

The Benefactions Of Women Christian Association In Tamil Nadu During 20th Century

Mrs. G. Prema¹, Dr. S. Sivakumar², Dr. R. Muthuraman³, Dr.K.Govindaraj⁴

¹PhD, Research Scholar, Department of History, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar-605 602

²Assistant Professor, Department of History, Thiru. Kolanjiappar, Govt. Arts College, Vriddhachalam.

³Guest Lecturer, Department of History, Thiru A.Govindasamy Govt Arts College, Tindivanam

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of History, Thiru A.Govindasamy Govt Arts College, Tindivanam

Corresponding Author - Dr.K.Govindaraj, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Thiru A.Govindasamy Govt Arts College, Tindivanam

DOI: 10.47750/pnr.2022.13.S06.559

Abstract

This article is mainly focused how the Young women Christian Women Association benefitted the women in India and Tamil Nadu during 20th century. The society has half of population are women, but their growth and development has not good over the years. The Women association is evolved for the uplift the women community in India. On the consequences, the Young Women Christian Association has worked for enhance the position of women in 20th century. . The Europeans have settled in India, their first ladies have worked for the women empowerment in the path of Women organization. The Christian missionaries also worked for the upliftment of poor and needy, particularly women in India. Perhaps, it has continued their work for more than two centuries and till exist. They initiated the schemes and programmes for the transformation of their position in social, economic and political phenomenon. Earlier it was started for the preaching of Christianity and often known as prayer groups. Later it has focused to develop the people with educational, technique, protective project over the years. Indeed, the Young Women Christian Association worked for the people, especially women from 20th century to modern era.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Schemes and programmes, Women association, Christian missionary

Introduction

Women are the most vulnerable community in the World from ancient to modern era. They are struggling to survive their life where social evils prevailed in the 20th century. For this crucial period, some of the social organizations or individuals both native and foreigners made effort to eradicate the same. On the path, there was lot of organizations grown in India to work for women, especially started by women groups. The Europeans have settled in India, their first ladies have worked for the women empowerment in the path of Women organization. The Christian missionaries also worked for the upliftment of poor and needy, particularly women in India. The Young Women Christian Association (YMCA) of India, an umbrella organization affiliated to the World empowerment through a variety of programmes, the most important of which are leadership training for women, advocacy work on women's issues and community development work. This article is mainly focused how the Young women Christian Women Association benefitted the women in India and Tamil Nadu during 20th century.

Foundations

The Young Women's Christian Associations are founded in England, according to this origin to two groups. The first group was formed in Madras in 1884, eight years before it was called the Young women Christian Association. This group called the Madras Christian Women's Association was organized shortly after a missionary conference in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1890. Earlier it was called as 'prayer union'.¹ The present YMCA was established in 1892 by the effort of Emily Kinnaird at Madras (now Chennai). it was noteworthy that despite the Association being founded by British women, it reached out of every women regardless of colour creed and language. However, the Y.M.C.A in Chennai came into being after the movement was well established in other cities such as Bombay, and Poona. Y.M.C.A boasts numerous initiatives benefitting a cross section of people. .

The first YMCA in the southern hemisphere was the YWCA of Dunedin, established in 1878 just one years after the amalgamation of the English association. It was followed by Christchurch (1883) and Auckland (1885).² The World's YWCA was started in 1894. In the twentieth century YWCA were set up in fourteen different towns and cities here; currently there are ten local associations from Whangarei to Dunedin. The first colonial branch was established at Port Dover, Ontario in the 1870s. Other branches were formed in India (1875), New Zerland (1877), Singapore (1877), Australia(1879) and later, Japan, the United States of America and Africa. ³In 1894 the World YWCA was founded with its offices initially in London, followed three years later by the first World Conference, also held in London, with 300 representatives from 20 countries . A variety of literature helped to keep members well informed. The first was Our Own Gazette, followed in 1881 by the monthly Letter and Young Ladies.⁴

Young women's Christian Association of Madras

Madras has started lately, and the useful association there, known as the Bombay Christian Association, has now become the nucleuse of the Young Women's Christian Association. The Young Women's Christian Association of Madras (YMCA) was started in 1892 to provide safe spaces for women pursuing an education or a career. For over 125 years this he YMCA has worked untiringly to remain relevant and accessible. Today the YMCA runs programmes to empower women and children affected by violence & poverty with justice and dignity. The motto of the Young Women Christian Association has "By love, serve one another" fulfilled towards its varied schemes and programmes. Every programemss has unique with a club, camp, class , conference and social aspect with going beyond the significance of the group or indivuidal and attributes to the wholeness of the every member should participating the event.⁵

Membership

Unlike the Y.M.C.A it is found worthwhile to have a branch where there can be very few members. The Y.M.C.A can pursue its quieter work among a small numbers, and as a rule the young women of India are unemployed and need to be taught occupations, whereas the young men are fully occupied in small stations where it scarcely possible to have a branch, little twigs are doing useful work on those days.

Year	Present	Additional	Total	Life membership
1887	232	-	232	-
1896	235	-	235	-
1925-26	337	130	467	-
1948	467	164	631	-
1954	320	-	320	-
1959	750	-	750	-
1962	898	-	898	18
1966	1100	-	1100	18

Source⁶

The YMCA is a volunteer membership movement. YMCA has been able to play such a big role in the community. The YMCA seeks to promote friendship, understanding and togetherness among its members and actives. Membership is open to any women or girl regardless of caste, class or creed.

Activities

The Y.M.C.A has did several works under the organized sectors namely committee conferences, clubs , branches and area groups, to social, sports clubs, dramatics, sports clubs and Bible study. It has actively worked with the other entertainment works like singling classes cookery, picnics and dramatics.

Mission field

Prayers were the essential part of all activates, and hymns singing ardent Christians. Prayers were an essential part of all activities, and hymn singing and bible reading were taken to women in the factories as they worked. For most of its existence the YMCA has interpreted Christianity as a call to action.⁷ The Y.M.C.A members are attained the training for the call to prayer, mission fields. The young women's Association has conducting the training class for Bible, or prayer meeting in India. The greatest progress has been made in the North –West provinces and in the Punjab, where is of the Y.M.C.A best known. The Bombay Association is also spreading. But there is evidence that South India will be to there, for branches have been organized in several places and then affiliated. The Saturday prayer Union is a helpful bond and the Bible study a useful factor with its arrangements for the examination and the offered of prizes for the best student.

Educational training

In addition to the missionary aspect of the Y.M.C.A there is the educational and crayoning part of the work which is only in its infancy and undeveloped for want of competent free workers. The aim not only to benefit those who join just for the present, but to train them for future usefulness in any sphere of life to which God may called them and above.⁸

Skill Training

Y.M.C.A started not only for benefit the people in religious but also to train them for future usefulness in any sphere of life to which God may call them, and there are many practical subjects to which the attention of members should be called by their secretaries. There are other skill training made by the Association are Sick-nursing, housekeeping, simple doctoring, dressmaking, and any useful industry , offering employment for women, should be taught well organized Association. The work should vie with that of the Young Men's Christian Association in the towns, or rather co-operate in the starting of useful classes for both sexes.

Safety of women

The safety of women has been a main concern since the organization began. One of the initial activities undertaken by many local associations was to meet the immigrant's ships and look after young working class women, arriving alone and at risk, to work in domestic services or factories. The main concern was to safeguard the response, the ability by providing healthy, clean-living, leisure –time activities. Besides Bible studies, the YMCA offered meals, a place to meet friends, classes and sporting activates. For young women the movement gave great possibilities on the century to participate sporting activities. For many young women at the turn of the century, the YWCA became a major influence and important anchor in their lives.⁹

Sahodari Project

Sahodari was a project of the joint action committee of Women some time before it shifted into the YWCA premises. But a few months before requests from the J.A.C.W was made by the Board of Management. Sahodari project was a family counseling center and shelter for women. In turn Sahodari was used as a base for a workshop of the Y.W.C.A of India an effective action in response to women facing domestic and other forms of violence. The issues discussed were dowry deaths, rape, wife-battering, sexual discrimination and their effect physically, mentally and emotionally on women “Sahodari has not only grown in numbers, but in quality,” says Mrs Thanikachalam, the centenary year Chairman of the project. From its inception, one of the aims of Sahodari has been to be a pressure group, ever alive to the social problems affecting women, and to be voice of the Y.W.C.A on these problems.¹⁰

The Sahodari project, distressed women were given counseling or legal aid. The YWCA played a significant role through the activities of Sahodari and the main was to give women food and shelter and to offer them vocational training. They also provide the counseling, legal help, home placements, self employment, shelter to women in enhancing their socio-economic conditions.¹¹ The work goes on, the women who came to Sahodari have faith in their Sahodari in the project. But Sahodari also faces many problems. Most of the women who come for help have no education or skills, and rehabilitation is difficult. The YWCA is able to do what it is doing only because financial help comes. The counseling centre gets 80 percent of its money from the State Social Welfare Board, ‘Bread for the world’ a funding agency in Germany, also helps Sahodari will not be the last of the Y.W.C.A projects nor is last success story. It is just another example of its motto, ‘By love, serve one another’.

Navajeevan project

Navajeevan is another service project of YWCA started in 1975, a short-term half was Home (3 to 6 months) for women who were fit to be discharged from the mental hospital, but were unable to return back home straight because of certain adjustment problems in their own home. The Navajeevan project had to the care of mentally ill women, providing them occupational rehabilitative thereby other projects like community college, old age home, nursery and Balwasdi, rural development project aims to develop and empower women.¹² Through this project the YWCA offers its residents craft teaching, opportunities for creativity self-help and occupations which helps women to build up their self-confidence.¹³

Social reforms

The YWCA which concentrates both on social reform and social work activities adopted many service projects to redress the grievances of women. Among such projects, the most famous being the rural Development project implemented in 1952 at Mudichur Village near Tambaram in Chennai which extended into village community development program. This project runs a mini health centre, tailoring unit, youth clubs, Mathar sangams and other developmental activities. The Mathar sangams involve women in various programmes which impart leadership public's cooperation and other skills. The YWCA adult education work began in 1972 and extended to thickly populated slums especially women and was named as Paster Pfeiffer Home.¹⁴

Conclusion

The society has half of population are women, but their growth and development has not good over the years. The Women association is evolved for the uplift the women community in India. On the consequences, the Young Women Christian Association has worked for enhance the position of women in 20th century. Perhaps, it has continued their work for more than two centuries and till exist. They initiated the schemes and programmes for the transformation of their position in social, economic and political phenomenon. Earlier it was started for the preaching of Christianity and often known as prayer groups. Later it has focused to develop the people with educational, technique, protective

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