



Research Paper

“Impact of Church Missionaries on Bhil tribe of Madhya Pradesh”

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I. Introduction

A Christian mission is a tabulated effort to escalation of Christianity. Missions often involve sending individuals and groups, called missionaries, across boundaries, most commonly geographical boundaries, for the purpose of proselytism . This involves evangelism and humanitarian work, especially among the poor and disadvantaged. There are a few different kinds of mission trips: short-term, long-term, relational and ones meant simply for helping people in need. Some might choose to dedicate their whole lives to missions as well. Missionaries have the authority to preach the Christian faith (and sometimes to administer sacraments), and provide humanitarian work to improve economic development, literacy, education, health care, and orphanages.

Christianity has been a powerful agency of cultural change among the Tribes in modern India. It was introduced by the revision of the English East India Company’s Charter in 1813 and 1833, though initially, on a fairly small scale. But gradually it penetrated deep into the backward and inaccessible tribal areas. In fact, the introduction of Christianity is closely associated with the expansion of Colonization in India. It was Whitemen’s burden to civilize the Bribes. In this circumstance, the Bhils of Madhyapradesh, a major settled agriculturist tribes who constitute a large tribal population in South Madhyapradesh, attracted the Christian missionaries at the first sight. Towards the middle of the 19th century , the Bhil of madhyapradesh were backward, illiterate, exploited and oppressed by the landlords, money-lenders and looked for a **Saviour** who could solve their problems. A psychological atmosphere was already created and the ground was ripe for the change. The Christian Missionaries appeared on the scene. In 1844, the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Missionaries was the first to make its appearance at Calcutta.

The Christian missionaries have made significant changes in people’s lives particularly among Christians of tribal origin through their committed work in fields of education, health, economic and social mobility, and agrarian relations.

Christian missionaries have been working in almost all fields of tribal life, especially in education and health. They also introduced modern life and culture side by side with preserving the existing culture. The pattern of their work for tribal people is very innovative as they engage through dedicated and highly trained personnel by means of whom they gain confidence and willing cooperation and most importantly they do their work by considering it as service.

Madhya Pradesh is one of the predominantly tribal states, in which 21.2 % habitants are tribals and Madhyapradesh contributes 13.57 % of the Scheduled Tribes population to the total ST population of India. It is also a land with many primitive tribes. The State has had a history of missionary welfare activities since the 19th Century, especially in the Malwa-Nimar region Madhya Pradesh.

Malwa-Nimar is a large area of Madhya Pradesh state where the maximum number of inhabitants are tribals. The major findings are that wherever the missionaries are active the socio-economic and educational status of tribals is found to be high and they also have a higher degree of social capital. In the Indian subcontinent, one of the largest concentrations of adivasis are found in a three hundred and fifty mile-long belt of mountains and forests which stretches from Rajasthan in the north to near Bombay in the south. These areas lie either within Madhya Pradesh State, or are in districts which adjoin directly on Madhya pradesh in neighbouring states. The adivasis of this belt belong to a number of different communities, the largest of which are the Bhils, followed by

communities such as the Varlis, Chodhris, Dhodiyas, Gamits and others. The Bhils are best known, as in the past they were organised in warlike clans which prevented outside rulers from extending their control over the mountains.

The Christian missionaries believe in the principle of maintaining the status quo of egalitarian society in which they involve themselves by looking at everybody as equal in society. The contribution of the Christian missionaries towards the education of the Adivasis (tribals) of Malwa-Nimar has been praised by many educationists.

Conditions of Tribals before the Arrival of Christian Missionaries:

Before the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the social and economic conditions of the tribals, the original settlers of the land, were ones of great distress. Their life was almost like that of slaves, a situation imposed by **the King, landlords, moneylenders and tax collectors**. Through force and fraud most of the **land was unjustly taken away from the peasants and a number of armed rebellions took place** but were suppressed by political force. In this way, these people were socially excluded from all walks of life. And hence the Christian missionaries experienced and recognized this system of hierarchy prevalent in Indian society and found their way to providing service for these people. They lived largely outside caste society and they did not follow Brahmanical forms of worship in any central way, having their own ritual specialists - shamanistic exorcists.

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Tribals after arrival of Missionaries :

The Church Missionary Society trying to gain the confidence of people by providing them facilities of school and medical treatment. The welfare work by Church Missionary Society during the days of famine and the expansion of school and medical facilities in that different part of the country also promote the conversion of people into Christianity. There was a direct relation between the welfare policies of Church Missionary Society and conversion of tribal's into Christianity.

II. Conclusion :

The tribal society was not associated so closely with any religion; they generally believe in nature's powers and the local deities. Generally they live in isolation because of the structure of the ancient society. With the help of Church Missionary Society colonial government want to expand their rule in remote and unexplored areas of the country. The Missionary societies were the functionary of British society. The primary aims of these missionaries were expansion of colonial empire by using religion. But these missionary societies provide them modern education system and provide them medical facilities. The intentions of missionary was always religious conversion, they are no there for any kind of reform. The colonial government wants to control these violent tribal communities and also want to access those forests which are not accessible without the support or oppression of the tribal communities. The tribal's are the natural habitants of forests and it is essential for British official to suppress them to have monopoly over the forest resources. British official are also aware about the disturbance and various revolt by the tribal communities in the region of southern Rajasthan and the rulers of the area are unable to control the area, so the role played by missionary societies was very helpful for British government.

This research has discussed the various forms of their contribution in educating the tribal's of Madhya Pradesh either directly or indirectly but in most of the cases it has been found that they have been directly involved with their day-to-day activities and hence also their education. The approach of missionaries work seems to be very pragmatic as they work as an insider by looking at people's problems and then acting accordingly. The researchers' own study has also found that the missionaries have played a key role in

education among Tribes, as was seen in the case of the village of Barwani district . This study also confirmed that The tribals cannot just forget and ignore their immense contributions for the lives the poor people.

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