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**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON "SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH
INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA"** Organised by the
Department of History held on 26th September 2023 and

Presented a paper on *Social Services of the London Missionary*
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ISBN : 978-81-945891-8-1



LEKSHMIPURAM COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

NEYYOOR - 629802

PROCEEDINGS OF INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

**SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH INDIA WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA**

September, 26, 2023

Editors

**Dr. A. AZHAHESH
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Organised By

**Department Of History,
Lekshmipuram Collrge Of Arts & Science,
Neyyoor - 629802, Kanniyakumari District,
Tamilnadu, India.**

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Social Services of the London Missionary Society in South Travancore

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Abstract

This research paper is entitled in the services of the society by London Missionaries in kanyakumari district. The London missionary society was initiated with the name of Missionary society in 1795, the missionary society was renamed as London Missionary Society in 1818. The London missionaries done many of works in the society, especially upliftment of the society it mentioned as social services, educational services and medical services. It develops the society and uplift the downtrodden people.

Keywords: Services, Missionary, Upliftment, Depressed, LMS

INTRODUCTION

The London Missionary Society was established in September 1795 in England. The first missionary sent to Travancore by LMS was William Tobias Ringeltaube a German Lutheran who commenced his work in 1806. After his missionary work many of the missionaries worked in kanyakumari district. The missionaries were worked the upliftment of the society via Gods ministry. Very important and essential services of the society were social upliftment of the society, abolition of the unwanted practices of the society, educational services and medical services. The missionaries were forced to face so many difficulties before a permanent settlement in Travancore.

Kanyakumari district has seen a rapid increase in the number of Christians, where the share of Christians in the population rose from 30.7 percent in 1921 to 34.7 percent in 1951 and has risen to 46.8 percent since then. The growth has also been remarkable in Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur districts. Christians in India are members of different church denominations though some are also non-denominational.

In 1809 Ringeltaube permanently stayed in Travancore and started his service. He built churches in Pichaikudieruppu, Thamaraiikulam, Puthalam, Athicaud, Kovilvilai, Eathamozhi, within the year 1810. He started schools near every church. According to 1815 census report, the total

Christians of his churches were 1019 and the number of school students in his schools were 188. The present study to examine the services of the society was done by London Missionary Society. The present study is following the historical research method.

SOCIAL SERVICES:

Women were considered inferior to men. It was even believed that girls who were taught the three R's namely reading, writing and arithmetic would become widows soon and widowhood was the bitterest misfortune a woman could ever think of in society.

The female education was entirely unknown and none of the women was able to read. It was never considered necessary to educate women for, as one of their proverbs says "To educate a woman is like putting a torch in the hand of a monkey. The social evils of untouchability played havoc on the lives of women. Early marriage was the order of the day. A larger number of girls were, often in infancy dedicated to the service of temples as devadasis. The miseries of widows were manifold. They were not allowed to remarry. They were not permitted to wear ornaments. At night they slept on the floor, or a plaited coconut leaf or an old mat.

By strict conventions and rigid rules, they were bidden to wear a coarse piece of cloth known as 'Mundu' extending from the waist to the knees

leaving the breasts bare. Women were not allowed to see any men except the dearest members of their family. The low caste females required to carry the water pot only on the head, not on the hip or side. Among the many unjust burdensome taxes levied on the low caste was called a breast tax.

The inhumanity and injustice in the collection and the nature of this tax was seen when an Ezhava lady, who was unable to bear the humiliation of the tax collectors, had to cut off one of her breasts and present it to them. These incidents proved that the people had to bear all these obstacles patiently. They looked up for a savior. It was during this time Christian missionaries came one after the other and began to teach the people about their oppression. The missionaries believed that "By educating a boy you got an educated individual, but by educating a girl you get an educated family.

FIRST UPPER CLOTH RIOT 1822 TO 1823

The Christians using upper cloth were ill-treated in May 1822 in public places and on roads. Charles Mead, the missionary complained to the local court. The court inquired of Mead as to whether the wearing of upper cloth by Christian women was required by the Christian religion and on receiving an affirmative reply from Mead, the court decreed that the accused Christians had no reason to be fined. This judgment relieved the Christians from ill treatment by the high castes for the time being.

SECOND UPPER CLOTH RIOT 1827-1830

This time also the women were flogged in public bazaar for wearing upper cloth and their clothes were stripped publicly. They threatened the people going to attend Christian worship and forced them to render Oozhiyam services. Chapels and schools were burnt down. The missionaries took a serious view of the atrocities committed by the caste Hindus and made a representation to the Government. The use of upper cloth was absolutely forbidden. Christians were ordered to respect the ancient caste customs.

THIRD UPPER CLOTH RIOT 1855-1859

In spite of all these restrictions imposed upon them, the women under Christian instruction continued to dress in the manner of Nairs. The

number of women wearing the upper cloth in public went on increasing. The missionaries were also humiliated and threatened and they had to keep guard at their residence. The sudras women were attacked in the bazaars stripping them of their upper garments¹⁰. As a result, serious rioting occurred and consequently the entire mission was in a state of disorganization.

As an agency of socio-political, cultural, and economic transformation, colonialism used several strategies to attain its goal.

ABOLITION OF OozHIYAM SERVICES:

The activities of the LMS and CMS missionaries helped to change the socioeconomic backwardness of the lowest sections of the society of Kerala. The missionaries relentlessly worked for the emancipation of these bonded laborers. They were the agents of colonial modernity and the real agents for spreading a Western education of the state. Their education created fresh avenues and spaces among the illiterate, downtrodden sections of the society. The Christian missionaries pleaded for the right of inheritance of the converted Christians as they brought it to the notice of the government. In 1815, another proclamation was issued, which granted permission to the Ezhavas and Nadars that who were converted to Christianity, to inherit property. The Christian missionaries continued their task. The social conditions of the women of the slave castes were deplorable. They strongly pleaded for a social life for the women because the majority of them were miserable and uneducated. The women were not permitted to cover the upper parts of their bodies. After a series of struggles, the government permitted the female converts of the low castes to cover their breasts. Besides, the missionaries offered employment to the oozhiyam servants to improve their social and economic conditions.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

The London Missionary Society wanted to promote education in their field of activities besides spreading the gospel message as they thought the education is also important to sustain their effort. With this in mind they sent a few educational Missionaries who devoted their effort for the cause of education. The First school for

high caste Hindu girls was opened at Eraniel in 1872. Later it was upgraded into a Girls High School by Madam McIlroy. Special schools were also set up for the benefit of certain communities like the Kshatriyas and Malayala Brahmins, who showed reluctance to send their children to common schools. In 1882 day, schools were established in Thuckalay, Thiruvithomcode, Thalakulam and Neyyoor.

EDUCATION FOR SLAVE CHILDREN

Except a few slave girls, who were trained in the Boarding schools, many other slave children did not get the benefit of education. Mead had an innovative method to help them. He announced that every school teacher would be given one panam in addition to his monthly salary for every slave boy he brought to school and 1 ½ panams for every slave girl. Within a year more than 1000 slave children were enlisted in the school in the Neyyoor District.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical work came to occupy an outstanding position in the work of almost all the Christian Missions which landed in India as well as of the Indian Church. The terrible inadequacy of medical facilities in India induced Christian agencies to start hospitals and dispensaries both in cities and villages. Small-pox was a common disease but the Nadars felt that this epidemic occurred on account of the wrath of Mutharamman or the mother of pearls. It took a long time for the people to understand the real reasons for diseases. The credit for creating a logical scientific outlook towards disease goes to the Medical Missionaries deputed by the L. M. S. Consequently, a shift took place in the system of treatment from indigenous medicine to English medicine.

Western medical missionaries expressed the opinion that prevalence of superstitions as well as unflinching faith in quack remedies had led to heavy loss of lives in different parts of India. In their own analysis, overpopulation, lack of proper diet and poor sanitation facilities had been responsible for the high incidents of mortality resulting from tuberculosis and small pox.

The first medical missionary sent to Travancore was A. Ramsay. In 1838, he began

medical work at Neyyoor. There are two accounts concerning the establishment of medical mission in South Travancore. One account says that the medical mission was started first at Nagercoil, but the other account says that Medical Mission was started first at Neyyoor. In the late 1860s, the 'untouchable' communities, comprising mostly of the Pulayas, were the major beneficiaries of the LMS medical mission work. The medical missionaries made the attempts to rid of all sorts of hatred regarding caste and religion under the care and protection of Medical Officers. It occurs the people of kanyakumari got the medical facilities.

CONCLUSION:-

This paved the way for the development of the society and depressed people of kanyakumari, and they got the medical facilities properly, got the education through proper way and upliftment of the society. These are the important services of the London Missionary society.

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