INTRODUCTION
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The aim of life must be a noble one, so that either the entire human race or at least a small segment of it may be benefited. There are three types of people we encounter in our day-to-day life. Among these, the first category, we find the selfless souls who live only for others, not for themselves. "Live and let live" is the policy adopted by the persons belonging to the second category. But the people belonging to the third category are absolutely selfish, who always care for themselves and not at all thinking about others.

The noble souls of saints, philosophers, scientists, statesmen and social reformers, belong to the first category cited above. They are born to serve others, they dedicate their lives. Their endeavours entirely for the noble cause of uplifting the society, preaching the Gospel of equality, fraternity and munificence; Jesus who was born as a man, lived and died just for the emancipation of the sinners, redemption of the suppressed and the salvation of the humanity. Gandhi could be declared as an outstanding person of the 20th century, because of the purity of his purpose, greatness of his character and the altruistic service to the poor and the downtrodden community. Thus we can enlist a number of great persons such as Ignatius Loyola, the founder of Society of Jesus. Abraham Lincoln the life long fighter for the cause of the Negroes, Albert Einstein the greatest physicist and so on. In this pedigree of selfless souls, for their dedicated service, the researcher was so much impressed by the yeomen dedication of a saintly
person, the founder of the Rosarian Congregation Rev. Fr. B. A. Thomas, who is very popular among the Christians of Sri Lanka as 'Tholagatty' Thomas. The basic reason for choosing the congregation for the research work is his noble motto of 'Live for Others'. In spite of being a Roman Catholic priest, Fr. Thomas has brought a social revolution of serving for the cause of social justice and upgradation of the backward community irrespective of the caste, creed and colour. His own life had been an exemplary one in this regard. Besides this he has given strict orders to the members of his congregation to follow his motto of 'Living for others' in toto. Following his footsteps all the fathers, brothers and sisters belonging to the Rosarian Sect have put in practice the social service to the first and foremost duty as clergy. There is a saying that 'One can find God in the smile of the poor'. The Rosarians have proved it beyond doubt that they live only for others. Fr. B. A. Thomas has won the beacon to illuminate the lives of the poor and needy. Words are easy like the wind, but when thoughts are put into action, one can find the hardships and problems to be faced boldly with determination. Rabindranath Tagore, the Noble Laureate in his master piece 'Gitanjali' has rightly prayed, 'Give me the courage to surrender my strength to thy will with love'. It seems that Tagore has sung these verses by foreseeing the social services of Rosarians.

With the approval and encouragement of Bishop Guyomar, the then Bishop of Jaffna Fr. Thomas started the Rosarian Ashram at Tholagatty.¹ By his own personal example, Fr. Thomas became an exemplary model to the

social workers, religious men and philanthropists. He preached the real meaning of the altruistic service to the society and showed them how to live for others. He observed strict austerities and detested the luxurious life, wearing costly clothes and partaking delicious food. He proved to be an epitome of the Gandhian principles of 'simple life and high thinking'. Austerity characterized him, not severity for a gentle gleaming light softened his piercing eyes. His voice bore the marks of self negation, compassion for others, quiet earnestness, a sense of mystery and the consciousness of a mission waiting to be fulfilled.\(^2\)

As a result of the researchers' frequent visits to Pushpavanam, the Rosarian Centre at Manapparai of Tiruchirappalli district, observed the day-to-day life and various activities of the Rosarians. The researcher could distinguish them not only for the laymen, but also for the clergies belonged to the other congregation. Simplicity of the life, sharing the problems of the poor providing them jobs for their livelihood, encouraging them to live an honest life attracted many people.

To give positive witness to Christian social relationships and to make reparation for social differentiations, Fr. Thomas took group of young men from various strata of society. To give witness of appreciation of human labour in life, a considerable amount of time was given for various types of manual work, works to meet household needs, cultivation of the land, animal husbandry and various types of industry to meet the needs of the community and society. In their works, the poor and neighbour were given

an opportunity to earn their living by participation in the works. In the work places an atmosphere of silence and prayer was encouraged and maintained. All these factors are found in the Rosarians kindled the researcher's heart and led him to resolve to make a deep study regarding the social services of Rosarians. Consequently, the researcher dared to write this research work.

The vision of a person enkindles others naturally without any coercion or compulsion. Fr. Thomas had been belonging to another congregation in Sri Lanka, but he has been chosen by the Almighty to dedicate his life and to establish a separate congregation of Rosarians with a pure and noble purpose of living for others.

**Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives make the researcher to choose this area of research:

- To examine the history of Rosarian Congregation and the necessity of such a contemplative religious order.
- To examine the organized structure of the congregation and other ashrams.
- To trace the history and growth of Rosarian houses in Tiruchirappalli Diocese and its services.
- To reveal the reality of the Rosarian way of life to the world and how they succeeded in the contemplative life.

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3 Michaelsamy (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 6.
➢ To analyse the services provided by the Rosarian monks, brothers and sisters in Tamil Nadu.

➢ To examine the services of other Rosarian Ashrams for the socially, economically and educationally weaker sections.

**Importance of the Study**

This study is partially religious importance and partially of social significant. Religiously, this area of research seems to be an important one. Since the congregation is not familiar to all, because it adopts a contemplative life style as its own. Consequently the research work will reveal the significance and remarkable features of Rosarian way of life and their measures to strengthen the initiatives of Universal Catholic Church.

Socially, though as a religious nature of the congregation supports and fight for the upliftment of the downtrodden masses without discriminating the caste, creed and educational qualifications. The Rosarians always support the downtrodden people and engage themselves for the upliftment of them. To accomplish this, they engage themselves in various humanitarian and charitable services, hence the study is socially a relevant one.

**Area of the study**

Though the Rosarian congregation had its birth in Sri Lanka in 1928, later deep rooted in the minds of the people of Tamil Nadu and to other States of India. But this study is focusing only on Tamil Nadu. Considerable space is allotted to describe the Rosarian Ashrams which are situated in
various parts of Tamil Nadu to have a glance on the history and arrival of Rosarian missionaries to Tamil Nadu.

Major portion of this research work is allotted to describe the Rosarian Ashrams in Tiruchirappalli diocese and their services to the betterment of the people. Since, Tiruchirappalli diocese is the nerve centre of Rosarian activities in Tamil Nadu region, the research work is focusing on that particular location. In spite of the contemplative life of the Rosarians slowly they engaged themselves in the activities to improve the social and economic conditions.

Methodology

The content of research is about with both spiritual and social activities. The study can be divided into two different parts like the history of the congregation of the Rosarians and the services of the Rosarians to the people. In writing this research work, both descriptive and analytical methodology has been adopted. In analysing the history and organization of the congregation descriptive type of methodology has been adopted. To analyse the impacts and level of voluminous services of the Rosarians analytical type of methodology has been used. Last but not least, the objective behind this study is to probe the impact of Rosarian congregation in the society. To accomplish the above mentioned task, the researcher has used critical methodology of historical writing also.

Chapterization

The whole research area has been divided into five different chapters other than the Introduction and the Conclusion.
The First chapter entitled, 'The Origin of Rosarian Congregation', in which the major thrust is given to the details of Rev. Fr. B.A. Thomas, OMI, the founder of Rosarian Congregation to enable the reader to understand the life history and the necessity to find a contemplative order authenticated by vast amount of primary sources.

The Second chapter titled as 'The Structure of Congregation', in which both the internal structure of the Congregation and the functioning of the Rosarian Ashrams have been clearly explained. In this chapter one can understand the strict and contemplative religious order of the Rosarians.

The Third chapter describes the 'Establishment and Functioning of Rosarian Ashrams' in various parts of Tamil Nadu.

The Fourth chapter entitled, 'The Rosarian Services to the People in Chengleput and Vadakkankulam', which describes the history, functioning and services of the monasteries.

The Fifth chapter separately describes the services of Rosarians in Tiruchirappalli diocese since the major activities and services of Rosarians centred in and around Tiruchirappalli diocese.

Finally, on the basis of the findings of the chapters, summarisation of the chapters has been given in the conclusion.

**Sources of Information**

To write this research work the researcher has consulted various sources, both of primary and secondary in nature. The sources about these ashrams because of its recent origin are not having adequate source
materials. In spite of these shortcomings, the researcher is able to secure relevant primary and secondary source materials.

Primary sources such as Codex Historicus of various Rosarian Ashrams, Constitutions, Directories, Diaries of popular Rosarian Brothers and Fathers, Reports, Government Orders, Deeds and Bonds, Letters and Circulars, Church documents, Questionnaire, Souvenir and interview provided sufficient information to write this research work.

With regard to questionnaire, there are fifty questionnaires have been supplied to the benefactors, well wishers and neighbourhood of the Rosarian Ashrams. The details culled from the questionnaire have been given to strengthen the facts derived from other sources.

The secondary sources such as books, journals and dissertations also supported the researcher to write this research work. Rev. Br. Rosary Alphonse, CR, the contemporary of the founder Rev. Fr. B. A. Thomas, OMI, and Rev. Fr. C. Bernard, CR, Fr. J. Peter, CR, Fr. Paviluppillai, CR and Fr. Philips Jesuthasan have authoured so many books, which are useful and relevant in writing this research work. Other sources such as journals and dissertations also supported the research area.