INTRODUCTION

Tirunelveli in South India witnessed the advent and growth of a series of Christian denominations including the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Latin, Jesuits, Oriental Orthodox Luthern, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, the Pentecostal and London Missionary Society including several Protestant Missions. As far as, South India was concerned among all the Christian Missions, though they reached the soil of south only by the dawn of the nineteenth century, they succeeded to become the pioneers of social change through their remarkable services in the field of education and including other welfare measures. Unlike the earliest catholic congregations like the Syro-Malabar the Protestant Missions emerged themselves as the most popular Christian sect which fought for the social justice of the poor people who were reduced to the status of virtual slaves. They opened education to them and brought them into the forefront of the society.

The cultural stature of a nation depends on a large extend on her educational system which has a powerful and lasting influence on men and matters. Education in India has been changing through the ages in consonance with the socio-political transformations. India has been well aware of the significant role that education plays in the history of a nation. Her rulers in the past had always been patrons of art and learning. The temples and ashrams of India were in favors of propagating learning. But unfortunately, education in the past remained a private affair confining only to the higher castes. Common
people were totally neglected and hence they had only limited chances of acquiring higher learning.¹

Before the arrival of Protestant Missionaries in Tirunelveli District of Tamilnadu, remained an educationally backward area. Palmyra leaves were used in the few schools as paper was a rare feature.² Instruction was mainly confined to the classics and the Purana’s.³ The schools of these days had no uniform or prescribed syllabus. The caste system clearly defined the boundaries of Education. Teachers were all Brahmins.⁴ This method of teaching was authoritarian. Learning was mostly memory based. The state was not willing to accept total responsibility for the education of the masses.⁵ But this barrier was broken during the period of the East India Company with the advent of the Protestant Missionaries.

Christianity was introduced in India by Apostle Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, in the first century A.D. He bounded at the

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¹ History of Higher Education in South India, Vol.I ,University of Madras, Madras 1957, p.2
² C.M.Agar, Church History of Travancore, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1900, p.1051
⁴ The Encyclopedia Americana, Vol.IX, 1984, P.648
⁵ The Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. VIII, 1964, P.1010
Tamil coast in A.D.51-52.\textsuperscript{6} But it grew as an influential religion in Tirunelveli in 1532, when Father Michael Vaz baptized most of the paravas of the sea coast.\textsuperscript{7} In May 1542 Francis Xavier, a missionary of the Society of Jesus came to Tirunelveli and worked among the Paravas\textsuperscript{8}. His arrival marked the beginning of hectic missionary activities in India in general and South India in particular. However, the Missionaries in South India in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries were all Roman Catholics.

The Protestant Mission in Tirunelveli began with the arrival of the Dutch East India Company in 1658. This year marked the capture of Tuticorin an important town in the east coast of Tirunelveli. They built a church there in 1750. It became the oldest Protestant church in the district.

Ziegenbalg and Plutscho were the early Protestant Missionaries who landed at Tarangampadi in July 1706.\textsuperscript{9} They had been dispatched and financially supported by king Federick IV of Denmark.\textsuperscript{10} They made Tarangampadi, which was under Danish control the headquarters of their

\textsuperscript{6} Sunder Raj, \textit{The Confusion called conversion}, TARCT Publications, New Delhi, 1986, p.4
\textsuperscript{7} F.J. Western, \textit{The Early History of the Tinnevelly Church}, Palamcottai, 1951, p.17
\textsuperscript{8} A.J. Stuart, \textit{A Manual of the Tinnevelly District}, The Government press, Madras, p.60
\textsuperscript{9} Michael Harris, \textit{Paternalism and the Church}, Oxford University Press, London 1962, p.11
\textsuperscript{10} James Vaughan, \textit{The Trident, the crescent, and the Cross}, Longman & Green and Co. 1986, p.281
missionary activities. C.K. Schwartz, one of the early important activists in Missionaries, joined the Tarangampadi mission in 1750 and wanted to make Trichinopoly his home with the purpose of extending his missionary work in other parts of Tamil Nadu. However, the king of Denmark could not accept any responsibility because Trichinopoly was under the control of the British East India Company. At this time the British became interested in the missionary activities in India.

A dual arrangement was made by which the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K) founded in 1698 in London agreed to offer financial assistance and its German counterpart agreed to send men. Accordingly Schwartz, a German, was accepted as the missionary of the S.P.C.K in India.

Schwartz, who was the first Protestant Missionary, visited Tirunelveli in 1778. He baptized a Brahmin widow who had been sending from a funeral pyre at Tanjavur by Col. Litton. She was named Clarinda. She started in 1785 a school in Palayamkottai, the first school on modern lines. Schwartz sent a school master from Trichinopoly. Here systematic education was started, which

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11 E. Arno Lehmann, It began at Tranqubar , The C.L.S, Madras, 1956, p.16
12 Census of India, 1891, Vol. VIII , madras, p.64
13 S.N. Mukerji, History of Education in India, Baroda, 1974, p.16
14 R. Caldwell, A History of Tinnevelly, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1989, p.24
ultimately led to the foundation of many premier educational institutions in Tirunelveli District by the Protestant Missionaries.\(^{15}\)

Between 1785 and 1816, Missionaries assisted by the Indian clergy and catechists visited Tirunelveli District and founded churches and schools. However, new epoch in the history of Protestant missionary in Tirunelveli started in 1816 with the arrival of James Hough, the chaplain as well as Missionary in the cantonment of the East India Company in Palayamkottai. Hough rejuvenated the early efforts in the district by visiting the churches and establishing a few schools including a seminary in 1818 at Palayamkottai.\(^{16}\)

On his request the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) founded in 1795 in England, sent C.T.E Rheims and Z.B.E Schemed as Missionaries to Tirunelveli in 1820. The S.P.C.K handed its Missions in Tirunelveli over to this Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts (S.P.G), founded in 1701 in England. David Rosen was its first missionary in Tirunelveli.\(^{17}\) Both the Missionaries of the C.M.S and the S.P.G established churches and schools in the district.

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\(^{17}\) D.A. Christdoss, *Nazareth Mission Charitram* (Tamil)circle committee, Nazereth, 1950, p.32
Despite of its location in the extreme south of this Madras Presidency and its smallness in extent, Tirunelveli District and his Protestant schools in it were able to influence the society and educational system in the presidency by sending a member of trained personnel in various parts of India. The pioneering efforts of the Missionaries and then impact on the society deserve a good deal of attention. But not much has been done their contributions. Most of the techniques introduced by the Missionaries in their educational programme are being followed now not only in Tirunelveli but in the entire state of Tamilnadu as well. This study attempts to trace systematically the origin and growth of the educational activities of the Protestant Missionaries in Tirunelveli District. As the present educational system was much to the methodology introduced by the Missionaries, a study like this, it is hoped would add a new chapter to the history of learning in Tirunelveli District, and highlight the part played by Missionaries in transforming ideals into reality in the share of education.

**Area of the study**

The area of investigation focused on the taluks of Tirunelveli. They are Palayamkottai, Sankarankovil, Ambasamudram, Nanguneri, Radhapuram, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi, Shenkottai, Alangulam, Veerakeralampudur, and Sivagiri. It is situated at the southern most part of the Indian sub continent. This territorial segment formed and integral part of ancient Tamilakam. ‘Tirunelveli’ word consists of three classic Tamil words. ‘Tiru’ means Respectable, ‘nel’ stands for paddy and ‘veli’
shows the meaning of fence. During British ruling period, ‘Tirunelveli’ renamed as ‘Tinnevelly’.

Tirunelveli District was called as Thenpandiyanadu under the Pandyas rule. When this area was under Cholas, they named Tirunelveli Mudikonda Cholamandalam under their rule. Then this area was ruled by Madurai Nayaks. During their period Tirunelveli was called as Tirunelveli Seemai. Under the British East India Company rule, it was Tirunelveli district.

The district is located in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. It is surrounded by Virudhunagar District in the north, the Western Ghats in the west, Kanyakumari District in the south and Thoothukudi District in the east. The district covers an area of 6,823 km. Tirunelveli has rainfall in all seasons. The district is irrigated by several rivers originating in the Western Ghats such as the Pachaiyar River, which flows into the Tamiraparani River. The Tamiraparani and Manimuthar Rivers have many dams, with reservoirs providing water for irrigation and power generation. The Tamiraparani River provides consistent irrigation to a large agricultural area. The Chittar River also originates in this district. The Courtallam and Manimuthar waterfalls are the two major falls in the district.

**Period of the study**

The present study mostly concentrates for a period of 19th century to 1947. Though, the Protestant Missionary Society had its birth in mid of 15th
century following a period of evangelical revival in London. They could commence their activities in South India in 1706 following the arrival of Ziegenbalg and Plutsch. The period of nineteenth century became very significant in the social history of modern India. It witnessed a number of attempts from different quarters to fight against the fossilized and out dated customs and usages. It was regarded as a period of renaissance and revival. There occurred three dimensional upsurges against the evils of feudalism and casteism. First one led by the leaders of the higher strata and the second one reformer who hailed from the lower section. When the first two efforts were from the part of the Indians, the third one was piloted by Christian Missionaries who championed the cause of the depressed and oppressed. In South Travancore the cause of such people was undertaken by the Protestant Missionaries with the support of the British administration. The period witnessed the establishment of the British Political Residency in South India. The period assumed greater importance through the works of political residence.

**Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to bring out the Protestant Missionaries and the educational services in Tirunelveli from the beginning of 19th Century to 1947. It also aimed to bring out how the government and other section of the society help to Protestant Missionary in Tirunelveli.
Objective of the study

To what extent the Protestant Missionaries did there yeomen services in the field of education to improve the condition of people of the Tirunelveli.

Scope of the study

Scope of the study is not restricted to one or few aspects of Protestant Missionaries and their role in general education in Tirunelveli. It is an elaborate study in which all the aspects such as all significant and impact upon the society and culture of the people in Tirunelveli. Its important would be realized only when the Protestant Missionaries came at Tirunelveli in 1706. They introduced several reforms in the system of education at Tirunelveli.

Hypothesis of the study

1. To know, the role of Missionaries in the primary education system.
2. To make known, the contributions of Missionaries in secondary education.
3. To make known, the Missionaries’ contribution to higher education.
4. To highlight the need of education of physically challenged.
5. To emphasize the Missionaries contribution to industrial education and adult education.

Design of the study

The first chapter of the thesis deals with ‘The Role of Protestant Missionaries to Primary Education.’ It demonstrates the growth development
and expansion of the primary education. The Missionaries universalized the education by admitting pupils irrespective of caste, religion and region. Their aim was to spread the Gospel but there was no compulsory conversion. The first Protestant school on Weston lines was started in 1785 as a pioneering effort in Palayamkottai. A girls’ school was started in 1879. The monopoly for centuries of a few on educations was broken. The Missionaries drafted a systematic curriculum which was unknown in South India and printed text books for the first time. The system of monthly meeting of teachers, inspecting school masters, monthly report of the school, written and oral examination for students, domestic life- oriented craft education and the like were the result of the pioneering efforts of the Missionaries. The boarding – school was a boon for poor students. Children with promising academic remarks were sent for higher education.

Two or three languages were taught. Strict discipline was maintained and there was no place for caste practices. Students were trained to put into practice the value of education. Nursery schools were started in 1852. The Missionaries started schools for the girls of upper castes. Most of the primary schools were started in rural areas where nobody had ever started a school before. The Missionaries gave importance to the English language without ignoring the regional languages Tamil. The student’s strength increased very rapidly year by year.
The Mission schools had more Christian pupils as time went on. The Missionaries bought vast areas of land, built a number of buildings for school and houses for teachers. In their eagerness to spread primary education, they met the parents within houses and brought their children to school and gave the children free clothes, food, money and even grains. The monitor system was introduced in 1821. The Missionaries raised the primary schools into middle schools. The literacy rate among the Christians was high and Tirunelveli District stood third in the Madras Presidency. Their exemplary educational methods and attitudes have formed the basis of the modern educational system. In this sense they were pioneering Primary education not only in Tirunelveli District also in the state of Tamilnadu, India.

The second chapter deals with ‘The Contributions of Missionaries in Secondary Education.’ There were only 15 high schools among 752 Mission School in 1947 because the Missionaries considered that high schools would not help much in winning souls for Christ. The few conversions opened the eyes of the Hindus who started their own schools. However, the Missionaries trained Christian youths for Mission work. Secondary education prepared many youths, irrespective of caste, religion, and region, for various civil and Government services. For many years, most of the Government officers in the district were old students of the Mission schools. Proper education and employment raised their standard of living. Even small villages developed into urban areas, with the establishment of high schools.
The Missionaries universalized education denied to the backward castes for centers. They returned the grants and the “policy of gratis” as the socio-economic status of the Christians got strengthened due to education. The system of keeping the high school and the college in the same campus was instrumental for the learner to continue their studies after. The Missionaries introduced a uniform system of educational management, involving many welfare measures like paying the salary to teachers, granting investment, and providing for provident fund. Following the example of the Missionaries, the people them self took the initiative and raised seven schools to the high school status. The Missionaries left behind hundreds of buildings and great assets to the nation.

The major part of the responsibility of educating the public in the district was shouldered by the Missionaries. Mixed school was a pioneering effort in the district. The system of appointing Inspecting school masters, writing weekly or monthly reports of the school, convening teachers’ meetings and discussing academic problems and the like are followed even today by the Government and other school managements.

The first High School for Girls in the Madras Presidency was started in a village. Many girls became teachers, nurses, Head-Mistresses and Government officials. They were in great demand not only all in Presidency but also in foreign countries. The number of school mistresses in the Mission alone was 1228 in 1947 which rose to 3180 in 1992-93. The girl students worked with the community for its socio-economic upliftment.
The vocational stream of education in the 10+2+3 system, mid-day meals scheme and the like are the district results of Missionary education. The Mission schools fought tooth and nail against casteism and prepared the young minds for egalitarianism. They worked for the placement of students. The Missionaries even arranged for marriages without much expenditure. The first Indian Bishop and many other Anglican Bishops were old students of the Mission schools. All the Headmasters and a few teachers of the High School had residential quarters in the school campus. The literacy rate was great among the Christians than among of thus in the district.

The third chapter deals with ‘The Missionaries’ Contribution to Higher Education.’ The Protestant Missionaries opened colleges for all and universalized higher education. They could not realize the downward filtration theory’ as most of the students were from the socially and economically backward sections. The C.M. College was the first college in the district. If the Mission college in Tirunelveli are now First Grade Colleges with a number of U.G., P.G. and research courses, it is because of the far-sightedness of the Missionaries who bought spacious lands and constructed a lot of buildings worth crores of rupees for future expansion. St.John’s College set on example of co-education by admitting girl students. In a rigid caste-torn society, the Missionary practice of separate hostels was quite inevitable. However, it was given up later. At the same time the colleges became the catalysts for the abolition of the ugly practice of casteism. The student’s involvement in the social problems of the villages made them understand
the value of education and the dignity of labour by which all-round development of the individual could be realized.

The greatest contribution of higher education was the founding of a college for women in 1896, which was the first Women’s College under the Madras Presidency. A number of Co-Curricular activities were introduced in the college. The girls were trained to be good housewives, teachers, nurses, doctors, Government officials and the like to serve the family and the society. Female education progressed well in the district. Three of the Missionaries working in the college founded the school for the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb in the vidivelli Ashram. They gave up their jobs to serve the neglected and down-trodden people. The idea of a college for a rural areas was severely Criticized by people from all walks of life. Nevertheless, with the purpose of serving the masses, the Missionaries started the college at Sawyerpuram which was the first college to be raised to the first grade status in the district. The students who passed through the college served the society in various capacities. Though the college was shifted to Trichy, the fame it left behind still remains.

The Theological College trained hundreds of catechists and clergymen. Recognizing the alive of education other Theological schools and Colleges were amalgamated with it. The college was very fortunate to have had the meritorious services of Rev. Stephen Neill, the world renowned church historian as well as theologian and Rev. G.T. Selwyn, affectionately called
“Namma Durai,” “Cholera Durai” and “Thayanamanavur.” Both of them later became Bishops in the Tirunelveli Diocese. Many of the Bishops in the Church of South India (C.S.I) were old students of the college.

Higher education imparted by the Missionaries produced an educated leadership in the church, society and Government. It opened new vistas of knowledge to all. Notwithstanding their religious motives, they served the cause of education as none else did. The methods they used, the values they upheld, the commitment they made, the convictions they maintained, the humiliations and hardships they suffered willingly, and above all their love and passion for the people of Tirunelveli remained a source of inspiration even today. They will never be forgotten by posterity.

The fourth chapter deals with ‘The Education of the Physically Challenged and Adult’. The services of the Protestant Missionaries who started schools for the Physically challenged at a time when the Physically disabled were considered burdens are unforgettable. Both the school for the visually challenged and that for the hearing impaired and disability to talk were the first of their kind in South India. The Missionaries extended their loving hand and accepted the poor children as inmates of their schools irrespective of status, caste, color and religion and prose did the necessities free of cost. Students from many parts of India and from Ceylon and Anglo-Indians and even British children joined the schools. The emphasis on industrial education provided new opportunities for a living to
the Physically disabled, who developed self-confidence and self reliance. The founders of the schools relinquished their posts in the Sarah Tucker Institutions and devoted themselves fully to the cause of the unfortunate and the unprivileged handicapped. They devised their own programmes and methods of teaching in Tamil following the English Papers taking into consideration the interests, aptitudes and capabilities of the learners. These were pioneering efforts in teaching the handicapped and were followed in other schools. The institutions in Palayamkottai served as models and forerunners to many other institutions in India.

Teachers from different parts in India got trained in the schools in Palayamkottai under the Missionaries who were specialists in teaching the handicapped. Many of the Co-Curricular activities made the Physically disabled enjoy life and led to the involvement of students in life’s activities which broadened their attitude towards life. The introduction of Scouts and Guides was an inspiration for the children to learn self-respect and self-reliance. The integrated courses introduced in the school was the first effort in Tamilnadu. W.G. Speight, the Principal of the school for the visually challenged (1919-1946) took interest in evolving a common code for the visually challenged in Indian languages. M.C. Langton helped to evolve an action plan for the education and rehabilitation of the blind.

The Protestant Missionaries about thirteen in number who served in these institution from 1890 to 1966 with dedication and perseverance discussed all praise and from then the Physically Challenged burned
patience, industry commitments, service and sympathy. Both the schools have been upgraded new into high schools. Though the schools were founded with the aim of serving the neglected physically challenged, Christian knowledge was emphasized leading to concessions. All educational activities were carried on in the schools only on Christian principles.

The last chapter deals with ‘The Missionary’s Contribution to Industrial Education and Adult Education.’ The Industrial and Lace schools imparted technical education to the destitute, orphans and drop-outs who considered these schools as asylums. The life oriented crafts and cottage industries, orphans and drop-outs who considered their schools on asylum. The life-oriented crafts and cottage industries taught in the school helped them lead an honest life. Many were employed in Government and private institutions all over the country and some chose to be self-employed. The monopoly of a particular caste over a particular trade or craft was broken. The Lace-schools admitted widows and poor girls who learnt the craft and earned their livelihood. Many of them were illiterate. Combining education with productivity was of great significance in the Indian Context in solving the unemployment problem in the area.

Industrial education established a healthy sense of dignity of labour, by breaking the misconception that doing certain work was below the status of a particular caste. The Art Industrial School at Nazareth was the first of its kind in South India to teach both boys and girls in the same school. Even in 1900,
eighteen different crafts were taught. Margoschis was the founder, protector, preserver and provider of the Art Industrial School at Nazareth. Unfortunately, all the Mission vocational schools except the industrial school at Nazareth had to be closed.

Most of the Mission schools followed the policy of “earn while you learn,” thus creating an awareness of the significance of industrial education. The industrial schools started in the villages of Tirunelveli District solved the number of socio-economic problems. The schools were run without any distinction of caste or religion. The Industrial School did not neglect the academic education of the learners. The products of these schools earned wide reputation in India and abroad and lagged many prizes. The Government which was indifferent to Industrial education in the beginning realized the importance later and granted funds to the school. The system of vocational Education is now being followed in the Higher Secondary Schools of Tamil Nadu. In spite of the frequent financial constraints, the Art Industrial School at Nazareth was able to continue its programmer in Tirunelveli District.