



EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION OF SAT IN THENI DISTRICT

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Abstract

This article attempts to highlight the educational contribution of St. Anne's Congregation, Trichy, in Theni district. Education plays a crucial role in the development of nation by providing the required work force to the economy. Education transforms human material into human capital and thereby it forms an indispensable part in the life of rural women. Moreover, education is the wonderful seed for the creativity of the curious people. The St. Anne's Congregation, Trichy, sowed that seed in Theni district in 1910 itself; from its inception it has rendered innumerable services to women, especially rural women in Theni district, through formal and in formal education.

Keywords: *Education, Rural women, SAT, Theni district.*

Introduction

In the words of Herbert Spencer, 'Education is training for the completeness of life'. Education brings perfection to life, which means the growth, and perfection of personality. It qualifies a person to fulfill certain economic, political and social needs and thereby improves the socio economic status of that person. The modern education of women in India formed the phenomenon of nineteenth century and was entirely due to the initiation and execution of Christian missionaries. A bird cannot fly with only one wing; it's both wings must be intact and equally strong. Similarly, no nation can rise without the equal and harmonious development of both men and women. Women can solve their own problems without the intervention of men; only if they get proper education. Historical development of humankind shows that education has formed a continuum and a basis for the development of human society. Because education helps in the creation of attitude, values, and enhancement of capabilities in terms of instilling various skills and knowledge, which in turn provides strength and resistance to people to respond to the changing situations adequately and encourage their meaningful contribution to the society's development. Education, with its dialectical role, can help the women to redefine themselves. For the initiation of process of change, the primary need is the removal of barriers to women's access to education in general and quality education in particular. In Theni district, that effort was taken by St. Anne's Congregation, Trichy, (SAT) in 1910 itself.

The SAT, was started by a widow Rev. Mother Annamma in 1858 in a humble way, has grown far and wide in quantity and quality. Their vocation was to run orphanages, give shelter to girls in distress, take care of the sick, and the like.¹ Annamma, who had experienced the pain of losing her own husband, devoted herself to provide solace and care for other widows. The main apostolate of SAT was establishing Schools for the poorest children, rehabilitation programmes for the widows and they enlighten many through its service of education.

The SAT, set its foot in Theni District in 1910. Agriculture is the major occupation of this people. Poultry farm and cattle rearing are also their occupations. Many industries are also established. However, most villages lack basic amenities. In the beginning of twentieth century, the women in rural areas were in a backward condition. To emancipate the rural women from their bondages the SAT had started many Schools and an Art and Science College, a College of education and two Community Colleges in Theni District. Through their service, they tried to emancipate and empower the rural women. Through educational ministry, the Congregation is offering value based holistic education to develop knowledge and skills and to inculcate moral, social and spiritual values for life in students. Almost all the educational institutions of the Congregation, from kinder garden level to College level, functions in rural areas. Majority of the students in institutions are first generation learners, Children of Dalits, Widows, and unwed mothers, tribal and from rural areas.

Educational Service in Rayappanpatti

Local tradition seems to indicate that the original small group of Udayars migrated into Madurai district during the devastating incursions of Hyder Ali into the Carnatic between 1750 - 1785. First, they seem to have settled down at Ahtoor then they moved on to Kombai.² Under the guidance of Rayappa Udayar twenty Udayar families moved towards the East, selected a fertile land in Cumbam valley, and settled there and named that village as Royappanpatty.³ Besides Catholics, Hindus also settled in this village, Mukkulothor community from Varusanadu, Pallan Community from Negattansevelle,

¹Dr. Leonard Fernando, Dr. Bernard D'Sami, *Born Again Jesuits Back in Tamil Nadu*, Dindigul, 2002 p.187.

²Nobili Pastoral Centre, *Archdiocese of Madurai, Origins, Development*, Madurai, 2013, p.102.

³M.A.Saveriar, *Rayappanpatty, Lady of Snows Church, Centenary year Souvenir*, Thiruchirappalli, 2002, p.12.



Sakkiliyar community from nearby villages also settled here. The Udayar community was more interested in agriculture than in education. In 1910, four Sisters of St. Anne's Congregation went and found a convent at Rayappanpatty. Mr. Rayappa Udayar, donated lands for the sisters of St. Anne's of Trichy.⁴ Another family gave them an acre of paddy fields for their maintenance. All the villagers contributed to their upkeep. In the same year they opened a "day Elementary" School for small girls and a night School for senior girls.⁵

In 1929 The Parish priest of Rayappanpatty. Rev.Fr David S.J got permission from the Government to start a Primary School there, which named as St. Aloysius Primary School. In 1929 the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an indigenous religious Congregation, started its branch at Rayappanpatty.⁶ The Parish priest hand over that Primary School to them. In 1934 the St. Agnes Primary School was run by the St. Anne's Sisters Trichy has got recognition.⁷ St. Aloysius Primary School under the care of Brothers of the Sacred heart of Jesus was soon upgraded into a middle School.⁸ With the opening of the High School in 1964, by the Brothers of the Sacred heart of Jesus, the St. Anne's Sisters Trichy, joined hands with them in running the St. Aloysius High School.

St.Agnes higher Secondary School

In the year 1989 the St. Agnes High School was separated From St. Aloysius Higher Secondary School and run independently by the St. Anne's Sisters, Trichy.⁹ The Strength of the School has been increasing year by year. In 1964 the Strength of the Students was 247, but now the Strength increased to 2826. The first SSLC Examination was conducted in 1967. This School has produced many Doctors,Engineers, Administrative officers, Professors and numerous teachers.

Infant Jesus Nursery and Primary School

Realizing the importance of foundation of the Children in rural areas, St Anne's Congregation Trichy, started a nursery School in 1975 in Royappanpatty. The School served the rural community by bring up the children not only in education, but also in language skill; Yoga, Karate, Keyboard, Dance, Sports and Computer application for the past forty-one years.¹⁰

Educational Service in Hanumanthanpatty

Hanumanthanpatty is located fifty miles away from Madurai in the west in Cumbam valley, It is one of the oldest center's of the Jesuit apostalate in Madurai Mission. The French Fathers found this place ideally located for their mission and it served as an effective link between Tamilnadu and Kerala. Though economically not so prosperous, the parishioners are very strong in faith.

Long before the creation of the Madurai diocese and its mission, Hanumanthanpatty assumed a significant place in the map of the mission in what was called in those days 'the Cumbam Valley'.

This village comprises of more than ten communities. Among them the vellalas and Adidravidas are Catholics. The Vellalas as well as the Udayars of Kombai valley seem to have come from the north through Ahtoor where they settled there and then moved on to Hanumanthanpatty and Kombai. The Adidravidas of Hanumanthanpatty seem to have come from Kottar. This tradition about the Adidravidas of Hanumanthanpatty is supported by the great devotion of that community to St. Francis Xavier.¹¹

This Parish enjoys the service of St. Anne's Sisters of Trichy.¹² In May 1912 the SAT sent Rev. Sr. Oorsul and two other sisters to Hanumanthanpatti, In the beginning first two classes were started, two sisters worked in the School and one sister was engaged in preaching catechism.¹³ They were working in the St. Joseph's Middle School which belongs to the Diocese, and did their best for the development of women in that area. From 1912, they joined hands with the parish priests in all the problems and sacrificed a lot to uplift the village especially the women folk in that area.

⁴ Dr.S. Peter Roy, Dr. M. John Diraviam, *The Great Bridge, The Heroic story of the Arch Diocese of Madurai*, 2013,p.95.

⁵ Rev.Fr Besse.S.J., *New Madurai Mission*. (trans) Rev.FrL.Moumas,S.J.,vol I,p.236.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.155.

⁷ St.Aloysius Higher Secondary.School, Rayappanpatty, *Silver Jubilee, Souvenier*, pp.1-2.

⁸ *Nobili Pastoral Centre, Op.cit*, p.275.

⁹ Notice Board.,St.Agnes Girls Higher Secondary.School.,Rayappanpatty.

¹⁰ Infant Jesus Nursery and primary School, Rayappanpatty, *Annual Report*, 2015-2016, p.1

¹¹ *Nobili Pastoral centre, Op.cit*, p.53.

¹² *Ibid*, p.94.

¹³ Maria province, *Silver Jubilee year Souvenier*,2007,p.66.



Educational service in Uthamapalayam

Uthamapalayam which was a substation of Hanumanthanpatty till 1986 has a Christian community older than that of Hanumanthanpatty. The Dalit Christians here seem to have been converted by the Missionaries from Kerala even before the beginning of the Jesuit Madura Mission of De Nobili in 1606. During the 17th and 18th centuries this place had been ministered by the Jesuit fathers coming from Madurai residence.¹⁴ It was said that, Apostle St. Thomas used to cross Uthamapalayam during his voyage from Kottayam to Mayilapore. An ancient highway between these two places passed through Pandya Nadu.¹⁵ According to belief, from that time itself Christianity began to spread in this area.

In 1913 the SAT sisters came to Uthamapalayam for preaching catechism and social service. In 1918 the primary school was started for the downtrodden people. In 1962 that school was elevated as Middle school, three sisters including a Headmistress are working in this school. In 1986 a hostel was started for the children of tea estate workers. In 1990, working women's hostel was started. St. Joseph's R. C. Middle school was upgraded as high school in 2005-2006.¹⁶

Educational service in Periyakulam

Periyakulam is a municipal town situated at the foot of Kodai hills of Western Ghats. As it is supplied with good water from Southparai, and Perijam Dams, agriculture thrives well in that area. Hence, many people came from different parts of the state and settled here. Mostly from Kodaikanal, people migrated to Periyakulam for livelihood options.

St. Anne's Higher Secondary School

In 1914, the Bishop of Trichy requested the Mother General of SAT to send some Sisters to Periyakulam for educational service. The Sisters came and started the night school and then primary school for children, in Periyakulam. In the beginning they stayed at the place for toilet purpose, later seeing the service of the sisters the people gave the present land. In 1923 the Government gave recognition to I to III Stds. In 1935 V Std was started. Three sisters worked in the school. In 1960 the school was elevated as Middle school upto VIII Std. In 1996 it became the High school, from 2000, it became Higher Secondary School.¹⁷

Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women

Until recently, the area remained educationally, socially and economically backward, a hot bed of communal clashes, casteism, illiteracy, pervading superstition, dowry deaths, honour killing, female infanticide and more. There was no College exclusively for women in this area. To get higher education, the girls had to travel more than 85 kms to Madurai and most of the parents couldn't afford to send their daughters to cities for higher education paying the course and hostel fees as well. After completing their schooling, the girls remained at home idle, prone to many problems and they had no scope of getting a decent and well paid job, hence girl children were considered as a burden.¹⁸

The members of the illustrious Jayaraj Nadar family took the pioneering efforts. They approached Rev. Mother Lucy Crescentia Mary, Mother General of St. Anne's Congregation, in 1968. With her rich experience in the field of girls education, came forward to launch on this maiden venture of St. Anne's Congregation. Jayaraj Annapackiam College, the temple of learning and the laboratory of moulding the character of young women, was started on 5th July 1971 by the combined efforts of Rev. Mother Lucy Crescentia Mary, and Jayaraj Chelladurai family. Since then it has been fondly nurtured with Christian values and carefully raised upto a successful educational institution by the service of able and dedicated administrators of Sisters of SAT.

In the beginning the Pre University class was started. The strength of the Pre-University class was 254. On 11th July, 1971 after one man's commission from the Madurai Kamaraj University, affiliation was granted to start B.A. Degree Course. Followed that numerous aided courses were started. In course many aided and unaided P.G courses, U.G unaided courses, M.Phil, and Ph.D courses were also started. Today many of the departments became Research centres.¹⁹ In the academic year 2001 – 2002 National Assessment and Accreditation Council, granted Accreditation to the college for five years with four stars.²⁰ In 2003 the affiliation of the College was transferred from Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai to Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal.²¹ In 2004 Autonomous status was granted to the college by University Grants

¹⁴ Peter Roy, M. John Diravium, *Op.cit*, p.102

¹⁵ Fr.Thamburaj, *Archdiocese of Madurai Origin and Development*, Madurai, 1922, p.1.

¹⁶ Maria province, *Silver Jubilee year Souvenir*, 2007, pp. 64-65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 64 - 67.

¹⁸ C.J.Hemanth, Angelina Hemanth., *S.G.Jayaraj Chelladurai, Remembering a legend.*, pp.37 - 38

¹⁹ Lr.No.02 / WU / Rr / Affi / 2013 dated 12 – 04 – 2013.

²⁰ RefNo. NAAC / A & A / outcome / 2001 / 13231 dated 05 – 11 – 2001.

²¹ TN Govt Gazette No 69, dated 16 – 10 – 2002. Lr. No AC1 / WU / RR / 2003 dated 30 – 06 – 2003



Commission. The Autonomous status was confirmed from the year 2004 – 2005 to 2009 - 2010.²² To shape the personality of young women, a diploma course on Gandhian Thought and Dramatics were introduced.²³ The Certificate courses in Flash, Communicative and Functional English, Tourism and Travel Management were also introduced.²⁴ In January 2011, the Autonomous status was extended from 2011 – 2012 to 2016 – 2017. In 2014 JAC was reaccredited by NAAC with “A” grade in third cycle. It will be valid upto May 2019.²⁵

The JAC is the first Autonomous College in Theni District and distinguished as the First grade College among the Colleges affiliated to Mother Teresa Women’s University, Kodaikanal. Besides academic Excellence the college aims at personalized education, inculcating a sound philosophy of life, strengthening their moral and spiritual values and developing their interests and talents. It moulds them into intellectually well trained women, with an edifying awareness of woman hood, to confront the challenges of love, peace and justice. Ever since its inception, the college carries on her onward march to achieve its goals and objectives, under the guiding principle of her motto “Serve with Love”. While the class room whets the appetite for knowledge, the co – curricular and extra – curricular activities mould an integrated personality. N.C.C, was launched in 1973, N.S.S, in 1976 and NAEP in 1978.²⁶ In 2005 the Satellite based education centre was introduced, JACEP Jayaraj Annackiam College Extension Programme was established. In 2010 Career oriented courses in English, and a certificate course in Human Rights and Duties Education was introduced. In 2013 Career oriented course in Commerce was introduced.

The JAC followed compassionate admission policy in admitting the students. Preference given to educationally, economically and socially backward students from rural area, Orphans, first generation learners, Physically challenged persons, daughters of the destitute and ex – service men.²⁷ JAC produced numerous graduates in the past forty five years. In 2015-2016 the students strength was 2455²⁸. The dedication and devotion of the sisters has been a steady path of success for the College. It is actualizing the founders vision- Liberation and empowerment of poor; marginalized and oppressed rural young women for four and a half decades.²⁹

St. Anne’s College of Education

St. Anne’s College of Education was started on January 2nd 2006, as an affiliated College of Mother Teresa Women’s University.³⁰ Its aim is to provide linkage to the emerging graduates and post graduates in the rapidly changing employment scenario, facilitating quality teacher education, thereby laying a strong foundation for future and to enhance the employability of socially, economically, and educationally backward women.

St. Anne’s Community College

In Theni District, 90 - 95 percent children of the age group 6-11 years, are enrolled in primary schools. At the secondary stage where children are aged between 11 - 15 years, the strength is reduced to 75 percent. In addition, the situation worsens at the higher secondary stage where only 24 percent of children between the ages of 15 - 17 pursue any kind of studies, due to the economic and social background.³¹ Most villages lack basic amenities. Unemployment is widespread in these villages. Technical education needs to be spread and youth need to be trained to become self-employed. Therefore, the Sisters decided to establish Community College in Periyakulam to give education to the downtrodden and backward people.³²

The St. Anne’s Community College was established on 28th July 1999. It is affiliated to National Institute of Open Schooling NIOS / TNOU Tamil Nadu Open University, which provides career-oriented courses to the rural women, especially school dropouts and married women, to make them employable and procure them easy access to jobs. Provisional Accreditation for Vocational Institution was given by NIOS in the year 2002.³³ The College functions with a motto of “Find the need and meet it”. The College strives to meet the needs of the community by identifying and assisting those who need for services, stimulating the development and serving as a resource centre for community based initiatives. The College is committed to provide equal opportunities for all individuals in obtaining access to programmes, services and employment.³⁴

²² F.13 – 2004 dated 18 – 08 – 2004.

²³ No. CO2 / 6 / 80 / 81.

²⁴ Official Record, JAC, File.

²⁵ Annual Report, JAC, 2015 – 2016, p.2

²⁶ Annual Magazine, JAC, 1995-96, pp.23-33.

²⁷ NAAC Report, JAC

²⁸ Attendance register, JAC,

²⁹ C.J.Hemanth, Angeline Hemanth., *Op.cit*, pp.38-40.

³⁰ F.SRO / NCTE / B.Ed / 2005 – 2006 / 4915, dated 23 – 12 – 2005.

³¹ Project Statement, *Op.cit*, p.1

³² Annual Report, *ST. Anne’s Community College, Periyakulam*, 2003, p.1

³³ NIOS/DIR (VOC)AL (ECE) 2002 Dated, 1 – 12 – 2002.

³⁴ *Institutional Statement Origin and the History of Periyakulam ST. Anne’s Community College*, p.1



It uses different educational methods to give employment training. It was started on the model of European and American Community Colleges. Education is given on the basis of employment opportunities adopted in this area. In the beginning Recognition was given to the courses

- Early Childhood Care and Education
- Certificate in Computer Applications
- Certificate course in Desk Top Publishing³⁵

The Trainings Offered are

- Life skill Development
- Employment skill Development
- Field Training in Industries
- Self-employment training³⁶

In 2010 Tamil Nadu Open University has given recognition to the courses,

- Diploma in Desk Top Publishing Operator - DDTP
- Early Childhood care and Education (Kindergarten) - DECE
- Health Assistant - DHA
- Fashion Design and Garment making -DFGM³⁷

Three years extension approval was given to the St.Anne's Community College to offer Tamil Nadu Open University Vocational Education Programmes in 2013.³⁸ Certificate of Accreditation was given in 2014 for the courses,

Diploma and Certificate Courses Offered

- Certificate course in Cutting and Tailoring – module I Six months
- Certificate course in Dress making - module II Six months
- Certificate course in Cutting Tailoring and Dress making – one year
- Certificate course in Secretarial Practice – one year
- Certificate course in Typewriting – one year
- Certificate course in Nursing Assistant – one year³⁹

In the beginning language and life skill development training was given. Nearly 90% of Community Colleges were involved in selecting employment-oriented programs from TNOU for its women learners and best Delivery Methods using innovative technologies. Community Colleges have partnerships with industrial houses for hands on training to its women learners, which makes them eligible for employment in relevant industries. The system of the Community for the community, and by the community produces, skill based, and life-coping education. The key attributes are accessed, flexibility in curriculum and teaching methodology, cost effectiveness and equal opportunity. All this is in collaboration with industrial, commercial and service sectors of the local area and responding to the social needs and issues of the local community.⁴⁰

In the year 1999 - 2000, only 18 students completed the course, now nearly 2830 students have successfully completed their course. From 2010 – 2011 some physically challenged persons were also admitted, It has Tie-up with many Institutions for employment, Most of the persons were placed in various institutions in and around Theni district.⁴¹

JAC Community College

The JAC Community college was started by the Jayaraj Annapackiam college administration in the year 2014. In the beginning they introduced two courses, Diploma in Healthcare, and Diploma in Desk Top Publishing, with fifty students admitted in each course. In the year 2015, diploma in Beauty culture and skincare were also introduced with fifty students. All the courses are free one year course. Eight staff members are appointed. The qualification for the students is twelfth pass. There is no age limit. The students sent for one-month compulsory internship. Diploma in Desk Top Publishing students are

³⁵ NIOS/AD (A Cad – 1) DTP/ 2003 Dated 10 – 06 – 2003.

³⁶ Annual Report, *ST. Anne's Community College, Periyakulam, 2000, p.3*

³⁷ F.No.TNOU/ CC/ Reg/01 Dated 09-02-2010.

³⁸ F.No.TNOU / CC Extension / 2013 dated 11 – 07– 2013.

³⁹ NIOS / SSS / Minority cell / 690033 / 2013.

⁴⁰ Project Statement, *Op.cit, p.2*

⁴¹ *Ibid, p.1*



sent to Kalvi institute in Theni, diploma in Beauty culture and skincare students are sent to Pinklash Beauty Parlour, Periyakulam, Diploma in Healthcare students are sent to the Government hospital, Kanavilakku.

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St. Anne's Jayaraj Chelladurai Matriculation School

Sensing the need of starting a quality matriculation school in Periyakulam town and trusting the dedication and hardwork of the SAT sisters, Mr. Chelladurai donated to the congregation, a prime property of nearly seven acres of land in Madurai – Periyakulam Road, to start a matriculation school. St. Anne's Jayaraj Chelladurai Matriculation School constructed there is being efficiently managed by a team of well-qualified sisters and teachers and is providing valuable service to the children in the neighbourhood.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The employment generating educational institutions of SAT helped the improvement in the life standards of both the Christians and non-Christians in the villages of Theni district. In the agriculture-ridden society, the educational mobility led to occupational mobility. This obviously led to an enormous change in the society. The SAT has produced remarkable changes in the social and cultural setup of Theni district. They run free hostel and orphanage for girls attached to educational institution to help the children of economically backward parents. Lot of girls from the tea estates of Cumbam valley, the first learners are staying at this hostel. The SAT focus on the empowerment and self-reliance of the poor to remake their future by a collective action for social transformation. The SAT helps many backward people in conversion. The entry of the backward people into Christianity has become a means for dignified life and higher status in the society. They are acting as a liberated force from the caste-ridden society. A purposeful and concerted attempt has made by sisters in ameliorating the conditions of the untouchables. Offering them awareness education and motivation to act collectively.

⁴² F.SRO / NCTE / B.Ed / 2005 – 2006 / 4915, dated 23 – 12 – 2005.

⁴³ Annual Report, St. Anne's College of education, Periyakulam.

⁴⁴ C.J.Hemanth, Angeline Hemanth, **Op.cit**, p. 41