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M. Dhiyva,
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Introduction

George Ugloy Pope popularly known as Dr. G.U. Pope the great European missionary. His parents were John Pope and Catherine Ugloy. He was born in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia on April 24, 1820. John and Catherine had ten children – six sons and four daughters. George was their second child. George became a great missionary and educationist in India.

Early Life

George was Nine years old when the family returned to England owing to financial difficulties. After their return they settled down in Plymouth. George had his schooling in Turner chapel near Plymouth. Very early in his boyhood, at the age of thirteen, George desired to go out as a missionary to India.

As soon as he was eighteen, he offered himself as a probationer for missionary work in India and was accepted by the Mission. With characteristic assiduity, he began to prepare himself Wesleyan for the life of a missionary in south India and began to learn French, German, Latin, Greek and Tamil, working eight hours a day. He learnt Hebrew and Greek languages so as to study the bible thoroughly, for old testament was written in Hebrew and new testament in Greek language.

Leaving his family, friends, parents and motherland, he left for south India, as a missionary in 1839 at the age of nineteen. At first he belonged to the Methodist church. He was appointed as an assistant to Rev. Robert Carver. He fell in love with Jane Mary Carver, the daughter of Robert Carver. G.U. Pope married her in 1841. After careful study and prayerful thought, he decided to join the church of England and he offered to serve the Society for the Propagation Gospel (S.P.G). During her second child birth his wife Mary Pope died in 1845 at the age of twenty one. She was buried at tuticorin. After her death Pope married Henrietta, daughter of Codlieb VanSomeren of the banking and commercial firm of Arbuthnot and company madras.

Dr. Pope had nine sons-two of who died at infancy and four daughters. None of his children survive today. Some of his grandchildren and great grand children are settled at different countries.

G.U. Pope Arrival in Tamilnadu

G.U. Pope arrival at madras marks the beginning of an epoch in the mission history of India. The ship bound for India set sail from Plymouth in England in 1839. It was a period before the steamship navigation came into existence. Among the passengers was G.U. Pope the youth of 19 who had some Text books in Tamil and Sanskrit. The ship was sixteen weeks at sea without a sight of land. He utilised the time fully for learning Tamil and other Indian languages for eight hours per day. During his journey he prepared a sermon in Tamil.

G.U. Pope came to India on behalf of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. But later he joined the society for the propagation of the Gospel. He gave his first sermon in Tamil because of his earnest desire that, you must talk in the language—the mother tongue of the Indian people , think in it and feel in it, before you can know of them”. Besides, his ambition was to talk only in Tamil on landing on the Tamil soil. In spite of some mistakes in the course of his talks, his attempt proved to be successful in due course. He was in madras for two years (1839-1841). In 1841 he left madras to work in tinnevelly under the S.P.G. and was sent in may 1842 for missionary work at Sawyerpuram and the surrounding villages.

The Sawyerpuram Mission

Rev. Pope came to Sawyerpuram in 1842. Though he was an European by birth, he was appropriately called as Pope Iyer of Sawyerpuram. The present development of Sawyerpuram with educational institutions and well planned buildings testify his work there.

This place Sawyerpuram has an interesting history. Sawyer—a genuine Christian was an Anglo-Indian by birth. The church in Tinnevelly owes a great debt to Mr. Sawyer, who was instrumental in founding a Christian village. The S.P.C.K., the missionary society that had been functioning in Tirunelveli, sent its money to Sawyer, the
honorary lay missionary and disbursed the salaries to catechists and teachers in mission schools. The village thus founded with such laudable motives in 1814 has been named by the settlers as Sawyerpuram in sheer gratitude of its benefactor.

This village of Sawyerpuram was a teri (barren land) surrounded by large stretches of sand dunes which had a strange fascination for G.U. Pope. Sawyerpuram had a hot climate and the European found it difficult to stand the heat especially during summer. There is a legend that Dr. Pope dug a pit in the earth sufficient to accommodate him, in which water was stored. In this he kept himself submerged up to the neck during the intolerable hot months while he proceeded for his readings. He made Sawyerpuram ans its neighbourhood the field of his labours for about twelve years from 1842-1854.

Sawyerpuram Seminary

What made Sawyerpuram so widely known so early in its history was the seminary which the S.P.G. estabished there in 1844. They chose the right person in Rev. Pope who immediately after his arrival at Sawyerpuram had settled himself with characteristic zeal to the two fold work of founding congregation and schools in the various districts north of the river of Thamiraparani and of establishing in the place, where he took up his abode on institution called 'Seminary'. These seminaries—one in Madras, a second at Veliarpuram (Bible Town) in Tanjore and the third in Sawyerpuram were founded by Rev. Pope while he laboured at these stations. This seminary was intended for the education of six boys from each of the five districts of the society for the propagation of the Gospel's mission in Tinnevelly. He planned to make the seminary as a multipurpose seat of learning a training school to train teacher catechists for the Christian schools and a theological seminary to equip the Indian clergy. From 1862 a high school was started which sent out the first batch of matriculates in December 1864.

The society for the propagation of Gospel recognised the high standards that their Sawyerpuram seminary maintained and regarded their schools at Idaiyangudi, Nazareth, Mudalur, and even Tuticorin only as feeder institutions for their superior seminary at Sawyerpuram.

Evangelisation in and Around Sawyerpuram

In 1842 when Rev. Pope came to Sawyerpuram, it belonged to the taluk of Nazareth. After his arrival Sawyerpuram was made the headquarters for the places north of river Thamiraparani. Rev. Pope was made the chief priest of that taluk. From that time onwards Sawyerpuram was marching towards progress. There took place a great religious revival in the country. At the time of his arrival at Sawyerpuram in 1842, there were 512 Christians and five catechists. There were only one Christian school and there were thirteen students. This increased slowly and in 1844 there began an encouraging movement towards Christianity in and around Sawyerpuram.

The present church at Sawyerpuram was opened at 1887; the church building society that was formed in 1844 at Sawyerpuram helped the construction of churches, for the new converts and to enlarge the old churches. As a result new churches were constructed at Puthiamputhur, Sivathaiyapuram, Subramaniyapuram and Pudukottai.

G.U. Pope Literary Work

G. U. Pope ambition on leading the Indian soil was that, he must talk only in Tamil. By translating the great works like Tirukural, Tiruvachagam, Naladiyar and Manimekalai, he had made the greatness of these works, known to the Europeans and created in them a love for Tamil. Dr. Pope was always popular. He came to India at a time when the Hindu Tamilians were called ajanies (These who did not have the right kind of knowledge). Dr. Pope himself at first refused to read Kamattupal which formed the third part of Tirukural.

He had done first the translations of three books which he had considered great-Tirukural, Naladiyar and Tiruvachagam. Tiruvachagam is a saivite work. That he could get into the spirit of these works in these days of violent Christian prejudice against Hinduism which speaks volumes of his catholicity.

An Ambassador for Tamil

Since ancient times, Tamil was the language of the people of Tamilagam and was the most internationally accepted of all Indian language. The pioneering effort made by the Christian missionaries and the Muslim scholars led to a Tamil revivalism. The Christian missionaries, in their bid to reach the masses, adopted Tamil as the language of communication. This led them to the study of Tamil for the explanation of religious dogmas and for the writing of books. The Catholic missionaries of the eighteenth century took a great interest in the study of Tamil.

G. U. Pope was one of these western scholars of the last century who did good services in the field of Tamil language and literature. He had left his indelible marks behind him in his services, rendered to Tamil in the fields of
grammer, literature, ethics, religion and philosophy. He had a very great regard for Tamil and the Tamils. Tamil is not a dialect of Sanskrit, but an independent language with a copious and original vocabulary, having a very clear and philosophical grammatical system, very highly cultivated and in every respect equal to Sanskrit itself. The noble purpose with which he undertook his literary enterprises in Tamil marks him out as an Ambassador for Tamil and a bridge builder between the east and the west.

G.U.Pope-A Writer

G.U.Pope proved himself a great writer. He wrote both religious and secular works. During his stay at Sawyepuram, he is said to have written four books viz. (i) A Treatise on the person of Christ, (ii) A compendium of Religious Teaching for schools and Christian Famiies, (iii) The fully of Demon worship and (iv) The prayer book in Tamil and the English church in South India.


He had written a few history books also. While he was at Ooty, he wrote two books on The History of India—one to guide the researchers and the other for the students. In 1880, he wrote A Text Book of Indian History. In 1883 he wrote little Rajas—primer of India History and Historical notes 2154 B.C. Ancient world, Panja-taca-prakarnam or the fifteen lectures. Besides, he studies the Toda language and wrote an outstanding book on its grammar. Realising the unsuitability of the tamil grammer works like Tolkapiam and Nannul for class room use, he ventured to bring out elementary grammer books of his own compilation.

Dr.G.U.Pope as a Translator

Dr.G.U.Pope, the great English missionary and the eminent oriental scholar has earned immortal name through his service to Tamil. The wonderful translation of the old and classical works like the Sacred Kural, The Sonorous Naladiar, The Sublime Purananaoru, The Sweet Manimegalai and above all, The Soul-stirring Tiruvachagam have entitled Dr. Pope to be included in the galaxy of the eminent Tamilian savants.

In 1886 he completed translating Tirukkural. Dr.G.U.Pope got the credit of being the first person to translate Kural into English. By his translation, Dr.Pope made the 'Sacred Kural' available to the world. In 1893 Dr.Pope completed translating Naladiar. Dr.Pope magnum opus was ofcourse his translation of Tiruvachakam. He translated 658 songs of Tiruvachakam while he was working in the oxford university. Cilappathikaram translated as 'The lady of the Anklet' was a review by Dr.Pope.

Conclusion

Dr.G.U.Pope efforts were equally directed to the extension of the church. He built the All Saints Church at nearby Subramaniapuram enduring extreme hostility and insult. The services of this great soul to Tamil and Saivism heart warming. In his last days he was a mature Saiavasidhant, with his faith as ever rooted in Christianity. He delivered his last sermon on May 26, 1907. He passed away on 12 February 1908.

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ROBERT CALDWELL - MISSIONARY WORK
AT IDAIYANGUDI

M.DHIVYA

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Abstract:

The district of Tirunelveli in the Madras presidency is located in the extreme South-Eastern part of the Indian peninsula on the Coromandel Coast. The principal towns in the district were Palayamkottai and Tuticorin. Palayamkottai was the headquarters of Tirunelveli district, while Tuticorin was a large town and sea port. Tirunelveli district had almost every class and caste of Hindus of southindia. The remaining castes in the district were Vellalars, Raddis, Maravars, Naidus, Chettiar, Panickers, Idaiyars, Kadiars, Kammalars and the lower caste Shanars, Pallars, Parayars, and Paravars. The main characteristic of the Tirunelveli district of the eighteenth century was political instability and disorder.

CHRISTIANITY IN TIRUNELVELI

The history of Christianity in Tirunelveli is traced back to the arrival of the Portuguese on the Coromandel Coast to augment their trading prospects at the turn of the 15th century. The Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries who accompanied the traders to the Tirunelveli coast were the first to spread Christianity in the district. The earliest reference to Protestant Christians in Tirunelveli occurs in an entry in the journals of Schwartz for the year 1771. Schwartz one of the greatest among the Tranquebar missionaries and known as the founder of the Tirunelveli church.

The spadework for protestant missions to take root and develop in Tirunelveli was done in the eighteenth century by German Lutheran missionaries supported by the Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). This was further strengthened in the nineteenth century under the auspices of the same society and also the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the society for the propagation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts (SPG). Its members were Brahmins and Vellalars who took active steps to prevent the spreading of Christianity. Both Caldwell and Pope were aware of and intimately involved in these local struggles against the upper caste Hindu movement to arrest the growth and progress of Christianity.

EARLY LIFE OF ROBERT CALDWELL

Robert Caldwell was born on 7th May 1814, were living in the small village of Clady in country Antrim, Northern Ireland. Caldwell's father William Caldwell. In 1824-1825 William and his large family moved from Ireland back to Scotland and settled near the port of Glasgow in an apartment block on the south bank of the river Clyde. At the age of sixteen one of his older brothers took Caldwell to live with him in Dublin with the intention of training him to pursue a career as an artist. Caldwell was enrolled in an excellent school of art and remained in Dublin between 1830 and 1833 studying the subject. He applied himself earnestly to the course and was able to make a promising, start, winning several prizes. Thus in
Dublin at the age of nineteen he was convinced of his true calling and suddenly throwing over the easel, he was determined to devote himself to mission work in India.

Caldwell in Madras

Caldwell was not quite twenty-four years old. When he arrived in Madras on January 8, 1838. He lived for three and a half years. The first year of his life in Madras was mainly spent in learning Tamil. The first evangelising assignment in Caldwell’s missionary career began among the lower castes in Madras with domestic servants mostly drawn from the untouchable Parayars. Caldwell reached Nazareth on Advent Sunday, November 28, 1841.

Caldwell in the Idaiyangudi Mission

Soon after reaching Nazareth Caldwell walked across 10 miles of deep sand to Idaiyangudi, to take up his appointment as the first resident missionary in the village. Idaiyangudi became his home for most of the rest of his life. The village is in the east of the present Tirunelveli district, 30 miles north-east of Cape Comorin and 3 miles from the sea. To the north of Palayamkottai lies some 35 miles and Tuticorin 45 miles away. The original name of Idaiyangudi was Ediyengudiyiruppu which literally means ‘Shepherds Colony’. The village earned its name from the founders and the early settlers, who were from the Shepherd community, though no trace of them remained when Caldwell arrived. The Idaiyangudi mission district shared the characteristic features of the south-eastern part of Tirunelveli district.

The dominant feature of this part which is to the south of the Tamaraparani River, was the red sand belt, which covered the region and was admirably suited to the growth of the Palmyra palm. The Shanars by far the most numerous community were highly concentrated in the Palmyra forest in the region. Caldwell took residence in Idaiyangudi, it was predominantly occupied by the Shanars with a mix of a few families of goldsmiths, dyers, oilmen and washermen. Caldwell found that the only Christians in the place were Shanars, of whom there were about 300 people; about 200 of the same class were heathens still, and this heathen minority included some belonging to the higher division of the caste, who had been Christians originally and had relapsed before the arrival of the European Missionaries. In December 1841, the mission station of Idaiyangudi was at a low ebb. A number of lapsed Christians were as great a hindrance as the heathen to the small church the remained.

In Caldwell estimate, apart from the church and a centrally located small structure with a single room intended to be the mission bungalow for the new missionary the entire village was an irregular mess, the houses built haphazardly. A school was nominally in existence though there was no scope for women even to dream of education. The people of Idaiyangudi were also known to be difficult to manage and the village itself did not belong to the mission.

The Journey to Idaiyangudi

At the beginning of July 1841, Caldwell set off to walk to the Nilgiris to visit the Bishop of Madras accompanied by a native servant and one or two coolies. Putting up at night in native rest houses and walking in the morning and evening, they reached the Nilgiris in August 1841. It was with such a vision and purpose that Caldwell journeyed to Tinnevelly on foot. He passed through Pondicherry, a French settlement Tranquebar, the first Protestant mission station in South India, the sacred temple towns of Chidambaram, Kumbakonam, and Tanjore. He came across a number of missionaries at these places and began to get some idea of the nature of their work.

The next phase of his journey was towards Tirunelveli. It commenced on horseback but was met with a setback as the horse slipped and fell. Without any regrets, however Caldwell reverted to walking. Referring to his enthusiasm to make the journey on foot, it was noted: His apprenticeship to the great work of his life was finished by another walk in the rainy season from the Nilgiris through the districts of Coimbatore, Madurai and Tinnevelly. Caldwell continued the final phase of his journey on foot and reached the boundaries of Tirunelveli in November 1841. Crossing the Tamaraparani river he entered Palayamkottai in the Tirunelveli district and felt as fresh as a lark despite the long journey. Passing through Palayamkottai, Nazareth and Mudalur, he had his first glimpse of the earliest exclusively Christian village functioning under Christian rules, located in the Tirunelveli district which was recognised as the garden of Indian missions. He finally reached Idaiyangudi at the end of 1841 having covered some 1300 kilometres.
IDAIVANGUDI A MODEL MISSION VILLAGE

Caldwell worked hard to make Idaiyangudi a model mission village in terms of its material prosperity too. Thus he planted rows of palmryas and other kinds of trees, expecting that the yields from these would in the long run help to create local endowments for the benefit of the converts, who would have something to fall back upon during drought or in any other emergency.19 Another major plan of his was to dig a water tank in the village, which will enable the people to be cleaner than they now are without expense. At present every drop of water is drawn from deep wells and has to be paid for and the washerman’s salary is one of the heaviest items of school expenses. It will also enable the people to grow rice on the land near the tank.

All these developments contributed in their own way to make Idaiyangudi a model mission station in rural neighbourhood.20 The visible results of Caldwell’s project in Idaiyangudi continued to draw admiring comments from visitors. In 1864, for example it was noted that in Idaiyangudi ‘the houses are very neat almost all of them having small verandahs facing the street quite a modern introduction in Tirunelveli villages; all of them however have a cleanly appearance — a great proof of sanitary advancement.

THE MADRAS SETTING

In the early nineteenth century the city, as a commercial and administrative seat of the East India Company, was a hub of intellectual activities. The establishment in Madras of the college of Fort St. George in 1812, which aimed primarily at teaching south Indian languages, Laws, and customs to the junior civil servants posted to the madras presidency gave an impetus to European scholarly interest in south Indian languages.21 Caldwell wrote four of his major works, A Comparative Grammar, Lectures on Tinnevelly Missions, History of Tinnevelly and Records of Tinnevelly Mission, The Shanars of Tinnevelly and a few other particularly significant articles.

Caldwell the Scholar-Missionary Author

Comparative Grammar (1856)

Caldwell was aware that the people of India had always shown a great interest in grammatical studies but had failed to ‘Compare the Grammar’ of their own language with the others. Dr. Caldwell ‘Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Language’ which is indeed a mighty contribution has revolutionized our approach to Tamil grammar.22 Caldwell worked on the south Indian languages when he went to England in December 1853 on his first furlough. His furlough lasted nearly four years and was prolonged for him to recoup his health and also to share his missionary experiences with congregations in England. It was a valuable opportunity to improve his scholarship in the Tamil language, and he had collected in India so as to write a book. It took about eighteen months to complete this work and in June 1856 it was published in London. It was Caldwell who introduced the term ‘Dravidian’ which gained currency following the publication of his comparative grammar in 1856. He described this, his first and longest work, thus; In the introduction I explain the origin and meaning of the common term ‘Dravidian’ which I was the first to use instead of the narrower term ‘Tamilian’ and which has found its place in all works on the Indian languages.23

Caldwell argued that Dravidian languages were fundamentally different from Sanskrit and had a common origin. He investigated their early history and their mutual affinities. In his judgement, Tamil owed nothing to Sanskrit and was the most highly cultivated ‘ab intra’ of all Dravidian idioms can dispense with its Sanskrit if need be and not only stand alone, but flourish, without its aid.24 Caldwell outlined the theory that Tamil culture had a separate and independent existence before the coming of Brahmins into south India. He claimed that Sanskrit was originally brought to the south led to the spread of a peculiar version of Hinduism heralding the proliferation of idol worship.

Caldwell’s claim of a ‘Dravidian’ alternative to the Aryan-Sanskrit- Brahmin culture was not limited in its significance to the confines of mission management. It’s implications were for reaching. His ‘Grammar’ set the tone for fixing a new identity and genealogy for the Dravidian languages and culture and the Tamil people. This new ideology was selectively appropriated by the English educated non-Brahmin elite to challenge the power and influence of the Brahmins and Brahminism, leading to the non-Brahmin Dravidian movement in Tamilnadu.25

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Lectures on the Tinnevelly Mission (1857)

Caldwell’s earliest writings “Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions” Descriptive of the Field, the Work, and the Results; With an Introductory Lecture on the Progress of Christianity in India was published in 1857. It contains a series of lectures that had appeared previously in a missionary journal, The Colonial Church Chronicle and Missionary Journal. The lectures in this volume were intended to dispel the profound ignorance of the English about missionary work and the progress Christianity had made in certain parts of India.26

Early History Of the Tinnevelly Mission (1881)

In the same year as his ‘General History’, Caldwell’s fourth book was published, a mission history entitled: Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Mission of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. This was a work on the Protestant Christian movement in Tirunelveli district spearheaded by missionaries aided by native priests and catechists. The introduction of Christianity and the impact of conversion upon Tirunelveli society form the basis for this historical sketch of the early Tirunelveli mission. It is essentially a compilation of materials culled from reports, journals, letters and other documents and records with explanatory notes. Caldwell noted, I have generally allowed the reports, letters, and other documents to speak for themselves contenting myself, as far as possible, with the work of a collector and editor.27

The Tinnevelly Shanars (1849)

One of the Caldwell’s earliest works was about the Shanar amongst whom he lived and spent a large part of his time and energy. The response of the Shanars to the gospel was becoming proverbial and he undertook this work as an assessment of their pre-conversion state. He published this influential and controversial pamphlet under the title “The Tinnevelly Shanars” in the year 1849. The Tinnevelly Shanars was Caldwell’s first major ethnographic treatise. It was essentially a missionary ethnography and gave a negative portrayal of the religion, culture, social standing and intellectual capacity of the Shanars, who were the principal objects of his missionary reform and conversion efforts. The pamphlet was withdrawn from circulation later as the Shanars vehemently protested against their inferior representation.

He claimed that the Shanars originally emigrated from Ceylon to the Tamil region and were ‘Hindus not of the Brahmanical but of the Tamil or aboriginal race’. As such they were he argued among the original inhabitants of the Tamil region distinct from its colonisers, the Brahmans. Caldwell also claimed that the Shanars religion was monolithic which stood outside the fold of Brahmanical religion. This indeed was the core of their religion distinct from Brahmanical ideas and rites and consisting of the worship of devils, whose anger they strove to propitiate by bloody sacrifices and ‘devil dances’. The large majority of their devils Caldwell concluded were of Shanar or Tamil origin and their connection with the Brahmanical systems of dogmas and observances, commonly described in the mass as Hinduism, was so small that the Shanars might be considered votaries of a different religion.28

CONCLUSION

Caldwell’s missionary life had spanned a period of fifty-three years, the entire span a determined step in the advance of Christianity in India. Caldwell spent his life in his mission district Idaiyangudi. In the annals of the church in Tirunelveli, he has an enviable record. Caldwell is remembered not only as an illustrious missionary but also as a great scholar; contribution to Tamil literature and Culture received a visible embodiment. He passed away on 28 August 1891.

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