

'Women's Education and Social Transformation' with Th Special Reference to the Role of Christian Missionaries in Kerala

Beena Dominic, Dr.C.Amritha Jothi

Abstract— Social Transformation is the process of change or the formation of value system in the fullest sence. Globalization has presented new challenges in the realization of the goal of transforming women and now women transformation has become the slogan and motto of many social reformers, governmental agencies and voluntary organization. There is a long cherished wish among all the women to have better avenues in life in order to lead the life in a more fruitful way. The paper deeply goes through the historical trends on women's education in Kerala and analyzes how we can transform women to applying education. The study tries to explore the theoretical approach of women's education and social transformation and assess the role of missionaries in women's education. The prime aim of this review is to provide a historical framework of women's education and social transformation and to generate new approach about education on the histoirical point of view. The analytical and theoretical techniques are used for preparing this work. The review throws light in analyzing the concept 'Social Transformation' through education by incorporating all divergent views with sufficient logical reasoning. It also explains the problems faced and the possibilities ahead on achieving women's transformation.

Index Terms— Christian missionaries, Globalization, Social Transformation, Women's education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Social transformation of women is a crucial factor in the sustainable development of a nation. It is a global issue being discussed in the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns. Since women constitute nearly half of the population, their contribution to the education is of great importance in the building of a nation. The most prominent feature of the 19th century Kerala was the revival of education on entirely new line which transformed the society of Kerala from medievalism to modernism. The education among women was one of the main items of the educational programme in the 19th and the following centuries. Here Christian missionaries played a vital role to transform women folk through education. Education can help to aware of their situations and ignorance of life, which enhance them to criticize in practical point of view. Thus they try to overcome the hurdles of life and forming their personalities in qualitative level.

2. Theoretical Frame work of Social transformation

In this section there are number of theories and educational innovations to explore the relationship between education and social transformation

Paulo Freire (1921- 1997), the Brazilian educationalist has left a significant mark on thinking about this concept. Freire assume that the learners must understand their own reality as part of their learning activity. In his well known work 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', he refers to traditional role learning as a banking system where students store deposits of knowledge made by the teacher (Freire Paulo, 1970). Through the liberation

and education, he aims to narrow the gap between the teacher and the student thus increasing the students' creative power. Central to this model is open communication and earnest dialogue between the student and the teacher. This challenges the teacher to demonstrate their humanity and that they are not 'above' the student. In problem-posing education, people

develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world in which they find themselves, they come to see the world not as at static in reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation.

According to Sri Ghose Aurobindo (1872- 1950) the Indian born and Cambridge educated scholar, with the transformation and growth of the individual, society would in turn transformation and evolve (Peeter Heechs, 1989). To Mahatma Gandhi, truth, non-violence and passive resistance were successfully used as an instrument of social and political transformation. He believed that education can play an effective role in developing a whole some human personality capable of resisting war, violence, injustice and oppression and building a social order where in man can live in peace and harmony with others. (Rajput J.S, 1998).

3. Conceptional Analysis of Social Transformation

The literal meaning of social transformation is a marked change in the form of a society. If the concept is taken literally, we can possibly never see a society which does not experience a 'transformation' in social terms at all. Societies have always been transformed through social processes. However, as an independent concept it appeared in a particular contextual basis, this same multidimensional context was the driving force behind UNESCO's organization of the MOST (Management of Social Transformation) programme. This programme launched a growing social scientific concept, 'Social transformation'. When we discuss the concept of 'Social transformation', we should consider that this concept has been produced and is still reproducing in the ideological streams of the 90's and 20's. When we mention 'Social transformation' as a newborn concept, we are referring to something more than the literal meaning of these two words. It is a multidimensional concept based on studies in the last century of a broad range of relevant fields like economic, literature and sociology. One

of the defining characteristics of social transformation is that it does not stipulate specific societal changes. Thus protecting its general route of the societies that takes its way in a positive direction. (Castle, 2000). It could be said that 'Social transformation' is not a completed scientific term, but rather a concept still in its infant stages. As Stephen Castles emphasizes 'Social transformation' implies an underlying notion of the way society and culture change in response to such factors as economic growth, war or political specific sense. According to Castle, it should be established an analytical framework which is particularly relevant to the current historical period. In other words, 'Social transformation' studies could be seen as a new interdisciplinary paradigm which we wish to develop social transformation studies emerge as a research field that can lead to theorizing positive social and political actors to protect locals and communities against the negative consequences of the globalization process(Castle 2000).

4. Women in Kerala during 19th Century

Today the women of Kerala have distinguished themselves in the various sectors of public life in India and abroad. In the field of Indian sports, female athletes from Kerala are among the record setters in several sports events. In the 19th century in Keala, the situation was entirely different; in fact the birth of a girl was not usually a welcome event. In 1820, one of the LMS missionaries wrote: A female despised as soon as she is born. She comes into the world amidst the frowns of her parents and friends; disappointed that the child is not a boy. In the 19th century Kerala women were very much bound by the rules and customs of society. It was definitely a patriarchal society and women had no freedom either at home or in the society or in the church. Women were totally subject to men.

During the 19th century the condition of Kerala women in the economic field was very deplorable. They were defined equally with men and hence they had no share of the family property. They were married off at an early age and dowry given to her become the property of the husband. She was supposed to do the duties at home be a good wife and mother. She had no right to go for a job and earn money. They were facing three major problems in the economic field.

- No right to inherit family property which had been divided for boys only, it was in the case of upper class Brahmin women. But Nadar women enjoyed the right to own property and right of inheritance.
- No right to property. They followed marumakkathayam system of inheritance
- Upper class women had no right to seek job and earn money. But lower sections were unskilled laborers.

They had no freedom in the social level. They were subjected to a lot of restrictions. Consequently many protest programmes were started. One such event was the agitation called. 'Melmunduprakshobham' or uproar over the upper cloth. The 'channar' community or the Nadars of South Travancore fought for the right of their women to cover their upper part of the body with cloth like that of the higher caste women. Traditionally the channar woman being lower castes

were not permitted to wear jackets.

5. Role of Christian Missionaries in female education in Kerala

One of the most significant characteristics of modern Kerala is the advancement of women in the field of education. A century and a half ago, education of women was considered as profane and immoral. But today education is no more considered the right of a particular sex or caste. This change in Kerala was brought about by the spread of education. In this context, the activities of the missionary societies- the LMS, CMS and BEMS became significant because of its pioneering works and distinguished contributions in the field of women's education and their social transformation. (R.J.Hepsi Joy, 1995, p.1)

Aims of the Christian missionaries: Kerala was in the cusp of social evils and practices during 18th and 19th centuries. Many social evil like child marriage, sati, smarthu, pula Pedi and dowry etc. tortured the women folk of Kerala. During this situation the missionaries were convinced that education is the only weapon for eradication of these evils. So they started educational activities for the upliftment of women in Kerala. Their motivation was summarized as religious and humanitarian concerns.

- Evangelization for Christ was the main aim of the missionary society. So they used education as the main instrument of the spread of gospels.
- To raise the status of women folk in the society.
- To give employment opportunities through vocational education
- To eradicate the social evils prevailed in the society.

5.1. London missionary society (LMS)

William Tobias Ringeltaube, the pioneer missionary of the London Missionary Society began his work in South Travancore in 1806. Wherever the missionaries started churches, schools were also opened and in all these places educational facilities were extended to girls also. They started different types of institutions such as girl's school, boarding schools, bazaar schools, day schools, caste girl's schools, English schools, village schools, evening schools, vernacular schools, Anglo-vernacular schools, training schools, and a college. The first school for girls was established in 1819 in Nagercoil by Johanna Mead.(Sr. Jossy,1997,p.13) Then they started schools in several places in Neyoor, Trivandrum, Parassala, Quilon, Vakkom, and Attingal. The starting of separate schools for girls and the introduction of co- educational system of education were two important contributions of the missionaries to the development of women's education. For higher education Scott Christian College was established at Nagercoil and it provided higher education to women also.

The missionaries showed particular interest in the development of female education, irrespective of caste or creed. Free boarding, food and clothing provided at the beginning was a blessing to the slaves and poor girls. Inspired by the missionaries, the government of Travancore took the responsibility in 1904 for imparting primary education to all children between the age of five and ten irrespective of caste or creed.

Inspired by the educational activities of the missionaries certain local people also promoted female education by starting schools.

LMS missionaries were the first to appoint lady teachers in schools to attract girls. In the selection of teachers the missionaries paid utmost possible attention to their religious and moral fitness along with other academic qualifications. They imparted vocational education along with general education. The lace industry started by the missionaries helped the slave girls to become independent economically. It also provided employment to many and prevented them from going back to their traditional professions. Thus the lace industry, embroidery industry helped to enhance the status of women in the country. The zenana work done by the Bible women helped the spread of education, especially among the women in high caste families. Some of the women in the zenanas were able to read and write. A notable contribution of the mission for the development of women's education in Travancore was the establishment of South Travancore was the establishment of South Travancore Medical Mission. Through the YWCA the missionaries were able to instruct the people regarding village economy and cottage industries such as bee-keeping and poultry keeping.

5.2 Church missionary society (CMS)

Norton, the first missionary of the church missionary society arrived in Alleppey in 1816. The missionaries of the CMS opened schools along with churches. They established different kinds of institutions for the development of education. Parochial schools, seminaries, Syrian girl's schools, boarding schools, village schools, grammar schools, training schools and colleges were some of them. The first school for girls was started by Amelia Baker in Kottayam in 1820. From Kottayam girl's education expanded to several places in Cochin, Alleppey, Mavelikkara, Trichur and Tiruvalla. The earliest pupils were the children of Syrians and high caste Hindus. After 1836, the CMS missionaries admitted pupils in their schools irrespective of caste and creed.

The Baker Memorial Girls' school, the fort school, Christava Mahilalayam and the Buchanan Institutions were some of the famous girl's institutions established by the missionaries of the CMS and these schools had rendered remarkable service for the development of women's education in Kerala. The missionaries included three R's in the curriculum. Besides, girls had to learn English, History, Natural Science, Mathematics, Music Needle Work and Embroidery. Modern higher education in Kerala was started by the CMS missionaries. In the CMS College at Kottayam lady students were also admitted. For the higher education of women, union colleges were started in Madras. Sarah Tucker College, the women's Christian College, St. Christopher's Training College, and the Missionary Medical College for women in Vellore were some of them. The missionaries combined formal education with vocational education and appointed lady teachers in the schools.

The missionaries imparted education to men and women by various means. Bazaar preaching and lantern lec-

tures, medical activities, general instruction classes, training programmes such as leader's training and saving habit training also given.

5.3 Basel Evangelical Missionary Society (BEMS).

Hermann Gundert, the first Missionary of the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society in Malabar arrived in 1839. The missionaries of the BEMS established various kinds of institutions such as boarding schools, day schools, seminaries, preparatory schools, Franco- vernacular schools, infant schools, normal schools, and the College. The first school of the BEMS for girls was established by Julie Gundert in 1839 in Tellicherry. Later schools were established in different places in Cannanore, Chombala, Calicut, Palakkad, Manjeri, Codacal and Vaniyankulam.

The missionaries of the BEMS opened schools for Christian and non- Christian boys and girls and admitted pupils irrespective of caste or creed. They introduced compulsory education among the children of their congregations. Christian parents were bound to send their girls and boys to schools and to educate them till they were about 14 years old. They admitted girls along with boys from the beginning of their endeavors and introduced fees in their schools.

The printing press helped the missionaries to publish books and magazines and it promoted the development of language and literature. The missionaries tried to educate men and women by various means. Bazaar preaching, zenana mission activities, Sunday school classes and distribution of literature were some of them. As a result of vocational education imparted by the missionaries the number of women who earned independently increased every year.

6. Impact of women's education on the Kerala society:

The activities of the missionary societies in the field of women's education have brought about tremendous changes in the society of Kerala. They are given below:

- Attitude towards girl's education: The activities of the missionaries helped to change the attitude of the people towards girl's education.
- Literacy rate: As a result of the activities of the missionaries there was rapid spread of education among the people of Kerala especially among women. In 1947, the percentage of literacy of males was 58.1 and that of females 36.0.
- Development of social awareness: members of each caste became aware of their rights in the society and tried to improve their conditions
- Eradication of social evils: Certain social evils such as sati, smarthas, devadasi system, pula, Pedi etc. disappeared from the society of Kerala.
- Introduction of western culture: The missionaries introduced western education and culture in Kerala.
- Vocational education provided employment opportunities and helped them to enhance their economic status.

Conclusions

The education imparted to women by the missionaries of LMS, CMS, and BEMS brought about revolutionary

changes in the society in general and particularly in the status of women. As a result, woman reached a level of human dignity and honor from a stage of dependency, insecurity and slavery. This helped the emergence of a new social order and cultural revival in Kerala in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Reference

1. Freie Paulo, 'Pedagogy of the oppressed', Sea bury press, New York, 1970.
2. Peeter Heechs, 'Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography', Oxford University press, Delhi, 1989.
3. Rajput. J.S (ed), 'Gandhi on Education', National council for teacher education, New Delhi, 1998.
4. Castle Stephen, 'Social transformation and Globalization', CAPSTRANS Development, 2000.
5. A Sreedhara Menon, 'A survey of Kerala History', S.P.C.S. Ltd., Kottayam, 1967.
6. R.J.Hepsi Joy, 'History and development of Education of women in Kerala', Seminary publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995.
7. Sr. Jossy, 'In the shadow of the most high', Mount Carmel Generalate Aluva, 1997.
8. The Indian economic and social history review, Vol.XLV. No.4, Sage publication, Delhi, Oct-Nov-2008.