



CONTRIBUTION OF GREEN OF AMERICAN CEYLON MISSIONARIE'S MEDICAL ACTIVITIES IN JAFFNA(1816-1948) - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The arrival of the British and the activities of the American missionaries introduced by them are of great importance in the growth of the medical field in Jaffna. Through the main objective of the visit of the American missionaries was religious propagation, they thought of engaging themselves in some welfare activities which could be used as means to win over the hearts of the people. It was at the background of this notion, that they started their medical services to the people of Jaffna. They provided western medical facilities to the people of Jaffna. Besides, they also created medical men from out of the Jaffna society and also gave them the necessary education and training, and achieved considerable success in their attempts, Dr.Green was one of those doctors sent to Jaffna to offer medical services. He may be pointed out as the doctor responsible for making western medical practices deep rooted in Jaffna. Through at the beginning, he produced doctors only through English medium, he succeeded later in producing western medical practitioners through Tamil medium as well. He did considerable amount of work towards the development of the Tamil language also. During his time, western medical institutions were set up at various places in Jaffna. The people of Jaffna though reluctant at the beginning for western treatment, began step by step to approach the hospitals of the missionaries. This research is based fully on an historical approach. Its main objectives include a comprehensive description of Dr.Green's medical services, clarifying the social services encompassed in his medical works and also being a pioneer to future researchers in this field paving the way for them to continue such studies. Primary and secondary data have been used for the purposes of the research, Primary data include references made by American missionaries, annual reports and books contemporarily published by the missionaries. The books and articles written at later times based on the primary data, and website data etc, have been used as secondary data. Thus it will be seen that the credit goes to Dr.Green who established the importance of western treatment in the minds of the people of Jaffna, who from times before the kings of Jaffna, had been used only to native methods of treatment. It could also be asserted that the foundation for western treatment in Jaffna was laid through his activities.

Key Words: Western Treatment, American Mission, Native Treatment, Western Education Through, Tamil Medium.

Introduction

The arrival and activities of the American missionaries opened a new chapter in the medical field of Jaffna. Prior to their arrival a traditional medicinal system had been followed in Jaffna. Though in between, Portuguese and Dutch administrations took place, they could not make any effective change in traditional system of medicines. More than social welfare, as they were intent on their revenue and religious propaganda, little attention was paid to the welfare of the people during their administration. However, the medical services rendered by the American missionaries who were despatched to Jaffna predominantly for religious propaganda gave them a special recognition in the eyes of the people. One such missionary was Dr.Green. To date, he lives in the minds of the people in Jaffna because of the various medical services he had rendered.

The arrival of American Missionaries in Jaffna

The activities of the American missionaries were found to be more in Jaffna, than in other parts of Sri Lanka because of the influence of the contemporary East India Company, in India. In 1812 missionaries including Hall, Rice, Nott and Mrs. Nott were despatched in a ship named 'Harmony' for the purpose of religious propagation. (*Jebanesan,S.,2009, p.12-13*). More or less during that same period, Judson couple and Newell couple had been sent to India in a ship named "Caravan". The British East India Company which was engaged in trade and administrative activities vehemently opposed their arrival into India for fear of their trade activities getting disturbed. (*Nadarajah,G.,2005, p.01*). One of the evacuated missionaries, named Newell, who proceeded to Maturities with the intention of establishing an office and continuing his service, unfortunately lost his wife and child on his way and reached Sri Lanka. Thus, his arrival in Sri Lanka marked the beginning of American missionaries services in this Island.

Robert Brownrigg (1812-1820) who was the governor of Sri Lanka at that time did not oppose the spreading of Christianity in Sri Lanka. (*Root Helen, I., 1916, p.06*). He was quite supportive to all Christian propaganda. He welcomed Newel and made all arrangements for him to select suitable place to carry on his propaganda. Out of his ten months' stay in Sri Lanka, he spent 11/2 months in Jaffna. Following this, he selected Jaffna itself as the place for organising religious propaganda. A letter he sent explaining the reasons for selecting Jaffna as the most suitable place, captivated the interests of the Mission head quarters, who sent another group of missionaries to Jaffna. This group which included Daniel Poor and others, who set off in a ship called Dryad in 1815, and reached Jaffna in 1816. (*Velupillai,C.D.,1984, p.19*). Sea voyages during that period were



very risky and also took a long time to reach their destinations. (*Jebanesan,S.,1989, p.05*). At the time of their arrival, the activities of the London missionary and the Baptist missionary were already going on. The group reached Colombo on the 22nd of March 1816. They did not proceed to Jaffna immediately. However, after staying in Jaffna for some time, they proceeded to Vattukkottai and Tellippalai, where they started their activities. This may be reckoned as the commencement of the American missionary activities in Jaffna.

American Ceylon Missionaries and their Medical Activities in Sri Lanka

The first ever mission to launch on medical services in the world, was the American mission. (*Velupillai,C.D.,1984, p.235*). Their arrival in Jaffna and the medical services conducted by them created a considerable amount of influence among the people in Jaffna. Before the arrival of the American missionaries, only native systems of medicine were found here. Evidences reveal that such medical practices had been going on traditionally, from times prior to and at the times of earlier kings of Jaffna. Some books on native medicines, had also appeared during the times of those kings. (*Sivasamy, V.,1992, p.105*). For example *Sekarasa sekaramalai, Pararaja sekaramalai* etc may be mentioned. In fact from very early times, such fields of medicine had been flourishing in Jaffna. They were a result of the direct contacts that existed between South India and Jaffna. Among these Siddha medicine was the oldest.

So, such ancient medicinal systems including the Siddha medicine, though patronised by the kings of Jaffna, were miserably neglected due to lack of state patronage during the regimes of the Portuguese and the Dutch. Even the valuable medicinal notes so far carefully preserved by the kings of Jaffna got lost. As these precious documents fell into the hands of individual medical practitioners, the native system of medicine which hitherto developed as a property of the state now became the asset of individual generations. Through the Portuguese and the Dutch had introduced some of their own medical systems, they did not gain any popularity amidst the people of Jaffna. The medical systems introduced by the British who followed the Dutch, though not sought after very much, at the beginning, the people of Jaffna soon realised their values and accepted them in the course of time.

Caste differences, exhibiting low and high class mentalities were found deep rooted among the people of Jaffna at the time the American missionaries arrived here. They were completely "immersed in traditions and false beliefs". They lacked the mental status to accept anything at once. As a result, the American missionaries were confronted with several problems in almost every activity they undertook. Whether it be education or medicine they had to face challenges. (*Arunthavarajah, K.,2015, p.02*). However as time went on, they achieved more in the field of medicine than in any other field of activity. It may be noted that even today there are many hospitals that bear their names in various parts of Jaffna. It is no exaggeration to say that this situation is a result of the dedication and broad minded services of the missionaries. Some of the missionaries who arrived at the beginning, through they did not possess the necessary medical qualifications, they did have the training and experience of having worked for some time in American hospitals.

The American missionaries established hospitals in various places and cured patients. At the beginning they rendered excellent services, establishing hospitals in places like Thellippalai, Vattukkottai, Pandatharippu, Manipay and Chavakacheri. Doctors Edward Warren, James Richards, John Seudder, Nathan Ward, Samuel F.Green and C.T.Mills are some of the notable worthy doctors who worked in such missionary hospitals. Thus Samuel F.Green is a member of this group of medical practitioners. Dr.Green who completed his degree in 1845, came forward to start his medical service in his own country. Later on, developing a desire to work abroad, he made arrangements to fulfil his desire. Before Green, the John Seudder couple had come to Jaffna and established their hospital at Pandatharippu in 1820. When they returned to America, Dr.Nathan Ward continued their services. It was towards the end of his service, that Dr. Samuel Fisk Green came to Jaffna and commenced his work. (*Ambikaibahan, R., 2006, p.08*).

Green and his Medical works in Jaffna

James Richards(1816-1822) and Edward Warren(1816-1818) were among the first group of missionaries sent out by American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions to start the American Ceylon Mission(ACM) in Jaffna 1816. They were sent 1812 by the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions to Dartmouth Medical School in Philadelphia, the fourth oldest medical School in America, to study medicine and surgery for two years. As the full medical course at that time took three years, they were not awarded the degree of M.D, when they left, nevertheless they would have known the basics of medicine and surgery as they were also given hospital clinical training. (*Arumugam,Thiru.,2009, p.13*).

Both of them met people affected by diseases in various parts of Jaffna, offered their services and made them realise the benefits in western treatments. Along with this, they also continued their religious propaganda. It was at the background of



their services that arrangements were made later by the American mission to despatch qualified doctors to Jaffna. It will be interesting to note that both the doctors mentioned above, were not holders of medical degrees.

Rev. John Scudder (1820-1836) was the first qualified medical missionary doctor who was sent to Jaffna by the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions to work for the American Ceylon Mission. Further He was in fact the first qualified medical missionary to be sent to work in Asia from the western world a singular honour for Jaffna. (*Arumugam, Thiru., 2009, p.25*). He came with his wife in 1819. To start with his medical services, he first settled down at Thellippalai and later shifted over to Pandatharippu. Following this, he started his work at Chavakacheri also. He even conducted classes in medicine to some students in Jaffna. Even after his death in 1831 his services were continued by those students he nurtured. Nathan Ward (1833-1846) was the second fully qualified physician sent out to Jaffna to work for the American Ceylon Mission. Nathan Ward was actually sent to be of assistance to Green when he was working at Pandatharippu. While staying at Vattukkottai he had conducted classes in medicine in addition to his services. He completed his service in 1847 and returned to his country.

Samuel Fisk Green (1846-1857) was the third fully qualified Physician sent out to Jaffna to work for the American Ceylon Mission. He was the outstanding Tamil Medical Missionary of his day. came to Jaffna in middle part of 19th century, 'first to be physician to the missionaries and then to be of use to the heathen round about'. After a few months at Vattukoddai where he used the equipment and continued the work of Dr. Ward he removed to Manipay and commenced a work destined to grow to large proportions and to exert wide influence. At once he began training Tamil young men who should do, he hoped far more than he could do directly to 'raise the whole standard of medical practice among the Tamils, substituting science for superstition and honourable practise for quackery' (*Root, I. Helen., 1916, p.43*). He was one such great man who toiled with a will and left his foot prints on the Jaffna soil by his devoted service to the Tamil people and the Tamil language, many years ago.

Dr. Green who was served the American Ceylon Mission in Jaffna during the period from 1847 to 1873. He was born in Green Hill, Worcester Massachusetts, USA on October 1822, the son of William E Green and Julia Plimpton, the eighth in a family of eleven children. His mother passed away when he was eleven years old and his elder sister, who was then eighteen years old, played a maternal role. (*Arumugam, Thiru., 2009, p.47*). He sailed from Boston on April 20, 1847, arrived in Madras on September 4 and in Jaffna on October 6. After a brief period of medical work at the A C M institution at Vattukottai. He was to Manipay in 1848, He established the first hospital and medical school to teach western medicine to the natives. Thus Manipay enjoys a pride of place in Sri Lankan history as the venue of the first hospital and the first medical school. (*Ambikaibakan, R., 2006, p.02*).

The hospital inaugurated by Green in 1848 at Manipay functioned as a centre that co-ordinated the contemporary medical services of the missionaries elsewhere in Jaffna. In the American mission annual report Green says that 2912 patients had been treated within one year after the establishment of the hospital. (*Ambihaibalan, R., 2006, p.08*). In addition to the medical services provided, classes were also conducted on medical matters, and as may be seen from the religious axioms printed on the receipts issued to patients, that even religious sermons had been conducted here.

Actually, at the time Green started his medical services in vattukkottai, the number of people who sought his treatment was very much less. In keeping with the fact that the people of Jaffna will not easily give up their age old customs and traditions, they did not want to wash their hands off the native physicians who had been treating them up to then. At the same time they did not have the heart to approach Christians for medical treatment. This dilemma of theirs, was surpassed by an incident that took place within two weeks. A person called Moothathamby had been afflicted by a bad stomach disorder and he was suffering very badly as the treatments given to him were of no avail. Now, at this stage, Green performed a surgery and completely cured him of his stomach pain. This news spread all over Jaffna and made his name well renowned. (*Ambihaibalar, R., 2006, p.12*). Consequently, the number of patients who sought his treatment began to increase in Jaffna. All though the services of the American mission was transferred to Manipay in 1848, his same increased greatly, rather than decrease. At that time Diseases were many. Apart from more deadly diseases like cholera and smallpox. He identified others that were common and the cause for each of them

Dr. Green made the greatest impact of all the medical Missionaries who worked for the ACM in Jaffna. Some of his achievements are

1. Studied the Tamil language in depth, sufficient to preach and write books in Tamil.
2. Established a hospital at manepay which still exists and is now known as the Green Memorial hospital.



3. Prepared glossaries of Tamil medical words, coining words if none existed. This was the case for the majority of medical and scientific words. This was a pioneering work in Ceylon and South India.
4. Translated, or supervised the translation of eight major medical text books (including Gray's Anatomy) and other minor treatises into Tamil, a total of over 4500 pages of text.
5. Established the first western medical school in Ceylon and trained about 62 medical practitioners directly and over 50 more indirectly, teaching early batches in English and later switching over to the Tamil medium. (Arumugam, Thiru., 2009, p.47)

He offered his service to the Tamil people, maintaining close religious with them. Being a person who could speak many languages including English, Latin, German, French and Greek he had the ability to learn Tamil quite easily. It was not difficult for him. He employed teachers to teach him Tamil and also learnt by conversing in Tamil with the patients who came to him. Within eight months he was successful in his efforts. Owing to his fluency in the Tamil language he knew more about the life styles and customs of the people. (Ambi, 1967, p.27). He also engaged himself in removing compared to western medicine. This made him feel the necessity that western medical practices should spread among the Tamil population. Following this he got down full fledged into activities to achieve this target. It was at the background of this aim that he intended to spread the knowledge of science among the people of Jaffna. Thus, while he attempted to teach medicine he had two students at the beginning. Third students also joined later. These three students were Joshua Dan forth, J. Dennison, and J. Vaithilingam. The first among them assisted Green in his effort to translate and publish medical books in Tamil.

Two severe epidemics of cholera occurred in Jaffna during the Dr. Green period. During the first one in 1855 He went about ministering to the sick as did Rev. Poor. Both caught the disease. He survived while Poor succumbed. Dr. Green thereupon gave himself to the cure and prevention of cholera in Jaffna. When a second epidemic broke out in 1866, the government distributed. He tracts by the thousands and adopted his methods to combat the dreadful disease. (Thurairatnam, ed., 1950, p.09). The services he did to safeguard the people against an epidemic that posed a challenge to his work, were excellent. Many people died to that disease. In order to save them from such diseases he wrote and published a book called "Pranopakari" which could create awareness among them (Veluppillai, 1984, p.161). He also published several pamphlets on this matter. People, who read these, realised how they could protect themselves from such a dangerous disease. Mr. Dyke who was functioning as the governor of Jaffna under British rule, requested Green to establish a free hospital for the people and run it efficiently. As Green agreed for this Dyke made arrangements for an allocation of Rs.1000/= payable to Dr. Green by the British government. After two years this amount was increased to Rs.2000/=.

In 1864 itself Green commenced his activities to teach western medicine through Tamil medium. At that time many people were of the opinion that they could get into government jobs only if they learnt through the English medium. Such people were sent on a ten days' holiday with the advice to reconsider their views or seek other jobs. This was a measure he adopted to understand the indispensability of his medical service and the stand of those who wanted to learnt it. The very purpose of Green was to utilise them in going from village to village and play medical services to the illiterate folk. K. Ilayapillai, S. Sittambalam, Kanthappar, S. Murugesu and S. Veluppillai belonged the first batch of his Tamil medium students to pass out. Out of 62 students who learnt western medicine from him, 33 learnt through Tamil medium. (Ambihaibahar, R., 2006, p.32).

With the view to expand western education in Jaffna he wrote several books in Tamil and also translated some. Embark on a venture after carefully considering all tasks involved and advance printing. That only will assure success. To do otherwise is a misdeed. The success of Green's undertakings in his pioneer venture to introduce medical and scientific literature in Tamil, may be attributed to his advance planning, before commencing work on his proposed plan. As mentioned elsewhere in this book, the first book selected for translations, towards the end of 1851, was Dr. Calvin Cutter's Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene. (Ambi, R., 1998, p.62)

The following list is provided as the medical science works published in Tamil as result of Dr. Green's planned undertaking

1. Cutter's Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene.
2. Maunsell's Obstetrics
3. Druitt's Surgery
4. Gray's Anatomy
5. Hopper's Physician's Vade Mecum
6. Wells' Chemistry
7. Dalton's Physiology
8. Waring's Pharmacopoeia of India



Vocabularies

1. Physiological Vocabularies
2. Vocabulary of Materia Medica, Diseases of Women and Children, and Medical Jurisprudence

Popular Treatises

1. Secret Vice
2. The Soul's Abode
3. The Mother and Child

Original Treatises

1. The Eye,
2. The Ear
3. The Hand
4. The Foot,
5. The Skin,
6. The Mouth,
7. The body,
8. Be clean,
9. Hints for Cholera Times,
10. Government Tract on Cholera,
11. The Way of Health(Ambi,R., 1998,p.62)

He did not have much support for his translation works at the beginning. However he continued his efforts later with the aid of the government. At the background of these efforts, western medicine began to develop through Tamil medium. As already mentioned, even though he lacked government support at the beginning, he did not give up his service to the Tamil language. He received immense support for a book he published through the mission press at manipay on child birth care. Even native medical practioners were interested in that book, whereby he was highly encouraged. It is worth mentioning that even when situations warranted his visits to America, he kept on making arrangements to translate from there itself, books on medicine. He learnt some new books whilst in America, and also engaged himself in activities to publish those in Tamil as well as to collect funds for this purpose. During 1858 and 1859, he selected some books for Tamil translation and also got the approval of the authors. (Ambi, R.,1967, p.46).

After five years of retired life, he came back to Jaffna in 1862 and started his services again. His return to Jaffna set up a new milestone in the medical field of Jaffna. In 1863 the government invited him to take over the Jaffna hospital, which was hitherto under military care. He accepted the offer and continued his medical services there. However, he began to realise that this was hindering his publication services. He therefore got books written or translated by his students. In addition to these translations valuable vocabularies were printed which were accepted as authoritative in India as well as in Ceylon. many popular treatises and tracts were issued which brought scientific truth to the people at large. He made it his practice to commend Jesus Christ to every patient and ask the help of God in the presence of his students at every operation. (Root,I.,Helen.,1916,p.43).

Conclusion

Dr.Green was an American, who willingly came to Jaffna and carried out his medical services in a splendid way. He made the people of Jaffna realise the benefits of western medicine and change over from native treatment. He created a number of doctors from our environment through English and Tamil media. A number of books on western medical science were translated by him. He also published a dictionary of medical terms. His medical activities as well as books were accepted by native doctors. He served at a time when transport and communication facilities were in a very bad state. Beyond all such difficulties, the services rendered by him to the people of our land were excellent and he is still remember red for all his valuable work. In fact, in the history of medicine during the British regime in Jaffna, the excellence of his work needs to be embossed in gold letters. Manipay hospital on its 150th anniversary, honoured him with the issue of a stamp in his memory.

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