



CONTRIBUTIONS OF SYRIAN CHRISTIANS IN THE SHAPING OF MODERN KERALA

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Abstract

Many diverse institutions and people have contributed towards shaping of modern Kerala. The diverse socio-economic, educational and health care projects and programmes that the Syrian Christians implemented out of the inspiration from the message of love of Jesus have ultimately contributed to the building up of Kerala. In this study, the researcher looks in to the contributions of Syrian Christians which added certain unique meanings and content to the type of modernity that is seen in Kerala.



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Introduction

About 20% of Kerala's population are Syrian Christians living in several countries. This status has not undermined its output in the society. It had always played an important role in building up modern Kerala through education, Social Services, Health Care etc. The Syrian Christian Church enlightened the people of Kerala not only in the area of spirituality but in all aspects of life. This study will discuss some of the contributions of the Syrian Christians in shaping modern Kerala.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

Most of the Syrian Christians were from an agrarian background. As a result the church which they belonged was able to use the income from the agrarian surplus for erecting educational institutions with the purpose of empowering their community. Most of these churches started their own schools and colleges. The church also gave importance in educating the poor. People of Kerala are proud of their high literacy rate. The Syrian Christians, who established educational institutions throughout the length and breadth of Kerala, opened the gates of school and colleges for everyone without looking into caste, creed or religion. Thus the downtrodden people of Kerala got an opportunity to educate themselves in these institutions and they were able to secure high positions in the society. These educational institutions played an important role in shaping modern Kerala.

SOCIAL SERVICE AND HEALTH CARE

Despite the small percentage of the population of this minority community, their contribution towards healthcare and Social services is unique and praiseworthy. The exemplary and the excellent services provided by the Syrian Christians through dispensaries, hospitals, Orphanages and destitute homes are significant. They had total commitment in these services. Many of the dispensaries and hospitals thus started by the Church helped a lot to save the lives of thousands of poor and marginalized people. In fact it was these medical institutions that have sustained the health of people in Kerala, causing them to evolve and operate as the foundational base of modern Kerala.

INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTES

In order to improve their living standards, the Syrian Christians established several industrial and Agricultural institutes. Some of the churches took the initiatives in introducing industrial and technical training centers for the benefit of their members which became well known. Some of these centers were well known for tile making, Weaving and textile.

Conclusion

The Syrian Christian church have helped to unite the people of Kerala and made them aware of their self-worth due their dedicated service in the field of education, health care and various social, political and cultural upbringings. Right from the beginning, the Syrian Christians offered a unique and profound impact on the society.

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