CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Education is the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Given a fair opportunity in education, women can significantly lift a nation out of difficulty and hardship through their important societal roles. In ancient India, the traditions of society and the nation were preserved in schools. Rig Veda says that education is something which makes man self-reliant and selfless; Upanishad mentioned that education is for liberation. Man’s ego has generally adopted a biased view of the education of women. It is because of this that the nature of feminine education differs from that of masculine education. Consequently, girls were educated at home, despite which the name of such woman scholar Andal, who composed Tiruppavai Tiruvenba belongs to Srivilliputtur in Tirunelveli District. The place assigned to women in the educational system of ancient periods was very limited and restricted. This study reveals that in the pyal schools, low caste people as well as girls were not admitted. Education of a Muslim child would start on a particular day. There was, besides, a school of the domestic type. Although women’s education was restricted due to purdah system, yet there is no doubt that young girls were taught in the schools. Girls of higher classes received education in their own houses from learned ladies or old men who served as private tutors. Women’s education was hampered because of the practice of child marriage which was widely prevalent both in the Hindu and Muslim families. On the whole during the medieval period, education of women was not significant.
The advent of British in India led to the introduction of western education and replaced traditional religious oriented education to suit the needs of the people in those days. Tirunelveli district, which was one of the 21st districts of Madras Presidency where education was most advanced was acquired by the East India Company in 1801 after the Poligar uprisings. In this district the efforts of missionaries towards women’s education met with complete success. Thomas Munroe’s Report of 1822 stated that only 117 girls were educated in the district of Tirunelveli. In order to encourage women’s education the missions schools had introduced some **unique feature** than the existing indigenous schools viz., clear-cut class system, wider curriculum including subjects like grammar, history, geography, religious instruction, teaching mother-tongue, English language, introduction of printed text books, regular school-hours; female normal school, holiday on Sundays, and to provide employment opportunity to old students. They openly criticized the evils of early marriage, polygamy, dowry, female infanticide, temple dancing, seclusion of women and their colossal illiteracy, which gave a new impetus to the women’s education.

In 1816 Bishop Middleton, visited Tirunelveli district and found out that there was one Christian school in Clarinda’s Church with 41 children. Subsequently, two schools established by Rev. James Hough imparted education to the natives **without the government’s pecuniary aid.** The students of these schools have secured **employment after receiving education.** In order to receive the gifts, the parents demanded for Girls Boarding schools, as the natives realized that these schools could afford safety and seclusion from age old tradition, free from social bondage, and eliminates the difficulties of girls to attend a school irrespective of distance. The missionaries’ intention was to provide suitable wives for pastors, teachers and boarding school boys.
The first Girl’s School which was started by the Christian Missionaries became the First High School for Indian girls to be recognized by the Madras Department of Public Instruction. The Missionaries also started “Pengal Viduthi Palli” or Girls’ Boarding School to fulfill the demand of the people of Tirunelveli district and provided free education, meals, clothing and gifts on the occasion of Christmas to boarders. To meet their educational and marriage expenditure, the girls were sent to school. The schools headed by schoolmasters were called as Schoolmasters' School and the schools headed by catechists were called as Catechists' Schools. Rev. Rhenius and his wife established about 400 schools exclusively for Christian girls within 18 years of service. Economic reasons and low enrollment of girls drove the missionaries to enroll a few numbers of girls in the boys village schools because of the establishment of co-educational schools. Parents would prefer village co-educational school located within the vicinity to save money, time and labour rather than far away girl’s school. For instance, the Elliot Tuxford girl’s school had the unique privilege of having electricity as early as 1930. There were 796 girls studied in the school which included 181 boarders in 1945. Till 1833, the missionaries mainly concentrated on establishing elementary schools, teaching through vernacular languages. New school inspectors were appointed. Rev. William Miller, the Inspector of Schools had recommended leniency to girls who studied in primary village schools to learn “the three R’s” i.e. reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The increasing number of schools and students during World War II proved that the natives realized the necessity of education. The Government had introduced fee system to limit the application for grants-in-aid to schools. The girls’ were exempted to pay fees and receive stipends, especially those who were in girls’ schools, and the senior department of the Normal School. For encouraging female education Rev. Pope strictly advised the parents to enroll their daughters in the
school like their son. In Tamil School, all students in all classes had paid 4 annas [1 anna is 6 paise] per month. Gradually few girls were also admitted in primary boy’s schools and the strength of the schools increased in North Tirunelveli. Hence, fee system no way affected the strength of the schools. Richard, the then Inspector of Schools, was very much impressed by the activities of the Girls’ Boarding School in Tirunelveli.

By the last decade of the East India Company’s reign, (1851) there were 217 Girls’ Day Schools and 39 Girls’ Boarding Schools in Madras Presidency under the control of Protestant Mission. Out of 7,878 educated girls in Madras Presidency, 3,275 were girls i.e. about 50 per cent of girls from Tirunelveli district, which was a remarkable development in the history of women’s education. 3,835 boys and 1,349 girls received education from S.P.G. schools in 1852. The missions release lot of fund towards running schools in Tirunelveli district. In 1853, there were 870 schools in Tirunelveli district. Among them 229 were mission schools and 641 were indigenous schools.

Due to the educational effort of Thomas Munroe, East India Company introduced and established a Collectorate School and two Tahsildary Schools in Tirunelveli district. There was thus roughly one school for every 30 of the population in Tirunelveli district. The introduction of English education proved a serious obstacle in the education of girls till 1868. Since the emergence of Educational department competition arose between the mission schools and departmental schools, which led to the closure of indigenous schools. The newly created departments of education paid special attention to open girls’ schools and appointed women Inspectresses. The instruction given at girl’s school was similar to that of the boys’ schools; but the standards were in some respects lower than that of boys’ schools and special subjects like household accounts, domestic economy and needle works were introduced. The proportion of girls to boys studied in school was
being the highest in Madras, and lowest in the United Provinces. Charles Wood’s was of the opinion on women’s education that education of women had made satisfactory progress though schools were under the control of missionary or private management, and recognized aided schools were inspected by the Government. But the Government allowed teaching the Bible after school hours. Some mission schools replaced the traditional school books by that of the Bible. In 1856, for the first time, several Christian schools were opened in North Tirunelveli. In these schools, girls were only 10 to 20 per cent of the total strength of the schools in North Tirunelveli. Girls at schools in South Tirunelveli was far ahead than North Tirunelveli. However, when a higher caste boy took baptism in South Tirunelveli because for the bulk of pupils withdraw from the Mission Schools all over the District. In order to retain the strength of the school, the missionaries imported milk powder to attract the pupils to mission schools and succeed in their efforts.

The Education Commission Report was reviewed by Rev. Vincent W. Harcourt, the then Principal of Sarah Tucker Female Normal School, regarding Women’s Education in Tirunelveli district. Based on the observation there were 5 Boarding schools and about 55 to 60 girls schools under his control. As per the Indian Education Commission Report of 1881, there was no government girls’ school in Tirunelveli district till 1885. Thus, the Missionaries monopolized women’s educational institutions in Tirunelveli District. Rev. Harcourt, the Principal of Sarah Tucker Institutions and Mrs. Kearn, the missionary and Manager of Schools in North Tirunelveli suggested the Government to release grant for Girl’s schools and expected the Government to give scholarships to school master during training period.

The Christian Missionaries started Co-education or mixed schools in the primary school levels and maintained quality of education than the indigenous schools. The anxiety of the natives to get quality education with the help of
missionaries by using their text books paved the way for admitting their daughters to mission schools. It also allowed the missionaries to visit their school and became the managers of these schools. Due to the rigidity of caste system, the Christian Missionaries were forced to start schools near Agraharam to admit Hindu Brahmin girls in these schools and break the rigidity.

Roman Catholic Missionaries also started schools exclusively for girls and granted recognition by the Education Department as a Secondary School with permission to open Form II and III in 1923. There were 53 Primary schools and 5 Middle schools started by Roman Catholic Missionaries prior to Independence. At present, these schools are being run as co-educational institutions in rural areas. From 1926 to 1935, only 5 schools were started. From 1944 to 1946 no school was started by the Roman Catholic missionaries. After World War II, the Roman Catholic Missionaries again started schools and imparted education to women.

The Madras Elementary Education Act of 1920 introduced many policies regarding the development of Elementary Education in Madras Presidency. District Educational Councils were created in Madras. The principal functions were: extension of elementary education with the co-operation of all agencies, opening of additional schools, expansion of existing schools; regulate the recognition of all elementary schools and to assess and disburse all grants-in-aid from provincial funds to private elementary schools. A large numbers of elementary schools opened under Village Panchayats were subsidized by the Government directly. All primary schools were inspected by the school inspectors of the Education Department. Indigenous schools were developed and made eligible for aid and the new aided schools were also started. Local bodies took steps to start school of their own where an aided school was not possible. For instance, Tuticorin Municipality sanctioned 1/11 of its total income for maintaining Elementary Schools and Adult Education Schools.
Richard, the then School Inspector on Elementary Education reported that the schools in Tirunelveli districts were fairly equipped well than other districts and run schools on its own buildings and a few were in rented building. Some school teachers served as School Masters as well as branch Postmasters. The number of aided schools, received the “Result grants” from the Tuticorin Municipality during 1892-1893 was the highest. In 1910 the First Municipal Girls’ School was opened (1910), the “Panchama School” was converted into a free school (1914) for all communities including the Adi-dravidas, who were entitled for admission in all public schools. The Schools started before the advent of the missionaries by the local bodies were in favour of giving admission on the basis of community, religion and gender. But after the establishment of the Mission Schools, admission is based on irrespective of community, religion and gender. In order to staff the Municipal schools with qualified teachers, elementary schools were converted into Basic Training Schools. In these schools, the teachers were paid a stipend of Rs. 18 per month in addition to their pay as school teachers. Ex-officio President was appointed as the Senior Deputy Inspector of Schools in Tirunelveli Range and the ex-officio Secretary was the Educational Supervisor of the Municipal schools.

The history of Higher Education for women in Tirunelveli District had its inception in 1820 itself. Mission schools run exclusively to educate low caste women and trained them economically self reliant. The government report (1856-57) stated that there were 273 Government Aided Schools and no Government girl’s school until about 1881 in Tirunelveli District. A large number of village schools for Hindu and Muslim girls throughout the district and these schools introduced new employment scheme. The appointment of women teachers paved the way for further development. Tirunelveli district had 3 Colleges, i.e. two first grade and one second grade and 4 high schools and hundreds of Primary School for
boys and girls. *One College, two High Schools, and a Secondary Grade Training School were set up exclusively for girls.*

The Missionaries re-established the first Girl’s school upgraded the Normal Elementary School to a High School, local educated Indian was appointed as the Headmaster. The first batch of seven girls was appeared for the Matriculation Examination in the Madras Presidency. In 1908, the Director of Public Instruction on seeing the tremendous growth and the high standard of the school upgraded it as a Government recognized Middle School in 1909 and upgraded it again as High School in 1930. This school became the First High School for Women in South India. This school was upgraded as a Higher Secondary School on 1 July 1978 and grows from strength to strength as a citadel of learning till date.

There was a demand for well qualified trained teachers in government and private schools throughout the Madras Presidency. Tirunelveli Missionaries were in particular to give job opportunity for the trained girls from the portal of Sarah Tucker Training School, since, women were highly motivated to become teachers. There was change in almost all Mission schools according to the requirements of the local public and with the approval of Government of Madras. For instance a school started as a Lower Grade Teacher Training School as a part of Girl’s Boarding School upgraded to the Upper Secondary or Matriculation Standard, Model Middle School. Then it was upgraded as a High School. From 1943 onwards the training school was administered by women alone. Until 1953 the Teacher Training School remained as Higher Grade Training Institute. From 1956 onwards it had been upgraded to Secondary Grade Teacher Training School. In 1973 the Basic Education system was removed from the teacher training schools and the training schools were known as ‘Teacher Training Institutes.’ The certificates which were issued as TSLC (*Training School Leaving Certificate*) were changed as Diploma in Teacher Education. This institution promotes Diploma in Teacher
Education in this district even today. Even today this school was raised to the status of a Higher Secondary School in July 1978. Hence, the mission schools changed its roll depending upon the local needs. The growth of Higher Education in Non-European schools slightly increased even at the outbreak of First World War. Since Women’s education gained more importance, the parents sent their daughters to schools in Tirunelveli district without considering the threat of World War I.

There were two girls institution which promoted High School education for women approved by the Government till 1907-08 in Tirunelveli District. The number of scholarships awarded by the Government was doubled in respect of those tenable in Colleges, Secondary schools and Higher Elementary Schools. The Tirunelveli Diocese of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon maintained 44 higher elementary schools and 5 middle schools, of which 14 were for boys and 25 were for girls and only 10 were ‘mixed’ schools. The number of girls’ schools exceeded the boy’s schools. Some schools were amalgamating the existing boys’ schools with the girls’ schools or admitted boys in the girls’ school and vice versa due to low strength or financial constrains.

The Board conducted a Public Examination for pupils at the end of their Secondary School Course and awarded school-leaving certificates in accordance with a scheme approved by the Government since March 1911. The curricula for girl’s schools follow the curricula which was in use for boys schools. Every teacher working in a school under private management must possess a teacher’s license issued by the Education Department. As per the Report on Public Instruction of 1926-27, Government permitted higher elementary grade trained teachers, with a minimum service of three years in recognized schools, to appear as private candidates for the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Public Examinations after passing the Training School Leaving Certificate Examination.
The researcher after the careful examination of the development of women’s education in Tirunelveli District opines that the Higher Educational Institutions were many under C.S.I. Tirunelveli Diocese in 1947. There were 110 Girls in Colleges, 289 women in three Teacher Training Schools, 473 Girls in three Special Schools, 22,503 girls in Middle and Primary Schools. Compared with the boys, more girls were studying in Teacher Training Schools and in Special Schools in 1947. There was no Government Higher Educational Institution for Women in Tirunelveli district till 1947. Moreover, the C.M.S. missionaries, who were the monopolizes of women’s education in Tirunelveli district, established hundreds of primary schools fabricated with high schools, one Women’s College and Teacher Training Schools. The Missionaries were the innovators as well as the policy makers for the welfare of women and teachers in this district.

The Mission Industrial Schools were founded long before the Government of Madras started such school. But these schools found it difficult to get a teacher to teach the girls and the women who were admitted. The lace made at these schools had a wide reputation. With the help of designers, there were 36 variety of lace product knitted by the women of this school. The missionaries regulated the working hours to motivate the women to involve in industrial school activities. They reduced the working hours for 5 to 6 hours a day for school children, and allowed the temporary workers to work only once in a week in the industrial school. Gradually the enrollment of women increased in this school and gave employment to many Christian women and girls. Idayankudi Lace Industry School was awarded with a Gold Medal by Madras Industrial Exhibition.

Art and Industrial School, Nazareth provided Vocational Training for boys and girls. Nazareth Art School won a prize with 2 certificates. The Inspector of Schools, the Director of Public Instruction, the Collector and District Magistrate, Mr. J.B. Pennington appreciated the work of this industrial school. Drawing,
Tailoring, Weaving, Lace Making and Embroidery were taught for the industrial school girls. They also weaved clothes for the resident Europeans, natives, and also for all the 350 orphan children in the Boarding Schools and Industrial School. A carpet made in the School was sold to Lady Wellington. As per the report on Public Instruction (1927-28) many changes were introduced to regularize aided Industrial schools in Madras Presidency. Palamcottah Blind Schools and Deaf Schools also introduced Industrial section and established a market at Kodaikanal. The school was aided by the Government and also by the District Boards. Wyatt and Isabella established a Girl’s Boarding School with combined lace-making industrial class with the voluntary support of old student of Tirunelveli industrial school. The Home provided the needy children with basic necessities: food, clothing, shelter, education, school uniforms and medical care. The school provided them with midday meals and afternoon milk. At present, the subjects taught in these schools were music, fine arts, drawing and sewing. The Roman Catholic missionaries also started two Industrial Schools, one at Palamcottah, which had only sales counter without any industrial school. The products made at the School were sold at Exhibitions or to different Catholic schools for prize-giving. The girl students were taught dress-making and needle work.

The Christian Missionaries gave an opportunity only to the orthopedically handicapped in ordinary schools. But the disabled like blind and deaf-mute were incapable of getting education in ordinary schools. Tirunelveli District is the pioneer district in special school educational activities not only in Madras Presidency but also in the entire South India. The First School for the blind in India was established at Amritsar in 1887. The First School for Blind Boys and Girls in Madras Presidency was established at Palamcottah in 1890. The Palamcottah Sarah Tucker Educational Institutions Annual Report (1890) stated that the first blind student Subbu was the first teacher of this school. During this period, the blind
school was divided into two, one for boys and another for girls. Both schools had separate educational section and industrial sections. The establishment of the school for blind was a milestone in the history of special schools in the Madras Presidency and in South India. Annie Jane Asqwith was instrumental in giving opportunity to the educated blinds to serve in the blind schools. Accordingly seven educated blinds were appointed as teachers of Pannaivilai School in 1895. All the seven were the alumnae of Palamcottah Blind School.

Between 1890 and 1895, number of Schools increased from 2 to 3 in Tirunelveli, two for boys and one for girls. The year 1908 was an eventful year in the history of Palamcottah Blind Schools because they purchased an area of twelve acres of land for the schools. In 1909 the new home was opened by T.T. Moordugh, I.C.S. the then Tirunelveli District Collector. Later on the Pannaivilai Blind School was amalgamated with Palamcottah Blind School for administrative convenience. Based on the recommendation, the management of Palamcottah Blind Schools made a request to the Government for financial aid. As a result, the industrial section of Palamcottah Blind Schools became a separate department. In order to solve inconvenience to the blind students, the Government took steps to establish a new school at Northern part of Madras Presidency. Meanwhile an American Evangelical Missionary started a Blind School at Rentachintala. As a result the Government gave up its idea of starting a school at Madras.

Accordingly the Government sent 18 blind soldiers to the Palamcottah Blind Schools for rehabilitation with the permission of the Principal Miss. Annie Jane Asqwith, the then Manager of Blind Schools. Looms purchased for rehabilitation centre and built shed for soldiers to stay with the fund sanctioned by the Government. Following that in 1917 the school management opened a hospital inside the school campus for the sick blinds. The Church Mission Society established a special section for the Trained Teachers in addition to Palamcottah
Blind Schools in 1918. In 1919, there were 5 schools for disabled children all over Madras Presidency. Yet there was no other school to provide Special School Teacher’s Training for the teachers of disabled children and these school was upgraded as Middle School and introduced Integrated Education System. The Blind students completed VIII Standard and then integrated with normal children at Sarah Tucker Girls High School. Annie Jane Asqwith, the founder of Blind Schools, came under the management of Diocese of Tirunelveli as T.D.T.A. Schools for the Blind. The Government introduced a revised syllabus for all Blind Schools in 1929. Moreover the Government forced to adopt the similar syllabus of Normal Industrial School in the industrial section of blind schools. Missionaries took effort to explain the inability of Blind and Deaf children in written examination. But at the same time blind and deaf children were very capable in practical work like normal children. When the government refused to accept the suggestions, the management took firm decision to conducted examinations and issue Industrial School Certificate to students. In 1929 the Palamcottah Blind Schools attempted to translate printing articles into Braille Code for general reading. The school began to use the New Braille Codes in June 1948. Between 1890 -1947 there were 8 blind schools in Madras Presidency. In 1961, the Palamcottah Boy’s and Girl’s schools were amalgamated into one for the sake of administrative convenience. The remaining blind schools were closed before Independence.

At the time of the establishment of Palamcottah deaf mute school, only 2 schools existed in India, one in Bombay and another one in Calcutta. The Palamcottah deaf school was established for a Blind boy Subbu in 1895-96. Subbu was the Blind student and teacher of this school later. Florence Swainson, the founder of the school invited a trained teacher for the deaf mute from England in 1897-98. With the help of Dr. William Moon of England, Florence Swainson introduced Tamil Braille i.e. Braille written for the Tamil Vowels and consonant
and introduced as Moon Type System. Later Florence Swainson admitted students from all over India. Both Tamils and non-Tamils students were studied in the Palamcottah deaf mute school. A multiple handicapped girl was admitted in Palamcottah deaf mute school in 1908. Florence Swainson took efforts to establish a second deaf mute school at Mylapore in Madras on January 1913 for the benefit of Northern part of Madras Presidency. Auvudaiammal, the first blind girl admitted and started a separate school for a single girl due to social stigma. Florence introduced Malayalam Braille and International Braille in 1912. The total number of the deaf mute schools in Madras Presidency increased to two in 1914-1915. There was no school for trained teachers of deaf mute children in the Madras Presidency, till 1918. As a result, the Palamcottah deaf mute school opened a training class in 1918 and gave training to the Christian women teachers for blind and deaf mutes. Since 1916 some non-Christian management also established schools for deaf mutes all over the Madras Presidency. When the Hindu management established deaf schools, there was no Non-Christian Special School Trained Teacher to teach the deaf mute in Madurai region because the management of the Palamcottah Teacher Training School was not willing to admit the Non-Christian Teachers for training. However, there was a constant rivalry between Non-Christian Deaf School and the management of Palamcottah Deaf School. Later the Government forced the Palamcottah Deaf School’s management to admit non-Christian for Special School Teacher’s Training. The Palamcottah Deaf School provided free facilities like education, boarding, lodging and clothing. In 1937 the Coimbatore Municipality introduced a Mid-Day Meals Scheme to the students of Deaf School. The strength of the school going deaf mutes throughout the Madras Presidency was growing steadily. In 1947 there were 6 schools for the deaf mute operated with the enrolment of 553 pupils in Madras Presidency. Almost all the district has a Government Special School.
This present study reveals that primary education is well developed in the district of Tirunelveli than any other district or any other parts of India. The missionaries and local bodies introduced many innovative policies to develop women’s education in Tirunelveli district till Independence. Even after the establishment of mission schools, indigenous schools also functioned; however, they also realized the quality of education in mission schools and adopted it in latter days. The missionaries establish all kind of formal educational institutions like Female Normal School, Boarding School for Girls, Co-educational Institution, Female Teacher Training School, Industrial School for Girls, Women’s College, Special School for Visually Challenged Girls and Hearing Impaired Girls, Nursery School and Panchama Schools, Night Schools in Tirunelveli district. The missionaries of Tirunelveli voluntarily shared their innovative ideas to promote women’s education like gift to girls after completing III Form or VIII Standard, fee exemption, free boarding, free dress, free plantain fruit and egg in the noon meal, different curriculum for girls, separate institutions, appointed lady staff and inspecting agencies, introduction of Quarterly and Half Yearly Examination, sent students for Government Examination, Formation of Parent’s Teacher’s Association, Attendance Committee, Scheme of Adult Education, Scheme of Result Grant and to give suggestions to the Education Commission of India and Directorate of Public Instruction to promote women’s education not only in Tirunelveli district but also to the entire Nation. At present (2011) district report there are 241 Pre-primary schools, 1,501 Primary Schools, 431 Middle Schools, 114 High Schools, 185 Higher Secondary Schools and 28 Teacher’s Training Institute to promote education in this district.

To conclude, the growth of female higher education in Tirunelveli district between 1800 - 1947 is significant. There are 2 Universities, 25 Arts and Science Colleges, 1 Medical College, 1 Siddha Medical College, 20 Engineering Colleges, 1
Law College towards the promotion of higher education in this district. The period of long struggle, dedication and innovative educational policies by the Christian missionaries encouraged separate women’s educational institutions in every village without the support of government. Up to 1884 Christian missions were the only private agency in the field of education and the government did not have the courage to entrust the work of education to any one in Tirunelveli district. There was no government institution for women in Tirunelveli District till 1881. It is observed that “the difficulties and the importance of women’s education were adequately appreciated by the officers of the Department of Education, and invited the view of the Governor – General – in – Council as to the nature and degree of the influence which might safely and properly be exerted by the officers of the Department of Education, to promote the extension of education for women. However, the C.M.S. missionaries, who were the monopolizers of women’s education in the district of Tirunelveli established hundreds of Primary Schools, few High Schools, one Women’s College and few Teacher Training Schools for Women. They introduced new policies for the welfare of women and teachers in this district.

At present, there are 17 Arts Colleges, 8 are coeducational institutions, 5 are exclusively for girls and 4 for boys. It make the research hypotheses very clear that Higher Education for Women is far ahead than men in this district. The colleges in Tirunelveli district were originally affiliated to the University of Madras. The Regional Directorate of the Collegiate Education in the district was formed on 10th September 1979 to regulate colleges in Tirunelveli district. Women Missionaries played a significant role in enhancing the status of women in the society and were a great source of strength to the underprivileged women of this district.
Bar Diagram (fig 6)

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT IN 1947
The S.P.G. missionary thought that industrial education along with formal education was the only solution to relieve them from a miserable life. So they established industrial school in 1844 and were a pioneer in Industrial Education in Tirunelveli District. The Missionaries of Tirunelveli district made the women independent by providing employment to them and ensure with regular income by working with the assistance of industrial schools, where they taught embroidery, sewing, drawing, type-writing, short-hand, lace and needle work, spinning, knitting, crochet, weaving, basket making and printing.

After the introduction of industrial education in Tirunelveli district, variety of industrial work open to women and earn for their livelihood, promote international trade and enhance their economic status through earning by learning, development of women’s education, employment, liberation from the age old traditional social bondages and retained their social status of women in the society. Missionaries helped slave girls to earn money by lace making and embroidery work to liberate themselves from slavery. Due to the growth of domestic industries especially lace-making and embroidery, there was enormous growth in the number of working women. They earned a decent living through jobs, learning cleanliness and achieved economic independence. Missionaries helped slave girls to learn developmental skills which made them to become more decent, clean, healthy and enjoyable. By making shirts, collars, trim frocks, jackets and fancy works, the girls gained some profits by themselves. The women missionaries, who worked for the Young Indian women, encouraged them to send the finished product to England and Canada, that promoted international trade to earn foreign exchange. However the report on training in skills in the late 1960s by the women missionaries still remains. The institutions founded by the missionaries still expanded and survived and offered a wide variety of education irrespective of caste and creed. It produced thousands of civil servants, doctors, nurses, engineers, scientists and educationalists. The humble
beginning of industrial education led to the development of women not only in the field of earning by education, but also helped them to enhance their status in social and economic independence still now and forever.

These studies also help us to understand that more number of women teachers were under training than male teachers in 1947. According to the statistical report of the Educational Institutions in 1947, the number of students in Colleges was 110 women and 451 men; in Primary and Middle Schools there were 34,107 boys and 22,503 girls; in High Schools there were 5,955 boys and 1925 were girls; Special Schools consisted of 360 boys and 473 girls. C.S.I. Diocese of Tirunelveli which maintained three Training Schools comprised of the total strength of 289 girls and 183 boys and in Special Schools there were 360 boys and 473 girls studied in 1947. Women’s enrollment in Teacher Training and Special Schools were higher than of men.

This research would help the policy makers to take decision and make changes required in the field of Elementary School education, Secondary Education, Higher Education for Women, Technical Education and Special School Education. Since the Tirunelveli District Missionaries were the innovators and trend setters in many fields like mid-day meals, free uniform, books, incentives, free boarding and lodging, industrial education along with formal education, quarterly and half yearly examinations, marriage assistance aid, placement at local and foreign countries, Universal Braille, Women’s Union, Widow Welfare Fund and so on.

In order to honour the services of the Christian missionaries, it is essential to build memorials to Women Missionaries in and around Tamil Nadu which could be promoted as Tourist spots, Photo galleries could be formulated and libraries should be established to familiarize the historical centres in Tirunelveli district. For instance, four generation of women of a single family rendered their services for the cause of women’s development in Tirunelveli District namely Mrs. Marthal Charles
Mault, (Mother in law of Caldwell and pioneer Industrial educationist in Nagercoil, Mrs. Eliza Caldwell (Wife of Caldwell and teacher of Caldwell and pioneer of Industrial School in Tirunelveli District) and Mary Caldwell, (daughter of Caldwell and Medical servant at Meignanapuram). Though they were first to their credits in many fields there great services were not come into limelight. The meticulous services of women missionaries may be honoured by the State and Central Government by issuing stamps and both the governments celebrate their centenaries. Further Research has to be carried out to write a capsule biography of the career and achievements of these unsung women missionaries of Tirunelveli district. There was overall development in the field of education in Tirunelveli district not only by the efforts of missionaries but also by the involvement of local leaders, voluntary agencies and women’s groups.