

A Panoramic View of the Department of History of Scott Christian College

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Abstract: *The Scott Christian College acquired under the able missionaries all that was needed for a higher educational institution. Under their exemplary leadership, this college grew into a great centre of learning. Besides seeking new knowledge, the Scott Christian College had a responsibility to the society as a whole. Situated in the midst of the backward and oppressed people the college worked as an instrument of social change. It was the first college in Kanyakumari district. The pioneer work of the missionaries in the Scott Christian College was an eye opener even to the Government of Travancore. Those who studied in the college secured employment in the government. The students trained in the Scott Christian College became great leaders of the society. They occupied high positions in the academic, political and commercial fields.*

Key Words: *Missionaries, Knowledge, Learning, Education, Change*

Introduction

The missionaries of Scott Christian College rendered great service for the development of the institution. The college is a boon to the poor students who cannot go to distant places to pursue their studies. The college plays a vital role in taking higher education to the doorsteps of the rural population in this area who otherwise will be denied education. Thus it helps the students and their parents. History is the first major subject. This college produced many Historians, Journalists, Political leaders, Parliamentarians, Military officers, Educationists, Cine actors and Civil Service officers.

The nucleus of Scott Christian College was conceived in Mylaudy, the south eastern village of Kanyakumari district, by the German missionary, William Tobias Ringeltaube. The idea of beginning a college was struck in the mind of Ringeltaube in 1806. The people of Mylaudy were hard workers and their main profession was farming and palmyra climbing. The high caste people of Kanyakumari District, the Brahmins, the Nairs and the Vellalars, denied them the right of entering into the portals of schools sponsored by the temple authorities.

William Tobias Ringeltaube took into consideration the lamentable condition of the poor people and took earnest steps for the beginning of schools. Primary schools were started in Mylaudy and in the nearby areas Ammandivillai, Zionpuram, Ananthanadarkudieruppu, James Town and Aathikadu. On his departure from Mylaudy he gave suggestions to his successors to start institutions throughout Kanyakumari district. The next missionary who came to South Travancore was Septimus R. Scott. He was very particular that a college should be started in Nagercoil, the capital of Kanyakumari district. In 1893, the school was shifted from Mylaudy to Nagercoil. Septimus R. Scott returned to England, collected funds, and came back to India. He laid the foundation for the starting of the college. As a first measure the college was began as a Seminary. In 1893, the Seminary was changed into a second grade college. The college was started with Junior Fine Arts (JFA) class. Since Septimus R. Scott toiled hard for the starting of the college, the college was named after him as Scott Christian College. After Septimus R. Scott, James Duthie took charge as the administrator of the college.

The official beginning of the college was declared on 13 February 1893. In 1894, Dennison was appointed as the Principal of the college. Simultaneously a library was also started to accommodate books and reference materials. The place where the college was to be located is in the heart of the city.

In 1893, during the period of Sree Moolam Tirunal Ramavarma, the King of Travancore, the Clock Tower was built in the heart of the town. Adjoining to this half a kilometer away, in the north eastern direction 8½ acres were earmarked for the construction of the college buildings. The missionaries requested the Royal House of Travancore to provide financial assistance. The government of Travancore also donated lands. Financial assistance were attained from the local people also. With these funds college buildings were erected in the western side of the located area. At the initial stages buildings were constructed with raw bricks and tiles were woven on the top. All these constructions were carried on by James Duthie, the administrator on the Principal missionary of Scott Christian College.

On 1 February 1927, George Henry Marsden became the Principal of Scott Christian College. During his period the college was known as intermediate college. By his hard work the intermediate college was raised to the level of degree college. In 1950, History was introduced as the major subject in the degree level.

The credit of enhancing the intermediate college into a degree level college goes to the Department of History. All other major subjects were introduced in the succeeding years. The department of History which was started in 1950 had eminent scholars like Professor Edison and Dr. John D.K. Sundarsingh. But B.A. History major did not draw the attention of students because of the introduction of Mathematics and Science departments.

English was the medium of instruction in the undergraduate level. Professor Edison left for Kerala and Dr. John D.K. Sundarsingh proceeded to United States of America for higher studies. By this time History department became a full-fledged department with all the three classes. It was the time when intermediate courses abolished and three year B.A. degree courses started. In spite of two year

intermediate courses, one year Pre-University Class (PUC) started in the college. To adjust the other one year, three year B.A. degree was started. So the department of History had pre-university class and three year degree class.

To fill up the vacuum of Professor Edison and Dr. John D.K. Sundarsingh, Professor John, Professor Kuttikan, Professor Devadhas, Professor Azaria and Professor S.S. Hector were appointed as lecturers in the department of History. On the contrary the strength of the History course detained in 1957 there were three students admitted in the B.A. History degree course. The declining of the Department of History was responsible for the abolition of the History B.A. course in Scott Christian College.

In 1966, Dr. John D.K. Sundarsingh became Principal of Scott Christian College. Being basically a historian, Dr. John D.K. Sundarsingh revived the B.A. History major in 1966. The Department that was abolished in 1957 because of the admission of three students was revived in 1966 with 64 students. Before 1966, History and Economics departments joint together and functioned as one department. In 1966, History department was separated from the Economics department and Professor Kuttikan was the appointed Professor of History from 1966 onwards. Along with him Dr. S.S. Hector, Dr. N. Rajappan, Professor Justus Robin Secil, and Angel Johnson were appointed as teachers. Does the department of History which had its eclipse in 1957 had its revival in 1966.

The Government of Tamilnadu ordered that at least one degree course in the colleges should have Tamil as the medium of instruction. Hence the department of History which had English medium was changed into Tamil medium. The Government encouraged the Tamil medium students by offering 150 rupees as honorarium for the students. The department had heavy rush for admission because Tamil medium students were given preference in appointments.

In 1971, due to shortage in appointments, the University ordered that the new campus should be selected for the college. Only then new courses would be allowed by the University. As a consequence 42 acres of land along the Parvathipuram, Kanyakumari road was purchased. At that time Professor Kuttikan, Head of the Department of History was also the Bursar of the Church of South India Kanyakumari Diocese. He took much interest for the purchase of land. Fund collection was made and certain Diocesan properties were sold and 42 acres of land was purchased. New buildings were erected and in 1971 History department was shifted to the new campus. Subsequently the entire college was shifted to new campus. In the old campus of Scott Christian College now Women's Christian College has been functioning.

In 1992, the department was upgraded as a PG department. The government of Tamilnadu has been very particular that any new department to be started after 1990 should be begun only on self-financing basis. So the PG department History was also begun as a self-financing department. In 2006, research course, M.Phil. was started in History. In 2008, Ph.D. course was introduced. Thus the Department of History in Scott Christian College has grown into a research centre. At present Dr. V. Ranjan heads the Department and under his able stewardship many national, state level and international level seminars were conducted. He has visited many countries, England, Japan and Indonesia and presented research papers in International seminars in Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Dubai and Philippines.

The department has a well-equipped department library. The department has 1500 books, Journals, and other reading materials. Competition Success, Competition Review and Social Science Journals have been added to develop the reading and writing habits of students. The department has a well-equipped and furnished reading room also.

The teachers followed discussion method of teaching along with a conventional system of lecture classes. They are fully involved in the academic work of correction and evaluation of M.Phil. and Ph.D. theses.

The weaker students are identified and tutorial classes are conducted. Career counselling and guidance are given. There are 29 scholars pursuing Ph.D. degree. 18 scholars have already obtained Ph.D. degree.

Dr. L. Reginold Jacob, Head of the Department of History who retired prior to Dr. V. Ranjan got two projects from the University Grants Commission (UGC). His main concentration was "The Working Class Movement in Kanyakumari District with Special Reference to Plantation and Cashewnut Workers".

Apart from the academic activities students and staff are involved in extension activities too. Women's Awareness Programme, Human Rights and Environmental Programme, and Free Eye Camp are the highlights of the extension activities with regard to assessment of students. They are continuously assessed by tests, quiz programmes, question and answer methods. With regard to employment, many boys and girl students have joined Tamil Nadu Police Service. Some students have passed SLET and NET examinations too.

The students are encouraged to organize association meetings regularly. This enabled the students to acquire leadership qualities. The following seminars were organized during the past ten years.

1. Seminar on Ecology and Environment.
2. Space Research and Communication.
3. Intercollegiate Seminar on local History.
4. Seminar on Fashion Designing.
5. Inter University Seminar on Monuments of Kanyakumari District Tourism Industry.
6. National Seminar on Coalition Government in India.
7. Quiz programmes on Travancore History and Freedom struggle.
8. Symposium on London Missionary Society (LMS) and Caste Hierarchy in Kanyakumari District.
9. One-day seminar on Indian Budget.
10. One-day National seminar on Recent Trends in Historical Research.
11. Progress of Historical Research and Writing in History in the 20th century.
12. Historical Monuments in India.

Besides these the students have been encouraged to join National Service Scheme (NSS) and National Cadet Corps (NCC). Educational tours have been arranged to the students to places of historical importance such as Delhi, Agra, Goa, Jaipur, Punjab and other important places of historical monuments.

The Department has planned to organize a Departmental Archives for the use of students and public. Local palm leaf Ballads of Historical importance, Numismatic sources that are found in this part of the country and Archaeological sources may be collected and preserved in the archives. Now today Mr. Sam Raj is in-charge of this Library.

Conclusion

Scott Christian College has been serving the community for the past 125 years. The Scott Christian College satisfies the needs of many students in Kanyakumari district. This institution has produced thousands of graduates. At present many of them are occupying important positions in different walks of life. We have hope that this institution will shine as a centre of higher education and carry the light of knowledge for the future generations.

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