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GR_T PREMIER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN
ERSTWHILE SOUTH ARCOT DISTRICT
WOOD'S DESPATCH OF 1854 AND ITS IMPACT

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Abstract:-The advent of Europeans in Tamil Country paved the way for the spread of western education and establishment of educational institutions at all the level. In the early period of Twentieth Century, there were only some "Zilla" Schools, several Taluk Schools, Missionary Educational Institutions in the South Arcot District. To impart higher education, there was only one College at Cuddalore run by Jesuit Mission. But there were no adequate opportunities and hostel facilities for all the students to get degree in large scale in this District. Realising the need for a University, Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras advised Annamalai Chettiar to start a college at Chidambaram, which was later developed into a University called 'Annamalai University' in 1929.

Likewise, in the order of the administration, the 18th pontiff Pommapura Adeenam, brought out a desirable change in providing education to the people living and around of South Arcot district. Tamil and Saivism were his two deep visions. He himself was a great Tamil Scholar. A team of pundits and scholars led by him examined manuscripts and did research works in Tamil to develop Tamil language and literature. His ardent faith on Tamil made him to establish a Tamil forum in the name and style of Murugan Senthamizh Kazhaham in 1937 with an idea of establishing a Tamil College in Mailam.

Keywords:University, College, Government, Education, Engineering, Institute, Adeenam, Saivism.

INTRODUCTION

Annamalai University

Annamalai University is a unitary teaching and residential University which was founded by Dr. Raja Sir. Annamalai Chettiar of Chettinad. He started several Colleges and ultimately the University in 1929. The ancestors of the Dr. Raja Sir. Annamalai Chettiar had made Chidambaram their second home. Subjects like History, Economics, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics were introduced in the intermediate classes. The medium of instruction was English. In June 1922, the B.A. degree course was started and subjects like History and Economics were taught. The courses of Mathematics and Philosophy were added in 1924. In 1925, Honours courses were introduced in English language and literature, History, Economics, Physics and Chemistry. He opened further two colleges, one a Tamil College, and the other a Sanskrit College. They became popular and were named as Meenakshi College.¹

The establishment of Meenakshi College gave an added impetus to the budding demand for

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a University in Tamil Nadu. The people of Tamil Nadu thought that Tamil should be the medium of instruction. With the result, the Government appointed Tamil University Commission under the Chairmanship of V. Kumarasamy Reddiar. The committee recommended that a University should be established without delay.

In this situation, Annamalai Chettiar conceived the idea of establishing a residential University. He offered to the Government in 1928, all the buildings and equipments of all the three colleges worth about 15 lakhs of rupees and promised to give another 20 lakhs of rupees, if the college were raised to the status of the Unitary teaching and Residential University. Finally the Government accepted the offer of Annamalai Chettiar and promised 27 lakhs of rupees towards the endowment fund, one and a half lakh of rupees as their share in the expenditure on buildings. Then the Annamalai University Bill was passed into an Act in 1928, and thus Annamalai University was started from July 1929. The Jurisdiction of Annamalai University is confined to an area of ten miles round its 'convocation Hall' to ensure constant and closer association of the students and teachers, and thus ensure an opportunity for real corporate life to develop.²

In the beginning, twenty six courses of instruction were started for the B.A., and B.Sc., classes. Instruction was provided in the following subjects; Philosophy, English, History, Economics, Tamil, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Sanskrit. In 1931 Honours Courses were started in Tamil and Humanities and Sciences later on. The study of Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada language were given more importance. The duration of Honours Courses was three years. The adult education programme was started in 1940.

In 1944 Annamalai University took a further step by founding a Faculty of Engineering and Technology. The Vice-Chancellor Professor M. Ruthanasamy visited several universities and Institute of Technology and formulated a scheme of studies which was considered by the Syndicate and got the approval for finance from the Government. The scheme comprised proposals for starting the following courses in Engineering like Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, Chemical and Radio and sound. In the same year an Air Training Corps was started and it was attended by 105 students.

When Dr. Manavala Ramanujam (1948-51) was the Vice-Chancellor, he started a Refresher Course in Estuarine Biology at Portnovo as Inter University Co-operative Enterprise. Portnovo was soon to become a centre of attraction and an advanced centre of Marine Biological Research. Prof. Seshiya sowed the seeds of the Marine Biological Centre and watched over its growth. The University started the Department of Oriental Studies which gave coaching to the students leading to the degrees and titles like B.O.L. Pulavar and Siromani. In addition to this, the Department of Music which offered courses like B.Mus and Sangeetha Bushana was also started in 1952.³

In 1956 two year Intermediate course was scrapped and one year Pre-University Course was started. There was a two year course in Geology leading to M.Sc. Degree and a course of similar length in Commerce and the both proved more popular. Banking, Mercantile Law and Income-Tax were among the subjects taught in the Faculty of Commerce.

The Faculty of Agriculture was started in 1963. Dr. Manavala Ramanujam, the Vice-Chancellor appointed Dr. Krishnamurthy, an expert in this field to organise and run it, which he did competently. The courses of B.Sc., and M.Sc., (Agri) were introduced, which provided instruction in microbiology, plant protection and allied subjects. Dr. Krishnamurthy, was the first Professor of Agriculture Department.

During the academic year 1975-1976 the Semester system was introduced in some course of study namely B.A., B.Sc., B.O.L., B.Com., Pulavar and M.Sc. (Agri). Likewise the same pattern was followed in all subjects like Master of Arts, Science, Commerce and Oriental languages. The Degree course in Physical Education was instituted. Further, a Post-Graduate Course in Business Administration and Library Science was introduced in 1978.

The Faculty of Law started function in 1978. Following the examples of Madras University the preliminary degree was instituted, the Bachelor of General Law – a two year degree course to be followed by the Bachelor of Law degree. In the same year the Vice-Chancellor decided to institute a Computer Centre. Prof. V. Balasundaram went to Delhi and met those in the seat of power, and succeeded in getting a grant of thirty-nine lakhs of rupees and so the Computer Centre was started.

The University played a predominant role in some of the activities. The third All India

Writer's Conference was held at Annamalai Nagar in April 1954. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, inaugurated the Conference and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice-President of India presided over the function.⁷ On February 9, 1955 the Silver Jubilee was celebrated. Besides this, the stimulus for History was provided by Professor. Arnold Toynbee, who paid a visit to the University in January, 1958. In April, 1966 there was a Tamil Conference at Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. Prof. L.P.K.R. Ramanathan Chettiar, on the research side of the Annamalai University attended the conference. C.N. Annadurai, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu participated in the convocation which was held on November 18, 1967.⁸

There was a Foreign Student Association Organised in this University. Most of the students were from Sri Lanka, Iran, UAE, USA, Hongkong, Nepal, East and West Germany and South Africa. The University maintained a study centre comprising 1424 volumes of Books. Annamalai University is provided with enough buildings for its laboratories and library. Annamalai University Publication was started in 1964. Dr. A.R. Alagappan is incharge of Publication which has published 540 books so far.

There is the Sixth (TN) Battalion N.C.C., comprising four companies with a strength of 560 senior division cadets and 2500 Junior Division cadets in the University Campus.⁹ The National Service Scheme and Social Service League activities are also functioning in the University. Annamalai University distributed several kinds of prizes and granted medals in the name of the Founder. Some of the prizes are: C.P. Ramasamy Tamil Essay Prize, C. Arumuganavar Prize, Rani Seethai Achi Music Tamil Essay prize, Dr. M.G. Ramachandran Gold Medal for Mono Acting, Thiru V.K. Tamil Essay Prize, Prof. S.V. Chittibabu Prize and Thiruppandandal Mutt Endowment Prize.¹⁰

The University is offering all sorts of scholarships and fee concessions offered by the Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu. Student Aid Fund is also distributed to help the deserving students who do not enjoy any other financial help. 'Book Bank' scheme, a novel scheme of UGC, lends books freely upto the completion of the course. Eight hostels are attached to this university namely; 'Malligai Illam', 'Kurinji Illam', 'Thendral Illam', 'Cauvery Illam', 'Mullai Illam', 'Pothigai Illam', 'Thamari Illam' and 'Kayal Illam'.¹¹ Good playgrounds are provided and facilities to all games and sports are made. An Athletic Association looks after the facilities.

The Golden Jubilee Celebration was celebrated on 6th December 1979 which was inaugurated by Rashtrapathi Dr. Neelam Sanjivee Reddi, President of India. Thiru M.G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu delivered the Golden Jubilee Address and inaugurated the Faculty of Medicine. Thiru Prabhudas Patwari, the Governor of Tamil Nadu and the Chancellor of the University participated in this function.¹² But all the undergraduates courses were abolished in 1982 in Arts and Science. As a Govt. Arts and Science College was started in the year 1982 at Chidambaram, it was able to accommodate the students for graduates, since the university restricted only the admission of Post-Graduate and Research.

Establishment of Annamalai University Technology Department

The Annamalai University Technology Department opened in 1944. The promotion of technological education is specifically with in the provision of the Annamalai University Section 3(a) (i) of the Act. A grant towards the cost of a technological department did not come within the scope of this decision. The scheme proposed by the Annamalai University however sought to provide for courses which now obtained in the government college of engineering plus certain new, courses such as chemical technology, electrical communications engineering etc.

The Annamalai University has received a munificent donation from Dr. Alagappa Chettiar for starting a technological institution. This type of technological institution which the Annamalai University proposes to have is not yet known. Distribution of technical or technological institution among the upgraded as all-India centres are Physics, Botany, Philosophy and Mathematics getting financial assistance as indicated above.

It is not out of place to mention here that the Ramanujan Institute of Mathematics originally established by Dr. Alagappa Chettiar and financed by the Asoka Trust and taken over by the university for administering in 1957, after the demise of Dr. Alagappa Chettiar, coalesced with the Department of Mathematics to function as the Ramanujan Institute for Advanced Study in

Mathematics from the year 1967-68. The Syndicate placed on record its deep appreciation of the valuable and timely help rendered by the UGC in the fruition of this proposal setting at rest once for all a long period of uncertainty of the future of the Institute.¹³

There was a spectacular development of this university from 1967 onwards.¹⁴ Most of the colleges in Tamil Nadu were affiliated to it. There were 116 colleges in Tamil Nadu in 1967. It also made a steady growth and contributed to the progress of higher education in Tamil Nadu. There were two universities in Tamil Nadu at the time of Independence. The jurisdiction of Madras University extended to the territory of the Tamil Nadu.¹⁵

Srimat Sivagnanabalya Swamigal Tamil College, Mailam

Srimat Sigagnanabalya Swamigal Tamil College was founded by Sivagnanabalya Swamigal, who was the head of Pommapura Adeenam, at Mailam in 1938. At first the Tamil College was started at the top of the Mailam Hill with two sections. In the Entrance course 24 students were admitted while in the preliminary course twelve students were admitted. Sivagnanabalya Swamigal appointed two vidwans to teach the students at first. Adigalasiriyan was the first Professor of this college.

Madras University appointed .E.K. Natesa Sarma as a Commissioner to visit the Tamil College for its approval. With the assistance of T.M. Narayanasamy Pillai, Kovai Khizhar and Thiru Ramachandra Reddiar, the college was approved as a Tamil College through the order of the Madras University A336/D/318/1941.¹⁶ Thus the college was affiliated to the Madras University.

In 1941, a four years Vidwan Course was introduced. Sixty-two students were admitted in this course. Four Vidwan teachers were appointed for teaching purpose. Then the four year Pulavar course was introduced in April 1972 and this course was abolished in April 1978. In 1975 four year B.Litt course was opened but there was no difference between the Pulavar and B.Litt course. Finally in 1980 a three year B.Litt course was started.¹⁷ It continues till date. Students from various parts of Tamil Nadu are admitted in this college. Women students were also admitted from 1954 onwards.

The College maintains a well equipped and enriched Library, which contains more than 6300 books and 80 percent of the books belong to Tamil language. Besides Tamil books, English, Telugu, Hindu and Malayalam books are also there. Thiruvadudurai Adeenam, Dharampura Adeenam and Thiruppanandal Adeenam donated many books for the purpose of growth and development of Tamil language and Saivism. Thiru O.P. Ramasamy Reddiar, who was then the Chief Minister helped for the growth of Tamil Language. The daily, weekly, and monthly magazines are also available in this library.

The Tamil College awarded a number of prizes for the efficient students. The prizes are; Srimat Sivagnanabalya Swamigal Weekly Workshop Prize, Engineer Varadarasu Mudaliyar and Chinthamani Ammal Prize, Thiru Varadha Reddiar and Jayalakshmi Ammal Prize, Thiru Veerasamy Reddiar Prize and Thiru Rasa Ramanar memorial prize.¹⁸

“Murugan Senthamil Khazhagam” was constituted for the growth of Tamil language in this college. Adeenathu Swamigal is the Permanent President, and the Principal is the Vice-President of the ‘Kazhagam’. Students also participated in the ‘Khazhagam’. In addition to that, ‘Thondar Khuzu’ is the sub-committee of ‘Senthamil Kazhagam’. A senior Professor is the president of the sub-committee. The common people and students render valuable services through this committee for the growth of Saivism and Tamil language.

A students’ hostel is also functioning in the college premises, with spacious accommodation. From the early period Adeenam provided both the boarding and lodging facilities to all the students in this college. But after 1981, the Adeenam provided free lodging and boarding facilities only to Virasaivite students.

However all the deserving students are provided free lodging facilities. The National and State Government Scholarships and other stipends and fee concessions are granted to the students. One unit of the National Service Scheme is also in existence in this college. The Tamil College Celebrated its ‘Mani Vizha’ on 12th August 1954. Even today the Tamil College continued to serve for the growth and development of Tamil language.

To conclude, it is very proud to say that the Annamalai University has become an important

centre where research and training for research are pursued in various departments. It is the care and interest of the people which matters, and the people of Tamil Nadu showing their affection for the university by considering it as a prized possession of theirs. The South Arcot District experienced outstanding progress in the field of Collegiate Education. Though the Government played an important role in elevating the standard of the Collegiate Education in this district, the service of the Annamalai University is unparalleled. The University has lightened many candles with its wisdom and its service to the South Arcot District is unique and it is irreplaceable and it has to be appreciated.

At the inspiration of the Sir La Sri Gurumaha Sannithanam the College was founded on 14 July 1938 with the able guidance kind co-operation of philanthropist like Thiru. Raja Mudaliar, Sub-registrar of Mailam Sub-register office, Thiru S.Sachithanandam Pillai the then the District Educational officer of Villupuram, Thiru T.M Narayana Swami Pillai Commissioner of H.R & C.E Department Thiru Kovai. C.M Ramachandra Chettiar, Thiru A.S. Mannadi Nair and Thiru P.Kameswara Rao. On the basis of report of Vidwan, Thiru T.K. Netesa Sharma, a specially appointed commissioner by the University of Madras, an affiliation of this college with Madras University was granted. This College was established with a single aim of encouraging the rural students to attain proficiency in Tamil language and literature. Students from South Arcot, North Arcot, Chennai, Chengelpattu, Salem and Tirchirappalli in high position as Adheena Kavthar, University Professors, Principals, High School, and Higher Secondary Teachers and Head Masters and many more were placed in distinguished positions in government non-government service.

END NOTES

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