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Research Journal

*Indian Streams
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HEALTH SERVICES OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT, TAMILNADU - A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present study is Health Services of Christian Missionaries in Ramanathapuram District, TamilNadu – A Study, aims at analyzing the nature, impacts and development of Christian Missionaries in Ramanathapuram District, particularly their services in the field of Medical. And to analyze and evaluate how they provided educational, social and medical services as accompaniments to their evangelical work and were action in collecting real information about the people they were trying to convert. So it was emerged as a religion in all parts of the district with specific centers and they too served as means of propagations of Christianity among the suppressed communities who were empowered and changes in the social structure. On western model, they had taken high efforts to open primary health centers and hospitals for the benefit of people who were suffer from epidemic like cholera, malaria, jaundice, and small box. It is occupy an outstanding position in the ministry of almost all Christian Mission. The first medical missionary was John Scudder who came to Madras in 1836 and with the help of his sons he started a medical mission. Dr.Jones was highly intended to dedicated services in St.Martins Hospital at Ramanathapuram which was called as Vellaikkaramma Hospital for his services to women around the Ramanathapuram and Kilakkarai delivered the children in this hospital are also described. They have done dedicated services at that time of floods, famines, epidemics and other natural calamities. One of the impacts of the services of the Christian Missionaries in this district was the emancipation of women from the traditional taboos, inferior status in life, lack of education, enforced widowhood, child marriage, polygamy, and temple prostitutions, (Devadasi System) were all restricted. Thus there was regeneration of Indian society due to the



activities of the Christian missionaries.

Significance

To analyzing the nature, impacts and development of Christian Missionaries in Ramanathapuram District, in Tamil Nadu particularly their services in the field of Medical, and evaluate how they provided educational, social and medical services as accompaniments to their evangelical work and were action in collecting real information about the people they were trying to convert.

Scope

On western model, they had taken high efforts to open primary health centers and hospitals for the benefit of people who were suffer from epidemic like cholera, malaria, jaundice, and small box.

Methodology

The study is based on both

descriptive and analytical historical research methodology. The study has followed the historical Research Methodology by interpreting in the chronological order and the topographical feature.

KEYWORDS: *Health Services, Christian Missionaries, provided educational.*

INTRODUCTION

The present study is Health Services of Christian Missionaries in Ramanathapuram District, TamilNadu – A Study, aims at analyzing the nature, impacts and development of Christian Missionaries in Ramanathapuram District, particularly their services in the field of Medical. And to analyze and evaluate how they provided educational, social and medical services as accompaniments to their evangelical work and were action in collecting real information about the people they were trying to convert. So it was emerged as a religion in all parts of the district with specific centers and they too served as means of propagations of Christianity among the suppressed communities who were empowered and changes in the social structure. On western model, they had taken high efforts to open primary health centers and hospitals for the benefit of people who were suffer from epidemic like cholera, malaria, jaundice, and small box. It is occupy an outstanding position in the ministry of almost all Christian Mission. The first medical missionary was John Scudder who came to Madras in 1836 and with the help of his sons he started a medical mission. Dr.Jones was highly intended to dedicated services in St.Martins Hospital at Ramanathapuram which was called as Vellaikkamma Hospital for his services to women around the Ramanathapuram and Kilakkarai delivered the children in this hospital are also described. They have done dedicated services at that time of floods, famines, epidemics and other natural calamities. The Health services of American Madura Mission in this district are created Cherry's Surgical Practice in 1834, combination of medical and evangelical work, fantastic prescriptions, the First Mission Hospital at Madurai in 1848, Albert Victor Hospital at Madurai in 1897, Leprosy Mission Hospital at Dayapuram in 1913, Dayapuram Rehabilitation Home, TELC Health Center, Aranmanai Medu, at Kamuthi, St.Martin's Hospital at Ramanathapuram in 1924, CSI.Hospital at Kilanjunai, Health and Nutrition Centers at Mandapasalai and Sevapet in Ramanathapuram, and Health Services of SPG.Mission in Ramanathapuram district is also great role in Veerambal, Keelakkarai, Melakkidaram, Kilanjunai, Muthukulathore, Kadaladi, and Paramakudi they also given free medical education to those who were suffered students among the society in and around of the Ramanathapuram District.

Medical work came to occupy an outstanding position in the ministry of almost all the Christian missions which landed in India as well as of the Indian church. The inadequacy of medical facilities in India induced Christian agencies to start hospitals and dispensaries both in cities and villages. The first mission to adopt a regular policy of sending medical missionaries to India was the American Board. These kinds of missionaries were named as medical Evangelists. The first one was John Scudder who came to Madras in 1836 and with the help of his sons he started a medical mission. In 1857, the Arcot area came under Arcot Mission of the Dutch reformed Church of America. The American Board began medical work in Madurai from 1837. The London Mission started medical services at Neyyoor in 1938. Later it had a number of branches in the modern Kanyakumari district. From 1840 the American Baptists had two medical Evangelists in Southern Bengal. The first Protestant Medical doctor to come as a Medical Missionary to Ludhianna in the Punjab was in 1842. After 1858, the Protestant Christian missions in general began to give more attention to medical ministry. The medical evangelists went to villages and to people rather than people coming to them. Along with giving medical treatment to the people, they preached the Gospel also to them.

Lady Doctor's service was introduced by the missionaries in 1850. The American Methodist Mission was the first to send a fully qualified lady doctor by the name Clara Swain. She started her medical missionary in 1870 having Barally (U.P), as her base. She opened a women's hospital there in 1874 on a piece of land gifted by the Nawab of Rampore. Thus the medical services of the Christians were supported and strengthened by the local kings and administrators.

Health services of the American Madura Mission in this district.

The First Mission Hospital

The work of Drs. Steele and Scudder were largely individual efforts. When Dr. Shelton arrived in 1849 he immediately started a dispensary and thereby laid the foundation of the great medical work now represented by its two hospitals and two out-station dispensaries. 1,800 patients were treated in eight month says Shelton's report for 1849. In 1850 the number was 2,400. Many came from towns and villages not by the missionaries and a good number from the Saurastras of Madurai, among whom no missionary work was then being carried on. The whole expense, exclusive of the dresser's salary, was less than Rs. 100. The mission report for 1850 acknowledges the receipt of Rs.300 from gentlemen in Madura for the erection of a hospital; and the mission history for 1851 records that a new building for a study at the house of the doctor and also furnished by private contributions, were commenced this year. The hospital was completed in 1851. It contained three large rooms, one ward for men, one ward for women, and one for dispensary and operation theatre. Shelton's enthusiasm over his new hospital encouraged every mission to have hospital, and every missionary to possess such an amount of medical knowledge to deal with medicines at its station with success.

Jesuit health service was started to help only the poor. Fr.J.B. Trincal established a hospital in Madurai to help poor people. The health guidance was given at free of cost. Contagious disease like Cholera had abolished by this hospital. Fr.Hass .S.J. and Fr.Causanal made many drugs. Koyna was called as Jesuit powder. Fr.Francis Bertram invited a medicine for snake bite. Trained nurses were appointed in the Jesuit hospital. Lay Brothers were useful and beneficial to the people. In the beginning medical services were rendered by the project at free of cost with the help of Mission Hospital Madurai. But due to its financial implications the project started concentrating on first aid alone. The following areas were identified by the Madurai-Ramnad Diocese and the priorities were fixed basing on the needs.

Mission Hospital, Madurai (1848)

Madurai Mission hospital was the first hospital established by missionaries in Madurai in the year of 1848. Dr.Selton was appointed as a medical officer in 1849. This hospital was well built under the supervision of Dr.Shelton. From the year 1855 to 1859, there was nobody to look after the Madurai Mission hospital. At this juncture, Madurai Mission hospital came under the supervision of Dr.Chester, who was the in charge of Dindigul Mission hospital. That time, five branch hospitals were in and around Madurai. All these hospitals rendered assistance to all the people. In the year 1863, Dr.Lot of Ceylon Mission appointed as Medical Officer at Madurai Mission Hospital. He worked till 1867. Then Dr.Palmen came to Madurai mission and rendered health service till 1874. Dr.Chester, Dr.Frank Van Allen also came to Madura Mission and rendered their services and their arrival was helpful to the health services in the Madura Mission.

Albert Victor Hospital, Madurai (1897)

Because of immense development of Madurai Mission Hospital, it was named as Albert Victor hospital. It had the best accommodation facilities for 44 inpatients and its construction charge was Rs-

42,000. In it Rs-40,000 was donated by Ramanathapuram Hindu Prince. He had close relationship with Dr. Van Allen. Mostly Hindus belonging to Madurai donated amount for the construction of this hospital. Government sanctioned only Rs.2500 for the construction of this hospital. By the year 1897, the hospital got the gigantic dimension as Christian Mission Hospital. Treatment was given to the patients in the morning and evening. Every day they started their service with prayer. Till date they are following the same method only.

Leprosy Mission Hospital, Dayapuram (1913)

Missionaries planned to construct Leprosy Hospital in Manamadurai. Dr. Harriet E. Parket visited Madurai to start a hospital for the leprosy patients. When he made trip to meet the women patients who were not able to go to hospital from Madurai and Ramanathapuram district, he noted the uncared leprosy patients. He decided to give them good food, dress and accommodation and so he started a Leprosy hospital with all facilities at Dayapuram in Manamadurai. The construction work was finished in the year 1911. Opening ceremony of this hospital was held in the year 1913 in a grand manner. All people from southern region received medicinal aid from this hospital. Various kinds of modern treatments were given there. Cured leprosy patients were allowed to live with their society.

In the early decades when leprosy had been the most dreadful and contagious diseases in the world, the scientific growth found its growth in the remote corner of Tamilnadu at Dayapuram, which is about 2 km eastern side of Manamadurai. With determinant and dedicated service of many and initiated by Rev. C. Stanely in the year 1913, the colony of Dayapuram was founded by Rev. & Dr. (Mrs.) Stanely Vaughn with the purchase of 20 acres of land in 1911 from the Raja of Sivaganga, at a cost of Rs.400, per unit. On 10th September 1913, the first patient was received into a small hut of mud and thatch. Rev. C. Stanely went to work with grim determination to better prevailing conditions and the Raja was approached, with the result he granted lands from time to time as gifts to forward the good work that was being carried on. Then the colony was on 100 acres of land.

The missionaries in the Madura mission who were chiefly physician served as a hospital in charge for the leprosy hospital. So one third of the expenses of Madurai mission Hospital and Dayapuram Leprosy Hospital were met by the Chennai government. Later all expenses were met by the Madurai mission. Later in the year 2007, hospital was re-established as TLM Community hospital (general hospital) and it was under the control of Madurai-Ramand Diocese.

Dayapuram Rehabilitation Home

This hospital not only gave treatment but also molded them to fit for the right job. The patients were trained to do gardening and tailoring etc, in the leisure time. In the year 1938, 340 door-mats, 40-sarees, and 140-dhoties were produced by the patients in the Dayapuram Rehabilitation Home. All these things were sold by the Madurai Mission. For the welfare of the patients, government framed GOCHALO plant to rear cattle. Likewise, this hospital rendered various services to the society.

TELC. Health Centre, Aranmanaimedu, Kamuthi

In the 19th century, Rev. Johanson, a Missionary from Sweden came to Aranmanaimadu a small village near Kamuthi taluk, Ramanathapuram district. He established TELC. Health centre in a small building. He made visits to the nearby villages and preached the Gospel of God and also he had given treatment for snake biting and various other diseases. He gave the treatment free of cost.

St.Martin's Hospital, Ramanathapuram

It could be converted into a special- treatment as out –patient's domiliary, in-patients, preventive work and surgery. There was a well organized and maintained theatre and laboratory with adequate water supply. A separate ward for general cases was there. Separate room was there with all necessary instruments. It also had a rehabilitation centre for the TB patients and it was effective.

With 100 beds this hospital was started by the former Missionaries. After a long period of Dr.Jones Madam, Dr.S.C.Bikkansu became in charge of this hospital. He has done a dedicated work. At present it functions under the head of Dr.Francis Savarirayan. He is accompanied by three other doctors' and one head nurse and other nurses and other servants under their services. In this hospital a fine laboratory and X-Ray branches are available. An excellent treatment was given to the in and out patients. Good hospitality and treatment were offered to all the patients without any discrimination. Delivery of child also was carried out. For our patients like pregnancy, for children the periodical anti-biotic injections and polio drops and also for eye problems and leprosy eradication separate treatments are carried out for periodically. Family planning programmes also arranged. New medical research method is also started.

CSI Hospital, Kilanjunai.

In a mountain surrounded by many villages where there are no proper roads and ways at Kilanjunai a hospital was established. It may be a gift of God. Dr.Somaiya is a chief doctor there. There are 40 other small centers around Kilanjunai to help the laborers, multi diseased patients. Around 100 kilometers radius their services were going on. The services like issuing free food, supplying cheppals at subsidized and installment basis are also carried out. To look after the out patients bed facilities are provided. It is expected that x-ray facilities were also provided. This hospital concentrates only on leprosy work including surgical correction and rehabilitation. It is for the economic upliftment of the total community of the Ramnad district.

Dr.Riggs was a Protestant Missionary cum Doctor. He served in Kilanjunai a remote village near Suranam in Sivaganga region. He was an Evangelist in his prayer service and a healer of patients. He started a dispensary in Kilanjunai as a real boon to the people of that area. He used to visit the nearby villages in his jeep and medicines in the truck. Conducted medical camps periodically which were helpful to the poor people. The people enjoyed his Tamil and were affectionate towards him and his family. He himself conducted delivery with the help of his wife. In such a way he was noted in double ways both by religious services as well as medical services.

Health and Nutrition center, Mandapasalai.

Apart from this project extended its services by concentrating on health, nutrition and spiritual activities in all the villages. The project took all efforts to introduce the child care programmes in Mandapasalai.

Health care center, Sevapet, Ramanathapuram.

This place belongs to Ramanathapuram district. It comprises of 20 villages. Here child delivery and light diseases are treated. For school children advice about health care and clean environment are given. Small box drops are provided periodically. Dr.G.D.Ebanesar from Devakkottai periodically looks after the patients.

Health services of S.P.G.Mission in Ramanathapuram district

Medical services of Dr. Margret Gray Jones

Dr. M.G.Jones was born in London. She studied M.B.B.S and got the degree of Doctor in London. At the age 24, she came to Ramanathapuram as the Medical Missionary to serve the people supported by the S.P.G.Mission. She worked actively with boldness and was fastest. So she was called as Tiger. She always thought about the welfare of the people. Most of the time she spent for the downtrodden and socially backward class people. She also whole heartedly dedicated to the publicity about Jesus who was a only one God and God who gives whatever needed to us. Already **Rev.Kingston** was a missionary, who had worked as preacher of the Gospel to the people of **Veerambal, Keelakkarai, and Paramakkudi**. At that time Ramanathapuram was ruled by Muthu Ramalinga Sethupathi who had given 64 acres of land to the Missionary for development. So **Rev.Kingston** was able to construct a Small Hospital in Ramanathapuram. Through this hospital he served to the poor people in and around of the Ramanathapuram district. In 1924, Dr.Jones was in charge of St.Martin's Hospital in Ramanathapuram. Because of she was an affectionate and respectable to St.Martin. When she was in charge, only one building was there. Then she was able to construct two wards, one general ward with 45 beds, delivery ward room, and a operation theaters. So it becomes a popular hospital for child care and women.

The Queen of Health Department

In Ramanathapuram, at Mandabam, a sea coast guard camped coastal area guard. Dr.Jones served to the soldiers who suffered by disease through the Martin's Hospital. She also constructed a small church there for prayer by the soldiers. At that time, Ramanathapuram was with the Diocese of Tinnevely-Ramanathapuram. She was appointed as the Head Supervisor of the Health Department in Ramanathapuram region. So she conducted free medical camps at Sikkal, Melakkidaram, Kilanjunai, Muthukulathur, and Kadaladi. There were two unmarried Doctors Philip and Doctor John who served rural people in and around Kilanjunai. It covered 20 miles around Paramakudi. Here Doctor Jones supervised and motivated the doctors once in a month. The dangerous and spreading diseases like cholera, malaria, plague, and small pox were immediately prevented by the injection. All types of medicines were bought from Karnataka State, At Bangarappatti, a biggest company of Industries and imported medicines from America. In 1950, Doctor Ricks and his wife who were from America served the poor people at Kilanjunai in a useful way.

Dr.Ricks selected twelve persons for exercise treatment and cured them. They were called Health Protector. He started to treat the sick people under the tree hospital about more than twenty villages. There were twenty beds and cots under the tree. He offered food to them, Unfortunately Dr.Ricks went to America with his family, So monthly once Dr.Jones visited the hospital at Veerambal and Kilanjunai. The government congratulated Dr.Jones service to the poor people and had given monthly endowment fees Rs.900 to the Hospital. So the government medical officer also visited the hospital.

St.Martin Hospital is identified by the people as a "**Vellaikkaramma Hospital**". Most of the women around the Ramanathapuram and Keelakkarai delivered the children in this hospital. The husbands of those who were affected by the V.D.R.L. diseases were also given some advices. Hence she visited the Swartz School and St.Andrews school hostel to check up the student's health. So the teachers and the students gave more respect to Dr.Jones. In 1954, Santhosam a boy affected by typhoid fever was admitted in the St.Martin's Hospital under the care of Dr.Jones who visited the boy ten times per day. At last he was cured and sent home with his mother. Dr.Jones said to the mother, that he was his son. Now he (Santhosam) is a retired Head Master in Ramanathapuram.6 Most of the people of Keelakkarai suffered due to stomach ache due to germ and colic with diarrhea. Immediately Dr.Jones offered germ medicine for affected persons. So the Doctor became popular among the women in and

around Keelakaria area.

Protector of the Orphanage children

During 1957, on December 25th Christmas day Dr.Jones travelled near Aranmanai in Ramanathapuram. Unfortunately while she was crossing the Aranmanai, she saw a pregnant beggar woman suffering in front of the Aranmanai. Immediately she saved and admitted her to the hospital. She also gave all facilities for that pregnant beggar woman. Dr.Jones arranged for delivery of the child to that beggar woman. The delivered woman, at least for 13 days took rest and medicine for health condition. The child was fine and protected by the Dr.Jones was given to adopted parents in Ramanathapuram.

Free Medical Education

Pregnant Assistant Training School was established by the Diocese of Tirunelveli-Ramanathapuram for Christian's women in 1957. Through the direct interview, the 18 poor students were selected for free medical education under some norms of the school. Including the 12 students got employment opportunity in the hospital. Educational qualification was 8th standard and education training period was two and half years. There were about eight higher grade experienced nurses working there.

A separate Superintendent was appointed for the nurses and the hospital. They appointed a male writer and a male nurse with male Laboratory Technician in this hospital. During the training period, all the students got experience in 18 delivered cases and eight operation delivered cases in this hospital. Rs.15 was given to the training students for every month. Rs 12 and half for food and two and half for personal expenses for the student's welfare. After finishing the course of two and half years, they were sent to Madras for Government examination. All the students got good marks and applied for government certificate. Finally they got government appointment order in the government hospitals and Union Health Service Centers.

Himalayan achievement

When Dr.Jones returned to London from India, she was honored and hailed by Dr.E.M.Abdulla M.B.B.S., who was chairman of Sayyed Ammal Nursing Home, Sayyed Ammal Engineering College, and Sayyed Ammal Higher Secondary School. Because the mother of Dr.E.M.Abdulla delivered in the St.Martin's hospital by Dr.Jones.With full satisfaction and dedication work done to all people in Ramanathapuram district, finally she died at the age of 88, in 1988. Dr.Abdul Kalam the former President of India was her friend and Rev.P.A.Soloman was her scientific guide and counseling. So Dr.Jones was a lovable, energetic, kind, strict, broad minded, and bright among the people in the Ramanathapuram district.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the missionaries have done a lot of commendable services in this district, especially in the field of education, health, welfare of the orphans and the people of Ramnad. One of the impacts of the services of the Christian Missionaries in the district was the Emancipation of women from the traditional taboos, Inferior Status in life, lack of education, enforced widowhood; child marriage, polygamy, and Temple prostitution (**Devadasi system**) were all restricted. They upheld the cause of women and the poor and the down - trodden people. Thus there was regeneration of Indian society due to the activities of the Christian Missionaries. Hence the missionaries had a clear cut vision of their

mission. Though evangelism was their principal aim they felt constrained by the love of Jesus Christ to alleviate human suffering and misery by providing better facilities of life as their prime concern. Consequently they charted out an agenda of social reforms for the benefit of the natives of Ramanathapuram District.

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