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Christianity and Its Impact on the Lives of Kallars in Tamil Nadu Who Embraced the Faith, in Comparison to Those Who Did Not: Special Reference to Kallar Tamil Lutheran Christians in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: The German and Swedish Lutheran Mission was a major and pioneering Protestant mission society that started its mission work in Tamil Nadu. The Halle Danish, Leipzig mission, and Church of Sweden mission societies had a larger mission field in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Christians are intimately associated with the German Lutheran Mission and Swedish Mission. The first German Lutheran missionaries, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, came to India in 1706. From then on, many Lutheran missionaries came to Tamil Nadu. Afterwards Tamil Nadu became a thriving Christian center for decades, with a strong Christian congregation, church, and several institutions. The majority of these Christians are descendants of Dalits (former untouchable Paraiyars) and Kallars who embraced Christianity. From a life of near slavery, poverty, illiteracy, oppression, and indignity, conversion to Christianity transformed the lives of these people. Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Dalits and Kallars found liberation and have made significant progress because of the Christian missionaries of the Church of the German and Swedish Mission. Both the German and Swedish Mission offered the Gospel of a new religion to not only the subaltern people but also the possibility of secular salvation. The history of Lutherans needs to be understood as a part of Christian subaltern history (Analysing the Indian mission history from the native perspective). My paper will mainly focus on Tamil Lutheran Dalit and Kallar Christians. In this paper, I propose to elucidate the role of German and Swedish Lutheran missionaries in the social, economic, educational, and spiritual life of Tamil Lutheran Dalits and Kallars. Due to the page limit, I am going to mainly focus on Swedish Mission and Kallar Lutheran Christians.

Keywords: caste; Kallars; Swedish Mission; infanticide; Tamil Lutheran Kallar Christians; Tamil Evangelical Lutheran church; Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran mission; Church of Sweden mission



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1. Swedish Mission in India

The Swedish Mission entered India through the first Swedish missionary who stepped foot on Indian soil in 1740. The following section will explore a few important missionaries' short biographies, including the most important ones in this paper.

First Swedish Missionary in India. John. Zacharias. Kiernander

The first Swedish missionary in India, as far as is known, was John Zacharias Kiernander (Estborn 1952, p. 125; Latourette 1960, p. 186; Asirvadam 1962, p. 1; Anderson 1999, p. 214; Iyyer Samuel 1955, p. 184; Hardeland 1895). He was the first Protestant missionary who arrived in Bengal. He was born in Akstad, Sweden, and educated at both Uppsala University and Halle, Germany. In 1739, he responded to a request by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge for a worker at Cuddalore in Bengal. After ordination, he came to India via London, arriving there in 1740. He rapidly built up a congregation and worked for the empowerment of women. When the French captured the city in 1758,

he was expelled and relocated to Calcutta. There he opened a school, Mission; he built the Old Mission church (Fenger 1906, p. 184) and occasionally preached in nearby Serampore. When his wife died three years later, he married a wealthy English widow, gaining social status and money to expand the work. Because the protestant church in Calcutta had been destroyed in the 1756 uprising, he built a new structure, along with a school and mission house, all at his own expense. He completed it in 1770, and it was later known as the old church or mission church. However, his entrance into high society hurt the effectiveness of his ministry, and his second wife died in 1773, and some bad business dealings ruined him financially. After losing the property in a bankruptcy proceeding in 1787, he became a chaplain at the Dutch settlement of Chinsurah. When war broke out in 1795, he returned to Calcutta and died destitute and forgotten (Sandegren and Kirenander 1928; Carnes 1832, pp. 299–318; Estborn 1952, p. 124; Iyyer Samuel 1955, p. 184).

In 1831–1836, another Swedish missionary came to India, namely Peter Fjettstedt, a pioneer of the missionary movement in Sweden. He was born in the province of Värmland in western Sweden and studied for the ministry at the University of Lund. After his ordination, he went directly to the Basel Mission School for missionary training. He was sent to Palayamcottai in South India. He was working in Tinneveli in the service of the C.M.S., but because of ill health he had to leave India, and after some years of service in Turkey, he went back to Sweden. In the second half of his life, he worked as a missionary motivator and organizer in his homeland, where he helped to found the Lund Missionary Society in 1845; this was the forerunner of the present-day Church of Sweden. Though lasting only a few years, his service in the mission-field was important enough. However, it became still more important at home, because his enthusiasm was able to arouse interest in mission work in the whole church. One result of his work at home was the formation of the Lund Missionary Society 1845. Only 10 years later, it merged with the Swedish Mission Society, but during the short time of its existence as an independent society, it had taken a step of the greatest importance for the future: it had established a connection with the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Latourette 1960, p. 186; Estborn 1952, p. 124; Iyyer Samuel 1955, p. 184).

2. The Connection between the Church of Sweden Mission and the Leipzig Mission Society

This Mission, founded in 1836, had already established itself in Tranquebar Mission and to the leaders of the Swedish Mission; therefore, it seemed expedient to work with the German Mission, both being deeply rooted in the Lutheran Confessions. Lund Missionary Society was integrated into the Swedish Mission Society, and later, this Society was succeeded by the Church of Sweden Mission Board. In this way, a fellowship between these two Lutheran Missions lasted until the Second World War. In many ways, it proved to be a real blessing to the Lutheran mission work in the Tamil country. However, cooperation between the two Missions was not always easy and could not be preserved without mutual sacrifices. Swedish Lutheranism was different from the German, less exclusive and more open and sympathetic to Evangelical missions and churches of other confessions. Even then, the C.S.M. continued to carry out its administration of the former L.E.L.M properties under the control and supervision of the Mission Trust of Madras (Estborn 1952, pp. 124–25; Iyyer Samuel 1955, p. 184; Jeyakumar 2009, p. 39; Murthy 2020, p. 206). The L.E.L.M later cooperated with the C.S.M in Tamil Nadu, which in 1919 resulted in the establishment of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran church. Because of World War I, in 1916, the work and properties of the L.E.L.M. in Tamil Nadu were transferred to the C.S.M. Later, under the orders of the Government of India, through notification No. 3550 dated 22 May 1919, the properties of the L.E.L.M. hitherto administered by the C.S.M were transferred by the custodian of the enemy properties, Madras, through a transfer deed to the Mission Trust of Madras (Hardeland 1895, pp. 179–92; Estborn 1952, pp. 123; Iyyer Samuel 1955, p. 184).

3. Desire to Be Independent

During this time in Sweden, the interest in the mission in India had also exploded, and they collected and sent no small amount of money. However, this increase at home and in India raised a problem. It felt like a significant handicap at home in Sweden that the mission friends could not look up to Swedish missionaries, as they were missionaries or on stations, such as Madura and Coimbatore, which had Swedes posted there for long periods as Swedish stations. All the money had to go through Leipzig, and the management of the mission was entirely in the hands of the Collegium at Leipzig and the church council at Tranquebar. The Swedish Mission Society made many attempts to be independent. Still, the desire of the Swedish Mission was not fulfilled, even though Karl Alexander Outcherlony, a Swedish missionary, had worked out proposals for a more independent position for Swedish missionaries. In his time, however, these did not bring any real change. However, when the Leipzig Mission Society had handed over its work to the Church of Sweden Board and the whole Church had become interested in the Indian Mission, they worked proposals out for a more independent position in the Swedish Mission ([Hardeland 1895](#), pp. 179–92; [Estborn 1952](#), pp. 128–29; [Iyyer Samuel 1955](#), pp. 184–89).

The proposals, however, met with challenging resistance at Leipzig. The Collegium was eager to preserve the unity of the mission. Instead of the independence, Leipzig offered the Archbishop of Sweden a seat in the Collegium. In this situation, it was fortunate that an important Swedish missionary, namely Johannes Sandegren¹, who later became a bishop of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church in an eminent degree, enjoyed the confidence of both missions and felt equally are important. He wrote to the Collegium and the Church of Sweden Mission Board. He pointed out, on the one hand, the advantages of cooperation between the two missions and the necessity of independence for the Church of Sweden in its work in India. After protracted negotiations, the Collegium consented, in 1901, to hand over three stations, Madura, Pudukkottai, and Anikadu, to the management of the Church of Sweden. Yet, for all external purposes, the name of the Swedish stations should be the Swedish Diocese of the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission ([Estborn 1952](#), p. 129).

In 1901, Leipzig's mission gave three stations to the Swedish mission, namely Madura Pudukkottai and Anikadu (*ibid.*, p. 129). From Madura, Swedish missionaries extended their evangelical work into the Ramnad District. Missionary Pleyel was working among the *Maravars* and built the *Paramakudi* station. The response of the *Maravars*, however, was scanty, although subsequent missionaries in those parts had tremendous success among the *Pallars* and other so-called low caste communities. During this time, a movement started among the *Kallars* at Kodaikanal in the Madura District. According to Estborn, the government tried their best to pacify and civilize the Kallar community, but the British had little success. The British Government introduced sterner methods (*ibid.*, p. 139), but it provoked the Kallar community due to this rebellion's tumult and attack on the police forces. The *Kallars* were defeated, leading the Kallar community to listen to the missionaries' message. Estborn expresses, "Religious and worldly motives joined to cause a mass movement towards Christianity". The British government found that the missionary work for the pacification of the *Kallars* was more successful than their own, and gave the mission their support. Paul Sandegren, who later became bishop, worked among *Kallars* for years. Later, work carried out by Himmelstrand founded the station at Usilampatti. Estborn called this place the heart of the Kallar country. Himmelstrand built a church in the Indian style, which served as a model church for other church buildings and chapels in South India ([Estborn 1952](#), p. 138). He worked with Miss Osterlind among the Kallar community; both worked especially for the upliftment of the Kallar women ([Gäbler 1936](#)).

The inhabitants of Pattukkottai are mainly *Kallar*. According to missionary Else Gäbler wife of Gustav Hermann Gäbler who worked in Pattukkottai "the *Kallar* are a characteristic. Harsh people, thieves, and robbers are in the community." But I don't agree with this statement because later part of my article I explained origin and occupation of *Kallars* ([Gäbler 1936](#)). However, the Gospel brought them social change. The social change has been explained by the missionaries in the following way: "God's word has not come

back empty. Our best and most efficient pastors and teachers have emerged from the *Kallar* communities". For example, the well-known native Tamil preacher N. Devasagayam mentions his own origin as being the "*Kaller* caste" (Gäbler 1936).

4. The Tamil People and Caste System

The populations in Madura, Pudukkottai, and Anikadu are Tamil people. Traditionally, sociological identity was found by the population of Tamilnadu in a particular *jati* or strictly endogamous caste group to which one belonged by birth for one's life. Apart from certain tribes who were settled in the hills or other remote places, or moving about as migrants, the society was composed of various local units, in which various *jati* formed and reformed a hierarchal but mobile system of interdependency within and outside the *Vedic* framework of the *avarnas*: *Brahmans*,² *Kshatriyas*,³ *Vaisyas*⁴, and *Sudras*⁵ of which only the first and the fourth were initially held to be represented in Tamilnadu (Grafe 1990, p. 14).

The Kallars caste's claim to be Kshatriyas, the second varna, was made by the Maravars and Kallars, small game hunters and soldiers serving under the Palayakars in peaceful times. Some of them raided on their own, but most of them invested with a piece of land for agriculture. The Maravars mostly live in the Ramanathapuram District, and in some places are called Servaikarars, while the Kallars live in the Pudukkottai and Madurai districts (ibid., p. 16). Kallars called themselves Vellalars, although Vellalars rejected their classification as Sudras claiming to be Vaisyas, and Vanniars asserted in the census of 1931 that they were the Kshatriyas of Tamil Nadu of old (ibid., p. 20).

5. The Origin of the Kallars

They were several legends regarding the origin of the Kallars. My main focus is not to go into detail about the origin of the Kallars, but I would like to shed light on one legend. According to F.S. Mullaly, "as also that of the Maravars and Ahambadayars, is mythologically traced to Indra and Aghalia, the wife of Rishi Gautama. This so incensed Indra that he determined to win Aghalia at all hazards and succeeded in utilizing a cleverly devised ruse. Aghalia bore him three sons, who took the names *Kalla*, *Marava* and *Ahambadya*. The three castes have the agnomen *Theva* or God and claim to be descendants of Thevan indra)". Another legendary exists that "once upon a time, Rishi Gautama left his house to go overseas on business. Devendra, taking advantage of his absence, misbehaved with his wife, and three children were born. When the Rishi returned, one of the three hid behind a door, and as he thus acted like a thief, he was henceforward called Kallan. Another got up a tree and was called *Marvan* from *Maram*, the Tamil word for a tree, whilst the third brazened it out and stood his ground, thus earning for himself the name of *Ahamudeiyan* or the possessor of pride. This name was corrupted into Ahambadiyan" (Thurston and Rangachari 1975, pp. 62–63).

Apart from legends, some scientific research has been carried out on the origin of the Kallars. One of the recent studies was carried out by Prof. Dr Pitchaiyappan, a professor at Madurai Kamaraj University, who performed genetic research. The result of the genetic research disclosed that the genetic factor of the blood group of *Piramalai Kallar* and the genes of the ancient people of Africa, namely M 130 Y, are the same. This study dates *Piramalai Kallar's* (Tamil) origin back six thousand years. This research confirms that ancient people migrated to India six thousand years ago from Africa (Raja and Malar 2004, p. 71). Today the *Kallars* are a politically influential community, but their origins and identity have been kept a secret. They have often provided scholars with the missing links in early Tamil history and have been variously identified as the Cholas, the *Muthttaraiyars*, the Pallavas, and the Kalabhras (Taylor 1857–1862, p. 399).

There are specific names for the Kallars: the Kallars are warriors,⁶ criminals,⁷ freedom fighters⁸, farmers, and soldiers (ibid., Muthuthevar 1976, pp. 75–76; see also Blackburn 2007, p. 39). According to H.A. Stuart, the Kallars are "a middle-sized dark-skinned tribe found chiefly in the districts of Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and Madura, and in the Pudukota territory". They commonly derived the name Kallan from Tamil Kallam, which means theft.

Nelson doubts the accuracy of this origin, but Dr Oppert agrees on it, and no other has been recommended. The original home of the Kallans seems to be *Tondamandalam* or the *Pallava* country, and the head of the class, the Raja of Pudukota (presently Pudukkottai), is to this day called the Tondaman. There are reasonable grounds for believing that the Kallans are a branch of the *Kurumb*. When they found their regular occupation as soldiers gone, they “took to marauding, and made themselves so obnoxious by their thefts and robberies”, that the term Kallan, the thief, was applied, and stuck to them as a tribal application. Rev. W. Taylor, the compiler of the catalogue *Raisonne* of oriental manuscripts, also identifies the *Kallans* with the *Kurumbas*, and Mr Nelson accepts this conclusion. In the census returns, *Kurmban* is returned as one subdivision of the Kallan caste (Thurston and Rangachari 1975, pp. 60–61).

According to W. Francis Wites, the Chola country or Tanjore seem to have been the original abode of the Kallans before their migration to the Pandya kingdom after its conquest by the Cholas in about the eleventh century A.D. However, in Tanjore, they have been greatly influenced by the numerous Brahmans there and have taken to shaving their heads and employing Brahmans as priests. The name Kallan is a disrespectful term and, hence, was later changed into Kallar. In the manual of the Tanjore District, it is stated that “profitable agriculture, coupled with the security of property in land, has converted the great bulk of the Kallar and *Padeiyachi* classes into the contented and industrious population. They are now too fully occupied with agriculture, and the incidental litigation, to think of their old lawless pursuits, even if they were inclined to follow them. The bulk of the ryotwari proprietors in that richly cultivated part of the Cauvery Delta, which constituted the more significant part of the old taluk of Tiruvadi, are Kallars. As a rule, they are a wealthy and well-to-do class (ibid., pp. 61–62).

6. Kallar Community and the British Government

The British started their military campaign against the Kallars in 1755 when Colonel Heron burned their stronghold of *Koilkuti* at *Tirumbur* (The kaval right granted to Kallars by Tirumala Nayak). Most of the barracks were put to the sword, and the place was robbed (Hill 1914, p. 97). Later, during the blockade of Madura, the British were again active. Angered that the Kallars were able to escape their defense and smuggle “the indispensable betel leaves inside the blockaded fort, they dispatched a Captain Preston to their area ‘to burn and lay waste all the villages and to make some examples of those they found in arms’” (Ibid., p. 198). In subsequent periods, the British army attacked and “pacified” the Kallars of *Melur* four times, but history provides details only of the last of these occasions. In 1764, Captain Rumley marched on a Kallar fort near Melur (*Vellalpati*) with 5 battalions of sepoys and 1500 cavalry and ordered the *ambalakkars* to meet with him.⁹ When they refused, he besieged the fort. Unable to enforce his terms, Rumley burned the fort and town and swiftly caused a massacre by slaughtering 2000 more. This annihilation is one of the few recorded wreckages of what must have been an extensive campaign of military defeat carried out by the British against the Kallars and others in their colonization of South India (Blackburn 2007, p. 42).

7. Criminal Tribes Act (C.T.A.) and Kallars

To know how the C.T.A. affected the Kallar community, firstly, we must understand the Criminal Tribe Act. Why did British officials introduce it? We first try to answer the first question. This act includes a series of laws passed by the British in the 1870s to propagate the idea of a few tribes and nomadic people of India as born criminals. According to the British, some of India’s ethnic or social communities are “addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences „The act, introduced by the British in 1871, was initially executed in North India. Later, it was extended to West Bengal and to other regions in 1876. Finally, it was implemented in the Madras Presidency in 1911. They amended the act many times and, by 1924, it covered most of the parts of British India. Initially, the act started

branding a few communities but, for a period, it included nearly 150 tribal communities, defining up to 60 million people as allegedly having criminal tendencies (Puja 2021).

The key characteristics of the act were to have close supervision and control over the movement of the tribes and informed the provincial governments. It provided sweeping power to the local administration and village elders to decide on their own will who was subjected to the law and how to implement punishments. It also provided unlimited power to the police to arrest, control, and monitor the movements of certain tribes. These tribes were forced to undergo compulsory registration and to obtain passes for movement. These kinds of unlimited power were given to the police and local administrations to arrest the tribal communities without a warrant or valid reason. They were arrested based on suspicion. Judicial systems were prohibited for these communities. The district government had regular records of such communities. There are several reasons that the British government passed this act. First, they liked to control the forests to cater to their demand for resources (supply timber for shipbuilding, iron for smelting, and training) to needed to meet the demands of the World War. British officials felt they could not execute their plan. If a forest tribe still dwelled in a forest, then the forest itself was the biggest hurdle to achieving their plan. The British believed that this act could help natives to settle down in one place to facilitate taxation and control. The British believed this act would monitor those tribes who resisted them (ibid.). I like to say that this act is a tool used by the mighty British, who wanted to exploit the vulnerable communities.

Taking these facts into account, it is as a culmination of the “*collerie*” image of the annihilation of the Kallar confrontation, and the annihilation and perversion of the kaval system, that we must view the application of the Criminal Tribes Act (C.T.A.) to the Kallars in 1919. Indeed, the abovementioned police surveillance was not new to the Kallars, for in 1801 the British appointed one Nathan Kahn as a special officer to supervise them (Nelson 1868, part II 114; see also Blackburn 2007, op cit, p. 48). The prohibited *tuppukulli* row brought on a scheme in 1905 by which all suspected *tuppu* agents were watched in particular taluks in northern Madura and southern Coimbatore districts. In one year, 800 Kallars were under suspicion, and efforts were made to arrest them by placing them under the then criminal procedure code.¹⁰ The campaign intensified, and police records show that Kallars were often arrested for charging the now unlawful fees and that many crimes were traceable to kaval disputes (ibid., 1900–1915). Arrests increased radically, and many Kallars were clustered into settlement camps, one of which had to be abandoned because of unsanitary conditions (ibid., 1919, pp. 27–51). A huge mob of Kallars greeted them, and the result was 14 Kallars dead—and, later, 1 constable. Fearful of further Kallar resistance, the government extended the act to all Kallars in the Madura District that year (ibid.). Simultaneously, police raids on several Kallar villages, in the euphemism of the police reports, “facilitated registration considerably” (ibid.). It was so “considerable” that, in 1920, no less than 20,000 Kallars were registered, constituting 97% of all persons registered under the act that year (ibid.). The true intent of the C.T.A. is clear from the report, which stated that the forced registration clause was to be held “in terrorem” against the Kallars (ibid.).

In the succeeding years, they extended the C.T.A. to Kallars in Tanjore. In fact, by 1933, the total number of Kallars registered—38,000—was equal to the total registered from all the other 250 castes plus “tribes” combined. Both in its relative and complete nature, this is an astounding figure. These figures mainly represent male Aneyaur (or Piramalai) Kallars. Furthermore, since census returns totaled around 15,000–20,000 in 1933, we are forced to conclude that every single one was registered under the C.T.A.¹¹

Even if we estimate from the number of Kallar males in the whole district that year, we find that it was applied to 40% of them. In the Madura area, the C.T.A. was, in essence, a Kallar control act. After 1918, the registration of Kallars under the C.T.A. proceeded at an abrupt step of several thousand each year, and resistance to this imposition reached a climax in 1920. Refusals to appear for registration prompted a constable and several armed police officers to go to the village of Perunkanallur near Madura (Blackburn 2007, p. 26).

8. Liberation from Female Infanticide Practice

On 18 December 2021, my wife and I were blessed with a third baby, a girl. My wife was pregnant while we were in Germany, so for seven months, my wife was in Germany, but, for her delivery, she came to India. It is usual in Germany or other Western countries for doctors to reveal the baby's gender when the mother conceives; however, in India, it is not allowed to tell the gender of the baby. As such, when my wife was admitted to the hospital for the delivery, I told the nurses we knew the baby was a girl, and we were delighted to have a girl baby. After the delivery, one nurse came to me and said, "we never see a father like you who is very happy even though he knows the baby is a girl". There are many parents who, when they knew the baby was a girl, were not happy, because they were expecting a boy baby. The reason I am sharing my experience is that parents' attitudes are even like this in the 21st century as well as in earlier days.

Female infanticide was largely practiced in the Kallar community. Faced with unbearable socio-economic pressures, An estimated 6000 babies were killed between 1976 and 1986 alone. The first daughter is rarely killed. However, successive female infants face murder because of the social and economic burdens that crush this community (Venkatramani 1986). An article by S.H. Venkatramani, in India Today, entitled "Women of Kallar community in Tamil Nadu", kill their female babies by feeding them poison", gives a very detailed account of female infanticide in the Kallar community.

This female infanticide directly resulted from the dowry system that prevailed in the society, especially among specific caste-based communities in the Usilampatti area in the Madurai District. It was prevalent in Salem and Dharmapuri districts as well. Specifically, in what was called the C.S.M. Pioneer Board Area, the Usilampatti Taluk, this practice was frequent among the Piramalai Kallar Community. There were so many young widows in society due to child marriage. It was usual for the Kallar community in the Madurai Usilampatti Area to remarry the young child widows. As such, the Swedish missionaries did not find it necessary to start any home for the widows in this area. However, in other parts of Tamil Nadu, the Swedish missionaries started homes for the child widows and industrial schools to train them in various occupations.¹²

During the 18th century, female infanticide was predominant all over Tamil Nadu, and it was more so in the Madurai Usilampatti zone. Esther Peterson, who came to India during the latter part of the 18th century, worked to eradicate this practice. Her visits to the villages produced fruits. Her forward-thinking approach and personal one-to-one dialogue was the best approach for seeding slow but steady social thinking for social change.¹³

She used to bring women from the nearby villages in vehicles to Usilampatti, give them food, and train them in handicrafts, embroidery, sewing, basket making, and gardening, etc., as she firmly believed that self-employment empowered the women, and that they could stand on their own without depending on anyone else, earning money for their daily living. Furthermore, she took the responsibility of dropping them back in their villages in identical vehicles. As it was difficult for the women and Ester Peterson to travel back and forth daily, they stayed in Usilampatti for a period. Hence, a place of residence was arranged and made available for them. In Usilampatti taluk, the literacy rate among males was higher when compared with that of females. They did not send most of the girl children to school. The land-holding population was tiny in this region, though most people were engaged in cultivation. The standard of living was average; during that time, Piramalai Kallar made up nearly 43.26% of the total population of this area (Government Press 1885, p. 95, in Punniyavathi 2015, p. 71).

Infanticide was a common practice in the community. Any members of the family rarely welcomed the girl child in family. The dowry system played a vital role in this unwelcoming behaviour in response to a girl baby. What the missionaries developed as a strategy to prevent female infanticide became significant in later days. Esther Peterson should be given credit for all these good things because, after her period of work, the C.S.M. missionaries continued her programs to eradicate the social evils that cankered the

Tamil society. Swedish missionaries worked very hard to promote awareness about the evil nature of female infanticide.¹⁴

During the early 18th century, some people stopped the practice of female infanticide, at least within their own families and immediate family circles. Even though they had many girls in their homes, these parents reared them, showing no kind of inhibition about educating them. Because of their education, these girls later grew up into good, responsible women in society, and married and settled in life with great respect. These missionaries adopted the children of poor parents and helped them in all ways to bring them up and get them settled down in their lives within the social life of the Piramalai Kallar community.¹⁵

Another important Swedish missionary who worked to empower the Kallar women was Ellen Nordmark. She came to India as a missionary in 1938. She was trained as a teacher and a pastor. Her training closely connected her with women's education, particularly the formation of the Girl's High School and the Women's Teachers Training Institute at Usilampatti. In 1949, Usilampatti primary school could not run properly because of the government order. With the help of another important person in Usilampatti, Miss Nordmark made an effort to run the school successfully. She was the headmistress and correspondent for the girl's school. She boldly worked among the village women in and around the Usilampatti for the empowerment of Kallar women. She always followed the method of Ester Peterson, such as bringing a group of girls by van, and they learnt tailoring, sewing, craftwork, etc. She stitched a bundle of blouses individually and introduced the garment to the women of Tamil Nadu (Punniyavathi 2011, p. 57).

She protected small children from child marriage, saved female children from infanticide, brought and gave them shelter and food education, and made them serve society in various fields. From time to time, she took specific steps to boldly empower the women in Tamil Nadu, especially Kallar women. She was a member of the Kallar Reclamation Committee. Mr Mookiah Thevar M.L.A. appreciated and called her Veerammal, which means "Brave mother". She was a member of the Church Council from 1965 to 1968 and was chairperson of the Education Board. In 1969, she returned to Sweden after sacrificing herself to Madurai and Usilampatti. She reached eternal rest on 21 December 1995 (Ibid.).

9. Conclusions

As we see above, caste and religion cannot be separated in the Indian context. The caste system is the most powerful tool used by the so-called high caste people to exploit the vulnerable so-called low caste community. Christian Mission Societies were also drawn into the caste controversy, particularly the Leipzig Mission. The Swedish Mission had a soft approach towards casteism, which created bitter experiences among the mission societies. Still, at the same time, the mission work of Leipzig and the Church of Sweden Mission were not interrupted. Even though the primary goal of the Swedish Mission Society in Tamil Nadu was to spread Christian Gospel among the most backward peoples, they gave education to the so-called low-caste communities and women. That education made them powerful. The power of the Gospel made them self-conscious that they, too, were valuable and dignified, both in the sight of God and human beings, and provided social healing. There is a clear relationship between the conversion to Lutheran Christianity and the desire for upward social mobility. The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Kallar caste found liberation and have made significant progress because of Christian missionaries of the Church of Sweden Mission. The mission offered the Gospel of a new religion to the subaltern people and the possibility of secular salvation. Swedish missionaries' role in eradicating female infanticide is commendable.

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Notes

- ¹ Johannes Sandegren was born on 20 November 1883 in Madura (now Madurai) in India, the third son of missionary Carl Jacob Sandegren. His siblings, Karl, Hermann, Paul, and Ebba were also later active in the mission. He studied theology and philosophy in Germany and in Sweden and was initially active in parish ministry. On 29 September 1907, he was assigned to South India and devoted himself to learning the Tamil language from 1907 to 1909. He then served in Virudupati (now Virudhunagar) in 1907, Tiruchuli in 1908, Virudupati in 1912, and Madura and other stations in 1913. He married Ingrid Ahlstrand on 20 June 1913 and subsequently headed several mission stations. In 1920, he became director of the seminary in Madura. He served in Madura from 1924 to 1926, as principal of the preaching course in Madras (now Chennai) at Gurukul College in 1926, principal of the theological college in 1927, principal of Madura station in 1929 and finally took over Arasaradi-Madura in 1930. In Germany, he became an honorary Doctor of Theology at Rostock in 1932. After returning to India in 1933, he became Bishop of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC) on 4 April the same year. He held this office until 1956. In retirement, he continued to work as a lecturer for a short time. Johannes Sandegren died in Uppsala on 15 November 1962. ([Leipziger Missionswerk—Detail Missionare n.d.](#)).
- ² The Brahmins, the priestly class, came from the head of God. They are eligible for learning and teaching and perform sacrifices. The others cannot teach and perform sacrifice. ([Murthy 2017](#), p. 8).
- ³ The Kshatriyas, the warrior class, came from the shoulder of God. They are eligible for learning. Their work is to protect the people by waging war against enemies. ([Murthy 2017](#), p. 8).
- ⁴ The Vaysias, the trading class, came from the thigh of God. Their work is to trade and feed the above two classes. ([Murthy 2017](#), p. 8).
- ⁵ The Sudras, the servants, came from the feet of God, and their work is to do all menial works for the above three classes. They are not entitled to learn anything. ([Murthy 2017](#), p. 8).
- ⁶ ([Ramanathan 2004](#), pp. 8–9). See also ([Kallar The Caste Who Makes the History of Tamilnadu 2007](#); [Venkatasamy Nattar 1923](#), pp. 20, 23, 37–41); “The great warrior tribes of Mudiraja-Muthuraja” http://mudiraja.com/mudiraju_warriortribes.html, cited in ([India Church Growth Mission 2014](#), pp. 23–24).
- ⁷ “The great warrior tribes of Mudiraja-Muthuraja” http://mudiraja.com/mudiraju_warriortribes.html; ([Baliga 1960](#), pp. 116–19; [Stein 1966](#), p. 143). It is true that the name Kallar literally means thief as per the Tamil lexicon. It explains thief/robber depredator as the meaning of the word Kallar, which derived from the root word Kal, meaning theft or robbery. ([The Tamil Lexicon II Part 1 1932](#), pp. 806, 809; [Oppert 1972](#), p. 257; [Thurston and Rangachari 1975](#), p. 68; [Orme 2010](#), p. 381). Cited in ([India Church Growth Mission 2014](#), pp. 23–24).
- ⁸ Thiru N.S. Ponniah, Advocate, High court of Tamil Nadu, http://www.academia.edu/5439431/Tamilnadu_De-Notified_Nomadic_Tribes_Consultation_proceedings. Anand Pandiyan, “Crooked Stalks: Cultivating Virtue in South India” (cited in [India Church Growth Mission 2014](#), pp. 23–24).
- ⁹ History of the Madras police (Madras 1959, p. 531). Cited in ([Blackburn 2007](#), p. 42).
- ¹⁰ Madras report on the Administration of the police of the Madras Presidency (Madras 1905, p. 9) cited in ([Blackburn 2007](#)).
- ¹¹ The piramalai or Aneyur Kallars were counted at 20,000 in 1881 (census, IV, 135), or approximately one-sixth of the total Kallar population of Madura District (subtracting the number of Kallars in present Ramnad District, which was then part of the Madura District). The 1931, the Kallar population in the Madura District was 200,000 (census, XIV, pt. II, p. 306), one-sixth of which is 33,000, of which one-half would have been males. Obviously, the figures are wrong somewhere, but the salient point is that an enormously large percentage of the Kallars of Madura District were subjected to the restrictions of the CTA.
- ¹² Contribution of Swedish Missionaries for Women’s Development in the Field of Social Recognition in Tamilnadu (India).
- ¹³ Himmelstrand, J, letter with Alm to the CSM Board 1929 cited in ([Punniyavathi 2015](#), p. 71).
- ¹⁴ Rev. Himmelstrand, Mrs. Himmelstrand, Sr. Rev. Nordmark, Sr. Larsen Vasti, Sr. Holmason Peterson, Rev. Gill, Sr. Wicklander, Sr. Peterson Snja, Sr. Will Helmsen Ingrid, Sr. Segarstad Erick, Sr. Segarstad Sigrid, Sr. Thumblad, Sr. Edstrom, Sr. Ulla Sandegren, Ouchterlong (1855–1856) Blomstrand (1860–1863) Osterlind (1915–1918) Holm Anny (1920) Lagerquist Army (1921–1922) Evavan Gernet (1922–1923) Halm Anny (1923–1928) Kronsell Ester (1928) Jonsson Maria (1928–1930) Logren Naemi (1928–1931) Wimmereranz Elna (1930–1931) Halm Anny (1930–1931) Paul Gabler (1935) Kronsell Ester (1931–1946) Enggvist Carlsson (1935–1937) John Greta (1937) Halm Anny (1937–1945) Kronsell Ester (1946) Larson Vusti (1946) John Greta (1947–1948) and Halmberg Tage (1949).
- ¹⁵ Anna Irbe, Annual report 1929, p. 7; Annual Report TELC 1931 p. 6, cited in ([Punniyavathi 2015](#), pp. 71–72).

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