

# The Role of the American Madura Mission in Women's Education in Madurai

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## Abstract

In 1834, the American Jaffna Mission founded the American Madura Mission in Madurai. Following the arrival of missionaries Levi Spaulding, William Todd, and Henry Hoisington in Madurai, it started engaging in serious activity. The missionaries' goals in Madurai were to build schools for women's emancipation and aid the underprivileged. As a result, they were crucial in the creation of Madurai's contemporary health and education systems. In 1834, American missionary Daniel Poor established the mission schools in Madurai. The mission quickly established mission schools at Madurai, Dindigul, Sivaganga, Mantapasalai and Periyakulam. Amid the Madurai missionaries, Mrs. Capron and Miss Katie Wicox were the pioneers to support women's education in the city.

**Keywords:** American Madura Mission, Madurai, Christian Missionaries, Education.

The administrative centre of Tamil Nadu's southern districts is in charge of Madurai, the state's second capital. It's situated alongside the Vaigai River. For decades, Madurai has been a hub for the academic study of Tamil literature, art, music, dance, and culture. Since ancient times, Madurai's territory has changed frequently as a result of shifts in its political fortunes. Its peak as a sovereign country was achieved in late mediaeval times, under the Pandyas. The kingdom stretched from the Kaveri River to Kanyakumai. But it was recognised as the area south of Kaveri and called the Madurai Subah when it was a province of the Carnatic under the Nawabs of Arcot (1701–1801). It was established as the collectorate of the Madras Presidency in 1801. During the company's tenure, the Madurai district included the divisions of Madurai and Dindigul, the zamindaries of Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram, and the tribal regions of Melur and Natham.

After arriving in India as traders, the British felt obligated to convert the natives to Christianity and the teachings of Jesus. They concluded that the best tool for achieving this objective was education. People had travelled to Tamil Nadu and India from a variety of nations. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, a missionary is someone who is dispatched to another nation to educate and preach their religion to the local populace. Those who came for spiritual work were called missionaries. The Christian missionaries, with the support of the company, had spread their faith in India.

The Christian missionaries believed that it was their responsibility to make every effort to improve the social, cultural, and educational environments that existed in South India. With financial and material support from the firm, the missionaries established numerous educational institutions throughout Tamil Nadu.

The company's charter act of 1813 was a significant turning point in Indian education history. A lakh rupee was set aside for the education of the people living under British rule, and missionaries were allowed to open schools and carry out missionary work. Aside from this, the Macaulay Minutes in 1835, Wood's dispatch in 1854 and the Hunter Commission Report in 1882, all helped to advance India's educational system. The British government moved quickly to put the aforementioned policies into effect. The Education Despatch of 1854 issued recommendations in favour of female education in India.

In certain regions of India, the attempts of Christian missionaries to educate women were only partially successful. The first school for girls, partially run by Indians, was founded in 1845. In the Madras Presidency, numerous mission schools were founded separately for boys and girls, according to Wood's report of 1854. The issue of female education came up for serious discussion by the government following the 1858 power shift.

In 1822, when Colonel Munro became the governor of the Madras Presidency, he planned to establish two collectorate schools in each district. Due to financial constraints, only one collectorate and three thasildari schools were opened. The thasildari schools in Dindigul, Sivganga, and Paramkudi were opened in addition to the collectorate school in Madurai.

In 1827, only about sixty scholars received education in the school in Madurai, thirty-two in Dindigul, and thirty-seven in Tirumangalam. The American Mission made a significant entry into the realm of education. As Bagawan Dayal says, the real foundation of modern Indian education was laid not by the British administrative authorities but by the missionaries and the officials of the English East India Company in their private capacities.

In 1834, the American Madura Mission was established in Madurai by the American Jaffna Mission. The establishment of contemporary Madurai health and education institutions was greatly aided by American missionaries. The American missionaries' primary settlement locations were East Veli Street, American Mission Church Street near the Periyar bus stop, and American Mission Street in Sellur.

The American Madura Mission began with the arrival of missionaries Levi Spaulding, William Todd, and Henry Hoisington in Madurai in 1834. The missionaries saw schools as tools for the spread of Christianity. Daniel Poor, an American missionary, founded the mission schools in Madurai in 1834. In a short period of time, the mission opened Tamil schools at Madurai, Dindigul, Sivaganga, Periyakulam, and Mantapasalai.

The American Madura Mission established separate boarding schools for boys and girls. At that time, Madurai completely disregarded the education of women. This resulted from a pervasive prejudice among Hindus against women's education. The missionaries also supported women's education, and Mr. O'Malley has rightly observed female education as the child of none but the missionaries.

The American Madura Mission established separate schools for females in Madurai, Pasumalai, and Tirumanagalam for the first time in 1909. In Tamil Nadu, the three-system system of education was implemented in 1920. This system was modelled after government, mission, and aboriginal schools. Capron Hall Girl's High School was founded in 1921 by Miss Katie Wicox, an American lady missionary. The missionaries established a separate school for girls at Usilampatti in 1922.

Women's higher education increased rapidly in the 1930s and 1940s. Two private girls' schools were established in Madurai in 1940 as a result. One was established by American woman missionary Katie Wicox and known as the Orlando Charles Piece Memorial Women's Higher Secondary School (OCPM). It is situated in Chinna Chokkikulam, Madurai, and St. Joseph's convent school for girls. It is a Catholic school in Madurai Town that is administered by nuns.

In Madurai, women's education had advanced more quickly after independence. There were two significant missionary institutions founded for women. Lady Doak College was one, while Fatima College was the other. American missionary Miss Katie Wilcox established Lady Doak College, a prestigious Christian institution and the first women's college in Madurai, in 1948 at the Noyes Memorial Gardens in Tallakulam, Madurai.

On the St. Joseph's campus, Fatima College was established in 1953 as the city's first Catholic college. Then, because to Mother Rose's efforts, it moved to the current location of Mary Land Campus close to Vilangudi in 1958. She took on a lot of responsibilities because of her unwavering faith and strong desire to assist young girls in Madurai.

As a result, the American Madura Mission and its missionaries started a new initiative for women's education in Madurai and helped to advance women's status in a number of fields through educational activities.

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