



PROBING INTO THE MISSIONARIES EFFORTS TOWARDS THE WOMEN EDUCATION IN ANDHRADESA DURING THE BRITISH RAJ

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The nineteenth century of British India is a landmark and watershed for social reform movement in India. In the course of century, the social reformers of India and Christian missionaries had been initiated for the uplift of women as well as depressed classes. There was a tenacious debate over the position of women in society especially from mid-19th century. These debates overwhelmingly signaled the beginning of social change for women status.¹ The fundamental activities of Christian missionaries in India as well as Andhradesa a list that included, gospel preaching, spread of education, and promotion of health and establishment of institutions for economic upliftment of the native converts, especially for the depressed classes. Here, the main objective of this paper is to assess the services rendered by the Christian Missionaries of various denominations in the field of girl's education especially amidst depressed classes. The sum total of the lives of Christian missionaries speaks eloquently of their contribution to the betterment of the outcastes.

Background of Present Education:

To evolve Indian education there were three important factors should be reckoned with. The earliest one was native or traditional education begin from time immemorial and followed to the next public system of education or British system of education and inaugurated and supported by British Government. The last one was Missionary education carried on by Christian Missionaries. The indigenous form of education of earliest one has been much modified and largely merged into others, while remaining two have become so nearly alike in their methods that they exists in 19th century as one system of education in India. In fact as will appear in the development, it has been the policy of British Government in India to delegate the whole work of education as much possible to private bodies and individuals, whoever are willing to undertake the task, while she herself holds a guiding hand and gives such assistance as is required to call forth private

effort. Not only missionaries have availed themselves of this policy, but the promoters of other religions or of some special kind of social reform as well, and even many groups of private individuals and municipalities have in this manner by the means of government aid sought to provide for the educational needs of their communities. For the most part of these undertakings are so small as not to warrant any special notice, are else there are so nearly conformed to and identical with the public system of education as not to admit of separate treatment. However, missionary education, embracing one-eighth of the whole number of those taught and nearly one-third of students in colleges is of sufficient bulk to give considerable colour to the whole scheme.²

The missionary education blending with western education had played a crucial role in the bringing at the crux of social change among the depressed classes during the 19th century. The reformers in addition to missionaries in India have searched the prevailing hierarchal caste system in India. All the while, though, they pursued the role of women down through the ages. For instance, in the Vedic period women were in high esteem and rise to rank of seers like Visvavara, Ghosha and Apala. The education of girls was not neglected and shared along the boys. There is no evidence in the Rig-Veda of the seclusion of women and ladies trooped to festal gatherings “decked, and shining forth with sunbeams”.³ Since the late 7th century or from the medieval period of India, gradually women life became very seclude in Indian sub-continent, particularly among the upper strata of society. No refreshing streams flowed back into the life of women in their homes, and as the centuries passed, the *Brahmanical* code gripped them ever more tightly. Among the orthodox Hindus there were several practices implemented against women; bride price, child marriage, sati and forced widowhood. In spite of the more democratic social system of Islam, in which women enjoyed many privileges denied to Hindus, especially as regards the holding of property in their own right, the Muslim invasions affected the status of women adversely, since fear of the invaders and of forcible conversion to the conquerors faith tightened the bonds in which women were held. Except in south of India, where large tracts were never touched by the invaders and purdah never became widely spread, the women’s quarters became still more impenetrable and seclusion of women extended from higher to lower grades of society.⁴

The decline of women literacy was a discernible and rapid that by the beginning of 19th century, hardly one woman in a hundred could read in Madras presidency and Malwa. In the earlier province in 1826 A.D., only 1,028 girls were attending schools as against 1,67,664 boys.⁵ According to the population of the Presidency, the percentage of girls receiving some kind of education was only 0.5. It may therefore, be stated that at the advent of the British rule, female education had practically disappeared from Hindu community, nay, it was regarded as a source of moral danger, if not as an actual vice, since only dancing girls could normally read and write. In their families, the old tradition to teach reading and writing to the new generation was continued.⁶ Nonetheless, from the second decade of the 19th century with the initiation of East India Company and Missionaries the importance of education somewhat surfaced in South Asia.

Movement of Women Education:

With the advent of Europeans and their pungent criticism against the stagnation of Indian society was with reasons of caste system and degradation of women position. The nineteenth century was a time of political, social and scientific upheaval in Europe. The British defined their domination of the sub-continent as a proof of their moral superiority. In arguments over how to best rule their colonial subjects in India, they were led to discussions of the ideal relationship between men and women. J.S. Mill opined the same in his book, *The History of British India*. He argued that women's progress could be seen as an indicator of society's advancement. The formula was simple: among rude people, the women are generally degraded; among civilized people, they are exalted. "Mill explained that as societies advanced, the condition of weaker sex is gradually improved, till they associate on equal terms with the men, and occupy the place of voluntary and useful coadjutors". Having learned about Hindu society through reading Halhed's *Code of Gentoo Laws* a translation of the Code of Manu, some religious works, and accounts written by travelers and missionaries, Mill concluded: "nothing can exceed the habitual contempt with the Hindus entertain for their women They are held, accordingly in extreme degradation."⁷ In this scenario with the dawn of 19th century, the pattern of women lives began to change with influence of western education and social reform movement and Christian missionaries. In reality, the concept of "perfect wife" was being redefined. First, there were modifications in appropriate activities for a female at different stages of her life. Second, the appropriate arena for female action was expanded; and third, there was a new and growing approval of individualism.⁸ In this changing pattern of society an hymn from *Manusmriti* verse (3.56) became popular, such as;

"The divine are extremely happy where women are respected;
where they are not, all actions (projects) are fruitless."⁹

Furthermore, a belief was developed and propagated regarding women education; if the mother is educated, the entire family would be educated because to ignite the society as a whole.

Role of Christian Missionaries in Education:

As an early step of many Christian missionaries of Western countries initiation for the education of Indian women appeared to be a prelude to social reform movement in India. They applied four important precepts to fulfill their missionary works such as: 1) Preaching, 2) Literacy,¹⁰ 3) Healing and 4) Education. As regarding to education a system of organized secular education they introduced, blending with religious education starting with the primary department up to Post-graduation or Doctoral degrees in the university.¹¹ Of course, their focal idea may be proselytization but this was no means confined to this purpose alone and took the broad interests and needs of the society as well.

One stark reality as regard to the education of India such as East India Company was though started its activities in 1600 A.D. but it initiated for the development of education only after a century. The East India Company's Charter of 1698 had directed the Company to maintain schools in all its garrison's bigger factories and therefore, the first school of the kind called St. Mary's Charity school was started at Madras in 1715.¹² As a part of Company's effort in 18th century towards Indian education and from 1813, it earmarked

some paltry amount for the education in India.¹³ At the same time the officials of Company had stepped in the Indian education to develop on the lines of Western education and to use Indians as clerks and translators to run their administration. Then they also propagated such as if the Indians got qualification they would give priority to them. In this scenario, in spite of traditional or indigenous education of India, as per the Charter of 1833, English became official language. For this decision, Christian missionaries and early reformers of India also expressed their consent. One dubious factor needs to be mention out about the priority of education on gender bias. In contrast to support for boy's schools, there was a tepid interest in the education of girls. The colonial government, despite pressure exerted by missionaries and liberals, was unconcerned with female education. The missionaries were interested in female education and schools for girls because, they argued, women needed to bring into the fold to make conversions permanent. Nevertheless, since men made the decisions, female education was ancillary.

In the beginning, the British government in India has invited the development of education any kind of private organisations or individuals, community bodies, reform societies or bodies of religious organisations of any faith to take the task of education development.¹⁴ In the beginning, the Christian missionaries as a fact of proselytization they tried to spread the education among the influential communities of society but that could not be materialised according to their assumptions. Then they deeply inclined towards the depressed communities of Hindu society that is the lowest of low. One noteworthy fact that here to be mentioned that the missionaries were very much protected by the then existed government of India and society without any fear of molestation. Their property and lives were safe and also given special protection to all the European inhabitants in India to practice whatever old or new religion consciences direct.¹⁵ Missionaries have taken advantage of such a great opportunity and there is no land where more systematic efforts have been made where mission work of all kinds is better organised than in India. According to Rev. Henry Huizinga; with a force of 1900 men and 2500 women, in all 4,400 Protestant foreign missionaries, coming nine-tenth of them from England and America and rest of them other parts of Europe and Australia, and with an army of over 37000 Indian workers, they were tactfully worked in every nook and corner of India, endeavouring in various ways to establish the kingdom of Christ. The 657 Roman Catholic Missionaries bring the number of foreign missionaries to over 5,000. By the dawn of twentieth century including aliens with all the Indian workers Catholic and Protestant made an army of 50,000 at the missionary work.¹⁶

Actually, the English East India Company's main aim to enter on Indian soil was to grip trade and commerce. With this motto, it did not entertain any missionary activity in India under the pretext that such activity would hinder their trade activity. Nevertheless, in the year 1813, William Wilberforce proposed a resolution in the House of Commons regarding amendment of Charter Act of English East India Company for allowing Christian missionaries to promote gospel work in India.¹⁷ This step has encouraged the several missionaries from different denominations of Western countries to step into India to do evangelical work.

After the establishment of the colonial rule in coastal Andhra, several Christian Missionaries had allowed to preach Christianity and establish institutions there. By the mid 19th century, various missions established their centres in the different regions of coastal Andhra. The first Protestant Mission that came to Andhra was the London Mission Society (LMS). It was established at London in 1795 and ten years later it has sent its missionaries to evangelistic work at Vizagapatnam.¹⁸ In 1833 Charter Act was again revised. On account of this, many more missionary organisations came to India for the propagation of gospel. As a part of expansion the LMS established its second station at Cuddapah in 1822 under the initiation of Rev. J. Hands when he was resided at Bellary. And schools were established there. Here, in spite of their desired results of conversion of many people into Christianity, yet the schools were maintained very vigorous from 1833 to 1851 for a period of eighteen years. Here by 1851 with the efforts of missionary, the low caste Hindus of Malas were embraced to Christianity from north and north-west of Cuddapah district and became strongly incited to renounce idol-worship and caste.¹⁹ All the denominations of protestant mission schools drastically increased by 1881, in the districts of Cuddapah, Kurnool and Nellore were 123 and students strength includes both male and female were 4854 in compared with year 1871 the school were 89 and students strength was 2062.²⁰ The drastic development occurred between 1871 and 1881, which was especially by the impact of Government support to the societies or the missionaries work of education. On other hand the missionaries through their services attracted heathen people. The LMS stations at Vizagapatnam, had established twelve schools by the year 1827 and were run with 525 scholars.²¹

Among them, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) had established their activities mainly in the northern part of Krishna district²² (on the North East Coast of the former Madras Presidency).²³ On October 28th 1841, its pioneer missionaries Rev. Henry Fox and Rev. Robert Noble began their missionary work in Machilipatnam.²⁴ Later, they extended activities to Guntur and West Godavari Districts. The CMS missionaries were school masters rather than gospel preachers. The Christian communities carefully instructed much focus should be given for education. Rev. Noble and his friend Mr. Sharkey opened a native English school on 21st November 1843 in Masulipatnam which had eventually been singularly blessed in the number of its high-caste converts and several of them were got superior government jobs from this product.²⁵ Later it grown into a high school in 1855 and was upgraded to a College in 1864. It became the chief educational institution for the students of the Northern Circars²⁶ and was rightly described by the then Governor of Madras Presidency, Sir Charles Traveleyan as the “South Indian Cambridge”.²⁷ There are also three caste girls’ schools besides, six more managed schools by agents of Church of England Zenana Missionary Society of the latter number, two specially for Muhammdans. For native Christians they also established boarding school for girls and a training institute for catechists and teachers. Of all the 6 districts it established the institutions in Masulipatnam, an Anglo-vernacular school and a caste Girls school, both in Bezwada and Amalapoor, while at Ellore there is most flourishing high school, with a Muhammadan branch besides three caste girls schools worked by the Zenana Society. Further in addition to mentioned above schools under this Church Missionary there were 84 small vernacular village schools with total 1170 students.²⁸

The American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) started its activities in 1820 to do evangelistic work among the different countries of the world. In Andhra country, they got activities in Northern Circars. They started their first missionary post was in Guntur on July 31st 1842 under the initiation of John Christian Frederick Heyer.²⁹ Later they extended their activities to East and West Godavari Districts.³⁰ Frederick Heyer established a number of hospitals and a network of schools throughout the Guntur region. The two prominent Lutheran missions in Coastal Andhra were the Guntur Mission pioneered by Frederick Heyer of the Pennsylvania Synod Society and the Rajahmundry Mission established by Rev. Luis P. Manno Valett of North German Missionary Society in July 1845. In 1927 the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church was constituted with the merger of both these missions.³¹ As a part of mission work, the AELC started several village schools and Secondary schools for both boys and girls in Guntur, West and East Godavari Districts.³² By 1881, it has established 59 schools, with students' strength of 1965.³³ Further, it also established one college at Guntur known as Andhra Christian College.³⁴

Rev. John Mc Laurin opened the first mission station of Canadian Baptist Mission (CBM) at Kakinada in 1874. In the beginning its activities were only restrained to Kakinada and surrounding areas.³⁵ Later, Kakinada as its Headquarters it established a total number of 12 Mission Stations along the coastal Andhra, starting from Avanigadda of Krishna District to Sompete of Srikakulam District.³⁶ In the field of education, it founded many educational institutions like; primary, secondary, Boarding schools and Caste girls schools for the benefit of poor and depressed class people.³⁷ Besides Normal school, it also established several Vocational schools and Industrial school to provide job opportunities to converted Christians and general public and economic empowerment for women.³⁸

After the arrival of London Mission Society in Andhra, the Godavari Delta Mission has established its mission station in 1837 with Narsapur in West Godavari as its Headquarters.³⁹ Then the American Baptist Missionary Society concentrated its activities in Nellore and Ongole regions and they started their activities from 1835 forward. They started their first Mission station at Nellore in 1840.⁴⁰ It was widely developed during and after the Great Famine of 1876-78 through its yeoman servers rendered to famished people.⁴¹ In 1892 the first Teacher Training School for women under the Baptist Missionary was established at Ongole in connection with missionary Girls School and was the one of the few early training schools in Madras Presidency.⁴² As a part their services they established several schools, hospitals, orphanages and industrial homes in the districts of Nellore, Prakasam and some parts of Kurnool and Guntur districts.⁴³

The Rev. John Anderson, the earliest missionary of the Church of Scotland, who arrived in Madras in 1837, started what was known as the General Assembly's School immediately after his arrival. The school soon proved a great success and Mr. Anderson was encouraged by the results that he opened branch schools at Conjeeveram in 1839, at Nellore and Chingleput in 1840 and at Triplicane in 1841.⁴⁴

The Salvation Army Mission establishment was very late compared with other Christian organisations to India and to India in 1884 and in Andhra was 1892 by Abdul Aziz. They concentrated their activities in coastal towns like Nellore, Bapatla, Tenali, Gudivada, Eluru, Tanuku, Nidadavolu and Rajahmundry. They rendered yeomen services in field of education, medical and social services as establishment of schools, colleges and hospitals to the downtrodden communities.⁴⁵ All the missionary organizations in Andhradesa established numerous schools and colleges for the Boys and Girls to develop the education.

The Christian organizations on their part they were very vigorous about the development of female education. However, it is very difficult to give exact number of girls are educated before 1830 in the mission schools. According to one missionary namely, Rev. Henry Huizinga, the total not more than 2000. Nevertheless, the number rose to over 13,000 in 1855 while at that time not a single girl had yet found entrance to any state or native school. In 1882, the number of girls in mission schools had again increased in five times to over 72000.⁴⁶

As already observed that there was a minimal initiation had shown in regard to the education of girls or women. But nineteenth century India is marked through a procedure of social reform and intellectual ferment. Through intellectual ferment, we mean an attempt at a critical and creative examination of the modern society with the purpose of transforming it based on modern lines. Further in the nineteenth century, the erudite middle class Indians who were influenced by Western education, strive for the Indian society to rejuvenate socio-cultural renaissance on an account to encounter the British opinion of Indian society was Pre-British (eighteenth century) as a period of stagnation.⁴⁷

British intelligential blamed the evils of Indian society and caste system on far with European society. In this scenario thesis of British, they bring light such as the achievements of Indians in art, literature, philosophy and science. This enquiry into past history led to a new awakening aimed at reforming Indian society, through, doing absent with the evil practices which were bring perpetuated in the name of religion.

The statistical records of literacy had shown female education as very low in the Madras Presidency that including the Telugu speaking areas of Andhra and to the percentage of women literacy was 0.5 only in 1881. However, it increased to 1.8 per cent by 1921.⁴⁸ In the meantime there was some awakening was occurred among the people and the British Indian administration about the education of Indian women. Reformers of Andhra were vigorously worked for the cause and propagation of women education. Female education made a fair start in the towns of Northern Circars like Vijayanagaram, Kakinada and Rajahmundry. The age-long prejudice against female education began to weaken and even girls from higher strata families began joining new schools though their number was low and negligible.⁴⁹ As per the census report of 1911, in regard to Secondary education schools exclusive girls in Madras Presidency which were established by then Government in the Telugu speaking districts of Presidency were only 5. In 1913, a heart-rending essay was published, written by Desabhakta Konda Venkatappayya Pantulu on the issue of

women education, in the then noted Telugu Daily, Andhra Patrika's 'Ugadi Sachka' (Yearbook). This essay also depicted how the Telugu women were backward in regard to employment with compared to Bombay Presidency. If the schools are established only meant for women these would be more useful to mature or adult women. Further in this article also stress the need of industrial training education for women for self-reliance.⁵⁰

Despite the Government effort, the role of missionary societies in the field of education in the Madras Presidency was very vital. With the exception of three Government institutions- the Madras University and the Provincial schools at Rajahmundry and Cuddalore and a few elementary schools supported by subscription in provinces, the education of the country was entirely in the hands of missionaries societies and natives themselves. We have already referred to the unsatisfactory nature of indigenous education as developed by the natives. In the department of elementary instruction the operations of some of the Missionary Societies were on a very considerable scale. In 1854 the society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts supported no less than 186 schools, the majority of which were in the districts of Tinnvelly, Madura, Trichinopoly and Tanjore. In these schools there were over 5,000 scholars of whom about 1,400 were girls. The amount expended by the society in its educational operations, including the cost of erecting and repairing buildings exceeded Rs.40,000 in 1852, and Rs. 30,000 in 1853. The operations of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) were equally extensive, especially in the Tinnevell District. It is reported that at the commencement of 1852 the total number of Mission schools in this Presidency amounted to 1185 with 38,005 pupils; while in the other Presidencies, where the Government schools were more numerous than here and more had been done in the higher branches of education, the aggregate number of Mission schools was only 472 with 26,791 children in attendance. In all the Vernacular Mission schools and in the majority of the English schools the course of instruction was altogether elementary education alone.⁵¹

The Viceroy while appointing the Indian Education Commission in 1882 suggested the Commission to consider this important objective of female education and to recommend the best means of encouraging and attending it. Eventually, the Commission recommended that the female education has to be treated as legitimate charge alike on local, municipal and provincial funds, and that it should receive special encouragement, including liberal conditions of aid, scholarships and stipends, reduced hours of stay in schools, change in syllabi and textbooks to suit the requirements of women. Further it recommended that "grants for 'Zanana' teaching be recognized as a proper charge public funds and be taken under rules which will enable the agencies engaged in that work to obtain substantial aid for such secular teachings as may be tested by an inspectress or other female agency. It was also given priority to impart of education to women at their doorsteps.⁵² Hence, the Hunter Commission has been considered as a landmark in the history of women education in India. K.K. Pillay has rightly opined that "it was not until the Hunter Commission took up the cause of female education, which a consistent effort was made in promoting".⁵³

In addition to the government, missionary organizations and social reformers had shown keen interest to establish the schools for girls. In fact, the first school for girls was established in Bengal and later this enthusiasm spread all over India. In South India, missionaries were the pioneers of higher education the first university college, the first medical school, and the first training college for women being established under the auspices of Missionaries. Moreover, an Indian Bishop of Dornakal rightly points out that, “Christians were everywhere the first to break the shackles in which women were bound and set them free to know and understand the world”.⁵⁴

Conclusion:

Despite the relentless efforts of Christian missionaries to serve the cause of women education and elevation of underprivileged classes, but that there was a taunt on the grounds of proselytisation from the Indians. The services of missionaries drew both praise and sharp criticism. It had not been an easy road. In this scenario, from late nineteenth century they had given share to the Indian men and women of other religions along with religious people and Indian Christians in a secularist concept to reach their objective to promote more education among the Indian people irrespective of community and religious ground. On the other hand, the reformers of India and Andhra were also spawned a fresh approach for progress. Without social reform to substantially improve women’s status, regeneration seemed doomed to failure. Humiliated by their colonial status, Indians of late 19th century were obsessed with the issues of strength and power. They needed an explanation for the weakness that had led to their defeat and an answer to the question of how to build up their strength. If they accepted the 19th century European theory that the status of women was integral to the level and strength of civilization and the European conclusion that Indian traditions were degrading to women’s status, they gained an explanation for their defeat and a remedy for reform.

While the nationalists who originate from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s patriotic novel “Anandamath” (1882) with a notion or slogan of “Bande Mataram” (Hail to Motherland), they admitted that the image of Mother Goddess was grossly neglected and they dedicated to the regeneration of the Mother.⁵⁵ Among them the noted reformer, Vivekananda has popularized an idea of worship of Goddess, reverence of the Motherland and a commitment to female education and improving the status of women became the triple vow of the modern man. However, Vivekananda regarded most of the social reform programmes of his contemporaries as inadequate to the great task of “national reconstruction”. Change was necessary but not through reliance on Western principles, continuous breast-beating about the evils of Hinduism, or leadership by English-educated intellectuals. It must come from the people, guided and educated by the Indian literati.⁵⁶ In spite of Indian antagonism against missionaries in the society the underlying movement for social reform in India was initiated by Christian Missionaries in regard to women education and upliftment depressed classes of India as well as Andhradesa. Even the missionaries may start the missionary work with an embedded concept of proselytisation they could not shown any discrimination on other religious people and they served for the betterment of society irrespective of caste, creed, sex and race - in short they could never breach the principle of secularist ideology of their religion. Indeed, they served the betterment of women education rather than the government. They urged orthodox Hindus to treat Dalits as human beings

and fellowmen. Through the education and flawless service they created social consciousness among women and downtrodden communities to fight against ill-feelings of society and hierarchal caste system and feeling weaker sex of women. However, numerically the development of educational schools and strength of pupils were more in coastal Andhra when compared to the Ceded districts that could be reasoned to tremendous impetus of early missionary work and economic development of earlier area.

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