

The Role of Christian Missionaries in Societal Change through English Language Education in Jaffna during the Colonial Era

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The activities of the colonial rulers brought about a great deal of changes not only in the status of the native languages but also in the entire linguistic behaviour of the masses of their colonized countries. In this regard, British colonization left behind in all its colonized countries a legacy which most of us utilize and criticize today and that legacy is the English Language. British rulers wanted to serve the needs of the indigenous people of Sri Lanka by promoting Christian faith using education. In this regard the education of Tamil people in Jaffna was from the very beginning, a subject of great concern to the missionaries. The humanistic concerns of the missionaries to educate the indigenous and uplift their life situations through education are highly commendable.

The objective of this paper on 'The Role of Christian Missionaries in societal change through English Language education in Jaffna during the colonial era' is not only to explore the role of missionaries in introducing and promoting English language education during the rule of British but also to emphasize that how those missionaries served as a tool to bring socio- linguistic changes among Jaffna Tamils through English Language Education. A descriptive method is carried out in this research paper. This paper elaborately describes the role played by the missionaries for the slow and steady growth of education in Jaffna and the major societal changes the missionaries brought such as female education, elimination of caste discrimination, and the emergence of English educated Jaffnese.

Keywords: British Colonization - Christian Missionaries - Language Education - Jaffna Tamil

