

Contribution Of Bishop Robert Caldwell To Education And Religion In Tirunelveli Region

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How to cite this article: T.K. Stantley David, E. Subash (2024) Contribution Of Bishop Robert Caldwell To Education And Religion In Tirunelveli Region. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 5878-5882.

Abstract

The aim of this article is to illustrate the educational and religious contributions of Bishop Robert Caldwell in and around Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. With Idayangudi serving as his headquarters, Bishop Caldwell, a European missionary and unparalleled writer and scholar, carried out his duties. Idayangudi is located 65 Km from Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu, India. He wrote a great deal, including his opus magnum. His 1879 work "The History of Tinnevely" is an enduring legacy he left for future generations. It is also evident that the district has produced a number of notable figures in the contemporary field of Tamil journalism. This article focuses on Bishop Robert Caldwell's services to education and religion in the Tirunelveli District and its environs.

KEY WORDS

Bishop Robert Caldwell, Eliza Caldwell, Idayangudi, Holy Trinity Church, Tamil Scholar

INTRODUCTION

Caldwell was well aware of the value of knowledge transfer. In practically every village where they established Christian congregations, the older missionaries in Tirunelveli, particularly those from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) missionaries, had established elementary schools. Caldwell valued education at every level. Education has always been seen as an effective ally. "Every year's experience working as missionaries in India deepens our belief that, among the best deeds being done for the welfare of the Indian people, the establishment of Boarding Schools for Girls, wherever feasible," The status of the schools in Idayangudi at the time, when Caldwell arrived in 1841, was appalling. He established numerous boys' and girls' schools in and around Idayangudi. Eliza Caldwell became involved in girls' education as soon as she arrived in Idayangudi in 1844. There was relatively little turnout. He so needed to persuade the kids to attend class. since the pupils came from less affluent families. For attending the classes, each child received one rupee every day from him.

CALDWELL AS BISHOP OF TUTICORIN

As the Tinnevely Mission region grew, it was considered as early as 1861 that Tirunelveli should have a suffragan bishop appointed to it. In 1873, Bishop Gell of Madras proposed that Edward Sergeant (CMS) and Caldwell (S.P.G.) be elevated to the rank of suffragan bishops. On March 11, 1877, Metropolitan Bishop Johnson installed Caldwell and Sargent as Tinnevely's assistant bishops in Calcutta. Bishop Johnson also suggested that Tuticorin,

with all of its benefits as a developing town, be designated as the S.P.G. headquarters of Tinnevely, and that the college be moved from its original, peaceful nursery to a bigger, more productive field.

Caldwell had similar thoughts: I should make Tuticorin the center of my activity and try to surround myself with all the establishments and institutions that should support it in becoming a powerful, prominent center.

HIS WORK AT TUTICORIN

Caldwell relocated his headquarters from the village of Idayangudi to the coastal town of Tuticorin in 1883 in order to enhance communication. Although the bishop was now closer to Madras, he was still 444 miles away by road and 30 hours away by mail. This was a major operation that involved moving schools and other facilities, but it also gave the bishop better access to the district as a whole. The correspondence during this time period shows glimpses of the fighting between the pious people, enough to make the Angles cry. Expect from CF Pascoe's 1901 book "200 Years of the SPG 1701-1900" about the Missions in "Tinnevely," which describes them as the catalyst for the Tamil revival as it was gaining traction and the crucial role played in this education, as well as female education.

MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES OF CALDWELL

On August 30, 1837, 24-year-old Robert Caldwell boarded the Mary Ann and anchored off Madras, filled with a mixture of awe, worry, and hope. He was getting ready to go to India as a missionary. In Tirunelveli, one of the hottest regions of India, this was the beginning of a cause. He spent his time studying Tamil while working on evangelizing the untouchables, the lowest caste in Madras. The name of the place, Idayangudi, intrigued him. Idayangudi, as it signified a shepherd's home, believed it was the ideal location for him to carry out his responsibilities. He arrived in Tamil Nadu in 1838 as a missionary, and in 1841 he was ordained as a priest.

He chose Idayangudi in Tirunelveli for his language and social service growth. Caldwell was ecstatic at the wealth of the Chola kingdom, the wealthy sea source of Tharangambadi, the Nilgris Mountains, and the Tamil source of the Pandiyan dynasty. He was familiar with Tamil Nadu's language and culture since he had traveled there firsthand, which helped him later on when writing Tamil grammar. In Tirunelveli, he was ordained as a priest.

The followers of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, eventually left the Church of England during the 18th century, but many others who held very similar beliefs stayed in the established churches and founded the Colonial and Continental Church Society (A.D. 1838) and the Church Missionary Society (A.D. 1799). Church planting was initiated by the C.M.S. and S.P.G. when they arrived in India, particularly in the Tirunelveli region.

The S.P.G. missionaries cared for three significant fields: Nazareth, Sawyerpuram, and Idaiyangudi. Dr. Caldwell sacrificed his life to create and grow numerous churches, one of which was in the village of Idaiyangudi, which is located distant from Tirunelveli.

ELIZA CALDWELL AND FEMALE EDUCATION

Three years later, Eliza Mault accompanied her husband Robert Caldwell to Idaiyangudi. She ended up in a distant village surrounded by destitution. Stricken Shannars (Nadar community) in one of India's hottest districts, with only the towering Palmyra trees on the red, barren sand to provide shade. Eliza was up in Travancore, where she was fluent in Tamil. She has worked full-time for the past four years alongside her mother in the girls' schools that have been established in Nagercoil. It follows that her primary contribution to her husband's efforts in the realm of female education which included lace classes is not surprising. Other S.P.G. Missions in the Tirunelveli District, most notably the Caemmerers in Nazareth, emulated her example. When her eldest son was born in 1845, Eliza vividly detailed the challenges they faced with female welfare and education.

The district's female population was in such poor shape that they had no motivation to better themselves or for their children to receive an education. They were not only incredibly naive, but also impoverished, uncivilized, and full of arguments. This passage, dated July 14, 1845, from Eliza's letter to Rev. Vincent Shorland, Secretary to the Madras Diocesan Committee (SPG), suggests that, despite lengthy neglect, Christian women were in every way superior to heathen women in their fields of labor.

THE GIRL'S BOARDING SCHOOLS AT IDAIYANGUDI

In May 1844, Eliza Caldwell opened a girls' boarding school. When it first started, eight kids joined, but in a few years, more than 100 people were involved. It marked the start of a protracted effort that Eliza and Robert launched to raise native girls' chances and persuade their families of the importance of education. Since the money for this came directly from private donors in England as well as from S.P.G., S.P.C.K., and other sources in India, a large portion of it hinged on their reputations at home. In the years that followed, Eliza gave birth to four sons and three girls, and the campaign went on unabated. In fact, by the 1860s, Isabella and Louisa, her two eldest daughters, were assisting their mother in running the day and boarding schools that she and Robert had by then established.

There are 1253 students enrolled in the institution. Most of the time, students supply their own textbooks. Over the course of three days at Edayangoody, the Madras Governor and Lady Napier assessed the students and looked over the boarding school setup. They emphasized their extreme happiness, praising the overall order and cleanliness in particular. For the additional benefit of the schools, Lady Napier asked that a thousand palmyra trees be planted in her honor and at her expense. The girls and boys at the boarding school where Dr. Caldwell's daughters dedicate their time and efforts range from 71 to 171 students, including day-boarders. This is a translation of an account that a girl wrote about her day in school.

CONDITION OF THE IDAYANGUDI PEOPLE

Upon arriving at other regions of Tamil Nadu, he was very troubled by the sight of the impoverished people's lives. His compassion was aroused by the sight of the people's filthy clothes, little tent homes, and lack of sanitary toilets. Despite their innocent appearance, the men's large mustaches and lengthy hair gave them an unfriendly appearance. The women were dressed badly, had unbrushed hair, and were slaves. Caldwell was shocked to see the living conditions of the populace. Social services were rendered with the intention of promoting the welfare of others. There were no expectations when providing this service. For the entirety of his life, Caldwell performed social services.

MODIFICATION OF IDAYANGUDI

Located in Tisayanvilai Taluk, Idayangudi was inhabited by Nadars, also known as shanars in the past, who were shepherds and palmyra climbers. The Nadars, who historically drew life from the palmyra palm as toddy-toppers, lived in the region of the teris. "Better than a desert - sandy, burnt up, barrenlands literally teeming with a Shanar population" describes the areas where the Nadars live. At Idaiyangudi, Caldwell designed and constructed a model hamlet with wide, open streets, straight roadways, and plenty of space between homes. for forty years. Caldwell planted blooming plants, shade-giving trees, tamarind, mango, money-bearing palms, and coconut palms. Even now, palm palms are mentioned here as having been planted during Caldwell's reign. After learning that every inch of the palm tree is used for something, the wife of Lord Napier, the governor of Madras at the time, donated funds to plant and grow a thousand of these trees.

CALDWELL FIGHT FOR UNTOUCHABILITY

There were people living in Idayangudi during Caldwell's visit. These people belonged to many castes, including Nadar, Vellalar, Maravar, Paller, and Paraiyar. They were fiercely loyal to their caste and mistreated members of other castes. After realizing the evil of untouchability, Caldwell made the decision to end it in society. He made an effort to undermine untouchability through his discourse and one-on-one interactions with others. To further demonstrate that everyone is equal, he also planned a feast for everybody. Untouchability was diminished to an extent. and uprooting the untouchability that he established.

SOCIAL SERVICE

When cholera struck the southern regions of Tennessee in the 1870s, he eagerly volunteered to rescue the people, putting his own life in danger. Everyone was enamored by this, and many of them converted to

Christianity. In addition to his evangelistic endeavors, Caldwell established a variety of religious and humanitarian organizations, including the Church Building Society and the Society for the Relief of the Christian Poor.

To sustain the converts in the vicinity of Suviseshapuram, Ittamozhi, and Tisaiyanvilai, the early missionaries needed to establish a center of residence. Thus, Suviseshapuram was chosen for that reason, and Suviseshapuram became a Christian community. The biggest accomplishment was the radical shift in Rev. Caldwell's opinion of the local populace. He helped the most impoverished of the poor and changed the villagers' way of life for the better. This determined endeavor cleared the path for Christianity to grow in closeness and assurance.

UPLIFTMENT OF THE SHANARS

The Shanars, according to Caldwell, "belong to the highest division of the lowest classes or the lowest of the middle classes; rude and unlettered but by many degrees removed from a savage state, poor but not paupers." Even the services of the Hindu upper caste barbers (Ambattan) and washer men (Vannan) were denied to them. Dr. Caldwell held certain opinions regarding the "Shanars'" occupation and the word "shaman," which comes from the word "Sanror," which means learned or "the noble is acknowledged by Tirunelveli District."

Shanars gained more social standing in the community. Their perspective on life was wider. Their boring life of gardening and tapping gave way to industrial training and employment. They started to take a newfound pleasure in life. Industrial schools were established to provide boys and girls with education and skills. Things started to get better for the materials. They were freed from the allure of wealth and poverty, were freed from the sullied customs and nearly hopeless degrading of the agricultural slaves, and the upper castes' sophisticated logic and outward polish. Caldwell wrote.

The number of Shanar adolescents enrolled in teacher training programs as well as the number of native pastors and teachers increased significantly by the middle of the 1800s. As a result, their status has significantly improved, and many fields of beneficial, lucrative, and honorable labor that were formerly off-limits to them are now open to them just like they are to any other class in the community. Many of them have moved to Malaya and Ceylon to work in tea plantations and rubber farms. A lot of people acquire land.

CONCLUSION

Caldwell constructed a beautiful church and a home for the bishop next to it. Caldwell personally oversaw the construction of the Holy Trinity Church and even performed the church's consecration after he was appointed Assistant Bishop at Tirunelveli in 1880. The church that the Caldwells erected is now known as the Holy Trinity Church, Idaiyangudi. The church's three entrances and magnificent single-stone pillars, together with its ornate Gothic architecture that still draws large audiences, include a baptismal font crafted from Ceylon marbles. The governor of Madras at the time, Lord Napier, gave the bells with a chime. Climbing the dim spiral staircase, one may observe the four renowned melodic bells that were put here by Caldwell's brother James Caldwell, possibly over a century ago, but in good, fruitful condition even now. Bishop Dr. Caldwell relocated to Tuticorin upon becoming Assistant, and it served as his office until 1883. For a few months following Bishop Sargent's passing, he also held Episcopal supervision over the C.M.S. field. Holy Trinity Church is the testimony of Bishop Caldwell's religious activities in Tirunelveli region. He also took much efforts to the welfare of the society in various level.

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