CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION OF THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED AND ADULT

The term ‘Physically Challenged’ is connected with the loss of ability. Physically Challenged is a disadvantage for an individual as a result of impairment or a difficulty.\(^1\) Education of the Physically Challenged means to help Physically Challenged persons physically, mentally, spiritually and culturally develop as capable individuals.\(^2\) It aims that helping the individual, to gain a good image in the society in spite of the disability. The Physically Challenged are classified into two broad categories, namely who suffer from mental disabilities and those who suffer from physical defects.\(^3\) The blind are the visually impaired and the deaf are the hearing impaired. The Protestant Missionaries did pioneering and commendable work in Tirunelveli District in education such physically challenged people of the area.

Education of the Visually Challenged

Traditionally, the visually challenged are described as visually impaired. It is said that while 20% of the visually challenged are born blind 60% became visually challenged due to diseases like intra-corneal tumor,

\(^1\) Social Wefare, November 1981, p.5

\(^2\) Vijay M.Merchant(ed.) Third All Indian Conference on work for the Blind, Bombay, 1977, p.141

\(^3\) Education in India, Missionary of Education, Government of India, New Delhi, 1950-51, p.224
glaucoma, retinal detachment and hydrocephalus. The rest become visually impaired of malnutrition or wrong medical treatment, measles, accidents and the like.⁴

Visually challenged is the worst disability for a human being, as it causes great suffering. It creates serious socio-economic problems. It costs the country Rs 50,000 in than in terms of Capital wastage and loss of production.⁵

A great number of human resources are being spent on training the visually impaired. India has the largest number of the visually challenged than any other country.⁶ The visually challenged are not properly treated by the society. Many of them live on charity institutions as beggars. Generally in Pondicherry District, Tanjavur District, Trichy District, South Arcot District, Madurai District, Tirunelveli District were 50/ , 50-60/ , 80-90/ , 90-100/ , 100-110/ , 110-120 / respectively.⁷

The origin of the school for visually challenged

The school for the visually challenged in Palayamkottai was founded by Miss. Annie Jane Askwith in 1890. It was everlasting monuments of philanthropic work, with a strange beginning. Miss A.J.Askwith, a C.M.S.

⁴ Mission to the Blind, October 1999, p.2
⁵ Vijay M. Merchant, op.cit., p.112
⁶ Gabriel Fassel, The Blind in India, American Foundation for Overseas Blind, New York, 1958, p.16
⁷ Census of India 1921, Vol.XI11, Part 1, Madras, p.29
Missionary was the manager of the Sarah Tucker Institutions in Palayamkottai. One morning, in 1888 while she was working in her office, a blind boy came to her asking for alms. She scolded him for begging, but the boy replied, “what can a blind person do except go about begging.” She told him that he could work and admitted him as a punkah puller in her house and gave him wages. Suppu was the name of the boy.

One day Miss Askwith told Suppu that in England visually challenged people could read books by touch. Immediately Suppu said, “Please teach me also to learn.” That was a great challenge thrown to her and she accepted it. Thus was sown the seed for the beginning of the school for the visually challenged in Palayamkottai. Miss Askwith never forgot the challenge. She went to England for furlough in 1888.

She met Dr. William Moon, a visually challenged but enterprising man who had published several books for the visually challenged in what came to be called “Moon Type”, using raised sounds for the alphabets in English. He prepared also Moon signs for Tamil language. Miss Askwith learned them

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8 Annual Report for 1924-1925, Schools for the Blind, Palayamcottah
9 Punka is a large piece of cloth stitched to a moving frame functioning as a Mechanical fan for cooling a room.
10 Some Builder of the Tirunelveli Church, Tirunelveli Diocese, Palayamkottai, 1993, p.2
11 D.E. Jonathan, Miss Annie Jane Askwith and the school for the Blind, 1888-1919, Palayamkottai, 1993, p.2
during her stay in England and prepared the Gospel according to St. John’s in Moon’s Type in Tamil. It was the first reader in Tamil for the visually challenged. In 1889 she came back to India with a definite aim of qualifying herself as a teacher for the visually challenged. She brought with her the first Tamil reader and the Moon signs for the Tamil alphabets—twelve vowels and eighteen consonants.

The School for the Visually Challenged (1890)

She taught suppu how to read by touch. He was able to acquire the skill in reading within a short period. He collected a few visually challenged boys and Askwith started a regular school for the blind in the campus of the Sarah Tucker Institution in 1890. In 1890, Miss Askwith and Miss F. Swainson were appointed the Missionaries of the Church of England Zenana Mission (C.E.Z.M) in charge of the Sarah Tucker Institution.

The first school for the visually impaired was started in 1785 by Lord Valention Hany in Paris and the first school in India was started in 1889 by Annie Sharp, a Missionary from England in Amritsar. In this context the school for the visually challenged started by Miss Askwith in 1890 was the

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12 Ibid., p.3
15 Gabbriel Farrel, *op. cit.*, p.17
second of its kind in India and the first of its kind in South India. In structure this was the biggest one in India and Asia.

The early schools for visually challenged in India in 1889 at Amritsar founded by Miss.Annie Sharp functioned for the welfare of the blind in the name of school for the blind. The early schools for visually challenged in India in 1890, at Palayamkottai founded by Miss.A.J.Askwith functioned for the welfare of the blind in the name of school for the blind. The early schools for visually challenged in India in 1893 at Pannaivilai founded by Miss.A.J.Askwith functioned for the welfare of the blind in the name of school for the blind. The early schools for visually challenged in India in 1926 at Madras founded by Catholic nuns functioned for the welfare of the blind in the name of Little Flower School for the Blind. The early schools for visually challenged in India in 1929 at Thiruppathur founded by Dr.Frederic Kokl Park functioned for the welfare of the blind in the name of Swedish Mission School for the Blind.16

Miss. Askwith appointed Suppu as the first teacher of the visually challenged. He started his work with seven pupils and taught them how to read. Other subjects were also taught in the school.17 The trainees of Sarah Tucker Teacher Training School assisted in teaching the visually challenged. At the

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16 Gabriel Farrel, The visually impaired in India, American Foundation for Overseas Blind, New York, 1958,p.17

17 D.Edward Jonathan, op.cit.,pp.3-4
end of 1890 girls were admitted. The first girl was Avoodaiammal. Surprisingly she was able to learn all the Tamil alphabets within a period of six weeks.\textsuperscript{18} There were two schools for the visually challenged, one for the boys and the other for the girls. In 1892 there were thirteen boys and eleven girls.

**School for the Visually Challenged, Pannai-Vilai(1893)**

Miss. Askwith started another school for the visually challenged at Pannaivilai, an important Mission centre near Tuticorin.\textsuperscript{19} The strength of the students in 1893 at Palayamkottai schools for the blind boys was 13. Another school, the strength of the students at Palayamkottai School for the blind girls was 11. The next school at Pannaivilai School for the blind was 6.\textsuperscript{20}

Nallathamby, a young visually challenged man who had been a student of the school in Palayamkottai, was appointed teacher in the school at Pannaivilai. He had passed the Primary Board Examination and obtained the Government Certificate which was necessary for all the teachers of the lower primary schools.\textsuperscript{21} The first visually challenged student, who later became a teacher, was cruelly murdered at the beginning of 1893 by his own people owing to jealousy.

\textsuperscript{18} *Ibid.*, p.5

\textsuperscript{19} G.T. Simon, William Athiatchar Kalam (Tamil), T.D.T.A., Palamcottah, 1946, p.10

\textsuperscript{20} Annual Report for 1893, Sarah Tucker Institution, Palamkottai

\textsuperscript{21} Some Builders of the Tirunelveli Church, op.cit., p.4
As most of the children came from poor families some were orphans and destitute, the Mission met the entire expenses connected with the students’ feeding, clothing, instruction, training and the like, when the monsoon failed, most of the children remained in the school even during holidays.\(^{22}\) Besides, children came from different states like Travancore, Andhra and Mysore and countries like Ceylon, Miss.Askwith prepared readers in Moon’s Type in their Languages also.

The Braille System

Miss.Askwith learnt and introduced the Braille system in 1912 in her schools. Reading and writing of the visually impaired called the Braille system, came to be accepted as the best medium suitable to educate the visually challenged.\(^{23}\) The Braille system of education designed by, Louis Braille of France in 1829. It is a factual representation of letters in the form of dots embossed on heavy grade paper.\(^{24}\) It consists of six raised dots, and sixty three combinations can be worked out using the six dots. The advantage of the Braille system over the Moon’s Type is that it can be written by hand.

Miss.Askwith provided each of the Tamil vowels and consonants with Braille Symbols based on the Phonetic similarity between the Tamil and English alphabets. A Braille symbol of an English alphabet was given to a

\(^{22}\) Annual Report for 1952-1953, Schools for the Blind

\(^{23}\) Blind Welfare, Vol.XXXIX, December 1958, p.10

\(^{24}\) Annual Report for 1928-29, Schools for the Blind
Tamil alphabet with similar sound. This phonetic relationship enables blind children who know Tamil Braille, to read English Braille easily.\textsuperscript{25} The Braille script devised by Miss.Askwith in Tamil is the first of its kind in the Indian language. It was aptly called “Askwith Braille” and Palayamkottai Braille”.\textsuperscript{26} Her Tamil Braille Alphabet was followed until 1950 in other schools for the blind in Tamilnadu.\textsuperscript{27}

The Government awarded the Kaiser-I-Hind medal to Askwith on 1-1-1907 in recognition of the noble work for the visually challenged in India.\textsuperscript{28} The Director of Public Instruction, Madras was also pleased with the work of Miss.Askwith that he granted certain conclusions to the school in the matter of grants.\textsuperscript{29} The syllabus of the school for normal children was slight modifications. Modeling was substituted for drawing; Braille was used for reading and writing, the Traylor Frame for arithmetic and special maps and plans for teaching geography.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{25} Edward Jonathan, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.31-32

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{An Overview of Braille Developed in India} (Braille Script) National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Deharadum, 1991, p.7

\textsuperscript{27} Ras Mohum Halder, \textit{The Visually Handicapped}, Deharadum, 1991, p.7

\textsuperscript{28} Eugene stock, The History of the C.M.S. Vol.IV, C.M.S. London, 1916, p.247

\textsuperscript{29} Proceedings of the Director of Public Institution, Department of Education, No.12898, dt.15.12.1890

\textsuperscript{30} The Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report for 1932, p.17
The school had sixty pupils in 1906. This year she planned the starting of a new school. For this she bought a new site of about twelve acres, for Rs 500 in August 1908. Here she took up construction of new buildings.\(^{31}\) Thereupon relinquished her principal ship of Sarah Tucker College and the Manager ship of Sarah Tucker Institutions and occupied the new buildings in 1908.\(^{32}\) The new campus of the school was called “Tharisanamanai” (House of Vision).

The children at Pannaivilai were transferred there. The school was visually challenged Boys. Each school had two sections—the history section and the industrial section.\(^{33}\) Miss. Askwith developed the schools into an educational as well as a vocational training centre for the visually challenged.\(^{34}\) After the completion of the academic course, the children were taught some useful crafts.\(^{35}\) Students came from distant parts of South India, as it was the only school for the visually challenged until 1926 when another school in the Presidency, was started.\(^{36}\)

It was the second in the area. In the literary section importance was given to subjects like Tamil (reading and writing), arithmetic, geography, 

\(^{31}\) Paul Appasamy, *The Centenary History of the C.M.S. in Tinnevelly*, 1923, p.250

\(^{32}\) M.E.Giffs, *The Anglican Church in India*, I.S.P.C.K. Delhi, 1972, p.327

\(^{33}\) Annual Report for 1924-25, Schools for the Blind

\(^{34}\) International year of Disabled Persons 1981, C.S.I., Council for Child Care, Bangalore, 1981, p.9

\(^{35}\) Annual Report for 1922-23, Schools for the Blind

natural study, hand-work and physical exercise. Students attended the Primary School examinations and by 1896 nine were successful. Miss. Askwith was very particular about every visually impaired student learning a craft so that he would not be a burden to his family or society.

**Craft Education**

The weaving of cellular cloth was introduced in 1920 and the cloth produced was of good quality. Also the boys tried the production of finer textures. The next was the production of a very thick, strong tape which was used for securing the hoods of motor car. Weaving became the chief industry in the school.

Besides, mat weaving was also taught. The girls did all the work from preparing the loom to the painting of the borders of the mats. Later, cotton-weaving was also introduced in the girls section. Basket making was started in 1922 with an instructor from Calicut. Cotton-weaving was recognized by the government. Both boys and girls took the Elementary and Intermediate Grade Examinations conducted by the Government.

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37 Inspection Report for 1922, Schools for the Blind

38 Annual Report for 1920-1921, Schools for the Blind


41 Annual Report for 1922-23, Schools for the Blind
Cane-work was started in 1923. Tiffin Baskets were made. But the department was closed in 1937, as the school did not get enough orders. In 1929 carpentry was introduced in the boys’ Industrial section. But it was closed in 1933 as it proved to be expensive. Gardening which was introduced in 1937 provided a major field of training of permanent value to the blind. The families possessed some land of their own. Basket-making and mat-making out of Palmyra fiber were some other crafts taught. Poultry-farming was started for the older girls in 1952. Normally a child took six years to learn industries and crafts.

In 1927 two babies were admitted in the school which rose to four in 1928 and such in 1929. For the first time in the history of the school, a blind boy of six months was admitted in 1952. These were a kindergarten section of which Miss. Nesam, Miss. L. Hanley and Miss. J. S. Mathanam were most popular teachers.

42 Annual Report for 1923-24, Schools for the Blind
43 The Tinnevelly Diocesan council Report for 1937, p.27
44 Annual Report for 1929-30, Schools for the Blind
45 The Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report for 1933, p.19
46 Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the N.C.C. Special Committee on the welfare of the Blind and the Deaf held at Nagpur on 27 and 28-11-1952, p.20
47 Ibid.,
48 Annual Report for 1929-30, Schools for the Blind
49 Ibid., 1920-21, Schools for the Blind
The schools were supported by voluntary contributions. The annual sales day was arranged and the articles produced in the schools were sold. The donation during the World War II period was Rs.14,755 and during the peace period was Rs.11,000/- out of which part of the donations came from men engaged in actual fighting.\(^{50}\) Sales and exhibition of articles like clothes, baskets and other hand-made goods were arranged annually. The school got orders for various goods from other institutions and Government departments like the Indian Railways.\(^{51}\)

**Conversion**

There were frequent conversions in the school. Miss. Askwith reported that in December 1892 three blind boys were baptized\(^{52}\) between 1920 and 1928. Conversion in the school for the visually challenged in 1920, 13 boys 11 girls and totally 24, in 1921, 12 boys 13 girls and totally 25, in 1922, 12 boys 10 girls and totally 22, in 1924, 10 boys 11 girls and totally 21, in 1925, 11 boys 09 girls and totally 20, in 1926, 14 boys 11 girls and totally 25, in 1927, 13 boys 13 girls and totally 26, Finally 1928, 12 boys 10 girls and totally 22 visually converted to Christianity.\(^{53}\)

\(^{50}\) The Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report for 1945, p.26

\(^{51}\) Annual Report for 1929-30, Schools for the Blind

\(^{52}\) Proceedings of the C.M.S for Africa and the East, 1892, London, p.147

A trip of Boy Scouts was formed in 1920 under Janathan David, the Headmaster of the Boys’ school.\textsuperscript{54} The starting of a Boy Scouts, the first of its kind in India marked a new era in the history of the school. The visually impaired are especially talented in music and therefore the schools gave them proper training. The talented were prepared for the Government examinations. In 1937 four boys passed the Lower Grade Examinations in music and three of them in First class.\textsuperscript{55}

A musical land was also started with schools. The school museum had a full set of clay models of fruits, vegetables, animals, birds and the like. The models helped the blind to form ideas about the articles of daily use.\textsuperscript{56} Medical check-up was an annual feature of the school. In one of the Check-ups conducted by the eye specialist Dr.Kugelberg on 16\textsuperscript{th} January 1928, it was discovered that out of 302 eyes examined, nearly 75 percent were caused by preventable diseases.\textsuperscript{57} The sports day was a happy day of children. At the end of January 1924, a new running track for the girls was opened. For indoor amusements, they had draughts, dominoes and quoits. The schools introduced

\textsuperscript{54} Annual Report for 1920-21, Schools for the Blind

\textsuperscript{55} The Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report for 1937,p.28

\textsuperscript{56} Annual Report for 1921-22, Schools for the Blind

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., for 1927-28, Schools for the Blind
games like table-tennis, hand-cricket and net-ball to send the visually impaired. Dramatics was also encouraged.

**Private E.S.L.C. Examinations**

The blind children were given academic education up to the elementary level. Arrangements were made for some students to appear for the E.S.L.C. Examination privately. The students of Mission colleges helped them. Miss. Askwith built in the school, a hospital which was dedicated in February 1918. The idea of integrating the visually impaired with normal children came into existence when the first visually impaired boy named Varghese was sent to the nearby Mission school.

Many visitors from within and outside the country visited the school. When Her Excellency Lady Willington visited the school on 31 October 1920, she was presented a carpet made by a visually challenged and disability to talk boy. The carpet was violet in color and bore an appropriate inscription in gold letters. His Highness, the maharaja of Cochin, accompanied by the Dewan, visited the School in 1 February 1922.

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58 *Ibid.*, for 1921-22, Schools for the Blind
59 Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the N.C.C. Special Committee, p.20
60 Annual Report for 1918-19, School for the Blind
61 Annual Report for 1956-57, Schools for the Blind
**Teacher Training Course**

There was no training centre at the beginning in India for the teachers who taught the blind. The Missionaries and the senior teachers trained the newly appointed teachers in Braille script and other teaching techniques. They were properly examined by the District Educational officer. A pass certificate in the examination in Braille and the use of the arithmetic frame with 75% of the total was compulsory for all teachers. The teachers were often sent for refresher courses to learn modern techniques of teaching. The first regular Teacher Training Course on all – India basis was inaugurated on 27 June 1960. The batch had eight trainers of whom one was from Orissa; two were from Utter Pradesh and five from the Madras state.

Once in a year, the old students used to come to the school and spend a day or two with the teachers and students. Many visually challenged men and women qualified themselves as teachers and were appointed in the Mission schools. Most of the trained visually challenged were employed in the Telephone Industry, Match Factories and the Cycle Manufacturing Industry.

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63 Annual Report for 1922-23, Schools for the Blind
64 *Ibid.*, for 1960-61, Schools for the Blind
65 Annual Report for 1956-57, Schools for the Blind
66 The Indian Church Directory 1938-39, Calcutta, p.250
67 Annual Report for 1956-57, Schools for the Blind
A production centre was started in the school with visually challenged adults. Thirty looms were installed. All India Handloom and the Central school welfare Board sponsored this project. The management of the schools after 1940 was carried on by a Governing Board constituted in 1940. Annie Jane Askwith, W.G.Speight (visually impaired), M.C.Longton, Lindsey, Harby, Ferguson, C.P.Cowell, James Turnbull, G.M.Wallford, Naish, Fry, Blenkarn (Blind), Davis and wiles were the important Protestant Missionaries who served in the schools for the visually challenged.

**Education of the hearing impaired**

Hearing impaired is as much a physically disabled as visually challenged. As a totally deaf person can never hear the sound, he remains dumb also. A hearing impaired child is generally defined as one who has lost his hearing before he could establish speech and language patterns. The total inability to hear is deafness. The old view was that a deaf and dumb person was incapable of education or culture. Now the attitude has changed, due to the discovery that speech could be taught to the hearing impaired.

In the past the hearing impaired were commonly referred to as hearing impaired and the Disability to talk, a term which denoted inability to hear,

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69 Proceedings of the Executive Committee of the Tinnevelly Diocesan Council, dt.8.12.1940

69 *Ephphatta*, August 1989, p.18
speak or comprehend the spoken language. During the middle of this century too, the term “deaf” alive was used. Now the term has been rejected because the Hearing Impaired can speak and they are called “linguistically disabled” or “hearing impaired”. Hearing Impaired in many cases, is caused after birth, usually by infectious diseases like measles or scarlet fever. Sometimes, deafness follows an accident. In some cases deafness is caused in the child when it is in the mother’s womb or by sexually transmitted diseases.\(^\text{70}\)

The hearing impaired is not especially well adjusted. Personality problems, loss of academic achievement, linguistic difficulties, and psychological problems, abnormal and emotional behavior are some of the personal problems of the hearing impaired.\(^\text{71}\) The hearing impaired children cannot hear their own voice. Often there is no cure. A normal child of five years has a vocabulary of 2000 words of his mother tongue. Then he starts primary education.\(^\text{72}\) But the hearing impaired child comes to school without knowing many words. He cannot understand what his teachers say. A hearing impaired child is taught a language while a normal child learns a language. The hearing impaired child has to process visually what a normal child would receive orally or audible.

\(^{70}\) Davidson, *Hope to the Handicapped*, the C.L.S. Madras, 1981,p.18

\(^{71}\) *Social welfare*, September –October, 1981,p.15

\(^{72}\) The First St.George Gazetter, Supplement to part II Section 3, Madras 1968,27.11.1968
The Hearing Impaired and the Visually Challenged

The visually challenged have less difficulty in learning than the hearing impaired. The visually challenged learn skills effectively with oral communication at a very early stage where as it is not possible for the hearing impaired. However in craft education, the hearing impaired is quicker than the visually challenged.\textsuperscript{73}

The visually challenged and hearing impaired in the Madras Presidency in 1871. The hearing impaired male was 21,373, female was 19,596 and totally 40,909 and visually challenged male was 27,984, and female was 32,869 and totally 60,853. Altogether there were 49,357 males, 52,465 females, totally 1,01,822 were reported to be presents in the madras presidency.\textsuperscript{74}

The visually challenged and hearing impaired in the Tirunelveli District in 1881 hearing impaired male was 458, female was 366 and totally 824 and visually challenged male was 1512, and female was 1693 and totally 3205. Altogether there were 1970 males, 2059 females; totally 4029 were reported to be presents in the madras presidency.\textsuperscript{75}

The Census Report of 1921 indicates that the hearing impaired in Tirunelveli District were in the range of 50 to 75 per lakh where as in North

\textsuperscript{73} Encyclopedia Americana, Vol.26, 1984,p.697

\textsuperscript{74} Report of the census of Madras Presidency, 1871, Vol.1, p.198

\textsuperscript{75} Report of the Census of Madras as Presidency 1881, Tinnevelly District, p.131
Arcot it was 112 per lakh.\textsuperscript{76} According to a survey conducted by the Indian speech and hearing association, the hearing impaired population in India in 1961 was estimated at 35 million, compromising both partially and complete hearing impaired. But there were 130 educational institutions and 31 technical training centers imparting educations and training for such people. Out of there 130 institutions, only four or five imparted instruction up to the secondary level.\textsuperscript{77}

**The School for the Hearing Impaired and the Disability to talk in Tirunelveli**

The first school for the hearing impaired and the disability to talk was started in England on 1792 by Dr. Watson.\textsuperscript{78} The Calcutta school for the Hearing Impaired and the Disability to talk the second of its kind in India was opened in 1893.\textsuperscript{79} Miss. Florence Swainson a Missionary from England started the school for the Hearing Impaired and the Disability to talk in Palayamkottai in 1895.\textsuperscript{80} It was the third of its kind in India and the first in South India. This school became the symbol of hope for the hearing impaired and the disability to talk children in South India.

\textsuperscript{76} Census of India, 1921, Vol.VIII, Part I, Madras, p.28

\textsuperscript{77} Social Welfare, October 1961,p.17

\textsuperscript{78} J.Kerr Love, *The causes and Prevention of Deafness*, London, 1913, p.15

\textsuperscript{79} *The Deaf in India*, 1953,p.13

\textsuperscript{80} Annual Report for 1901, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
Early schools for the hearing impaired and disability to talk in India in 1884 was located at Bombay founded by a Missionary. In 1895 a school was started at Palayamkottai the in Miss. Florence Swainson and named it as Florence Swainson School for the Deaf and Dumb. In 1913 a school was started at Madras. It was founded by Miss. Florence Swainson and named it after the C.S.I. School for the Deaf and Dumb. In 1926, a school was started at Madras. It was founded by I.C.M. Nuns and it was named as Little Flower School for the Dumb. Finally in 1932 a school was started at Coimbatore, it was founded by Mr. Varadarajapillai and named it as the Municipal School for the Deaf.⁸¹

**The School for the Hearing Impaired and the Disability to talk in Palayakkottai, 1985**

Miss Florence Swainson, a Protestant Missionary from England as well as a qualified nurse came to Palayamkottai in 1890 with Askwith.⁸² She joined the Sarah Tucker Institutions as a teacher and dedicated her services to the education of girls in Tirunelveli.⁸³ She began an education an industrial class and started teaching sewing. Some of the young girls from nearly places joined the training in sewing.

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Swainson took pity on them and wanted to do more for the Hearing Impaired children. She wrote to Mr. Duncan, the Director of Public Instruction, Madras Presidency and made requires asking whether any school for the Hearing Impaired and the Disability to talk existed in India. In response, Duncan, sent copy of the letter written to Queen Victoria of England, requesting her to do something for the welfare of the Hearing Impaired and the Disability to talk in India also. The queen enclosed the feeling of the hearing impaired and disability to talk in England and requested the Government of India to give special concession to anyone who undertook such a noble task for the deaf. Duncan stated that any effort in that direction would be welcome. Encouraged by the letter of Duncan, Swainson started the school in 1895 on the campus of the Sarah Tucker Institutions. Meanwhile the industrial school had 29 girls, of whom four were hearing impaired and disability to talk. It was self supporting. The girls were taught needle work. Beads work and making curry – powder.

She started admitting all hearing impaired and disability to talk children without any distinction of status, caste, creed or language. Boarding, lodging and teaching were free of cost unlike schools in

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85 Letter of Florence Swainson to the President, District Board, South Arcot, 25.8.1906

86 Proceedings of the C.M.S. for Africa and the East 1896, London p. 264
Bombay and Culcutta.\textsuperscript{87} At the beginning only girls alone were admitted. She used to give a rupee to anyone who brought her a deaf child.\textsuperscript{88} Some parents requested that their sons should also be admitted and taught. According to the Custom of the land, only a person who could speak had the right to inherit property. Therefore Swainson admitted deaf boys also.\textsuperscript{89} As instructed, food, clothing and lodging were free. Children from various parts of India and Ceylon flocked to the School.\textsuperscript{90} Swainson accepted these poor children except the Tamilians who were taught in English.

During the short furlough to England, she collected £850 from her friends for the school. As soon as she returned to India she bought the present site for Rs.4500/- with some building from Dr.Dhanakodi Raju\textsuperscript{91} and shifted the school to the new site. The Government also granted Rs.4674/- as building grant. Her friends also sent her money for the construction of new buildings according to the needs.

\textsuperscript{87} Letter of A.P.Chellaiah, Headmaster, School for the Deaf and Dumb to Miss.Paul, Sarah Tucker College, Palayamkottai, dtd.24.2.1958
\textsuperscript{88} Jean Macdonald, \textit{The Growth of a Mustard Seed}, Sarah Tucker Institutions, Palayamcottai,1956 ,p.12
\textsuperscript{90} Proceedings of the Secretary to the Government of Madras, G.O.No.1416/1/06 dtd.13.12.1906
\textsuperscript{91} Paul Appasamy, \textit{op.cit.},p.250
The children were taught using the age old method of sign language. Swainson herself formed some standard sign for the concrete and abstract terms in Tamil and English. Subsequently this method gave place to finger spelling.\textsuperscript{92} In order to adopt this method in the schools she had to find out the way of spelling the long and short vowels and consonants in Tamil language.\textsuperscript{93} The instructional system and the finger spelling method devised by Swainson to suit the Tamil language was a pioneering effort in this field and it was widely used for a long time by other schools for the Hearing Impaired and Mute in Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{94} The Government of Madras asked Swainson to found another school. Accordingly, she opened the seemed school for the hearing impaired and disability to talk at Mylapore, Madras in 1913. She was the manager for both the schools.\textsuperscript{95}

The Government awarded Swainson the Kaiser-I – Hind Medal in appreciation of the pioneering work done by her in the field of education for the Hearing Impaired.\textsuperscript{96} She came to India as a fully qualified nurse but

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  \item \textsuperscript{92} Proceedings of the Director of Public Institution, Madras, No.774 dated.23.12.1901
  \item \textsuperscript{93} Charles Chittenden, \textit{History of Florence Swainson School for the Deaf and Dumb}, (unpublished) Palayamkottai,1958,p.3
  \item \textsuperscript{94} Annual Report for 1975 Florence Swainson School for the Deaf and Dumb, Palayamkottai
  \item \textsuperscript{95} Jean Macdonald, \textit{op.cit.},p.12
  \item \textsuperscript{96} Letter of A.P.Chelliah, \textit{op.cit}
\end{itemize}
as a great self-made educationist as well, Miss. Florence Swainson died on 3 March 1946 at the age of 94. The first news of her death came to Palayamkottai in a letter from an English deaf man who was once a student of her school. The school which was started with three children grew by leaps and bounds.

The students’ strength at the primary level in 1900-1901: In the upper primary there was 5 boys and 4 girls and in lower primary 25 boys and 20 girls. The students strength at the primary level in 1901-1902 the upper primary was 8 boys and 8 girls and in lower primary 28 boys and 24 girls. The students’ strength at the primary level in 1902-1903: In the upper primary there was 4 boys and 2 girls and in lower primary 32 boys and 27 girls. The students’ strength at the primary level in 1903-1904: In the upper primary there was 4 boys and 11 girls and in lower primary 35 boys and 19 girls. The students strength at the primary level in 1904-1905: In the upper primary was 3 boys and 16 girls and in lower primary 39 boys and 28 girls.

The Boys’ School for the hearing impaired and disability to talk was recognized by the Government in 1898. The Girls’ school for the Hearing

97 The Log Book for March 1946, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
98 Elizabath Morgan, Fetter Free, the C.L.S. Madras, 1948,p.5
99 School Log Books and Annual Report
100 Proceedings of the Director of Public Instruction, Madras, No.472, dated.,29.6.1898
Impaired and disability to talk was recognized in 1899.\textsuperscript{101} Later the two schools were amalgamated into one school which was recognized by the Government of Madras in 1901.\textsuperscript{102} Swainson ran the school independently and the church of England Zenana Mission (C.E.Z.M) supplied trained teachers regularly. She purchased land in the name of the C.E.Z.M. The Management was taken over in March 1957 by the T.D.T.A. from the C.M.Z.M.\textsuperscript{103} A Government Board was constituted and its first meeting was held on 13 August 1957.\textsuperscript{104}

Besides the second school started at Mylapore by Swainson, a school was started at Nanguneri by Miss. Gnanaratnam, an ex-teacher of the Palayamkottai school. But after her death the school had to be closed on account of financial difficulties. A.C.Koshy, a teacher of the Malayalam section in the Palayamkottai School started a school in Kerala. P.C.Chacko and Philip left the Palayamkottai school and joined the Kerala School. On the request of the Government of Travancore Mrs. J.Devanesan, a teacher in the Palayamkottai School, started a school on 9 November 1942 in Thiruvananthapuram. The Industrial School for the hearing impaired at

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., No.593, dated., 30.1.1899

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., No.2235 dated., 10.4.1901

\textsuperscript{103} Application for revival of Building Grant, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai, as per order of D.P.I.Madras No.2036, dtd.20.8.1910

\textsuperscript{104} Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Res.No.9(B) dated., 18.3.195
Srikaryam Kazhakuttam. The South Kerala was started in 1961 by Miss. D. Prema, daughter of Devanesam. Mr. Edwin Moses, Mrs. Paripoornam Edwin and Mrs. Anbu Gnana Sigamani voluntarily left the Palayamkottai School and joined the C.S.I. School for the hearing impaired.

**Teaching - Learning Process in the School**

Educationally, the aims of the school were to help the children acquire language, make them communicate their feelings to the fellow members in the most simple way, develop good character and conduct and teach them crafts. So they could live with dignity. As the children cannot hear sounds, they cannot understand what is spoken. By watching the movement of the speaking lips, the hearing impaired progress in their understanding. This method is known as lip reading or speech reading. This is also referred to as the oral methods. The gestures play an important role. The methods of teaching and the teaching aids then in use continue even now. Teaching was done using familiar objects. Clay models, pictures and action songs were used. Stories were acted. Dramatization was very popular among the deaf children. The curriculum included the Bible, history, geography, arithmetic, drawing, health education, house management, physical exercises,

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105 Annual Report for 1961, F.S.Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
106 The Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report for 1932, p.15
107 Inspection Report for 1930. Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
gardening and some crafts. The duration of the course was ten years. For eight years there was much language study. In the ninth and ten years emphasis was placed on handicrafts. The time-table was like that of any other ordinary school. Hardly anything was changed since then.

**Sign Names**

The hearing impaired communicate among themselves using the language of signs, a system of manual symbols supplemented by some finger-spelling. It is known as the sign language. It consists of visible movements of the hands or arms, many of them derived from natural gestures. Nevertheless, it is a living language and fulfils the primary function of providing a means of communication. Sign language is the mother of the hearing impaired and the Disability to talk.

There were five sections in the school. They were the Tamil medium section, English medium section, Malayalam medium section, Industrial section and Teacher Training section. The first five did the work of an elementary school. There were classes from 1 to VIII. The infant class was called class I. In 1908 industrial sections for boys and girls were started. Boys learned carpentry, tailoring, cotton-weaving, and mat-making; basket

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109 Inspection Report for 1920, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
110 The Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report for 1947,p.40
111 *Ephphatta*, August 1989,p.18
112 Inspection Report for 1919, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
making and girls learnt basket-weaving, hand-sewing, needle work, embroidery, knitting and the like. People and card boards modeling for boys less than twelve years also was started. Also the school sent well-trained boys for the Government examination in carpentry. As the strength of the school grew, even girls without hearing defects sought admission in the industrial class. The industrial section also earned money through training. In July 1941 the tailoring department got plenty of orders from the Red Cross Society at Kodaikanal and Madras.

**Teacher Training Section**

The schools for the hearing impaired and disability to talk throughout India sent their teacher-candidates to the Palayamkottai school for training under devoted and well-qualified Missionary like Mrs.Hooper and Miss.Raynor. A separate section for the training of teachers was opened. The duration of the course was two years. Practical training and theoretical instruction were given. In 1929 six teachers passed and four of them

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113 *Ibid.*, for 1908, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
114 Letter of Florence Swainson to the Director of public Instruction, Madras, dated.24.4.1914
115 *Narpothagam*, April 1932,p.31
116 The Log Book for July 1941, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
117 Inspection Report for 1920, Deaf and Dumb, School, Palayamkottai
118 The Log Book for March 1929, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
obtained first class.\textsuperscript{119} Later on successful teachers were awarded Junior Diploma in Teaching the Hearing impaired. The training section continued in the school until 1968. There was a nursery section also in the school.

Every year the school conducted a number of co-curricular activities like Kummi and Kolattam for girls’ gymnastics, drill and marching for boys. The inspection report of 1911 speaks very highly of Kolattam that it was done with much precision. Celebration of national days, Sports Days, Children’s Day, Medical check-up, Students excursion, Founder’s day and the like were some of the annual features of school.\textsuperscript{120} Pyari, who was blind as well as deaf, was admitted in the school at the age of nine. She was a puzzle to the Missionaries who took it as a challenge and taught her with at most patience, concern and sympathy. Her sign name was “sightless”.\textsuperscript{121} She burned manual alphabets and then spelled the names of things.\textsuperscript{122}

A museum was set up in 1910 in the school with a vast collection of models, pictures, teaching aids and the like for the intellectual growth of the students.\textsuperscript{123} The library also had different printed material received from England. Gardening was an important activity. The children worked in the

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid, for November, 1931 Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai.

\textsuperscript{120} Annual Report for 1908, Deaf and Dumb School, Kulavanigarpuram, Palayamkottti

\textsuperscript{121} Elizabeth Margan, \textit{op.cit.},p.22

\textsuperscript{122} Inspection Report for 1909, Deaf and Dumb school, Palayamkottai

\textsuperscript{123} Inspections Report for 1910, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai
school every day and cultivated fruits and vegetables. Sometimes they even sold the excess vegetables in the market.

A new ground was prepared for paddy growth on the campus. From 1941 each class was allotted a separate garden. The students who left the school after proper training were employed as Carpenters, Tailors, Cooks and helpers in private and Government enterprises. A few of them worked as matrons and teachers in the schools for the deaf and dumb.

**Dayasthalam**

Dayasthalam was the home for the adult hearing impaired women. The term ‘Daya’ means love and ‘Sthalam’ means place. Dayasthalam means ‘place of love’. Deaf women who stayed there were in the age group of eighteen and above. They had been the pupils of the school from their childhood. As they had no home of their own, they had preferred to stay in the school. They earned their living by doing needle work, embroidering and mending garments for European residents. Miss. Mac Bride started working with the industrial section at Dayasthakam from 21 June, 1932.

The school maintained a close relationship with former students. Mr.E.J.Christopher, a teacher of the school, was appointed on 1 June 1926

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124 Ibid., for 1937, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai

125 The Log Book for January 1932, Deaf and Dumb School, Palamkottai

126 Elizabeth Morgan, *op.cit.*, p.46
as a social worker among the adult deaf.\textsuperscript{127} He resigned his post and accepted the new assignment. The appointment of a school worker for the adult deaf was the first of its kind in India. The annual session of old students gave the deaf adults an opportunity to sing with fellow-people and teachers. Basically the school year ended with the Annual Parents’ Day Function.

**Scouts and Guides**

Scouts camp was exciting to the children. On 28 and 29\textsuperscript{th} July 1936, the scout camp was held at Tuckerammalpuram. The Third Camp of Guides was held registered at the headquarters.\textsuperscript{128} The founder of the 134 scant Movements personally signed the Guides Certificates.\textsuperscript{129} The Investiture ceremony of the Scouts and Guides was held on 25 October 1927, presided over by Rev.G.T.Selwyn. The Guides’ using was registered as Third Palayamkottai. Blue Bird on 4\textsuperscript{th} November 1931.\textsuperscript{130} Miss.Sundaram, a deaf and dumb teacher, was in charge of the Rangers. The Guides and Scouts took part in the rally held in other schools and mixed freely with normal children. Sales and exhibitions were arranged every year. Articles made in the school were sold in

\textsuperscript{127} Letter of C.de.Chittedan, Principal, F.S.School for the Deaf and Dumb to the Asia Secretary, C.M.S. London dated.24.7.1962

\textsuperscript{128} The Log Book of July 1926, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai, dated.27.7.1927

\textsuperscript{129} Guides Certificate issued to the Deaf and Dumb School dated.27.7.1927

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 4.11.1931
exhibitions. The Tirunelveli church continued to observe one Sunday in every year as “Ephphatta Sunday” or Sunday for the Deaf ever since 19 August 1934. Collections were made as contribution to the school.\footnote{The Log Book for August 1934, Deaf and Dumb School, Palayamkottai} For the first time a Nativity play, in which almost all the students participated was performed on 23 December 1931.\footnote{Ibid., December 1931, Palayamkottai} It was a success and it was made as an annual feature. It is staged during Christmas season even now. Florence Swainson, Elizabeth Morgan, Lyth, Mac Bride, Raynor, C.de Chittenden and Miss. Chittenden were the important Protestant Missionaries who served in the school.