

Review of Literature on the role of Christian Charitable Organizations in Promoting Rural Social Transformation in Kerala: An analysis

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Abstract— Purpose: The study aims to examine the role of Christian Charitable Institutions in promoting Social Transformation in rural Kerala. Christian Charitable Organizations have significantly contributed to the educational and social development by operating on the moral and social principles inherent in the Christian faith. Christianity has a long-standing history in Kerala, where charitable organizations have been active in its social progress. However, there is a need for a more scientific approach in the implementation of development activities by these organizations. The literature review specifically highlights the contribution of Christian Charitable organizations in rural development. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the educational and social initiatives of the Syro- Malankara Catholic Church.

Research Design: The study uses descriptive research designs by using secondary data from electronic sources such as Google Scholar and other data bases.

Result/Outcome/Findings of the Study: The paper highlights the role of Christian Charitable Organizations in the development of rural Kerala, focusing on their contributions across various fields. The findings emphasize on the enhanced involvement of Christian Charitable Institutions in the nation building.

Originality/Value: The synthesis derived based on the surveys of literature is original in its derived form.

Paper type: Review of Literature based on various electronic databases of international and national journals related the Christian charitable organizations and their various contributions for the rural development.

Index Terms- Christian Charitable Organizations, Agent of Social Transformation, Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

I. INTRODUCTION

The Christian faith in Kerala has a long history dating back hundreds of years. The Christian presence is generally believed to have started in the first century AD itself dating from the belief that St. Thomas, an

apostle of Jesus Christ came to Kerala with the purpose of spreading the Christian faith [1]. Over the last 500 years, Christianity has flourished in Malabar as various missionary groups established a presence across what is now the state of Kerala [2]. The missionaries played a pivotal role in establishing progressive missionary groups established a presence in various parts of what is now the state of Kerala [3]. The missionaries were at the forefront of all kinds of progressive activities in the state from building and running schools and hospitals, and creating infrastructure to support religious and community life. Local rulers and kings supported their work as the missionary schools and colleges were essential for propagation English and Western education in Kerala [4]. The introduction of diverse ideas for social advancement began in Kerala with the arrival of the Portuguese, and gained further momentum with the establishment of educational institutions by British missionaries. Shortly, after the foreign missionaries set up schools, the Catholic Church took the lead in expanding education across every part of Kerala [5]. The Christian community is primarily located in the central and southern coastal areas of the state [6]. Christian missions focused on improving the quality of life for all people. These missions worked to raise awareness about the challenges faced by orphans, widows, leprosy patients, untouchables, infant girls and women [7]. NGOs and civil society play a crucial role in Kerala by contributing to nature conservation, providing essential services to those in need, and pursuing poverty reduction. Their cost- effective approach, labor-intensive methods, and emphasis on community participation and non- hierarchical decision making contribute to the development and operation of infrastructure [8].

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To understand about Christian Charitable Organizations.
2. To review the rural development initiatives of the Christian Charitable organizations
3. To review the Poverty Alleviation and Educational Programs of Christian Charitable Organizations.
4. To review the strategies used by the Christian Charitable Organizations to address Social Problems.
5. To briefly review the role of Christian Charitable Organizations in the Social Transformation of Rural Kerala.
6. To conduct SWOC analysis on the activities of the Christian Charitable organizations in Kerala.
7. To find the research gap based on the review of literature.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study aims to investigate the impact of Christian Charitable organizations on the rural transformation of Kerala, focusing on areas such as education, health, poverty alleviation, etc. The analysis is based on a review of reputed international journals, using secondary data. Further, a lucid description is attached to the study to find out the relevant suggestions for strengthening the social involvement of the Christian Charitable organizations that lag in this field in front of other fields of social development. To justify this, SWOC analysis is worked out for the precise study as a methodology for this paper.

IV. ANALYSIS BASED ON REVIEW OF LITERATURE

4.1 Related works on the Social teachings of the Church and Christian Charitable organizations based on published literature from the electronic Database-Google Scholar (Keywords: Social teachings of the Church, charity and development)

Table 1: Fundamentals on Church, Charity and Social Transformation

Sl. No.	Area & Focus of Study	Contribution	Reference
1.	Christian religion and social transformation	Religious communities are constructing an effective interface between religion and socioeconomic and political development. Political and socio-economic activities are often give flavour to with religious expressions and practices.	Agbiji, et al., (2015). [9]
2.	Charity, justice, and development in practice.	Within Christian theology and practice, charity most simply means direct service to those in need, as illustrate in the traditional corporal works of mercy.	Clark, M. J. et al., (2020). [10]
3.	Contemporary Catholic Social Teaching	Caritas or charity is the heart of the Gospel message. Charity is a word Christians hear and use often, sustained reflection on charity as the persistent and umbrella virtue has diminished in popular religion.	Clark, M. J. et al., (2012).[11]
4.	The foundation of charity by the church with Mercy of God.	Charity of Christianity is not an accidental involvement but belongs to the fundamental mission of the Church. Therefore, charity work is an important element of the Church’s mission as it is through charity the Church shows the merciful nature of its Saviour, Jesus.	Przygoda, W. et al., (2019). [12]

5.	Christian influences on Social Welfare and Social Work Practice	As Christianity developed and became more institutionalized along with this the social welfare system also developed. The church provided social services to community only because of the motivation received from the biblical imperatives.	Poe, M. A. et al., (2012). [13]
6.	Moving from social friendship to political charity	Love transcends borders and differences, reaching out to anyone in need without discrimination, demolishing barriers, and replacing them with connections.	Lanuza, G. et al., (2022).[14]
7.	Charity as the theological foundation of Christian teachings.	Charity is a foundational theological notion in Christianity. That is variously defined and related to other theological thoughts throughout the tradition's history.	Johanson, T. E. et al., (2014). [15]
8.	Catholic charity as the Heart of Social Work.	In the Catholic perspective, charity is not a value or lasting state of the individual character but also finds expression in social services and engagements. Charity is the practice of relief or help for those in poverty.	Adams, P. et al., (2014). [16]
9.	Christian Charity	Charity was not confined only to providing food, money, and clothes but to equip them to earn their livelihood. The needy were assisted with their family life, and they were brought up since childhood.	Bykov, et al., (2015). [17]
10.	Social responsibility and Catholic Social Teaching on Charity.	The Church's social teaching is not exclusively about social and economic justice; rather it is Catholic teaching, and only a commitment to the truth of the Gospel makes Catholic social justice feasible.	Dalley, P. et al., (2018). [18]

4.2. Related works on Christian Charitable Organizations and their contributions to Social Transformation based on published literature from the electronic Database-Google Scholar (Keywords: Christian Charitable Organizations, Social Transformation)

Table 2: Social Transformation by the Christian Charitable Organizations.

Sl. No.	Area & Focus of Study	Contribution	Reference
1.	Christian charitable organizations and its challenges.	Religious beliefs influence the organizational aspects of faith-based humanitarian projects.	Burchardt, M. et al., (2013). [19]
2.	Role of Christian Charitable Organizations towards the socio-economic development.	Religious organizations are providing various forms of support such as education of the children, health care, construction of houses, promotion of religious values, marriage support, provision food and clothing, community- related programs and women empowerment with unstable amount.	Moidin, B. B., et al., (2012). [20]
3.	Christian reactions to Discrimination and Violence	Christian's often mistreated by various forms of social persecution, legal	Bauman, C. M., et al., (2017).[21]

		discrimination, and occasionally even violence.	
4.	International migration on home Churches and local social development.	The religious economies model exaggerates the influence of religious leaders and their capacity and willingness to instigate change. Leaders of churches are limited by the constitution, structure, and tradition of their institutions, as well as their dependence on religious leaders and laity.	Kurien, P. et al., (2014). [22]
5.	Christian Social Work and concern for the Social Life	The Christian Church, as a spiritual and social community, places great importance on nurturing personal relationships through acts of service. Which also a sign of the Church's humility.	Chirugu, G., et al., (2022). [23]
6.	Community Empowerment as a standard for Christian social work.	Christian social workers have a twofold mission, encompassing ethical responsibilities stemming from both their professional world and their religious environment.	Stoeffler, S. W., et al., (2020). [24]
7.	Faith-based charitable organizations and their initiatives.	Majority of religious groups participated in social service initiatives, they typically engaged in these services in only minor and tangential manner, often providing for individuals' emergency requirements.	Bielefeld, W., et al., (2013).[25]
8.	Christian Perspectives on Social Justice and Religious Participation.	Social justice does not develop in a vacuum, instead, various social environments like families, schools, and religious groups provide a rich circumstance for social justice development.	Todd, N. R., et al., (2013).[26]
9.	Models of Christian Social Work	In each Christian denomination, there is a focus on the social life of our fellow humans, especially those facing difficulty. The Church has exemplifying all Christian values, particularly, mercy and love for others.	Chirugu, G., et al., (2022). [27]
10.	Christian responds to Socio-economic inequality and its impact on development programme	Christians often view evangelism as spiritual labour, while they see social actions, like addressing economic, social, and political justice, to be part of the physical realm; leading to a focus on meeting spiritual needs within the Church.	Shitabayashi, H. et al., (2022). [28]

4.3. Related works on Rural Development by the Christian Charitable Organizations based on published literature from the electronic data Google Scholar

(Keywords: Christian Charitable organizations, poverty alleviation, rural development of Kerala)

Table 3: Rural Development initiatives by the Christian Charitable Organizations.

Sl. No.	Area & Focus of Study	Contribution	Reference
1.	Basel Mission working for Thiyyas and Badagas of Kerala.	The Thiyyas and Badagas eagerly interacted with the Basel missionaries as active contributors because of the sufferings they	Basu Roy, T. et al., (2021).[29]

		faced due to their low social standing, economic backwardness, and age-long subordination and deprivation under the upper caste Hindus, and later by the European colonizers.	
2.	Kuriakose Elias Chavara a social reformer of Kerala.	The foundation of empowerment of dalits and minorities are education and employment. Kuriakose Elias Chavara was eager to start a movement that would ensure public education, and create possibilities for well-mannered employment.	Scaria, M., et al., (2015).[30]
3.	Christian development NGOs	Christian NGOs typically embrace a comprehensive worldview that brings together the spiritual and the material, aligning with their conviction. That view is consistent with their belief in uniting evangelism and development in what they refer to as the holistic Gospel.	Myers, B. L. et al., (2015). [31]
4.	Education for Sustainable Development from a Christian Perspective.	The Christian religion has long been recognized for its commitment to supporting the less privileged in society. Christian religious bodies and organizations actively involved themselves in various charitable initiatives.	Ezeh, et al., (2015). [32]
5.	The Church as a Social Enterprise	Church-established organizations established by the Churches operate autonomously and they try to stand on their own regardless of the times that they get services from their donor Churches.	Mabwe, L., et al., (2018). [33]
6.	Collaboration between effective Altruism and Christianity.	Churches are deeply committed to assisting the most vulnerable individuals worldwide and contribute funds to carefully evaluated NGOs to carry out this essential work.	Liberman, A. et al., (2017).[34]
7.	Role of Christian Charitable Organizations in a Socio-democratic Welfare State.	The Church's extensive poverty alleviation efforts during economic downturns question the traditional idea of the universal welfare state model.	Hiilamo, H. et al., (2012).[35]
8.	Christianity on the evolution of the Development Aid System	The international development assistance system increasingly recognizes the valuable contribution of faith-based organizations in promoting development thinking and in the distribution of development aid.	Kopiec, P. et al., (2021).[36]
9.	Role of NGOs in the development of Rural India.	In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of experiments in rural development because government organizations have been unable to effectively reach the rural poor in regard to rural development at the needed level.	Bhaker, S. K. et al., (2014). [37]
10.	Catholic Relief Services for the Vulnerable through the Livelihood Programme.	NGOs are known for supporting rural development. In developing countries, channelling resources through projects will benefit rural populations.	Chitongo, L. et al., (2013). [38]

4.4. Related works on the Contribution of Christian Charitable organizations towards Education and Upliftment of Weaker Sections of the Society based on published literature from the electronic Database-

Google Scholar (Keywords: Christian charitable organizations, educational development, upliftment of weaker sections in the society)

Table 4:Contribution of Christian Charitable Organizations towards Socio-education Development

Sl. No.	Area & Focus of Study	Contribution	Reference
1.	Christian Educational Institutions on Economic Self-Reliance.	Education serves as a powerful tool for Christian charitable organizations to redeem lost children of the Lord. The opportunity and responsibility for redemption are not only spiritual but also provide the opportunity for economic freedom.	Nwosu, C. C. et al., (2012).[39]
2.	European and American Christian missions on rural development.	The different Christian missions in Nigeria have played a vital role in the country’s socio-economic development across various sectors including education, healthcare, agriculture, commerce and politics.	Diara, et al., (2013).[40]
3.	Christian charitable organizations promoting quality education	The government’s inability to provide education for all citizens is evident in its policies of returning schools to missions and liberalizing the establishment of tertiary institutions. Following this development, several churches have established universities, polytechnics and other higher learning institutions.	Uche, et al., (2022). [41]
4.	Role of Church in supporting orphans and vulnerable children.	To the Church, caring for orphans and other vulnerable children is a fundamental duty that lies at the essence of the Christian religion.	Muzingili, T., et al., (2015). [42]
5.	Women’s participation in community-based Organizations is a Strategy for Poverty Reduction.	Enhancement of Women's involvement in community-based organizations is closely tied to education, as it serves as a means for skill development and building trust and confidence.	Mutongu, Z. B. et al., (2012). [43]

4.5. Related works on the Poverty Alleviation Initiatives by Christian Charitable organizations based on published literature from the electronic Database-

Google Scholar (Keywords: Christian Charitable organizations, poverty alleviation programs)

Table 5: Role of the Christian Charitable organizations in the Poverty Alleviation

Sl. No.	Area & Focus of Study	Contribution	Reference
1.	Challenges and Opportunities for the Christian Charitable Organizations	The Catholic gang ministries were dedicated to gang prevention working for justice, development, and advocacy. In contrast, the Progressive Pentecostal churches focused on gang recovery, prioritizing evangelism, baptism by the Holy Spirit, and the adoption of new moral behaviors.	Myers, B. L. et al., (2015). [44]
2.	Faith based Organizations in Poverty Eradication.	Christian charities are known for their decentralized approach and grassroots involvement with the world's poorest and marginalized communities, amplifying their voices and empowering them to break free from the shackles of poverty and address social challenges like illiteracy and poor health.	Hapompwe, C., et al., (2021). [45]
3.	The Old Testament's approach to reducing poverty and its relevance to the contemporary Church.	The positive message that Jesus conveyed to humanity was intended to provide not only spiritual nourishment (for the salvation of the soul) but also to take care of the bodily needs of the body by setting man free from all manners of suffering, including social, economic and political injustices.	Apuuivom, D. B., et al., (2024). [46]
4.	Ways for Effective Altruists (EAs) and Christian donors to collaborate productivity.	Many Christians donate to their local Church or to Para church Organizations without considering if their contributions could be used to address global health and extreme poverty, which are typical goals of effective altruism.	Lieberman, A. et al., (2017). [47]
5.	The social function of religious charitable and public services.	Religious charity and public service play a crucial role in social welfare organizations and serve as a valuable addition to the social security system.	Xintong, J. U. et al., (2016). [48]
6.	Religious organizations and poverty alleviation during the age of new public governance.	Both Christians and Jewish faith traditions call for individuals to look beyond their own needs and actively participate in activities that benefit others.	Scott, M. L., et al., (2018). [49]
7.	Christian Charitable Organization's response to poverty.	The church is entrusted with the spiritual and material duties to liberate the denial of the human state of spiritual and physical poverty.	Sirengo, J. et al., (2021). [50]

8.	Religious organizations and micro-finance	There is a clear distinction between organizations linked to religious faith and those that claim to be secular. Faith-based microfinance possesses the same distinct features as that of faith-based organizations.	Hoda, N., et al., (2015). [51]
9.	Poverty Alleviation Programmes of the Christian Charitable Organizations.	The primary commandment of Jesus Christ resolves around loving God and loving others. This same principle formulates the mandate transferred to the Church to devote itself to the mission of eradicating poverty.	Kakwata, F. et al., (2020). [52]
10.	Exploring the role of faith-based organizations, social capital, and community resilience, in disaster recovery.	One key factor contributing to faith-based organizations' success in providing of social services to communities is their access to volunteers, enabling them to offer more services and dedicated additional time to each individual recipient of social services.	Rivera, J. D., et al., (2014). [53]

V. CHRISTIAN CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL RURAL TRANSFORMATION IN KERALA

Christian charitable organizations played a significant role as agents for social transformation in rural Kerala through various initiatives that address both immediate needs and long-term development goals. The beginning of nearly all contemporary social services can be connected to historical ties with religious institutions [54]. In the early days of Christianity, charity was grounded on the concept of serving others and promoted principles such as fairness, voluntariness, providing aid according to needs, and ensuring the appropriateness of the assistance [55]. This charitable effort extended beyond mere material support to include assisting with family life and upbringing, as well as addressing the educational needs of both adults and children. These objectives aimed to help individuals overcome the negative impact of poverty and to instil a spirit of compassion in future generations, reflecting principles still relevant in modern social work theory and practice[56].

Christian charitable organizations played a significant role for social transformation in rural Kerala through various initiatives that address both immediate needs and long-term development goals [57]. Here’s how they contribute:

- Education and Literacy Programs: Many Christian organizations in Kerala run schools, vocational training centers, and adult literacy programs [58]. By focusing on education, they empower individuals to break the cycle of poverty and contribute actively to society [59].
- Healthcare Services: Hospitals, clinics, and mobile health units run by these organizations provide healthcare services to rural communities. They often focus on marginalized groups and ensure access to healthcare facilities that might otherwise be unavailable [60].
- Women’s Empowerment: Through self-help groups, skill development programs, and microfinance initiatives, Christian organizations empower women in rural Kerala [61]. This empowerment leads to improved household income, better health outcomes, and greater social standing [62].
- Community Development: Projects related to infrastructure development, sanitation, clean water supply, and housing are undertaken by these

organizations. They collaborate with local communities to identify needs and implement sustainable solutions.

- **Social Justice and Advocacy:** Christian organizations advocate for the rights of marginalized communities, including Dalits and tribals [63]. They work towards creating a more inclusive and just society by lobbying for policy changes and raising awareness about social issues.
- **Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation:** During natural disasters such as floods and cyclones, these organizations provide immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation support. Their networks and resources enable them to respond quickly to emergencies and mitigate the impact on affected communities[64].
- **Spiritual and Moral Guidance:** Apart from material support, these organizations provide spiritual and moral guidance, which is often integral to the holistic development of individuals and communities.
- **Environmental Conservation:** Some Christian organizations in Kerala also engage in environmental conservation initiatives, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, biodiversity conservation, and awareness about climate change [65].

In Kerala, where Christian charitable organizations have a longstanding presence, their efforts have contributed significantly to the social and economic development of rural areas. By addressing multifaceted challenges and fostering inclusive growth, these organizations play a crucial role in promoting sustainable transformation and improving quality of life in rural Kerala.

VI. SWOC ANALYSIS ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS IN KERALA.

The SWOC analysis stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges to look into the core issues with all its crucial factors [66]. SWOC analysis [67] creates an effective matrix with an ordered list that handles all variables in all its important areas [68].

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
Wide- reaching networks Volunteer Mobilization Sustainable funding Holistic Approach Advocacy and influence Inter-denominational Cooperation Long –term commitment	Dependency issues Proselytism concerns Funding limitations Lack of scientific studies regarding project implementation Lack of coordination/Fragmentation Conflict of interest Problems related accountability and transparency
OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
Partnership and Collaborations Technology and Innovation Capacity building and empowerment Youth Engagement Addressing emerging issues Advocacy and policy influence Holistic development programs Volunteer training and development.	Funding Instability Cultural sensitivity Accountability and transparency Volunteer management Coordination and fragmentation Security and access Regularity challenges Perception and trust Sustainability and impact measurement Internal conflict

VII. IDENTIFIED RESEARCH GAPS

Based on the extensive review of the literature on the Christian Charitable Organization and Social Transformation of Rural Kerala, the following research gaps are found for further research:

- **Research Gap 1:** There is ample scope left to make a comparative analysis on the Institutional Initiatives of Christian Charitable Organizations working on rural development issues in Kerala.
- **Research Gap 2:** There is a need to study the landscape of contributions by the Christian

Charitable Organizations towards rural development in detail in Kerala State.

- Research Gap 3: It is particularly noteworthy to study the contributions made by the Syro-Malankara Catholic Charitable Organizations to the Kerala's rural transformation.
- Research Gap 4: It is also found that mere projects on rural development alone cannot achieve adequate result but requires collaborative efforts to fortify any rural project implementation hence ample scope is left behind to study such steps in detail.
- Research Gap 5: There is an ample scope to conduct multi-dimensional evaluation on the entire previous development projects of Christian Charitable Organizations to find the real utility of its services with appropriate magnitude.

VIII. KEY FINDINGS BASED ON THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Generally Rural Developmental Projects are not static but very dynamic. Hence, there is a need for initiating continued effort to redefine the ideas of development. The Christian Charitable Organizations should incept a special committee to evaluate the utilities of all its social service activities periodically.
- The Christian Charitable Organizations needs to take initiatives to develop awareness as well as to work on emerging social problems such as human trafficking, substance abuse, unemployment, corruption, caste discrimination, racism, human rights violation, ecological issues etc.
- The Christian Charitable Organizations should use more scientific and technological tools to study the societal problems so as to facilitate its institutions to implement new programs for the betterment of the Society.
- The Christian Charitable Organization needs to integrate the services of social workers, community leaders, politicians, social service agencies, volunteers and public at large to achieve a holistic social transformation.
- The Christian Charity Organizations should channelize its efforts in the line of social justice, peace, universal brotherhood, human rights and integrity of the nation.

- The Christian Charitable Organizations shall work on addressing the rural social issues through education, awareness, public participation, rural appraisals, information, resource mobilization, media etc.

CONCLUSION

Christian Charitable Organizations in a religious society like Kerala, in particular, are expected to play a key role in influencing the social, political and economic life of the people. The religion goes much beyond its ordinary role to strengthen the social fabric of the Society. Christian Charitable Organizations exert a cultural influence over the world's major civilizations. Especially, their contribution to nation-building cannot be overlooked with remarkable contributions to bridge the existing social gaps with quality and value added education and poverty alleviation. In this way, religion and the Christian Catholic Organizations does influence transformation of Society. However, the scarcity of resources faced by the Christian Charitable Organizations has indirectly influenced rural development projects of these entities. Christian charitable organizations is consistently building its resources, infrastructure to instill sources to work on current social problems. Therefore, there is no doubt that Churches and its Charity Organizations have contributed immensely to the religious, political, and socio-economic development of the country. The real mission of the Christian Religious Institutions can be accomplished, only when the truth seekers guide and control ideological speculators across the world.

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