

SCUDDER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL AND ITS MEDICAL SERVICES

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Abstract

The Tamil Country witnessed with many denomination of Christian Missionaries since the advent of the Europeans. The London Missionary Society kept its activities in Kanyakumari District. The Madura Mission concentrated its services in Madurai District. The S.P.C.K., and S.P.G., missionaries engaged in their services in Tirunelveli District. The Tranquebar Mission made its centi activities in Thanjavur District. Likewise, the American Arcot Mission done its yeomen services to the people of the North Arcot District. The American Arcot Missionaries established a hospital at Ranipet, Vellore in 1866 and rendered medical services. In spite of much opposition from the natives, the hospital grew with the increasing number of patients. John Scudder and his sons worked hard for the establishment of the hospital. The hospital was named as 'Scudder Memorial Hospital' and a new building was constructed in 1928. It is still rendering medical services at Ranipet. This paper attempts to highlights the origin and growth of Scudder Memorial Hospital and its invaluable medical services in the North Arcot District in the second half of the Nineteenth Century and first half of the Twentieth Century.

Keywords: *Arcot Mission, Medical Services, Missionaries, Scudder, Ranipet, Vellore*

1. Introduction

This paper highlights the medical services of the Christian missionaries of Arcot Mission at Ranipet Hospital, Vellore. The missionaries of Reformed Church of America were involved in changing the lives of the people in India by providing medical services, better education and social work. Medical work continued as the major area of Reformed Church of American missionary activities. For missionaries, health and wholeness involved both physical and spiritual well-being. The healing of sick seemed to the missionary as a proper exercise of Christian benevolence, and the example of Jesus was constantly followed as a spiritual basis for medical missions. The region of Arcot was chosen as a sphere of missionary enterprise, and the mission became more consolidated by establishing schools and hospitals. The Arcot missionaries established a hospital at Ranipet and branch dispensaries at Tindivanam, Gudiyattam and Kaveripakkam. The mission was an important and successful enterprise by which the Arcot region was covered with a network of mission stations.

2. Dr. John Scudder, Sr.

Rev. Dr. John Scudder, Sr., was the first medical missionary who came to India. He was graduated from Princeton University in 1811, and the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1813. He practiced successfully in New York City.¹ He became convinced that he was called to be a missionary. He then thoroughly committed himself to serve God through medical missions of the American Board, and later of the Dutch Reformed Board. John Scudder reached India in 1819 and he was the first physician to be sent forth from his country as a missionary.² He established a large hospital, of which he was the chief physician. He was successful in treating cholera and malaria. He was both a minister and physician and never neglected the physical want of his patients.³ In 1847, he went to Madurai and spent two years there to provide medical aid. In 1849, Scudder returned to his mission in Madras where he laboured till his death on 13th January 1855.⁴ He dedicated his life and service to the neglected sections of the society.

3. Henry Martin Scudder

Henry Martin Scudder was an American Missionary and the son of Rev. Dr. John Scudder. The first regular medical mission of American Arcot Mission was established by Dr. H.M. Scudder.⁵ In 1850, he went to Arcot area and started a dispensary at Walajapet and gave medical aid. Countless people came and got treatment from Dr. Henry Martin Scudder and he spent most of his time in the dispensary. He met the patients before the treatment and taught them simply about Jesus Christ, His teachings, His life and Ministry and used to commence treatment with small prayer.⁶ The walls of the rooms were decorated with texts from the Bible and tracts and hymn books were distributed. A simple statement of religious truth was printed on the back of the out-patients' tickets.⁷ He felt the need of medical ministry in India and wrote a letter to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in November 1851 insisting the need of a medical missionary to be sent. In March 1856, Rev. Jared Waterbury Scudder came to India as medical missionary. Because of the illness of his wife, Rev. J.W. Scudder was directed to return to America.⁸

4. Rev. Dr. Silas Scudder

Rev. Dr. Silas Scudder and Rev. Dr. H.M. Scudder, Jr., the two sons of Rev. Dr. John Scudder came to Ranipet as the missionaries of American Arcot Mission on 25th December 1860. Silas Scudder was sent to re-open the Walajapet dispensary. His main aim was "Preaching the Gospel and healing all kinds of diseases".⁹ During the period from 1861-1865 there took place a civil war in America. Hence, the Arcot Mission was not able to get sufficient fund from America. In 1861, Silas Scudder, took charge of the American Arcot Mission as second missionary at Vellore. When he was at Vellore, he used the ground in front of his house as dispensary and treated the out-patients. He not only gave medical aid but also did some surgeries. He could get the support of the natives at Vellore.¹⁰ The Christian Missionaries were treated as good servants of God. The family members of Scudder rendered their medical services for the natives.

5. Establishment of Ranipet Hospital

Silas Scudder spent most of his time in ministry than the medical work for five years. In 1865, the American Civil War was ended. In the same year, Reformed Church of America Board donated money to Arcot Mission to start a dispensary and a hospital. For this purpose, W. Ackerman donated 50,000 rupees and with this amount Silas Scudder started a hospital at Ranipet on 17th March 1866. At Ranipet, there was a dispensary run by the Government. The servants of this dispensary opposed the hospital started by Scudder and spread some rumour about this hospital. They spread the news such as

- This hospital was started to impose Christianity
- The missionaries gave defiled water as medicine which was a blemish to the Hindu belief
- Appointing lower caste people to treat the patients was insult to the upper caste people
- It broke the caste restriction.

They also spread the news that those who went to get treatment from this hospital will be punished by the government. Even though Scudder faced so many hardships, Ranipet hospital ran successfully. Scudder went to the palace of Nawab in Ranipet to treat a woman in the family of Nawab of Arcot. As he treated the woman in her personal room at the palace, Scudder was respected by the local people. The number of patients in the Government dispensary became very low. Hence the government closed that dispensary and the monthly expenditure of this dispensary ninety-eight rupees was ordered by the government to be given as the administrative grant to the hospital of Scudder.¹¹ The Government transferred to his care a hospital and dispensary, belonging to it, and previously under the charge of an apothecary. The institution came under the exclusive control of Scudder, on the simple condition that he shall report the extent of his work to the authorities. All the equipments and medicines in the Government dispensary were transferred to Ranipet hospital and Silas Scudder

was appointed as the Medical Officer of the North Arcot District by the Government of Madras on 15th August 1866.¹²

High caste men, both old and young, visited the hospital almost daily, they did not come for medical treatment but out of curiosity to take part with the mission service and read the books. Each patient had a number given to them. The name, age, residence, caste, and disease were taken down under this number and the prescriptions written out in full. The name and number were then filled into the blanks of a printed leaf, and given to the patient. This he must carefully preserve, and bring with him whenever he revisited.¹³ At the end of 1867, Lord Napier, the then Governor of Madras visited the hospital. William H. Seward, the Secretary of Abraham Lincoln, the then President of the U.S.A, after his retirement, was on a world tour and he came to Madras. He was a close friend of Napier, the then Governor of Madras. William H. Seward wanted to make a visit to the service centres of American Arcot Mission. So a special train was arranged from Madras to Ranipet and Napier and William H. Seward visited Ranipet hospital. Lord Napier after noticing the high services of the missionaries doubled the government grant to the hospital.¹⁴

6.Scudder Brothers

After Silas Scudder, Dr. John Scudder assumed the charge of the hospital and run it till 1874. The Dispensary and Hospital work had been maintained with increased attention. The patients were from all castes, the higher as well as the lower could seek the aid, both as in and out patients. Funds had been donated by the Local Boards to carry on medical work. The Gospel was preached every morning before medicines were given, and books were presented to those who desired.¹⁵ During the administration of John Scudder Jr., the in-patient's ward was opened. Silas Scudder, when he was in the hospital at Ranipet, trained the helpers and they worked with him. These helpers could help John Scudder in his hospital ministry.

In 1875 Henry Martin Scudder Jr. was sent to the Arcot Mission as a medical missionary. He was in charge of Ranipet hospital. There was drought

and famine in this area during 1875-1877. Nearly 70,000 people were affected by this drought, and they were accommodated in the relief camp. Henry Martin Scudder Jr. was appointed as in charge of the Relief Camp by the Government. Anemia and some other diseases were recorded due to insufficient and improper food.¹⁶ In 1877, he started the Maternity Department at the hospital. During the middle of 1878, malarial fevers were rife and more than usually fatal. Several times the number of out-patients treated for malaria in a single morning exceeded ninety. The fever had generally been intermittent in character, but it had often assumed a remittent type and sometimes a very violent and pernicious form.¹⁷ With the help of the native helpers, Ranipet hospital was run by Henry Martin Scudder Jr. The daily average attendance of the hospital increased and the patients were from all the quarters of the North Arcot District. The in-patient ward of the hospital continued to be functioned well and this was the most remarkable feature of the hospital.¹⁸

7. Louis Rousseau Scudder

In 1889, Dr. Louis Rousseau Scudder took charge of Ranipet hospital and administered the hospital for sixteen years. During his tenure, many patients were treated as in-patients and out-patients. A large number of patients were admitted in the in-patient ward. He performed more than hundred major surgeries and nearly five hundred minor operations. In 1891, a famine attacked and a large number of patients were admitted. At the end of this year, Mrs. L.R. Scudder was severely attacked by typhoid fever and could recover only after a month.¹⁹ Louisa E. Hart served as the maternity and children's doctor. In 1899, the government handed over this hospital fully to the Arcot Mission and sanctioned the annual grant of Rs. 2066. This amount was received by the mission till 1902. The hospital at Ranipet was fully under the control of the mission; its claim was recognized by the government. In the absence of L.R. Scudder, Miss. L.H. Hart took charge of the hospital. More than 13,000 patients were treated during the year.²⁰ There was an increase in *purdah* or secluded patients. The number of cases to which Hart had been called and visited also increased and a modern

operating table was supplied through the generosity of Miss. Helen Gould, a missionary.²¹

8. Treatment to Cancer Patients

Dr. Roy was sent from America to take charge of Ranipet Hospital in 1914. He showed much interest in treating cancer patients. The development in the surgical department had been very slow in 1916. The hospital had better facilities for surgery, new operation center and better trained assistants. Engaged in keeping the hospital clean and orderly, Roy gave direction to perform certain duties.²² The hospital at Ranipet occupied a permanent place in the hearts of the people of Ranipet and neighboring towns and villages. They realized the benefits of western medicine from the hands of the missionaries who were sympathetically inclined towards them. The cases which came to the mission hospital at the last stages of their disease understood the *manthrams* and concoctions of the several quack doctors. The natives expected the growth and welfare of the hospital by their grateful financial support. Ranipet hospital played a major role with the service given to the sick and suffering people. The number of in-patients, out-patients, major operations and minor operations increased rapidly. In 1923 the natives donated rupees 8,226 and this indicated the interest and confidence of the people in the medical ministry of the missionaries.

9. Scudder Memorial Hospital

In 1919 cornerstone of the Scudder Memorial Hospital at Ranipet was laid by Mrs. John Scudder II who was eighty one years of age. The Scudder Memorial Association in America and its members in India decided to build a hospital in the name of the founder at Ranipet, Vellore. That year was the centenary of the arrival of Dr. John Scudder and Mrs. John Scudder in India to carry out mission. Galen Fisher Scudder, a graduate of Princeton and the Cornell Medical School and the son of Lewis R. Scudder arrived in India and was made Medical Superintendent of Ranipet Hospital and was given the responsibility of building the Scudder Memorial Hospital. Architectural plan was drawn up by Reginald Dann, the then Architect for the Government of Madras.²³

the gift on behalf of the Board of Foreign Missions. The newly built hospital was brought under the administration of the Arcot Assembly. Rev. E. Savarirayan, as President of the Assembly accepted this responsibility. Before the close of the function Abdul Hakim, a wealthy resident of Melvisharam, Vellore and a very public spirited citizen, announced his contribution of 3,000 rupees for the erection of a private ward block. Hakim was duly thanked by Muthiah Mudaliar, the then Minister on behalf of the management of the Hospital.²⁵ The Minister opened the hospital for the public and announced that it was ready for immediate use. Galen F. Scudder in charge of the Scudder Memorial Hospital, Ranipet witnessed that "*God may use this institution more and more for the spreading abroad of the knowledge of the love, in the life of Jesus Christ.*"²⁶

10. Conclusion

The medical services of the missionaries of American Arcot Mission were remarkable and commendable. Their contribution towards medical services in Tamil Nadu is noteworthy. They could reach the poor and oppressed people with their selfless service. Large number of people irrespective of caste, color and creed received medical aid from the Scudder Memorial hospital. They made all effort in a big way in healing the sick people with love and care. The Scudder Memorial Hospital at Ranipet is a standing symbol of their meritorious service. Thus Christian missionaries not only toiled for the spiritual physical well being of the natives.

11. End Notes

- [1] J.B. Waterbury, *Memoir of Rev. John Scudder*, New York, 1870, p.11
- [2] J. Charles Molony, *A Book of South India*, Chennai, 2004, p. 200.
- [3] J.B. Waterbury, *op.cit.*, p.21
- [4] Charles Henry Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, New York, 1923, p. 96.
- [5] Anna Robertson Montgomery, *Gloria Christi*, London, 1907, p. 114
- [6] I. Ilangovan, *From Rev. Dr. John Scudder to Ida Sophia Scudder*, Vellore, 1995, p. 65