INTRODUCTION

South Travancore witnessed the advent and growth of a series of Christian denominations including the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Latin, Jesuits, Oriental Orthodox, Luthern, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, the Pentecostal and several other Protestant missions including the London Missionary Society. As far as South Travancore was concerned, among all the Christian Missions the London Missionary Society assumed greater importance. Though they reached the soil of South Travancore only by the dawn of the nineteenth century they succeeded to become the pioneers of social change through their remarkable services in the field of education, industry and other welfare measures. Unlike the earliest Catholic congregations like the Syro-Malabar which had its church even from the 1st century A.D the London Missionary Society within a period of hundred years emerged itself as the most popular Christian sect which fought for the social justice of the poor people who were reduced to the status of virtual slaves. The LMS was the youngest church, established in Travancore and the origin of its missionary activities is associated with the evangelical revival in England in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Every Christian in England considered it his duty to strive hard for the spreading of the gospel both at home and
abroad. The enlightened Christians in England also advocated strongly in favour of allowing missionaries to spread the gospel in India. William Wilberforce, one among the champions of church-service, raised his voice in the British Parliament in favour of the evangelization of India through missionary efforts. This dream became a reality with the founding of missionary societies. Among these, the London Missionary Society stood in the vanguard; it came into being in 1795 on a non-denominational basis. The fundamental principle of the society was “not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy or any other form of church order and Government; but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God”.¹ The history of the missionary activities of the Protestant church in Travancore commenced with the arrival of William Tobias Ringeltaube, a missionary of the LMS in 1806 A.D. The political influence of the British in Travancore and the appointment of the British Residents like Col. Macaulay and Col. John Munro in the beginning of the 19th century played a vital role in the establishment of a mission centre of the LMS at Mailadi in South Travancore. William Tobias Ringeltaube was the pioneer Protestant missionary came to South Travancore. Col. Macaulay persuaded the Raja of Travancore and got permission to build churches. The growth

of the mission was further promoted by Col. John Muro.² He greatly favoured the mission and used his influence on its behalf.³ The LMS started its work first among the Parayas and it soon spread among the Shanars or Nadars.⁴ Once the Shanars were considered an oppressed class in Travancore, who were not satisfied with their position.⁵ The attention of the missionaries of the LMS was also turned to the lower sections of the society like Parayas, Pulaya, Ezhavas etc, who suffered from caste tyranny and oppression. They were considered as the “lower orders.”⁶ They were in a degraded condition. They transferred their allegiance to the European missionaries and to their religion which brought them deliverance from the trammels of the old-world civilizations.

The LMS missionaries took a strong stand against caste distinctions within the churches through education. Their aim was to create “an independent, self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating native church. The result was the formation of the South India United Church

⁴ The Nadars were known as Shanars before 1921. In that year, the Madras Government issued an order directing, them to adopt the term ‘Nadar’ in place of ‘Shanan’ (G.O.No. 785, 7th July 1921, Govt. of Madras Law – General Department). (Quoted in N. Austin John Manohar, *The History of the South India United Church 1908-1947*, [unpublished Ph.D Thesis], University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1992).
(S.I.U.C) in 1908. When SIUC was formed in South India, Travancore Mission of the LMS was the most successful among the missions in the whole of India.\(^7\)

When the LMS missionaries came to South Travancore, a woman was considered a burden to the parents in her childhood, a burden to her husband in her womanhood and a burden to her children in her old age. Generally women enjoyed a degraded position in the family and social life. But the LMS missionaries, with the help of lady missionaries, empowered the christian women as well as the caste Hindu women.

The missionaries of the LMS started educational institutions and established printing presses, lace-industries and championed the cause of female education. The lower castes and slave castes who were denied education found their way to the mission schools. A system of missionary vernacular instruction for both sexes at the village level had found culmination in an English Seminary at Nagercoil. Although it was meant for religious activities, it served the purpose of secular education to seek profitable employment in the state. Through education, the missionaries

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\(^7\) Minutes of the Third General Assembly of the SIUC, Bangalore, 1911, p.29.
provided inspiration for the ideology of liberation and empowerment to women.\textsuperscript{8}

The LMS missionaries of Travancore fought against the gradual abolition of slavery. The people belonging to the castes such as Pulayas, Parayyas, Kuravas, Vedars and others had been slaves to the rulers as well as to those belonging to the high castes.\textsuperscript{9} They had been born as slaves, lived as slaves and died as slaves, and such slaves formed themselves into a major chunk of the population. Every wealthy man and even rich individuals of inferior castes had a number of bondsmen born in slavery.\textsuperscript{10} In the year 1847, there were 16,50,000 slaves in Travancore.\textsuperscript{11} LMS missionaries like Rev. Charles Mead, Rev. Mault, Rev. Bailey and Rev. Baker as well as their brethren approached the government in 1847 with a memorandum seeking the emancipation of all slaves.

The LMS missionaries of Travancore also wanted the assertion of social rights. The low caste people were not permitted to wear upper cloth. The upper cloth disturbances were one of the most important social


\textsuperscript{9} Samuel Mateer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.297.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{11} C.M. Agur, \textit{Church History of Travancore}, Madras, 1903, p.891.
upheavals in the 19th century Travancore. With the help of Col. Munro the LMS missionaries supported the native Christians to wear upper cloth.

The missionaries stressed the need for education, English medicine, scientific reasoning against superstition and blind belief and technical development in the western model. Though initially they were reluctant to oppose the colonial regime, the exploitative nature of colonialism came in for criticism. The missionaries started various types of educational institutions and established printing presses, industries and championed the cause of female education. Through education, the missionaries provided inspiration for the ideology of liberation and empowerment to women.\(^\text{12}\)

The industrial work done by the missionaries was a great boon to the suppressed caste’s women. It helped them to purchase their own freedom by paying their ransom money to their masters. It created self-awareness and dignity among the suppressed women and helped them to eradicate poverty from their houses. By and large the LMS in Travancore was held responsible for bringing changes in the face of the society and raised the status of women.

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Area of study

South Travancore, the area of investigation included the taluks of Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Neyyathinkara, Trivandrum, Nedumangad and Chirayinkil situated at the southern most part of the Indian sub continent. This territorial segment formed an integral part of ancient Tamilakam and once remained the citadel of human culture and civilization. As the land of Lemurs it occupied a permanent place even from time immemorial. Thereafter the area became the meeting ground of all the important religious including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam, together will all their sub sects and denominations. It was once known ‘Sreevalumcode’ means ‘the abode of prosperity’. It was ruled by Tiruvatis and Vanchipalas and also remained the headquarters of the erstwhile Trippappur Swaruppam. It is an oriental microcosm, a representative land and an area of striking contrasts, unique with its physical features, social structure and cultural complex. It is a land of mountains and depths, brooks, valleys and hills. It is basically an agricultural tract which became the granary of the south. It is famous for its vast stretches of paddy fields, rich forests and mineral resources. The gentle slope and the natural divisions with its vegetation furnish an
enchanting sight. The extensive paddy fields of the low lands, broad patches of coconut groves and tapioca fields of the valleys and rubber plantations of the hills further enhance its beauty and became a source of attraction with its pleasant climate.

But such a blessed land became the worst centre of caste disabilities and restrictions. Originally there was no caste system in south Travancore. It remained an integral part of the universal and cosmopolitan social structure of ancient Taimlakam. The processes of Aryanisation infused the venous of superior - inferior complex. The introduction of the Brahmanical system of caste hierarchy, the erstwhile Dravidian Communities were reduced to the status of untouchables and unseeables. Although gradation of castes and rules governing hypergamy, endogamy and exogamy were analogous to those prevalent in other parts of India, the caste nomenclature and most of the customs and usages were peculiar to South Travancore. By seeing the caste and communal hatred of South Travancore Swami Vivekananda called as ‘a veritable lunatic asylum of India’. In such a context the London Missionary Society commenced its activities in South Travancore.
Period of Study

The present study mostly concentrates for a period of hundred years from 1806 to 1905. Though the London Missionary Society had its birth in 1795 following a period of evangelical revival in London they could commence their activities in South Travancore in 1806 following the arrival of William Toibas Ringeltaube. The period of nineteenth century became very significant in the social history of modern India. It witnessed a number of attempts from different quarters to fight against the fossilized and outdated customs and usages. It was regarded as a period of renaissance and revival. There occurred three dimensional upsurges against the evils of feudalism and casteism. First one led by the leaders of the higher strata and the second one reformers who hailed from the lower sections. When the first two efforts were from the part of the Indians, the third one was piloted by the Christian missionaries who championed the cause of the depressed and oppressed. In South Travancore the cause of such people was undertaken by the Protestant missionaries with the support of the British administration. The period witnessed the establishment of the British Political Residency in Travancore. The period assumed greater importance through the works of Political Residents.
Hypothesis

- To discuss the unique features of South Travancore in the social history of modern India.

- To examine how far the socio-political condition of South Travancore influenced the London Missionary Society to focus on the uplift of the people who hailed from the lower strata of the society.

- To analyse the various customs, beliefs and superstitions that reduced the people to the position of slaves and the measures initiated by LMS to liberate the poor people from the churches of such practices.

- To comprehend the social change in South Travancore piloted by LMS unlike the social change that took place elsewhere in India.

- To assess the educational endeavours of the LMS and how far it could uplift the women.

- To trace the women empowerment through the embroidery, lace making and similar industrial endeavours.
- To review the circumstances that led to the liberation of women through upper cloth revolt.

- To describe the factors that contributed to the beginning of social change in South Travancore.

**Objectives and Significance of the study**

The LMS missionaries were directly involved with the empowerment of women in South Travancore. The study intends to focus the yeomen services rendered by the missionaries and to examine how their mission and ministry helped to attain the liberation of low caste people like Nadars, Pulayas, Parays, Ezhavas and others. The proximity of the native women with the missionaries enabled them to emulate feelings of self-respect and equality which were alien to a highly male dominated society. The endeavours of the missionaries in educating and organizing the masses were highly appreciated by the different sections of people.

**Methodology**

Since this study attempts to explore the history of the social change initiated by the LMS missionaries in South Travancore, the historical method is used. The process involves investigations, recording, analyzing and interpreting the events of the past for the purpose of discovering
generalizations that are helpful in understanding the past, understanding the present, and to a limited extent in anticipating the future.

Collection of data from primary and secondary sources, criticism of the collected data using the internal and external examination and presentation of facts in a readable form, involving problems of organization, composition, exposition and interpretation are undertaken as a part of the historical methodology. Primary sources are the most sought after in historical research. They are first hand accounts of information. Therefore, primary sources are extensively used in this study. Primary sources used in this study include letters, minutes, reports, charters, court decisions, census reports, Neettu, (Royal proclamations of the rulers of Travancore) periodicals and books published during or just after the period and personal diaries etc.

The secondary sources are the books which include historical information related to the subject are also used to supplement the primary data. They were neither informed by a participant nor an eye witness to the original event. The credibility of the data was analyzed by applying historical criticisms. In the missionary reports and their publications and in some of the government reports, the scholar at times noted certain biased statements. Maximum care has been taken to make the study a
dispassionate and original one with the help of a systematic and scientific historical analysis of the date. Effects have been taken to make the study objective and impartial.

**Review of Related Literature**

The thesis is mainly based on Primary sources. Published government documents including Census Reports, Travancore Administrative Report etc. are noteworthy. Annual Reports of the private agencies and records at the disposal of the Missionary Archives (Bangalore) form part of the primary data. Unpublished dissertations of various related aspects are of much use to this work.

Secondary sources include published books, published thesis, periodicals etc. The sources are analyzed both intensively and exhaustively so as to eliminate the chances of bias.

The sources mentioned above are preserved in the Kerala State Archives, Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai, United Theological College Library, Bangalore, Kerala University Library, Thiruvananthapuram, Scott Christian College Library, Nagercoil etc. Old books published works and records on this particular
topic are the treasure house of information which deals with the hardships endured by the low class people of South Travancore.

**Chapterisation**

The thesis embodies six chapters besides the introduction and conclusion. The introduction explains the relevance, scope, objectives hypothesis, period and area of study, methodology and survey of literature besides the design of study.

The first chapter forms the background of the present doctoral thesis. The dawn of nineteenth century represented a stratified society on the basis of caste and religion. The cosmopolitan and universal outlook of the erstwhile Tamil society underwent far reaching changes following the establishment of the Brahmin hegemony. The venom of caste system based on the Chaturvana was injected into the body polity of Tamils. The society was divided into caste Hindus and non-caste Hindus. The sons of the soil mostly the Parayas, Pulayas, Nadars, Ezhavas, Paravas etc were reduced to the status of unlookables anduntouchables. The virtual sons of the soil were reduced to the position of drawers of water and hewers of wood. They were subjected to severe disabilities. The basic and fundamental civil right including freedom of movement and expression were denied to them. The background undertakes a comprehensive study of the principal castes
including the Brahmin Nambudiries, Nairs, Vellalas, Nadars, under the area of research.

The second chapter harps upon the Formation of the LMS from 1806 to 1865. William Tobias Ringeltaube from Prussia became pioneer in the establishment of the Protestant faith in Travancore. At the zenith of feudalism and caste rigidity William Tobias Ringeltaube succeeded to erect a church and form a Christian congregation. The chapter explains the trials and tribulations that William Tobias Ringeltaube faced in the course of his nine years stay in South Travancore. The political and administrative set up also became very helpful towards the development of Protestant faith. Col. Colin Macaulay, the first Political Resident of Travancore and his successor Col. John Munro became instrumental in the promotion of the Christian faith. They continued to patronize the conversion even against the protests of the principal ministers like Dewan Velu Tampi. In the midst of such adverse circumstance William Tobias Ringeltaube succeeded to establish congregations at Earnarakulam, Puttalam, Kovilvilai, Ittamozhi, Anandanadankudiyiruppu and Pichaikudiyiruppu. The climate, food, medicine and his restless hard work made him sick and he was compelled to go in eternal peace. The newly formed congregations were entrusted with Vedamanikkam a native convert from among the
untouchables. He went ahead with the work giving confidence to the converts.

The period of Charles Mead from 1817 to 1853 assumed greater importance. The shifting of the head quarters to Nagercoil extension and expansion its activities to Neyyoor, Trivandrum, Quilon etc are discussed in detail. Similarly his period witnessed tremendous growth of English education. The establishment of Travancore District Committee marked another distinct stage in the growth of the LMS in Travancore. The chapter continues to discuss the services of other important missionaries like Charles Mault, James Russel, Miller, Whitehouse, James Duthie, C.C. Leitch, John Abbs, Samuel Mateer and John Cox for the betterment of the people.

The third chapter “The Assertion of Social Rights” dwells upon the vigorous attempts made by the converted people to assert the basic and fundamental privileges which were long denied to them. Among this assertion of social rights a detailed analysis was made on the major rounds of struggle to cover the breasts of their women folk. In the name of customs and traditions the non-caste Hindus were subjected to severe social restrictions. The people of South Travancore led three rounds of struggle to assert their right to wear upper cloth in 1822, 1828-‘29 and
1855-‘59 respectively. In the midst of the opposition of the caste Hindus, the non-caste Hindus could carry out the struggle mainly through the lacit support of the London Missionary Society. The measures initiated by the higher ups of the British Government are discussed in detail. It also traces the results of such interventions. The proclamations issued by the local rulers reflect the legacy of the role of the missionaries. Like the Nadars of South Travancore, the Pulayas, Parayas and even the Hill Arrians received the benefits of the efforts of the London Missionary Society. It ultimately paved the way for the abolition of slavery and liberation of the untouchables from the clutches of ageold serfdom.

Removal of slavery, empowerment of women and medical services come under chapter four. It deals deep into the institution of slavery from its genesis till its abolition. The role played by London Missionary Society has been analysed in detail with the help of valid original sources. The trials and tribulations of the slaves were also depicted in detail. Such a terrible inhuman situation began to change through the intervention and influence of the protestant missionaries. Besides the slave traffic there existed praedial slavery at its worst form. The praedial slavery especially the Pulayas and Parayas became the victims of shocking inhuman treatment at its worst form. Such details are dealt in great length to explain
the role of London Missionary Society in the abolition of slavery. Even the Catholic missionaries at times promoted slavery and their churches functioned as the godowns of the slaves. The Proclamation of 1853 granted freedom only to the slave children born after the proclamation. Through the intervention of British Government especially Cullen, the British Resident of the Government of Travancore issued another Proclamation in 1855 which granted freedom to all the slaves. The chapter further proceeds to the role of healing ministry in the process of social change especially among the non-Christian through the dedicated and selfless services of the missionaries.

The economic development forms the central theme of fifth chapter. Economic resurgence and stability played a decisive role in the social emancipation since wealth formed the basis of human relations. Realising the legacy of human relations in terms of wealth, the London Missionary Society adopted a series of measures to empower the so called untouchables in terms of economy. The chapter unfolds the impact of small scale industries like Lace and Embroidery, weaving, tailoring, printing, book binding, leather working and agricultural pursuits which were calculated to embolden the women folk. The wives of almost all the
missionaries of LMS concentrated their attention in the liberation of women folk through such industrial ventures. They took meticulous care to impart training to the weaker sections. The products had high demand. The salary though it was comparatively meagre instilled a spirit of confidence in their minds. The earnings were used for the betterment of the family and their fellow people. The economic development accelerated the course of the social change in South Travancore.

The last chapter deals with “Social Change through Educational Activities”. Education especially the English system of educational came down as the most vibrant catalysing agency of social change. In a caste ridden feudal oriental society the missionaries of the London Missionary Society rendered remarkable service towards the spread of western system of education among all the sections of the society irrespective of caste, religion, colour and creed. The chapter dwells in detail about the signal services rendered by LMS Missionaries starting with William Tobias Ringeltaube, Charles Mead, James Duthie, Mault and others.

The Governmental authorities of Travancore including the reigning Maharajas extended liberal support towards the promotion of education.
The missionaries gave importance to vocational oriented system of education, giving due importance to the vernacular languages. The female education received the special attention of the missionaries. The syllabi comprised of both secular, moral and religious subjects. At times the Government put forward certain conditions to hamper the smooth working of the schools are also discussed in this chapter. For the dissemination of knowledge printing presses were established. The scope and importance of printing press have also been analysed.

The conclusion traces the major findings of the study, its impact on the society, the formation of SIUC and its legacy on human rights and cultural renaissance.