INTRODUCTION
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Tamil Nadu was earlier known as Madras State. It is the home of the Tamils, a Dravidian people with a rich cultural and political heritage. Thirunelveli district, one of the southernmost districts of the present Tamilnadu, has a unique place among the districts of Tamil Nadu and was fondly called ‘Tirunelveli Semai’ underscoring the fact of its being administered by the British and socially uplifted by the foreign missionaries. It was bounded in the north, by the Madura district and the erstwhile Ramnad Zamindary in the east and south by the Gulf of Mannar and the west by the Western Ghats. The district lies between 8th and 10th Degrees of North Latitude and between 77°30' and 78°30' East Longitude. It is about hundred miles from north to south and seventy miles from east to west with an area of 5,387 square miles. The headquarter of Tirunelveli district was Palayamkottai which lies three miles east of Tirunelveli.

The Tamiraparani, the ‘copper-coloured river’ is a perennial river, which rises in the Periya Pothigai hills in the Western Ghats and flows between Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai, traverses about seventy five miles through Ambasamudram, Tirunelveli, Srivaikundam, Tiruchendur and drains in the Gulf of Mannar and falls into the Bay of Bengal, a little south of Tuticorin. Sittar, Kadana, Servaiyar and Manimuthar are the major tributaries of Tamiraparani river.

3. The term, ‘Tirunelveli’ composed of three words, ‘tiru’ (sacred), ‘nel’ (rice in the husks) and ‘veli’ (hedge or enclosure) or ‘sacred rice enclosure’. The town is well known for the extensive rice fields. The word ‘Palayamkottai’ is derived from Palaiyam (a camp) and kottai (a fort). (Annual Report of S.P.G., 1829, pp.156-157).
4. Tirunelveli was called by the British ‘Tinnevelly’. The British usage was more often used rather than the Tamil Tirunelveli. Normally, Indian scholars used Tinnevelly to refer to the period of British rule and Tirunelveli since independence.
5. Pharoah, Gazetteer of Southern India, Madras, 1855, p.436.
Tirunelveli district is fed by the North-Eastern and the South-Western monsoons. Most of the people in the district are agriculturists. The farmers cultivated paddy and cotton. However, cotton was the preferred crop. The women and children were also engaged in agricultural work. Crops like maize, millet, ragi, black-gram, green-gram and groundnut are also cultivated. The teris or extensive red colour sand fields were the special features of Tirunelveli district. Even without water or manure, the teri region is productive, for it abounds with the palmyra palm. Palmyra trees were the wealth of this land.

A large proportion of the inhabitants of Tirunelveli belonged to a single caste called Shanars or Nadars. The members of the Nadar community adopted agriculture and palmyrah climbing as their regular pursuit of life. Some of them were engaged in trade also. They are hard working and industrious. The historic name for this caste is ‘Shanars’ or ‘climbers’. But they preferred to be called Nadars. So, in 1921, they were directed to adopt the term, Nadar in place of Shanar by order of Madras Government.

The term Nadar means ‘ruler of a nadu’ or district or Lords of the soil. The chieftains among the Shanars were known as Nadans. The word, Shanar is derived from the 'nar' or loop of rope worn round the ankles in order to climb the palmyra trees. The Nadars are believed to have migrated from the northern

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7. G.O. No.785, Law Department, Government of Madras, 7 July 1921.
coast of Sri Lanka and entered Tirunelveli via Ramnad. Along with them, they brought the seeds of Jaffna palmyrah. The Pandyan rulers granted them title over the sandy wastelands which were found to be suitable for the cultivation of palmyrah palms. The trunks, the roots, the fibres and the leaves of the tree are used in various ways.\(^\text{10}\) The palmyra tree produces fruit that is very sweet and is often used for making beer.

The Nadar women collected firewood and boiled the juice in large earthen pots. When the juice thickened, it was poured into coconut shells. It hardens into a coarse, black kind of sugar, called by Europeans, jaggery.\(^\text{11}\) The hard, black jaggery cakes were often eaten for lunch by the tappers. But most of it was sold. Women were also involved in making different palm products such as fermented juice or toddy, jaggery, fibres, baskets, mats, cots and roof beams. Nadars were considered a ‘half polluting’ caste by the upper caste people and were not allowed to carry umbrellas or use foot-wear. The women were not allowed to carry water-pots on their hips as the high caste women did.\(^\text{12}\) The religion of the Nadars was anti-Brahmanical in character. Every Nadar settlement had its own temple called Ammankoil. Goddess Bhadrakali was the titular deity of this community.\(^\text{13}\)

The Nadar community formed nearly one-fifth of the total population of

\(^\text{10}\) Sooryamoorthy R., *Climbing Up*: Palmyrah Workers’ Development Society, Martandam, 2000, p. 3.
the Tirunelveli district. They occupied a middle position between the Vellalas on the one hand and the Pallars and Pariahs on the other.\textsuperscript{14} The Brahmins, Vellallas, Naicks, Maravars, Vanniyars, Chettis, Reddis, Pallars, Pannikers, Yadavas, Paravars, Pariahs and Chakkiliyas were the other communities.\textsuperscript{15} The Brahmins who were just a microscopic minority emerged as the greatest arbitrators and peace makers and extended their counsel to the reigning kings of the past. Some of the Brahmins were priests, government officials and land-holders. Besides, the Hindu temples and mutts with their enormous wealth, endowments and income from pilgrims were the private properties of the Brahmins.\textsuperscript{16}

In the social ladder, the Vellalas, the non-Brahmin group were next to the Brahmins. The three main divisions of the Vellalas in Tirunelveli district were Tondamandalam Vellalas or Mudaliars, Karkattars and the Pillaimars. Most of the Vellalas of the district belonged to the Pillaimar sect, locally known as Vellampillai. They found employment in government departments and were also merchants, ship owners, farmers, landowners and school masters. The Vellalas were the chief advisors of the poligars of Sivagiri and Panchalamkurichi.\textsuperscript{17} The Naicks and the Reddis were emigrants from the Telugu country. They served as watchmen, landholders, farmers and traders.

In Tirunelveli, Maravars or Thevars constitute another important caste. They served in the army of the poligars and took part in wars. When they were

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Annual Report of S.P.G., 1853, p. ixvii.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Joseph Thekkedath, \textit{History of Christianity in India}, Vol. II, Bangalore, 1982, p.149.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Srinivas, M.N., \textit{Social Change in Modern India}, Berkely, 1966, p.5.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Census of India, 1961}, Vol. X, p.1.
\end{itemize}
discharged from the forces, they indulged in social crimes like robberies and way laying for their survival and caused riots and disturbances threatening the very survival of the depressed classes.\textsuperscript{18} A few Maravars were in charge of kaval (protection). As wages, they received allowance of rice from the farmers when the paddy was harvested and collected tax from each household. Some of the Maravars cultivated paddy, betel and tobacco.\textsuperscript{19} The caste-Hindus exploited the recklessly brave Maravars but kept them in ignorance and servitude. Education and political progress were denied to them.\textsuperscript{20}

Paravars were fishermen, boatmen, sailors and traders in salt fish. Pannikers were few in the district. They were spirit distillers and sellers, weavers and dyers of cloths. Pallars were farmers, landholders, labourers and weavers. Pariahs\textsuperscript{21} cultivated onion, engaged in trade and worked in the coffee or cinnamon gardens in Ceylon. Besides these, there were potters, carpenters, stonemasons, bricklayers, goldsmiths and shoemakers.\textsuperscript{22}

A majority of the people of Tirunelveli were Hindus. A few Jains and Muslims too lived in the past in certain areas like Tirunelveli proper, Pettai, Bottomare, T.S., \textit{Classes of Modern Society}, London, 1975, p. 11.
21. Caldwell derives the word, Parayan from para\textsuperscript{2} or drum. The members of the caste did the work of drummers, particularly at funerals. In the ancient days, it was the duty of the Parayas to beat the drum when those who were about to undergo capital punishment while being taken to the gallows. (Nagam Aiya V., \textit{The Travancore State Manual}, Vol.II., Trivandrum, 1906, P. 402). Their habitations were situated away from the ordinary village limits and were called, Paracheris. (Velupillai, T.K., \textit{The Travancore State Manual}, Vol. I, Trivandrum., 1940, P. 680).
Kayalpattinam, Pottapudur, Kadaianallur and Tenkasi. Some Muslims who lived in the coastal areas engaged in trade and business. The coastal region of Tuticorin has always been famous for pearl and shell fisheries, both of which used to be government monopolies.

To understand the political history of Tirunelveli district, a brief sketch of the rulers from the beginning to the abolition of the poligari system in the Tamil country is necessary. Tirunelveli was a part of the Pandya Kingdom of Madurai during the Sangam age. After the Sangam period, it was successively ruled by the imperial Cholas, the Muhammadans, the Nayaks, Imperial Pandyas and the Nawabs of Arcot.

The rule of the Nayaks started in 1559. One of the important administrative measures taken by Viswanatha Nayak (1529-1564 A.D.) was the reorganisation of Tirunelveli into palayams or pollams and the appointment of palaiyakars or poligars over them. The Poligars were originally hereditary chieftains. They possessed of considerable territories and power. Their estates or chiefships were conferred upon them by the old Pandya Kings. The title of poligar was given to them by the Vijayanagara Kings. In Tamil, pollam was called as palaiyam. It literally means a camp. Palaiyakaran means the chief of a camp. Each poligar had entrenched himself with a large body of armed forces.

retainers. It was his primary duty to give military protection to the inhabitants living under his jurisdiction. Each chieftain had to pay tribute to the Nayak, fight in his army whenever necessary and maintain order in the palayam.

Viswanatha Nayak appointed the local Marava chiefs as the palaiyakars for the palayams created along the western stretch of Tirunelveli district. He nominated Nayaks as the palayakkars of the eastern portion of the district. The ancestors of Pulithevar of Nerkattumsevval were the Marava palayakkars and the ancestors of Veera Pandya Kattabomman of Panchalamkurichi were the Nayak palayakkars. Vijaya Ranga Chokhanatha, the Nayaka, died in 1731 without issues and was succeeded by his Queen, Minakshi. During her reign, disputes arose and finally the kingdom fell into the hands of the Mohammadans. In 1750, Tirunelveli consisted of thirty two palayams. Among them, eighteen were under the control of Marava chiefs and fourteen under Nayak chiefs.

Tirunelveli was ruled by the Nawabs of Arcot from 1744 to 1801 A.D. In 1744, Anwar-ud-din Khan was appointed as Nawab of Arcot by the Nizam, Asaf Jah. After the death of Asaf Jah in 1748, Nasir Jung, the second son of the Nizam ascended the throne. The success of Anwar-ud-din in obtaining the Nawabship of Arcot marks the beginning of the Wallajah administration in Madurai. However, the Wallajahs had to face two powerful opponents, Chanda Saheb of the Nevayets and Vijayakumara of the Nayaks. The various districts in the south

were held by officers appointed by Anwar-ud-din. Anwar Khan was appointed Fauzdar and Amil of Tirunelveli for revenue administration. But the real authority was rested with a number of independent chiefs of the district. When the Nawab was strong, he levied as much tribute as he could collect from the poligars. Anwar-ud-din was succeeded by his son, Muhammad Ali in 1749. The policy of Mohammad Ali, the Nawab of Arcot, with regard to the collection of taxes and his subordination to the English were abhorrent to the poligars. Their love of independence and action led them inevitably into conflict with the Nawab.

The poligars refused to pay tribute to the Nawab of Arcot and raised the banner of revolt against him in 1751. The British, at the request of Mohammed Ali, offered to help in his fight against the poligars in 1751. Accordingly, Mohammed Ali sent an expedition in 1751 under the command of his brother, Abdhul Rahim, with thirty European soldiers led by Lieutenant Innis. He was the first English man to land in Tirunelveli in 1751 A.D. He routed a confederacy of the poligars at Tirunelveli and destroyed seventy of their mud forts. He exacted tributes from the poligars and took several of them prisoners. At the request of Nawab Mohammed Ali, the British interfered in the administration of the palayams in 1755. Maphfuz Khan, the brother of Mohammed Ali, undertook an expedition to suppress the revolt of the poligars with the help of the British army headed by Colonel Alexander Heron on 25 March 1755.

28. Rao Sahib and V.S. Padmabha Iyyar, A Short Account of the Tinnevelly District, Palayamkottai, 1933, PP. 1-3.
29. Madras Diocesan Record, July 1903, P. 177.
30. Military Consultations, Vol.4, Madras Council, 3 February 1755, pp.24-44.
The armies of the Nawab and the East India Company stormed the fort of Nattukottai, a stronghold of the poligars. Determined to spread terror among the poligars, Maphuz Khan and Heron not only wiped out the entire garrison but slew many of the inhabitants. Consequently, several poligars submitted, cleared their arrears and gave security for the payment of the balance. However, two of the most prominent poligars, Kattabomman and Puli Tevar refused to fall in line. Therefore Heron sent an army under the command of Maphuz Khan and Captain William Lee to storm Panjalamkurichi, the stronghold of Kattabomman. When the poligar agreed to pay tribute and gave security, they withdrew their force on 30 April 1755. Muhammad Yusuf Khan was appointed to carry on the revenue administration in Tirunelveli from 1756 to 1763. It was not a smooth run for him. There were struggles with the poligars.

In 1765, the local poligars in Tirunelveli plundered the East India Company’s villages, near Palayamkottai. The company sent a garrison to protect the villagers. Often, the Nawab used the English soldiers to collect the revenues from the poligars who refused to pay. The British gradually gained possession of the whole of Carnatic by suppressing the Nawab’s adversaries, Chanda Sahib and Khan Sahib. However, their help to the Nawab, came at a heavy price. Huge payments to the British become a drain upon the Nawab’s resources. As a way out of this desperate situation, a treaty was signed between the Nawab of Carnatic and Lord Macartney, the Governor of Madras in 1781 by which the British took over the civil administration of the Carnatic including Tirunelveli district.

Mr. George Proctor was the first civil officer of Tirunelveli appointed by the East India Company in 1781 for the purpose of receiving and administering the revenues of the Nawab. But his administration led only to a general discontent in Tirunelveli. He was succeeded by Mr. Eyles Irwin in 1783. In 1792, Carnatic Treaty was signed between the Madras Government and the Nawab of Arcot. It required the Nawab to contribute 3½ lakhs of rupees every year as payment for the support extended by the British military establishment. It also empowered the East India Company to assume the revenue administration, in the event of war in South India.\(^{32}\) This treaty enabled the Company to assume control of the external affairs of the Carnatic and establish their revenue authority over the poligars.

The civil officers appointed under the treaty of 1792 to represent the British Government were commonly called Collectors of Poligar Peshcush (tribute). The Treaty of 1792 also enabled the British to station their army in the sircar territory.\(^{33}\) Threatened with total extinction, the poligars of Tirunelveli organised themselves into a league under the leadership of Vira Pandya Kattabomman of Panjalamkurichi. But Major John Bannerman routed the hostile confederacy in 1799.\(^{34}\) After this victory, the British proceeded with the reorganisation of the administration in Tirunelveli. Bestowed with such authority, most of which just came their way, the British determined to wrest Tirunelveli

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34. Revenue Consultations, Vol. 98, the Government of Madras, 7 October 1799, pp. 2877-2884.
from the Nawab’s control. Accordingly, Lord Edward Clive, the then Madras Governor, made repeated appeals to the Nawab to hand over Tirunelveli to the British.

Negotiations were held between Lord Edward Clive and Azim-Ud-Daula, the grandson of Nawab Mohammed Ali. By the Carnatic Treaty of 31 July, 1801, Azim-Ud-Daula agreed to hand over Tirunelveli to the British. The British intervention in the administrative affairs of Tirunelveli led to the cessation of Tirunelveli to the English by the Nawab of Arcot in 1801. This event marked the end of the rule of the Nawabs of Arcot over the Carnatic including Tirunelveli and the beginning of direct British administration. A very wholesome outcome of the British take over was that the fierce poligars became peaceful zamindars. The district of Tirunelveli was formed in 1801 with S.R. Lushington as its first Collector. The land south of Madurai was included in it. The new district included the sircar regions and the poligars of Ramnad and Sivaganga.

A separate district, Ramnad was formed in 1803. But these districts were yet again reorganised in 1808 by merging Ramnad and Sivaganga with the district of Madura and Sathur and Srivilliputhur with the district of Tirunelveli. When the British assumed the administration of the Tirunelveli district, it was divided into nineteen taluks and fifteen palayams. In 1838, the number of taluks was reduced to thirteen. In 1860, the taluks were further reduced to nine. In

36. Madras Diocesan Record, July 1903, p.177.
1910 the Tirunelveli district comprised eight taluks, namely, Ambasamudram, Nanguneri, Tenkasi, Tirunelveli, Sankarankoil, Srivaikuntam, Tiruchendur, Koilpatti. There were sub-taluks with headquarters at Vilathikulam, Tuiticorin, Palayamkottai and Radhapuram. Later, Sivagangai and Sattankulam became sub-taluks.

The advent of Christianity

As the British were gaining political ascendancy in Tirunelveli, some other European nations were trying to reach out to the oppressed and the marginalised through their missionaries. Though Christianity had come to India centuries earlier, the first protestant mission was established in Tirunelveli towards the end of the eighteenth century. In fact Indian Christian church owes its existence to the Apostle Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ, who is believed to have reached Cranganore in the Malabar coast in 52 A.D. According to tradition St. Thomas established seven churches in Kerala, namely Paloor, Cranganore, Parur, Kayal, Gothambangalam, Niranam and Kollam. Then he went to the Tamil country and served for seven years at Mylapore where he suffered martyrdom in 72 A.D.

The Portuguese were the earliest Europeans to come to India for trade. They were ardent Roman Catholics who helped the Roman Catholic Missions abroad. On account of the settlement of the Portuguese on the Tirunelveli coast,

a Roman Catholic Mission was founded in Trunelveli in 1532. A bloody conflict between the Muslims and the Paravas\textsuperscript{41} over pearl fishing rights led to the slaughter of thousands on both sides. When the Muslims secured the help of the Nayak rulers, the representatives of the Paravas of the coastal region at Tuticorin contacted the Portuguese Captain at Cochin, Pedro Vaz de Amaral, seeking help against the Muhammadan oppression.\textsuperscript{42} In return for their help, the Paravas adopted the religion of the Portuguese. Thus the Paravas, 20,000 in number from the villages along the coast from Cape Comorin to the island of Ramesvaram became Christians. On account of its pearl fishery, it was called the Fishery Coast.\textsuperscript{43}

Francis Xavier,\textsuperscript{44} a Catholic Missionary from Spain arrived in India in 1542 and worked among the Paravas in Tuticorin and adjoining coastal areas.

Consequently, the Paravas on the eastern coast and the Mukkuvas on the western

\textsuperscript{41} The Paravas, Parayas and Pallars who formed the lowest strata of the society, were treated as untouchables. Paravas were the fishing community found in the sea coast towns of the Tirunelveli district. They were in majority at Tuticorin. They earned their daily bread by diving for pearls and were thus engaged in pearl fishing industry at Tuticorin. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the Muslims of Kayalpatnam had obtained on lease the pearl-fishing from the Chera King, Uday Martanda Varma and reduced the Paravan divers to slavery. A Parava woman selling paniyaram was insulted by a Muslim master in 1532. The husband and his comrades caught hold of the Muslim and cut off his earlobes and they killed many of the Muslims. The Muslims with the support of the Nayak rulers slaughtered the Paravas in thousands. Dom Juan-da-Cruz, a Nayar convert and merchant of Arab horses from Calicut, then in exile at Tuticorin, requested them to seek the protection of the Portuguese of Cochin. (Ferroli, D., \textit{The Jesuits in Malabar}, Bangalore, 1939, p.118).


\textsuperscript{43} Letter of Fr. Peter Martin to the General, 1 June 1700.

\textsuperscript{44} Francis Xavier was born in 1506 in Spain. He studied Philosophy at St. Barbe. After completing his education, he became a Professor in DE' Heaven's College. Later, he became a member of the Society of Jesus and offered his services to the East. He reached India on 6 May 1542 and settled at Goa. He worked among the Paravas of Tirunelveli and South Travancore. Many of his letters were written from Manapad on the coast, near to Tiruchendur. In 1549, Francis Xavier went to Japan. On his return journey to India, through Malacca, Singapore and China, he died in December, 1552 on the island of Chang-Chven-shan of the coast of China. His body was brought to Goa, where it was preserved. (Henry James Coleridge, \textit{The Life And Letters of St. Francis Xavier}, London, 1861, pp.210-211).
coast were baptized. He left India in 1552 and the work was continued by Fr. Henriquez, Superior of the Jesuit Mission, until his death in 1600. Tuticorin, Mannar Island, Vembar, Punnaikayal, Virapandiyapatnam, Manappad and Periyapatnam became the major Catholic Mission Stations. The Jesuit Fathers established their mission centres in Madurai in 1596. From Madurai, they moved to centres like Tiruchirappalli, Tanjore, Salem, Karur and spread Chiristanity. The Roman Catholics carried on extensive missionary work through the Jesuit Missions of Robert De Nobili and his successors, John De Britto and Joseph Constant Beschi.

Besides the Jesuits, the Dominicans and the Augustinians too arrived in India with the active support of the Portuguese Kings. The Roman Catholics were more numerous in the south than in the north of India. Of the seven and a half million Christians in the Indian sub-continent in 1942, more than half were Roman Catholics. Rev. James Hough reported in 1820 that there were 30,000 Roman Catholics in the district of Tirunelveli. Their chief stations were Palayamkottai and Tuticorin. By 1773, the Society of Jesus was formally suppressed by Pope Clement XIV. The Society was restored in 1814 by Pope Pious VII. In 1838, two Jesuit Missionaries, Father Martin and Lious du Ranquet, sent by Pope Gregory XVI, arrived at Palayamkottai and commenced their

mission work in Tirunelveli. Yet, the Jesuit mission suffered a steady decline in its missionary activities, partly due to divisions within its own ranks and partly due to the growing influence of Protestantism.\[50\]

In the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D., Spain and Portugal lost their supremacy over the seas to Protestant countries like Britain, Holland and Germany. It was their turn to propagate religion. Being Protestants themselves, they took Protestantism abroad. The Dutch were the first to bring Protestant Christianity to Tirunelveli district. In 1658, they captured Tuticorin from the Portuguese and erected a fort in 1700. Following their occupation of the Fishery Coast of Tuticorin in 1700, they expelled the Jesuit Priests from the coastal towns and endeavoured to convert the Paravas to Protestantism. But, they met with total failure. Besides Tuticorin, the Dutch had settlements at Alwar-Tirunagari and Manapad.\[51\]

Tranquebar on the Tanjore coast became the birth place of Protestant Christianity in South India.\[52\] King Frederick IV of Denmark undertook missionary work in his colony at Tranquebar on the Coromandel Coast. He deputed Bartholomew Zieganbalg and Henry Pleutchau\[53\], two Protestant missionaries


\[53\] Zieganbalg and Pleutchau were the German theological students, studied in the University of Halle. They were ordained in Denmark prior to departure and were financed by King Frederick. They reached Tranquebar on July 9th, 1706. These Lutheran Missionaries were the pioneers of the Protestant Mission in India. They learned Tamil language, established schools and seminaries, translated the Scriptures, text books, set up printing presses and collected a vast corpus of manuscripts from the Halle University. Zieganbalg set up the first school in 1707 in Tranquebar. He taught the students by scrawling the alphabet on sand. Bible was translated into Tamil in 1727 by them. They compiled Tamil-German dictionary. They laid the foundations of the church in the districts of Tinnevelly, Trichinopoly, Tanjore and Madras. (Erich Beyreuther, *Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg*, Chennai, 1998, pp. 32-52).
of the Royal Danish Mission, to organize a Lutheran Mission in the Danish settlement at Tranquebar. They landed at Tranquebar on 9 July, 1706 and the work was extended to Madras, Cuddalore, Tanjore, Tiruchirapalli and Tirunelveli.\textsuperscript{54} Danish Missions were affiliated to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.).\textsuperscript{55} Early in 1709, the S.P.C.K. of England sent money and books and in 1712 a printing press to Danish Royal Missionaries at Tranquebar. Anglican Missionary work in Tirunelveli began in 1770. It was an offshoot of the S.P.C.K. of the English Mission at Tanjore and Tiruchirappalli.\textsuperscript{56} From 1770 to 1820, the missionary work in Tirunelveli was financially supported by S.P.C.K. This was the first Protestant missionary station in the south.\textsuperscript{57} Another mission, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.)\textsuperscript{58} began its work in India in 1817. The Danish Missions in Tanjore and Tiruchirappalli were transferred to S.P.G. in 1820. The first S.P.G. missionary to Tirunelveli was Rev. Rosen.\textsuperscript{59}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{55}{The oldest Anglican Missionary Society, which came to be known as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.). S.P.C.K. was founded in England in 1698 by the members of the Anglican Churchmen. Its main object was to promote education and to support missionary activities in the colonies. In 1710, the Danish-Halle Missionaries, Ziegenbalg and Pleutchau became the Corresponding Members of the S.P.C.K. At first, the S.P.C.K. had taken great interest in supporting the Danish Royal Mission at Tranquebar. Its Missionary stations included Madras, Tanjore, Trichiropoly and a part of Tirunelveli. (H.O. Wakeman, \textit{An Introduction to the History of the Church of England}, London, 1889, p. 419).}
\footnotetext{56}{Kuriakose, M.K., \textit{History of Christianity in India}, Madras, 1982, p. 88.}
\footnotetext{57}{\textit{Historical Sketch, Diocese of Tinnevelly and Madura, New Series}, Published by S.P.G., Westminster, 1982, p. 3.}
\footnotetext{58}{S.P.G. was founded in 1701 in England by the Anglican Churchmen. Its main aim was to provide Anglican ministrations to British people abroad and to evangelize the non-Christian races of the world. It was the official representative of the Church of England and all the Diocesan Bishops in England were the members of its Standing Committee. The Archbishop of Canterbury was the President of the Society. S.P.G. began its labours in India in 1817. (Charles Henry Robinson, \textit{History of Christian Missions}, Edinburgh, 1915, p. 58)}
\footnotetext{59}{Badley, B.H., \textit{Indian Missionary Directory}, Lucknow, 1881, p. 97.}
\end{footnotes}
In the beginning, the authorities of the English East India Company, the Board of Directors in England and their Governors in India adopted a policy of strict religious neutrality. Though they appointed Chaplains to look after the religious needs of their own men living in different settlements, they did not permit them to carry on any kind of religious propaganda among the people. But by the Charter Act of 1813, the British Parliament allowed the Protestant missionaries from Europe and North America to preach Christianity in British India. Since then, the Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists and Salvation Army had been sending missions to India. After the Charter Act of 1813, missionaries came with their wives to South India. They wielded great influence on the development and welfare of women. The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) sent its missionaries to India in 1814 and to Tirunelveli in 1820. The S.P.C.K., the S.P.G. and the C.M.S. carried the gospel work all over the British Empire.

The founder of the Christian congregation of Tirunelveli was Christian

63. In 1799, the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East was founded in England to spread the Gospel in the non-Christian World by Charles Simeon, Vicar of a Church in Cambridge, John Venn, Rector of Chapham and some distinguished laymen such as William Wilberforce, Thornton, Zachary Macaulay and James Stephen. The C.M.S. was the largest missionary society of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. (N.C. Sargent, The Dispersion of the Tamil Church, New Delhi, 1962, p.16).
64. Dorothea Jane Stephen, Outline History of the Christian Church, Madras, 1937, p. 72.
Frederick Schwartz of Brandenburg, a S.P.C.K. missionary. He established a mission at Palayamkottai in 1780. Rev. Schwartz baptized Kohila, a royal Maratha Brahmin widow of Tanjore on 3 March 1778 at Palayamkottai with the converted name Clorinda. Her husband was a Maratha Brahmin and held a position in the Tanjore court. When he died, she was rescued from sati by an English military officer, Henry Lyttleton. He taught the gospel to Clorinda. She knew Marathi, Tamil and English languages. She was the first woman missionary in the Tirunelveli church and is called the mother of the congregation of Tirunelveli. She started a small school in a hut in 1787 at Palayamkottai. She initiated a dialogue between Roman Catholics and the Protestants and was able to solve the misunderstanding between them.

The first church register of Tirunelveli in 1780, contained forty names of converted Christians bearing Clorinda's name first. There were thirteen different castes among the Christians including Brahmins, Pillais, Iluvas, Asaries, Chetties, Maravas and Pallars. Clorinda had a small church constructed at Palayamkottai

65. Rev. Christian Frederick Schwartz arrived in Tranquebar in 1750 under the Danish Mission. In 1767, he became the S.P.C.K. missionary in Tiruchirapalli. He started a mission in Tanjore with three catechists in 1772. Businessmen of Tirunelveli area visited Tiruchirapalli and were converted to Christianity by Rev. C.F. Schwartz. Thus Christianity began to spread in Tirunelveli. He visited Palayamkottai in February, 1778. He mastered over the languages of Tamil, Marathi, Hindustani, Portuguese and Persian. He was sent to Hyder Ali as British Ambassador by the Governor of Madras, Sir Thomas Rumbold. He acted as interpreter between the Madras Government and the Raja Tulaji of Tanjore. He was the guardian of Prince Serfojee of Tanjore and later his Dewan. His missionary labours helped to spread Christianity almost all over South India. When he died on 13 February 1798, Raja Serfojee covered his body with a gold cloth. (Madras Diocesan Record, 1898-1899, pp. 79-80).

in 1785. It became a place of worship both for the English and the Tamil Christians. On 24 August 1785, the new church was dedicated by Rev. Schwartz. It was the first Protestant church in the Palayamkottai area and Sathianathan was appointed as the catechist.  

On 29 December, 1790, Rev. Schwartz ordained Sathianadan to lead the congregation of Tirunelveli. Rev. Schwartz sent David of Kallangudi to Palayamkottai in September 1796 to assist Sathianathan. He did gospel work at Vijayaramapuram, near Sattankulam and Shanmugapuram, near Kadatchapuram. Consequently, forty people accepted Christianity in 1797. The first Christian village in Tirunelveli was formed in 1797 by David. He purchased a piece of land, near Adaial with financial assistance from Captain Everett of the S.P.C.K. in Palayamkottai. Adaial gave shelter to Christians who fled from persecutions. It became the first Christian settlement in the Tirunelveli district and was hence called Mudalur, the first village (1799). Near Mudalur, the Christian settlements of Jerusalem (1802), Bethlehem (1802), Samaria (1803) and Nazareth (1804) were founded.  

The Madras Diocesan records inform that there were 3000 Protestant Christians in Tirunelveli in 1816.  

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71. Madras Diocesan Record, 1890-1892, p.17.
and intersecting at right angles.\textsuperscript{72} Meanwhile the Danish Mission in Tirunelveli ceased to work due to the scarcity of missionaries. It was transferred to the C.M.S. in 1817 mainly through the efforts of Rev. Mr. Hough. He purchased land and erected buildings at Palayamkottai, a station which afterwards became the head-quarters of the C.M.S. Tirunelveli Missions. Protestant Christianity began to spread in the neighbouring district, Kanyakumari also. Within a few years, more than five thousand Nadar Christians accepted the new faith. From 1820, the C.M.S. and the S.P.G. Missions were engaged in upgrading the primitive congregation into a Diocese. By 1831, there were 8,780 Christians, 270 congregations, 120 schools and 150 teacher catechists in Tirunelveli district\textsuperscript{73}.

**Protestant Missions**

Tirunelveli was the garden of Protestant Missions. The missionary societies, S.P.C.K., S.P.G., C.M.S. and the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (C.E.Z.M.S.)\textsuperscript{74} did selfless and devoted work in Tirunelveli for many years.\textsuperscript{75} The Protestant women missionaries served through these missions in Tirunelveli. There were two types of women missionaries, spinsters and the wives of the missionaries. The C.E.Z.M.S. carried on women's work in Madras, Ootacamund, Palayamkottai and in Tirunelveli.\textsuperscript{76} In 1825, the S.P.C.K. handed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} Interview with P. Isaac Jebamani, Retired Headmaster, Palayamkottai, 29 November 2003.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Beth Walpole, *Venture of Faith*, Madras, 1993, pp. 70-76.
\item \textsuperscript{74} C.E.Z.M.S. was organised in 1864 by ladies in England. The women's work in connection with C.M.S. mission was entirely in the hands of C.E.Z.M.S. in Tirunelveli District. (Hugald Grafe, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.IV, Part 2, Bangalore, 1990, p.206).
\item \textsuperscript{75} Report of Tinnevelly Diocesan Council, 1946-1947, p.11.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Proceedings of the C.M.S. for Africa and the East, 1920-21, p.85.
\end{itemize}
over the management of all its Protestant mission stations, Madras, Tanjore, Tiruchirappalli and part of Tirunelveli to the S.P.G. due to the shortage of missionaries. In 1826, the S.P.G. took charge of the S.P.C.K. Mission in India. However, the larger part of the work in Tirunelveli became the field of the Church Missionary Society. 77

For administrative purpose, Tirunelveli mission was divided into S.P.G. and C.M.S. The S.P.G. stations worked on the eastern side of Tirunelveli, while the western part was under C.M.S. The two societies carried on their work in harmony under a Bishop. Occasionally joint conferences of the clergy and laity of both the missions were held. Issues relating to the work of the church were discussed. The missionary stations were divided into Circles which contained three or four pastorates each. Every Circle had its Chairman appointed by the Madras Corresponding Committee. All Circles were under one Council, presided over by the superintending missionary. The Council was convened once in every three months. All matters connected with the congregations and the clergy were brought to the notice of the Bishop of Tirunelveli. 78

The congregations to a large extent managed their own church affairs and supported their own pastors. 79 When the quantum of the work grew, it became difficult for the Bishop to manage the affairs of Tirunelveli from Madras. Hence, two assistant Bishops, Bishop Robert Caldwell for the S.P.G. and Bishop Edward [21x721]

Sargent for the C.M.S. were consecrated at Calcutta in 1877 and sent over to Tirunelveli. However, the working of the Assistant Bishops proved unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{80} Hence the Bishopric of Tirunelveli, Madura and Ramnad was formed in 1896.\textsuperscript{81} The C.E.Z.M.S. was merged with C.M.S. in 1901.\textsuperscript{82} From 1905, a series of dialogues was held among the leaders of both the C.M.S. and S.P.G. missions by Bishop Williams and Bishop Waller until on 11 March 1924 to merge their missionry fields with the Diocese of Tirunelveli.

The merger of C.M.S. and S.P.G. in Tirunelveli paved the way for the Church Union in South India. In April, 1918, the properties of the S.P.G. and the C.M.S. Missions were brought under the direct supervision of the Tirunelveli Diocesan Trust Association. The Tirunelveli Diocese was formed in 1924 by amalgamating S.P.G. and C.M.S. missions.\textsuperscript{83} The new Diocese of Tirunelveli comprised the three districts, Tirunelveli, Ramnad and Madura.\textsuperscript{84} The administrative work of the Diocese was transferred to the Diocesan Church Councils. They were rearranged as North, South and Mid Church Councils. The Diocesan Council and its Standing Committee allocated grants to the institutions.\textsuperscript{85}

The emergence of the Church of South India was through gradual stages. In 1850, missionaries in different parts of India felt that they should meet periodically in conferences in the interest of their common work. Accordingly,

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  \item \textsuperscript{80} Report of Tinnevelly Diocesan Council, 1946-1947, p.10.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} Proceedings of the C.M.S. for Africa and the East, 1948-1949, p.87.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 1902, p. 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 1924, p.48.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Eyre Chaterton, \textit{History of the Church of England in India}, New York, 1924, p.308.
  \item \textsuperscript{85} Diocese of Tinnevelly Constitution, 1949, p.1.
\end{itemize}
Provincial Conferences were held in major cities like Calcutta, Benaras, Ootacamund, Lahore, Allahabad and Madras. In 1888, the Centenary Missionary Conference was held in London. With the spread of western education and the gradual growth of the spirit of self-reliance and independence among various groups of Indian Christians and the improvement in their economic status, the need for united Indian Christian community arose. With this in view, conferences were held by Indian Christians belonging to different missions.\(^86\)

The formation of the South Indian Missionary Association in 1897 led to the missionary conferences in the main political centres of South India like Madras and Bangalore and in the hill stations such as Kodaikanal, Coonoor and Ooty. The South Indian Missionary Conference of 1900 held at Madras brought together 150 missionaries of fortyfive different missionary organizations and a Christian community of 3,50,000.\(^87\) The founding of the Christian Literature Society, the Christian Endeavour Convention, the Young Men Christian Association in 1890, the Student Volunteer Movement of India and Ceylon in 1896, Indian Missionary Society in 1903 and the National Missionary Society in 1904 were instrumental in bringing together the European and the Indian Church leaders of different denominations on a common platform and for a common cause. On 24 July, 1908, the South India United Church (S.I.U.C.) was formally constituted.\(^88\)

The S.I.U.C. was the amalgamation of the American Arcot Mission (A.A.M.), the United Free Church of Scotland Mission (U.F.C.S.M.), the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) which represented Presbyterian and Congregationalist traditions. In December 1927, Indian Anglican Churches got independence from the Church of England which led to the birth of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon. They came under the control of the Metropolitan Bishop of Calcutta. The doctrine and the ecclesiastical organisations were mostly on the model of the Church of England.

In March, 1930, the General Council of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon met at Calcutta, and drafted a constitution for the Church. It recognised the diocese of Tirunelveli as a self-governing body. The various denominations wanted to form an inter-denominational union. Christian denominations in South India like the Anglicans, Methodists and the South India United Church, the combined body of Congregationalists and Presbyterians, expressed their willingness to join the union. These four denominations then came under the name, The Church of South India (C.S.I.) on 27 September, 1947.

The C.S.I. consisted of the Dioceses of Tirunelveli, Madura-Ramnad, Tiruchirappalli, Madras, North Travancore, Central Travancore, South Travancore,

Krishna and Godavari, Mysore, Hyderabad (Medak), Cuddappah and Chittoor, Kurnool and Ananthapur, Dornakal, and Jaffna in Sri Lanka. The inauguration ceremony was held in George's Cathedral, Madras, on 27 September, 1947. The Circles in the districts of Madura and Ramnad were handed over to the Diocese of Madura. Tiruneveli Diocese began to act independently and religious works were carried on more vigorously with foreign aid. The flow of foreign women missionaries to Tirunelveli and the surrounding districts helped transform the traditional society.

In Tirunelveli, Protestant Women Missionaries dedicated themselves to the noble cause of spreading Christianity. They were responsible for the establishment of several educational institutions, churches and hospitals. Their aims were to impart female education, uplift the women, give medical assistance and carryout welfare schemes. They fought and worked for the eradication of existing social evils like sati, slavery, devadasi system, child marriage, female infanticide, untouchability and superstitions. They settled in different parts of Tirunelveli, especially in Palayamkottai, Megnanapuram, Idaiyangudi, Nazareth, Dohnavur and Tuticorin. Their selfless and voluntary services led to a cultural renaissance in Tirunelveli Diocese.

Importance of the topic

The enthusiasm displayed by the women missionaries in the development of Tirunelveli Diocese and the transformation of the traditional society is significant. Their efforts have left a lasting impact on the region.

of female education is really praiseworthy. Women missionaries and the wives of the missionaries opened schools for girls in their residences. They were the pioneers of women's education in modern India. After 1840, the number of schools grew. Not only schools were established at the head of the mission stations, but great effort was made to establish and develop schools in villages. As a result, women all over Tirunelveli district became aware of the benefits of education and grew more and more eager to send their girls to the schools run by the mission.

In the girls' schools, the women missionaries trained the children in knitting, stitching, embroidery and lace making. This enabled the girls to earn their bread in the future. Since the children of the schools were given free medical treatment when they fell ill, caste Hindu parents sent their children to the school without any hesitation. Introduction of female education brought about a great change in the habits and appearance of the women. In order to attract more and more non-Christian girls, the missionaries appointed lady teachers in the schools. The educated women began to question the gross abuses prevailing in the society. They also opposed the oppressive customs, practices and regulations that existed in the society and fought against them vigorously.

The pioneering services rendered by the women missionaries through Christian hospitals, dispensaries and health care centres were widely recognised by the government and the public. The network of hospitals and dispensaries started by the women missionaries became a boon to the people affected with different diseases. They checked the onslaught of epidemics and contagious
diseases. The women missionaries not only treated the diseases with medicines but also taught and trained the people to detect diseases early and undergo treatment in the beginning itself.

Education of the public on matters relating to nutrition formed one of the major functions of the women missionaries. Implementation of slum cleaners schemes gave an impetus to the programme of environmental hygiene. In the beginning as the natives considered nursing as a mean and disgraceful profession, the women missionaries took efforts to bring trained nurses and dressers from Europe. Later, the native women were trained as nurses and dressers. The nursing service became more efficient and effective. Maternal and child health service were provided by the lady missionaries with the assistance of maternity assistants. The women missionaries also started leprosy asylums to shelter the many wandering lepers in Tirunelveli district. Curative and preventive measures were also organised.

Multifarious rural schemes were launched by women missionaries. They were aimed at bringing relief to the poverty stricken rural women of Tirunelveli district. The women missionaries patronised lace making and embroidery industries thus enabling many women of the poor communities to earn their daily bread. Adult education centres were established in rural areas and women were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. Nights schools were conducted for working women. Summer schools were organized during summer holidays to give instruction in general knowledge, spoken English, handicrafts, gardening and scouting.
The awareness education imparted to women encouraged rational thinking in them. As a part of the awareness education, seeds, seedlings and saplings were distributed among the villagers for planting and nurturing. There were summer camps, seminars and public meetings in villages to propagate rural sanitation, hygiene, water supplies, family welfare, child development and health talks. Healthy baby competitions were conducted in rural areas. To solve the drinking water problem, wells were dug and tanks were repaired with foreign aid. Besides digging wells, they also cleaned and chlorinated, deepened and repaired the existing ones.

To promote a healthy spirit, sports and games were organised. It encouraged a number of young women to take an active part in sports, games and arts. This developed in them a leadership quality. The women missionaries started libraries and reading rooms in the school premises and the villages and supplied them with newspapers, magazines and valuable books. Apart from helping the villagers to acquire basic education and general knowledge such facilities also made them utilise their leisure time usefully. Women missionaries themselves wrote books, pamphlets and articles for the benefits of the women.

Another major impact of the missionary work was the liberation of women from different forms of bondage. Child marriage was discouraged and widow remarriage was encouraged. The missionaries were very critical of polygamy, female infanticide and the devadasi system. They also urged the government to
prohibit these social evils. They did social work among women, poor children and unwanted children. Women missionaries actively supported the movement to abolish the institution of devadasis. In this regard, the work done by the Dohnavur Fellowship under Amy Carmichael deserves special mention.

The Zenana mission was a constituent of the Protestant missions. Its work was undertaken by the lady missionaries primarily to reach the womenfolk of the non-Christian families and to teach them reading and writing. The women missionaries did yeomen service to the blind, deaf and dumb also. They felt such compassion for those handicapped that they wanted them to lead a decent normal life like other citizens through general education and vocational training. Special aids, maps and instruments were prepared to facilitate their proper training. Books were supplied to develop the reading habit.

Review of Literature

A series of general studies have been undertaken on the missions and missionaries of Tirunelveli. But so far, no serious evaluation has been made of the contributions of the women missionaries from 1800 to 1947. It would be an act of gross injustice if proper light is not thrown on the service and sacrifice of these gentle English women who made it their lives' business to help the downtrodden women in the area. Hence a comprehensive and critical study is not only in the fitness of things, but also putting things in the right perspective. In this study, an attempt is made to highlight the social service activities of the
Protestant women missionaries. The different aspects are examined and discussed keeping historical objectivity in view. The period under study was one of historical importance, because Tirunelveli district had been then witnessing tremendous changes in the social, economical, medical and educational spheres. The missionaries concentrated their attention on Palayamkottai which has a cluster of Christian educational and social service institutions.

Further, the period between 1800-1947 saw a full fledged progress in Christian literature. Both English and vernacular literatures grew by the efforts of missionaries and laymen of Tirunelveli. Rhenius, the first C.M.S. Missionary wrote more than twenty books in Tamil on various subjects such as History, Geography, Logic, Tamil Grammar, Evidence of Christianiry, Spiritual Instruction and also devotional books. Some of his important books are, *A Treatise on Idolatry, A Short History of Mankind and Suvisesha Samarasam*. In 1820 he compiled many pamphlets and one of them is entitled, *The Essence of True Vedam*.

Robert Caldwell’s monumental works, *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, A History of Tirunelveli, History of Tirunelveli Mission, The Spiritual Temple, Dyanamalai* shed light on the proposed subject. Vedanayagam Sastriar’s *Bethlehem Kuravanji*, Henry Alfred Krishna Pillai’s *Ratchanya Yatrigam*, Dewan Bahadur A.S. Appasamy’s *Fifty years Pilgrimage of a Convert* and Bishop V.S. Azariah’s *India and Missions* were some of the other notable laymen books contain sporadic information about the missionary work in Tirunelveli.
Amy Carmichael's books, *Lotus Buds and Things as They Are* reveal the fact that the *devadasi* system had existed in the Tirunelveli district and explains the rescue of the victims of this system. Her another book, *Overweights of Joy* supplemented the facts stated in *Things as They Are*. *Missions in South India* by Joseph Muller, *A History of Missions in India* by Julius Richter and Pettitt George's, *The Tinnevelly Mission of the Church Missionary Society* contain references to the origin of the Protestant Missions in Tirunelveli district.

Nora Brockway’s, *A Larger Way for Women*, Harriett Warner Ellis’s *Our Eastern Sisters and Their Missionary Helpers*, Edward Jonathan’s *Miss. Anne Jane Askwith* furnish details about the history of women missionaries in general. Caldwell’s *Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions*, Christudas’s *History of Tinnevelly Diocese*, Frank Houghton’s *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur*, Gorden Hewitt’s *The Problems of Success*, Western’s *The Early History of the Tinnevelly Church* and Henry Packianathan’s *Bicentenary History of the Tinnevelly Church* provide a lot of information about women education, the position of women in Tirunelveli district and the contributions of women missionaries for the improvement of their status in society. The Rural Work Committee of Tirunelveli diocese published booklets on *Rural Work, Village Service* and *National Service* speak of the missionary activities. The C.M.S. and S.P.G. published magazines, *The Church Missionary Review, The Intelligencer, Gleaner, Mission Field, The Harvest Field in English and Narpothagam* (1849) and *Siluvaikodi* (1882) in Tamil contain a few references to the works and spiritual life of the people of Tirunelveli.
The following questions form the hypothesis in this study. What were the religious and political conditions of the people of Tirunelveli district in the 18th and 19th centuries? What was the attitude of the Protestant Women Missionaries towards the native people and what were the measures taken by them for the empowerment of the women of Tirunelveli? To what extent did the natives respond to the technical and non-technical institutions started by the women missionaries.

Sources of Information

The study on the Service of the Protestant Women Missionaries in Tirunelveli, 1800-1947 is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are mostly found in the C.M.S., S.P.G. and S.P.C.K. records. Further, Madras Diocesan Records and Annual Reports of Tiruneveli Diocesan Council have been highly useful in writing this thesis. These records are kept in the United Theological College Library, Bangalore and Bishop Stephen Neill Ecumenical Study and Research Centre of the Tirunelveli Diocese at Palayamkottai. The reports of the Tirunelveli Diocesan Council provide much information about the growth of various institutions in the Diocese. The Constitution of the Diocesan Administration is an immensely valuable source of information on the Diocesan administration. Also, the C.M.S. Sarah Tucker Institution Annual Reports provide the much needed information about the Sarah Tucker Institutions which were established and administered by the women missionaries.
Annual Reports of the Florence Swainson Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai contain a fund of information about the social service rendered by women missionaries. Manuscripts written by Florence Swainson about the Deaf and Dumb School at Palayamkottai, Memorium of Royds and the works of Amy Carmichael, Rehnius, Robert Caldwell, Rev. Thomas bear witness to many events. They help with the correct chronology of events and trace the history of women missionaries and their social activities. Personal interviews with some personalities have been of great value in arriving at certain important conclusions. The tablets found in the Holy Trinity Church, Idaiyengudi and St. John’s school, Nazareth provide first hand information about Mrs. Eliza Caldwell and Mrs. Anne Cammerer, who were the pillars of social service in Tirunelveli district.

Secondary sources are used substantially to corroborate the data supplied by primary sources. They include contemporary and semi contemporary writings in the form of published books, newspaper reports and periodicals. The veracity of the sources are tested through cross-examination. The sources are analysed both intensively and exhaustively so as to eliminate the chances of bias. The published works of different authors furnished much information. H.R. Pate’s *Tinnevelly Gazetter* and R. Caldwell’s *A History of Tinnevelly* contain sporadic information about the Christian Mission activities. D.A. Christudas’ *History of Christianity in India* (Part II), J.A. Sharrock’s *South Indian Missions* and D.S. George Muller’s *Portrait of a Diocese* were utilised to reconstruct the early history of the Diocese of Tirunelveli. *United to Unite*, edited by
Rt. Rev. Dr. J.W. Gladstone furnishes requisite information about the various formations of the Church of South India.

**Our Eastern Sisters and their Missionary Helpers** by Harriett Warner Ellias and V. Titus Varghese, **Glimpses of the History of the Christian Churches in India** by P. Philips, **The Problems of Success - A History of the Church Missionary Society** by Gorden Hewitt, **An Outline of Missions** by John Aberly, **Churches in India** by P. Thomas, **History of Christianity in India**, Vol. IV by Hugald Grafe and **History of Christianity in India**, Vol. II by Joseph Thekkedath, **Reminiscences of Bishop Caldwell** by R. Caldwell, **History of the Church Missionary Society**, Vol. III and IV by Eugene Stock, **The Centenary History of the C.M.S. in Tinnevelly** by Paul Appasamy, **Two Hundred years of the S.P.G. 1701-1900** by C.F. Pascoe, **Year Book of Missions in India, 1912** by J.P. Jone’s and **Historical Sketches-Diocese of Tinnevelly and Madura** published by S.P.G. helped the researcher to trace the social welfare measures and medical services of the women missionaries. They also throw much light on the religious, social, economic and political conditions of the people of Tirunelveli district in general.

The Missionary magazines, **The Harvest Field, The Mission Field, Church Missionary Review, The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Gleaner** have also been of great help. **The Bicentenary Souvenirs, Centenary Souvenirs, Diamond Jubilee Souvenirs** published by various Churches, Schools, Colleges and Hospitals of Tirunelveli district contain references to the
missionaries and growth of educational institutions. To make the study more fruitful, oral sources and interviews with the laymen are added.

**Methodology**

The present study is an attempt to analyse in depth the work of the Protestant women missionaries to uplift to the poor and the needy. The research method employed in organising the present study is historical descriptive method, an orderly and relevant narration of events, description of women missionaries and their contribution based on relevant data. A study of mission documents and primary sources is made. In this work, an attempt is also made to analyse how far the work of the Protestant women missionaries was helpful to the poor. Caution has been applied for an assessment of distorted statements and exaggerated accounts of missionaries and writers of the age. However, through the application of criticism, the evidences and corroboration of facts, it has been found possible to reconstruct the history of the service of the Protestant Women missionaries in Tirunelveli district from 1800-1947 A.D.

**Organisation of the thesis**

The thesis is designed into five chapters besides an introduction and a conclusion. Attempt is made in the **Introduction** to trace the importance of missionary service and outline the hypothesis of the study in its proper historical perspective. Proper attention is focused on the background of the Tirunelveli diocese and its people. The introduction also includes an analysis of the source material for the present study.
The educational system of any country mirrors its culture and traditions. Lack of independent thinking and proper reasoning, caste discriminations, mass illiteracy, denial of access to education and social and intellectual backwardness of the people and dominance of religion resulted in the decay of female education in Tirunelveli district. In the 19th century, female education developed gradually through the efforts of the Christian Missions. The Protestant Women Missionaries rendered very valuable service to the development of female education by establishing a network of elementary schools. They taught the pupils to read, write and arithmetic in the primary schools. They believed that the study of western science and literature through English would remove the ignorance and the superstitious beliefs that held the women in a vicious grip. It would inevitably weaken the people's faith in Hinduism, paving the way for easy conversions. These factors are discussed in the first chapter on Contribution To Basic Education.

Tirunelveli district had an organised system of women's education due to the untiring efforts of the missionary women. Schools for all levels of education had been established and an ever increasing members of girls from all sections of society attended them. The girls in the Mission schools were fed and clothed, partly by the Mission and partly by other means. The Hindu children and Mahommedan pupils were instructed in the vernacular. The women Missionaries founded colleges too to bring about a socio-cultural change. In addition, Girls boarding schools were also started for those who came from distant places. Sarah
Tucker College for Women provided higher education to the girls of Tirunelveli district. It is the first college for women in the Madras Presidency. It nurtured women's welfare and provided space for them to develop their educational potentials. Girls who passed out of these institutions could occupy very good positions in life. More important, they in turn worked for the uplift of downtrodden women. These facts are discussed under the chapter Higher Education.

The third chapter Medical Services is devoted to the medical work of the missionaries. Medical relief was one of the functions of the women Missionaries. It was conceived by the early S.P.G. missionaries in Tirunelveli. Sawyerpuram was chosen as the venue for the first experiment in 'Medical Evangelism'. When contagious diseases were ravaging the countryside, the native people had no proper medical help. They relied on the native physicians called the vaithyans for relief. In some cases, they sought the assistance of devil dancers and a group of sorcerers called manthravadhis to get cured of dreadful diseases. The vaithyans treated the sick with medical herbs. However, these native physicians could not find remedy for all diseases. Hence, missionary work in the health sector was most welcome beneficial.

The fourth chapter Rural Reconstruction describes and analyses the rural reconstruction service undertaken in Tirunelveli district and the uplift of the social and the economic position of women. The Rural Work Committee was mainly responsible for the Rural Reconstruction in Tinnevelly district. The
committee trained the rural workers. The Mothers' Union formed in 1847 also did splendid work. It conducted a Summer School for rural workers. The Diocese met the expenditure regarding the rural relief works and the night school. Foreign Christian Missions rendered yeomen service in times of famine and drought. The famine-relief measures were carried out on a large scale in all rural areas. At first the Diocese chose the most affected areas for relief work. The Government of India and the Government of Madras co-operated in the relief work of the Diocese. The Diocese introduced rural uplift programmes to improve the condition of the people in the villages.

Tirunelveli Children's Mission did splendid work among the children. The mission members visited the Christian villages and encouraged the parents and teachers. Examinations were also held under the auspices of the mission on the Bible lessons read during the year and prizes were distributed. The women missionaries started lace and embroidery industries in different places of Tirunelveli District. It provided employment to numerous native women especially the widows. This made them self-reliant and independent. The Rural Work Standing Committee paid more attention to cottage industries.

The chapter on Crusade Against the Social Evils is devoted exclusively to explain the activities of the women missionaries and their relentless fight against the social evils. The women missionaries spared no effort in their service for the welfare and benefit of the veiled women especially the purdah wearing women. Zenana homes were established under the auspices of C.E.Z.M.S. Most
of the occupants of these homes were the Hindu and Muslim women who were in constant subjugation. They were taught to read the Bible, sing songs and to develop and mould good character. It is from these homes, Bible Women were produced and the propagation of gospel gained momentum. This resulted in a large scale conversion. The main contribution of the Zenana women was the eradication of superstitions. The women missionaries worked for the abolition of social evils like child marriage, slavery, caste system and devadasi system. Miss Amy Carmichael and her associates redeemed the girls who had been offered to the temples as devadasis.

The sixth chapter Welfare measures for the Physically Handicapped explains the welfare measures by the women missionaries for the handicapped in Tirunelveli. The Tirunelveli church did pioneering work in the care and education of the handicapped children. The school for the blind was established in 1890 by Miss. Askwith at Palayamkottai. Blind children of both sexes between the ages of four and ten were admitted. Adult blind were also admitted in exceptional cases. As the blind were ordinarily drawn from poor homes all their needs, including food and clothing were to be met by the school. General education was imparted upto VIII Standard. The syllabus was the same as that prescribed for normal children. A variety of teaching aids and instruments were employed to teach the blind. After the completion of the prescribed period of general education, they were given vocational training. A deaf school was started.
for the deaf and dumb children at Palayamkottai by Florence Swainson in 1887. All were given free tuition and most of the pupils were given free boarding. Oral method of instruction was followed in the school. The crafts like carpentry, book-binding, printing, tailoring, spinning, making of mats and coir brooms were taught to them.

The researcher's observations, findings and evaluation of how the social welfare measures adopted by the women missionaries helped accelerate the progress of women in Tirunelveli district are discussed in the Conclusion of the study.