

Beginnings of Education in Andhra Upto 1854 AD-The Role of Christian Missionaries

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I. INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the English East India company's rule, indigenous system of education was prevalent in Andhra. It consisted of teaching courses in Sanskrit, Arithmetic and Telugu, the teacher making himself seated on a pialat his house, or under a shade of tree. Learning by rote was its character. It did not attempt to inculcate the habit of scientific and critical thinking and spirit of enquiry among the students. For his service the teacher was meagrely paid by the parents of the pupils. These schools had existed for a very long time without any change in their style of functioning. This system continued even after the establishment of the East India Company's government, which in its early stages did not consider education of its subjects as its responsibility. It was in the year AD 1673 that the first school was set up by the East India Company for the education of the children of its employees at fort St. George, at present a part of Chennai. In 1715 St. Mary's Charity School was established at Madras (Chennai) to meet the needs of the growing number of the children of school-going age from the families of the company servants. These facilities were, however, not intended to reach the children of local residents. The East India company was different till 1813 towards the education of the people they ruled. Its main interest was trade, and the acquisition of territory was only a means of creating wealth in India for their investment. While the government was indifferent to providing education to its people, the Christian missionaries took lead in that direction.

Charles Grant, William Wilber Force, Dr. William Carey and Bishop Heber from England were well known for their liberal and missionary thinking. They wanted Christian missionaries to play an active role in the spread of education in India on the western lines. They attacked the prevalent social and religious evils in India and hoped to improve the social conditions by spreading education amongst masses. Charles Grant, the high priest of evangelisms, was an influential director of the company and a member of the British parliament. He remarked that Indian society was in a depraved condition due to ignorance and want of a proper religion. Therefore, he felt that the Indians should be "educated" first and then converted to Christianity. With the constant effort of Charles Grant, the Charter act of 1813 was passed, directing the East India company to allot funds to the tune of one lakh rupees for the spread of education and

removing restrictions on the educational activities of the missionaries. Therefore, he is called "the founder of English education in India". The charter act of 1813 is considered a landmark in the history of education in India. It marked the acceptance of education as the responsibility of state, in the case the East India Company. From that point of time onwards, education policy in India underwent several changes based on the suggestions made from time to time by administrators like Thomas Munro, Macaulay, Charles Wood, William Hunter and lord Curzon, as a result of which India witnessed steady progress in the spread of western education. However, not until Thomas Munro became the governor pf Madras presidency in 1820 that any serious effort was made in this direction in the presidency. For instance, even the meagre amount of funds allocated for education was not fully utilized for that purpose.

In 1822, Munro made an enquiry into the state of indigenous education. This was the first educational enquiry conducted on systematic lines in all the twenty districts of the presidency. This survey threw light on the fact that out of every 67 in the population of the Andhra districts, only one was receiving education. Most of the schools were lower grade ones and supported by the European settlers. Teaching in these schools was confined to reading, writing and arithmetic. In no school were the science subjects taught. The categorisation of schools was not clear, and the grants were not adequate to meet the expenditure involved. Munro found that the conditions of education in the province were not only inadequate but even those available were unevenly distributed in different parts of the presidency. This was on account of the absence of encouragement from government on the one hand and poverty of the people on the other. Therefore, in his minute dated 10th march 1826, Munro proposed the establishment of two Collectorate schools, one for Hindus and another for Muslims, in each the district head-quarters and one tahsildaree school in each tahsil or taluk of the province. The total cost was estimated at Rs. 50,000 per annum. Meanwhile, a committee of public instruction was constructed in AD 1826 in presidency to recommend systematic measures for promoting education among the people. A training school was started at Madras in 1826 to train teachers for the Collectorate schools, and one batch of teachers come out of it in 1827.

DR. M. RAMA DEVI

Subsequently, Munro's proposals for the Collectorate and tahsildaree schools were sanctioned by the court of directors in 1828. The schools were to be free from caste distinctions. By 1830, several tahsildaree schools and fourteen Collectorate schools were established. Instruction in the tahsildaree schools was in local languages. The Collectorate schools offered courses in English, European languages and sciences along with Telugu and other local languages. After the death of Munro (1827), the education scheme envisaged by him came to be neglected. Meanwhile, the issue of renewing the company's charter came up for discussion in the British parliament directed the company to review the state education in India and make provision for its progress. According to it East India company appointed a commission with Macaulay, the law member in governor-general's council as chairman, to study the issues and recommend measures to improve the situation. Macaulay submitted his report in 1835. This report recommended allotment of rupees one lakh in the Indian budget for education and its use for the support of English education and language, and also to adopt the curriculum prevalent in British schools. After its acceptance by the governor-general William Bentinck in his proceedings, dated 7th march 1835, the Madras government stopped funds to the Collectorate and tahsildaree schools later year, and abolished them in the following year.

Since 1836, when the schools under the Munro scheme were abolished, no steps were taken to promote indigenous education by the government. Amidst such uncertainties, a ray of hope was seen in Andhra, in the form of the initiative taken by George Noble Taylor, sub-collector of Godavari district (1852). That was the time when the people of Godavari region were anxious to have their children educated. At the initiative of George Noble Taylor. A society came into existence, local people being its members. With a view to promote educational activities in the region. An Anglo-vernacular school (1852) at Narsapur, the headquarters of the sub-division of the district, and three of its branch schools, one each at Palkol (palakollu), Penukonda (west Godavari district) and Achanta, were set up and supported by the local subscribers and managed by committees consisting of leading citizens of the places concerned. When the education was receiving scanty attention of the government, the Christian missionaries took initiative in the spread of education to the extent their resources permitted in the Madras presidency, of which Andhra was a part. Christianity arrived in India even before the European colonial powers did. Tradition in the Syrian orthodox community reveals that the arrival of Christians in India took place in the 1st century AD.

Origin of the present system of education in India is to be sought in the activities of early Christian missionaries. The earliest to enter the field of missionary in India were the Roman Catholics. As soon as the Portuguese had gained a hold in this country, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit and other Roman Catholic Missionaries began to arrive and organise institutions in different parts of the Portuguese possessions

for the evangelisation. The institutions started by them were divided into four categories-

- Portuguese and Latin schools for elementary education attached to churches and missionary stations.
- Orphanages for Indian children, in which, besides the elementary instruction, industrial and agricultural work was also provided to the pupils.
- Jesuit colleges for higher studies.
- Seminars for theological instruction and to train candidates for priest-hood.

The London Missionary Society (LMS), protestant by denomination, which was set up in 1795, sent its first missionary, the Rev. Mr. Forsyth, to India in 1798. The other missionaries of the LMS to follow him to the Madras presidency were the Rev. George Cran and the Rev. Augustus Des Granges. They commenced their work in Madras by opening a school in 1805, and another school for the children of Europeans and Indians at Visakhapatnam in 1806, at a time when East India Company was strongly opposed to educational activities of the Christian missionaries. Thus Andhra got a missionary school for the first time in 1806. In a course of time, a number of schools were set up in different parts of the Madras presidency, including Andhra. As soon as they acquired sufficient knowledge of Telugu, they translated some portions of scriptures and articles of the church of England into Telugu. They got the assistance of a converted Brahmin, Anandarayan from tranquebar, for this translation work. But both the missionaries died quite early, Cran in 1809 and Des Granges, the following year. But even before they died, two missionaries, Gordon and Lee arrived to take charge of the mission from Granges. In Bellary district, which was then considered as part of Andhra region but at present in Karnataka, the LMS set up a mission in 1810 under Rev. J. Hands. The mission established a native school and a charity school along with a church at Bellary. The work of LMS was the first attempt to set up schools in Andhra region.

Whatever be the character of the early educational activities of the missionaries in general, it must be accepted, they introduced a new system of education in India by establishing schools in all parts of the country, including Andhra region. They introduced a new organisation, previously not known in this country. They taught a wider curriculum covering subjects like grammar, history and geography along with religious instruction. They were the first to write and print text books, and they introduced regular school hours. Schools were managed either by a singular teacher or sometimes by more than one teacher for systematic class-instruction. The charter act of 1813 came into existence with two important educational issues. One was the company's acceptance of responsibility or providing education to its Indian subjects. The other was the permission to the Christian missionaries to go to India and work in the territories of the company for the education and proselytization of the vulnerable sections of the Indian society. Consequently, there followed a great missionary

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activity from 1813 onwards in all parts of the company's dominions in India, including Andhra. Armed with the company government's permission, the missionary societies, which had already been existing in India, intensified their activities. New missionary societies came into field. Baptist missionary society, the church missionary society, the Wesleyan mission and Scottish missionary society were important ones among them. London missionary society, an already established Christian organisation, opened its branches at several places in Andhra.

The Anglican model of church administration was introduced in India by setting up a Bishop at Calcutta and other priests for each of the three presidencies, that is Calcutta, Bombay and Madras to be maintained from Indian revenues. In Andhra area, after the death of Cran and Granges of the LMS, the work was taken up by the Rev. John Gordon Pritchett. Lee set up a branch mission at the town of Ganjam, now in Orissa. The New testament was translated from the original Greek into Telugu by the Rev. Pritchett. It was in two volumes, comprising 888 pages' octavo. Gordon and Pritchett prepared a version of New testament, which was printed in the Madras commercial press years for the mission. By 1827, there were 12 schools with 525 students in Visakhapatnam under LMS. During the great famine of 1835, many poor people of the district brought their children to the missionaries. The wives of the Rev. J. W. Gordon and Rev. E. Porter gave all the necessary support to the native girls, numbering around a hundred and taught in their boarding school, which was later transferred to Srikakulam. The Bentinck resolution of 1835 based on Macaulay minute was still an experiment and a matter of contradiction in the education policy in India under the company rule. The Madras government spent the least amount for the education department owing to the lack of mutual understanding, amidst many other reasons, between the company government and the supreme government in England. So during the period 1835-54, whatever be the policy followed by the Madras government and the East India company, missionaries continued their educational activities in Andhra districts. Collectorate and tahsildaree were abolished in 1836, with the sole idea of promoting English education, as already alluded to. The government policy wavered in the field of education with an alarming uncertainty. The natives of Andhra districts reverted to the old system of primary education and higher learning of Sanskrit. But their needs and aspirations for the new system or western system of education were met and fulfilled but the several missionary institutions.

Both protestant and catholic missionaries, mostly protestant societies from Europe and America, imparted good education in Andhra region, thus filling the gap caused by the uncertain education policy of the government. The LMS started a new branch at Cuddapah in 1824. Besides, the society for the propagation of Gospel (SPG) at Cuddapah, the American Baptist mission at Visakhapatnam, the Godavari delta mission at Narsapur (in the present west Godavari district), the north German missionary society at

Rajahmundry (in the present east Godavari district), the evangelical Lutheran church, Guntur, the church mission society, Masulipatam (in the present Krishna district) were other important missions in Andhra. The LMS at Cuddapah commenced its work under the guidance of Rev. W. Howell, schools were opened, and a few converts were baptized in Cuddapah. And their number increased later. By the year 1835, J. H. Gordon of the LMS set up two boarding schools at Visakhapatnam. By 1837 a collegiate institution was founded, and in 1840 a printing press was set up in the same town. The Godavari delta mission was opened by W. Bowden and George Bear, at Narsapur in 1837. By the year 1840, the Rev. S. S. Day, the first American Baptist missionary settled at Nellore, 108 miles north of Madras. He preached the tenets of Christianity both in English and Telugu.

Robert Thurlington noble of Cambridge exercised remarkable influence over all the young men of higher castes at Masulipatanam where he worked hard for the evangelisation through education. A memoir of his devoted life was written and published in 1867 by his brother. J. N. Noble Rector of Netherboughton. R. T. Noble arrived at Madras on 4th July 1841. On October 28th 1841, he arrived at Masulipatnam. He commenced his work at Masulipatnam on 13th November 1843, with his two masters, two pupils and two pairs of subjects for teaching 'Bible' and 'Bhagavadgita' Euclid and Geography. It became a daily teaching school, with regular routine. With the duties discharged by the Noble as the head of the school, it came to be the native English school for the education of the upper classes. As a missionary and educationist among the higher castes in south India, in order to organise a native ministry, he commenced his work at Masulipatnam in 184, and within four years, he showed some striking results. The eminent ministry, the founder of Masulipatnam mission, had the same name as Robert De Nobili, the founder of the Madura mission, who exercised wonderful influence over the pupils in the school. Noble devoted his whole life-time to the missionary work. He explained that his mission was confined to the higher castes as he desired, because the Brahmins among the Hindus are venerated. He also explained that bearing a priestly character, they were the most favoured offspring to God, and all castes look up to them with deference. "Christianise the Brahmins and all the other orders will feel the gracious influence", was his opinion. His school gradually filled with Brahmins and other higher castes. It progressed as the number of pupils in got increased. The lower standards classes in the school became crowded. Besides reading the holy scriptures, the subjects taught in the school were, Bible stories and Grammar, Geography, History, Euclid, arithmetic and so on.

There were also examinations, and the system of rewards was suggested by Noble. The school with the facility of English and vernacular instruction at Masulipatnam was the only school of higher kind between Madras and Rajahmundry. Noble wanted to see the mission and schools well supplied with educated teachers of humble, earnest,

pious and heavenly wisdom. But his activities continued here in Andhra till the time of his death. Thus, the Christian missionaries of various denominations carried on their missionary work to spread the message of Gospel, for which they chose the spread of education among the people belonging to all sections of the society as a means. In the process, the people got the benefit of education, through in a moderate measure, both in the religious as well as secular sectors. The effort of the Christian missionaries in this direction gradually appealed to the conscience of the natives, p. in Andhra and found patronage extended to it by them, both from the zamindari section and also from the common people, as they felt the need of education of the public.

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