

Vol II Issue VIII Feb 2013

Impact Factor : 0.1870

ISSN No :2231-5063

Monthly Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Golden Research Thoughts

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

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Abstract:

In the Catholic Church there exists today a body of men known as the society of Jesus, each of whose thirty three thousand members looks into the past for his way of life to a man who lived through the first half of the sixteenth century (1491- 1556). This man, courtier and gentleman, soldier and campaigner, student and teacher, ascetic and mystic was Ignatius Loyala.

He was a Spanish noble man who while convalescing from a wound received in battle, began to reflect on the aimlessness of his life when compared to the ideals discovered in his reading of the lives of Christ and his saints, the only books available to him in his enforced idleness. As a result, he became filled with the desire of seeking both his own Christian perfection and that of his neighbours¹.

INTRODUCTION:

The Jesuit community is composed of priests and brothers who are bound by the personal vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The name of Jesuit was assigned by the opponents and can be traced to caloin. 'Society' is a later name for the original compania in Spanish which to some extent implies discipline in this bend of spiritual soldiers.

When Ignatius devised the organization be desired to meet the requirements of the times by their obedience and subjection to the church. Their general is elected for life and the local supervisors and provincials nominated not elected in a democratic way.

St. Ignatius demanded from everyone obedience not only of execution but also of will and intellect. A Jesuit is not to accept dignities and offices which would make him independent of the society unless order by the pope himself to be accepted. Contemplation and action form the daily routine of the Jesuit. In general, the Jesuit order was seen as a light cavalry free to move about according to the needs of the church not a infantry laden with heavy armor of protective rules and prescriptions going into minute details.

Today this society of jesses has speed all over the world and is noted for their missionary work and leadership. In education the society conducts several universities seminaries colleges and high schools all over the world.

The history of the Jesuit in India opens with the landing of St. Francis Xavier in Goa in the beginning of May, 1542. He was not the man originally selected for the mission; it was the Spaniard, Nicholas Bobadilla. But when he arrived at Rome from Naples to receive the order from Ignatius he had to look for a substitute in Francis Xavier. In the history of Jesuit missions in India Francis Xavier stands out in Solitary grandier as the as the one apostolic man². His body rests in Goa incorrupt. Some of the greatest Jesuit missionaries of India are St. John De Britto, Bl. Aqual viva and his companions, Robert de Nobil and Beschi³.

The work of the Christian missionaries has great value as the pioneer work which led to the building up of the modern educational system of India. The first formal Christian educational enterprise anywhere outside Europe was St. Paul's college founded in Goa in 1540 by the Franciscans. It was taken

over by St. Francis Xavier in 1542 for the intellectual and spiritual training of young natives and their preparation of the priesthood. Then there was a long period of Stagnation.

From 1835 till the end of the century a considerable number of Christian institutes were founded all over India. The Jesuits came to India in very different circumstances. They were called as educators and organizers of the scattered catholic community's weekend by internal dissemination and dispirited by opening new vistas to Indian youth under the British rule.

In 1838 the French Jesuits of the Toulouse province came to the old Madurai mission territory. They began a college at Nagapattinam as St. Joseph's college. University colleges were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Mangalore before the turn of the century and many more colleges of general education and colleges of education, one hundred high schools, several technical school and schools of agriculture were opened⁴.

The missionaries were pioneers in many respondents. The first university college, the first medical school and the first training college for women were all established under the auspices of the Christian missionaries.

They were also pioneers in bringing western ideas of. In Pondicherry the society of Jesus is concluding three colleges, namely St. Joseph's college, Cuddalore. St. Emgulat Pondicherry and St. Xavier Palayamkottai. The Christian college is an integral part of Indian higher education for almost hundred and fifty years. They remain still as important centers of learning, making an impact which is felt far beyond the college community⁵.

It should be obvious therefore that society's educational apostolate must really be effective from the national human, social and religious points of view. I is also necessary to understand why the Jesuit missionaries undertook educational activities as an integral part of their work in India, especially in Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry holding in their exalted motto "Ad majored Dei Gloria" (for the Greater of God)⁶.

People in India seeking the network of Jesuit educational institutions, colleges and schools have got the impression that the Society of Jesus is a teaching order. To be honest one should say that it some countries like India say that it some countries like India and U.S.A this is the apostolate that is seen and known. To be fair also to St. Ignatius should say that education was adopted as one of the apostolate of the Society of Jesus during the Founder's life time. With ten years of the foundation of the society the vision of Ignatius was wide indeed and it comprehended anything that is for the glory of God.

Its aim is to promote virtue first and learning second. The strictness of Jesuit discipline will be easily understood and perhaps even appreciated. The very fact that of least ten times as many boys apply for admission shows that this appreciation is genuine. They have educated thousand of non-Christians who are to be found in every walk of life in the nation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are deeply indebted to Professor and Head, Department of History, Annamalai University, Annamalaiagar-608002, Tamil Nadu, India for their inspiring help, constant support and for providing facilities in the department to carry out the research work.

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