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**SARAH TUCKER HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL,  
PALAYAMKOTTAI – A HISTORICAL VIEW**



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**ABSTRACT**

*Palayamkottai is one of the most important cities of Tamil Nadu. It is also called as oxford of south India. Palayamkottai is names as oxford of south India because of its educational Institutions. Many Educational Institutions were started in Palayamkottai during the periods of English. Many Christian Missionaries from European countries came over here and started many Educational Institutions to promote the standard of living of the people. Sarah Tucker Higher Secondary School was started with a vision of the women Education. It is premier Christian Institution in Palayamkottai. It was started in the year 1858. This paper analyses the historical aspects of the Sarah Tucker Higher Secondary School.*

**Keywords:**

*Christian Missionary, Christian Missionary Society, Education. Sarah Tucker.*

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Palayamkottai is one of the most important cities of Tamil Nadu. It is also called as oxford of south India. Palayamkottai is names as oxford of south India because of its educational Institutions. Many Educational Institutions were started in Palayamkottai during the periods of English. Many Christian Missionaries from European countries came over here and started many Educational Institutions to promote the standard of living of the people. Sarah Tucker Higher Secondary School was started with a vision of the women Education. It is premier Christian Institution in Palayamkottai. It was started in the year 1858. This paper analyses the historical aspects of the Sarah Tucker Higher Secondary School.

**Miss. Sarah Tucker**

One Sarah Tucker, though a physically challenged and confined to her room in England, her zeal for missionary work never declined and, being a good writer, she wrote numerous articles on

matters related to Christian missionary works. She had very much limited mobility, but not her christian faith of love and care for other people.

When Ms.Tucker read reports on Indian women and their physical and sufferings both at home and work places under various appalling conditions, she was very much saddened and their pathetic conditions very much affected her. She realized the root problem in Indian women's suffering is their illiteracy, lack of education and motivation. Upon hearing that there was no proper educational institution in southern India, she made up her mind to have a separate educational institution started to impart knowledge to Indian women. Through education, Indian women can realize and achieve their full potential in fundamental fields that will prepare them for tomorrow's challenges and establish them as worthy citizens. They may become shining examples to the posterity.



Miss. Sarah Tucker

### ***HISTORY OF SARAH TUCKER HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL***

The origin of Sarah Tucker High School is to be traced from 1858 when a Normal School was founded in Palayamkottai. The origin was quite interesting. Rev.John Tucker the secretary of the C.M.S. had three sisters in London. They were Sarah Tucker, Elizabeth Tucker and Catherine Tucker. Sarah Tucker was a disabled girl. Being informed by her brother about the plight of women in India, she developed an interest in female education and sent money to Tirunelveli for spreading education among them. She wrote articles in the magazines in London.

In 1843 Sarah and 20 young British girls collected a sum of 20 Sovereign and send it to Palayamkottai to found a school for girls<sup>1</sup>. A Normal school was established in 1843 with that money at Kadachapuram, a small village in the extreme eastern part of the district. Unfortunately the school was closed after 13 years in Teacher Education.

Sarah Tucker met with an untimely death in 1857 leaving her vision to her friends Maria, Sophia and Joanna who wanted to do something in their friend's memory. They formed a committee, raised a sum of 811 Sovereign and sent it to India<sup>2</sup>. It was a period when there was no Normal school for girls after the one at Kadachapuram was closed. The money which was sent at the proper time was utilized well for starting a Normal School for Girls in Palayamkottai in 1858 in the name of Sarah Tucker<sup>3</sup>.

Thus her dream became a reality. Rev. Ashton Diff and his wife Alice Victoria Diff were in charge of the school and they ran the school in a rented building. Funds came from England.

Lands were bought and the foundation for the new building was laid on 23.8.1861 by Rev.F.Sargent<sup>4</sup>. The practicing section of the Normal School was raised to the status of a High School in 1890 by Mrs.A.J.Askwith<sup>5</sup>. The school was elevated to the level of a Second Grade College in February 1896 under Miss.C.E.Cowell<sup>6</sup>.

A hospital was opened in 1892 in the school by Rev. A. H. Lash through the efforts of Missionary Swainson who was a Missionary as well as a trained nurse<sup>7</sup>. Sick children, treated and nursed in 1894-1896 were 297. There were 83 cases of Measles in the isolation ward and 19 cases of smallpox. The Medical Missionary Nurse Morten, assisted by two Indian women, Annai and Naomi, attended 71 confinement cases and paid 1215 house visits. Medicine was dispersed to 1822 out-patients who came from 46 villages<sup>8</sup>. Nurse Morten taught Indian girls nursing and dispensing<sup>9</sup>. Lord Wenlock, the Governor of Madras visited the school in 1892 and was very much pleased with the working of the hospital, which he praised as a "little gem"<sup>10</sup>.

Miss. Florence Swainson started on industrial class in the Sarah Tucker Compound in 1890. It was in this class Swainson developed in 1895 the idea of founding a school for the Deaf and Dumb<sup>11</sup>. The girls were taught needle work, bead work and making curry powder. A few girls received training in nursing under Swainson in the hospital.<sup>12</sup>

The Sarah Tucker Compound was also the nursery of the school for the Blind. Inspired by the reply of a blind boy who came to the campers for alms, Miss.A.J.Askwith started the school for the Blind in 1890.<sup>13</sup> The women Missionaries started a number of branch schools in the district.<sup>14</sup> In 1882 there were 55 such schools and 1890 there were 41 schools. The number rose to 50 in 1896.

A new High School Building was opened on 26.12.1902. On that occasion May-pole dance was performed by girls of the school and Lady Curzon commented that she had seen the dance at Simla but there it was not perfect. But in Sarah Tucker it was performed correctly.<sup>15</sup> The students used to gather for worship in one of the class-rooms as there was no chapel. The need for a chapel was felt. The children gave up eating bananas for six months and saved the money on their part. Well-wishers from abroad contributed some money. A beautiful church was built in 1906. The District collector presented a bell to the church<sup>16</sup>. Appreciating the noble work of Askwith and Swainson, the Government presented them the Kaiser-I-Hind Medal<sup>17</sup>. The Sarah Tucker Old Girl's Association popularly known as STOGA was formed in 1910<sup>18</sup>. The STOGA Branch was opened in Ceylon and there was a centenary reunion in Colombo on Saturday 25 between 1958<sup>19</sup>.

Miss E.M.Chamber was an enthusiastic Guide. In her time there were associations like Blue Birds, Guides and Rangers which worked for badges in Cookery, Astronomy, Child Nursing and First Aid. The Rangers corresponded with the Guides in England thus international understanding<sup>20</sup>. Edward Sargent had bought valuable lands in the village of Athaliyoothu, 2 miles away from Palayamkottai for the C.M.S with the money donated by Miss Sarah Tucker. In her name the village is called Tuckerammalpuram<sup>21</sup>.

The school which was founded with five students in 1890 had 4150 students and 102 teaching and 16 non-teaching staff in 1990<sup>22</sup>. Separate Governing Boards for the college and the High

School were constituted in 1925, though the institution existed in the same compound<sup>23</sup>. The S.S.L.C examination results were always good. From the beginning the school maintained a well- established with 277 were boarders<sup>24</sup>. The Missionaries and teachers lived on the school campus in residential houses<sup>25</sup>.

The Training school, High School and the college were in the same compound. Therefore a site of 30 acres, 2 miles south of the high school, was bought and the college was shifted there in 1947<sup>26</sup>. A girl who entered the Sarah Tucker compound could get both her elementary and secondary education. She could either join the college on the Teacher Training School. She could learn a craft for her livelihood. Many distinguished persons invited the school and praised the working. The STOGA is still continuing. Thousands of young women have gone out of this great institution and held important posts in different countries such as India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore, England and U.S.A.

Unlike the other Mission Girls" Schools, Sarah Tucker High School was situated in the town and attended mostly by a good number of caste Hindus. The last Missionary who served in the school and retired in 1958 was Annie Lindsey.

## 2. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The school is running with the following aims,

- To provide a healthy liberal, secular and sound general education.
- To mould the character of the students.
- To shape the students into smart, self-confident children and to develop in them a true sense of citizenship.
- To give students individual attention so that they will receive a warm welcome and the best care that childhood and adolescence would need.
- To create pleasant atmosphere with all the facilities for a sound, meaningful and practical education.

### *SCHOOL SYMBOL*



### *SCHOOL MOTTO*

So run that ye may obtain the incorruptible crown

## ***COURSES OFFERED IN SARAH TUCKER HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL***

### **Courses offered at the +2 level,**

Part-I	Tamil
Part –II	English
Part- III	general Education

### **Group I**

English Medium	-	Physics, Chemistry, Computer Science, Mathematics Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics
Tamil Medium	-	Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics Physics, Chemistry, Bio-Chemistry, Mathematics Physics, Chemistry, Home Science, Mathematics

### **Group II**

Tamil Medium	-	Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Micro Biology Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Nutrition & Dietics
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### **Group II A**

Tamil Medium	-	Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology
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### **Group III**

Tamil Medium	-	Accountancy, Commerce, Economics, Computer Science
English Medium	-	Business Mathematics, Accountancy, Commerce, Economics

### **Group IV**

Tamil Medium	-	History, Geography, Economics, Advanced Tamil.
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### **Vocational Course**

Tamil Medium	-	Management Principles, Accountancy, Commerce, Type
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## ***EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES***

Extra-Curricular activities are available for the benefits of the students. They are, National Service Scheme, SCOUT, Junior Red Cross, ECO Club, Red Ribbon Club, Consumer Club, Literary Debating Society (LDS), Parents and Teachers Association, Sarah Tucker Old Girls Association (STOGA), Religious Activities, The School Choir, Sports and Games, Science Club, Road Safety Patrol, School Excursion etc.,

## **3. CONCLUSION**

Sarah Tucker Higher Secondary School was founded in 1890 in palayamkottai. The school has completed 150 years of committed labour of love and learning. Empowerment of women has been the unique culture of the school. It manifests a rich tradition of quality and value loaded system of learning, aiming to bring about a wholesome transformation of women with a well-balanced moral and social outlook.

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