slave girl⁴⁹. Thus he encouraged to collect as much possible more slaves for education. Within a year through this rule Rev. Hocker had collected more than thousand slave children for the school education in all around Neyyoor⁵⁰.

Pulayas Education

On 1852 Rev. Mead returned from the society's service in South Travancore⁵¹. The British Resident offered Rev. Hocker the post of superintendent of the Government schools and press. So he went to Trivandrum on 1855 and settled there⁵². Another connection in which Rev. Hocker had laboured, was his work among the non-christian Pulayas, the lowest class of working people. They generally lived outside of the town⁵³. Rev. Hocker formed a school in his own promises and collected a few boys of this so called low caste people and gave them a little education. In the year 1861, he opened a school for the Pulayas through pulayan Charity School" at Trivandrum⁵⁴ Rev. Hocker collected funds from gentlemen in and around the town and supported this poor school. When a famine broke out on 1861 he secured a daily contribution of rice from the palace for these poor Pulaya childrens⁵⁵. The Maharaja of Travancore greatly helped Rev. Hocker with money, cloths and rice for the improving the condition of this poor Pulayas. On this way the poor Pulaya childrens were got education.

The educational Service of Rev. Hocker are till remembered and they showed of female education in this area brought many changes in the Social and cultural life of the people of South Travancore.

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