

CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN 19TH CENTURY DURING PRINCELY MYSORE

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The British rule facilitated Christian and missionary activity indirectly in a host of ways, and directly through the sometimes sympathetic intervention of colonial officials. Yet it was one of the peculiarities of the Raj that in its official capacity the British Indian government resolutely refused to champion when the East India company went from being a trading monopoly to also becoming ruler over a large and growing territory, it pronounced a policy of religious neutrality and social noninterference, it sought the obedience of its subjects, but not any transformation in their beliefs or practices. After the mutiny, when the British parliament took over direct administration of India, the Queen's Proclamation assured her subjects that their faiths would continue to be respected. As long as her subjects paid and obeyed, those subjects could profess whatever they chose, even the civil law under which they were administered was for a long time Hindu and Muslim law, as interpreted by British-established courts.

Until 1813 missionaries could only operate on company controlled territory with company's permission, and subject to many constraints. One of the earliest missionary bodies, the Baptist missionary society, active in India since 1793, chose to found its chief mission at Serampur, then under the control of the more welcoming Danish authority, rather than in British India. The character of the East India Company was renewed and revised by parliament at Twenty Year intervals. In 1793 efforts by the Clapham sect evangelists to insert a 'Pious Clause' requiring company support for missionary activity was rebuffed, but the renewal of the charter in 1813 was accompanied by missionary bodies being given a free hand to carry out their activities as well as the establishment of a Bishopric and of Archdeacons for the three presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. The revised charter also committed the company to accept some responsibility for the education of its Indian subjects, even if initially only to the tune of a miserly 1,00,000 (one lakh rupees) a year. Both measures in their different ways marked the advance of the idea that British rule was to be justified not just for its economic benefits to Britain, nor even for the peace and law and order allegedly provided to Indians, but that the ultimate and "Providential" reason why Britain had been granted India was to ensure the "Moral and material Progress" of India, soon to be charted in annual "Moral and Material progress" reports.

In Missionary ranks the Idea that education would be powerful and even predominant aspect of the mission to win over souls was taking firm root. By the early decades of the 19th century conversions had been few, and those overwhelmingly among low castes, outcastes, and tribal groups, the heartlands of Hinduism remained not simply unquestioned, but almost untouched. Caste in particular seemed to be an insuperable barrier to conversion, for conversion meant placing oneself outside of caste and thus severing most social ties and forms of social intercourse. Time and again missionaries complained that the institution of caste, and a

stubborn attachment to their own “superstitions”, made the work of winning over natives all but impossible. Thus, the Abbe Dubios, who had spent a lifetime in India, went so far as to declare that if the Hindus went to Europe to win converts to Shiva and Vishnu they were more likely of success than missionaries in India.

Since this dissertation work lays more emphasis on the Mysore state I would like to go in detail about the part played by Christian Missionaries in Mysore state. Christianity was introduced in the state of Mysore by the Dominicans around 1325A.D. At that time, the state was an independent Kingdom, but was a part of the states ruled by Delhi, from whom Fr.Jourdain received letters from Pope John XXII.

After having known about the introduction of Christianity in Mysore soil we are very much tempted to ask the question that in which part of the kingdom of Mysore they actually entered. It is difficult to say as we have no document about it. But, as they were coming from west coast, we suppose that these missionaries entered the country from the west and began to preach the good news to the people who were living in that part of Mysore. The Dominicans did not seem to have converted many Hindus, for nothing significant is mentioned about their preaching by one Fr.Paulin of St.Bartelemy in his writings.

Fr.Paulin gives credit to the order of St.Francis of Assisi for the first evangelization of the people of Mysore. As a matter of fact, after having written that the Seminary of Cranganore was founded and managed by Fr.Vincent of the order of St.Francis, he adds: “other religious of the same order were the first to enter into the kingdom of Mysore and Madura, and they did a good job in the conversion of gentiles. Around the year 1587, they were followed by Fr.Bernardin Terrari, and Pierre Louis, an Indian of Malabar. Both were the first apostles of the Christians of St.Thomas”.

According to this statement, the people of Mysore had not seen any preaches of the gospel before the arrival of the Franciscans who started their Evangelisation just before 1587. Fr.Cinnami, who is considered to be the founder of the Italian mission in this part of India, speaks, in his letters, about the Christians of Srirangapatna, then the residence of the king Where he found a beautiful church.

Let us come now to the establishment of the Jesuit Mission in the Kingdom of Mysore. It is certain that they founded two missions quite separate: One in the kingdom of Mysore and the other one which was a part of Carnatic. At the time of the first foundation, the kingdom of Myosre extended up to Darapuram, but in breadth, it consisted only of the region which started in the Western Ghats, till about 10 miles to the west of Bangalore. This town and its surrounding territory were annexed to the kingdom of Mysore only in 1687, when Chikka Deva Raja, the king of Mysore, purchased Bangalore for 3,00,000 (Three Lakhs Rupees) from Kadim Khan, general of the emperor Aurangazeb. This is why the Jesuits who came to evangelize the kingdom of Mysore, as it was at that time, were not concerned about the people who were living to the east of the kingdom. It was given to the Jesuits who were in charge of Carnatic province to establish later on some Christian communities in that latter part of the peninsula. As missionaries of Mysore, belonged to the Jesuit province of Goa, and were under the authority of the Archbishop of Cranganore.²

It was the Portuguese Jesuits who founded the Kanarese mission. They came from Satyamangalam, where they had a large number of Christians, through the wild tracts of jungle on the borders of the river Cauvery, and established congregations, the descendants of whom are still to be found in a few villages in the south east. Father Cinnami made Srirangapatna the headquarters of the Jesuit Kanarese mission. The number of Christians in

Srirangapatna itself was greatly increased when Hyder Ali brought 9000 Catholics from Mangalore. At palahalli, near Srirangapatna, another Christian Congregation was formed, but we do not know at what date.

In the east, a Telugu Mission was established in 1702 by two French Jesuits, named Boucher and Mauduit, who came from Thakkulum, about 8 miles from Arkonam and who built chapels at Bangalore, Devanahalli, Chikkaballapur, Hoskote, Anekal, Kolar and other places. By 1755 there were 13 Portuguese Jesuit Missionaries in the Kanarese Mission and about the same number of French Missionaries in the Telugu Mission.

On the fall of Tippu, in 1799, a member of that society, the famous Abbe Dubois, was sent to Srirangapatna where he was received well by colonel Wellesley. He remained assisted by four Goanese priests in charge of all Christians in Mysore. It has been said that this remarkable man had escaped from one of the fusillades of the French Revolution and sought refuge in India, but this is incorrect. Abbe Dubois left Paris on the 19 January 1792, one year before the massacres of the French Revolution began. On entering on Mission work, he resolved to follow the example illustriously set by De Nobilli and Beschi, of adopting the Indian costume and accommodating himself to the customs and modes of life of the country.

In 1887, the Hierarchy was proclaimed in India and the Countries above mentioned were erected into a Bishopric, under the title of the Diocese of Mysore, the head quarters remaining at Bangalore as before. There were in the Mysore Diocese, 95 schools for both girls and boys with 6,260 pupils. The most important institution for boys in Bangalore was the St.Joseph's college, which was divided into the European and Indian sections and teachers up to the B.A. Degree.

St.Joseph's college had 600 students; 70 Europeans, 120 Anglo-Indians and 410 Indians. The needs of the mission were steadily increasing and divine providence sent new reinforcements to look after these needs in the person of ten new missionaries from 1882 to 1886. So, at the end of 1886, there were 33 French Missionaries and 10 Indian Priests in the Apostolic Vicarage of Mysore.

The chief educational institution for girls was the Sacred Heart's college, also in Bangalore teaching up to the Intermediate standard.

The first protestant mission to the Kanarese people was established at Bellary by the London Missionary Society. Then in 1820, operations were commenced in Bangalore and in 1839 extended to Mysore, but in 1850, the latter station was given up. From the beginning, the efforts of the mission had been devoted to public preaching, education and Literary work. By agreement with other missions, the District over which organized work was carried by the London Mission has since the eighties been confined, with in the Mysore state, to the strip of the country extending north and south between Bangalore and Kolar. In that area, the mission had two head stations, Bangalore and Chikkaballapur, a number of out stations with resident evangelists; and schools for boys and girls, containing some 2,000 pupils. A third head station was at Hosur, just outside the limits of the state.

Of the educational institutions for boys, the principal was the High school in Bangalore, established in 1847. It contained about 600 pupils and educated up to the Entrance Examination of the University. Its hall, from the time of its erection in 1879, had been much used for public lectures to the English speaking Indian Community. Rev.T.E.Slater was well known in this connection. Female education was especially indebted to ladies of this mission Mrs.Sewell and Mrs.Rice who, in the face of many difficulties opened and conducted the first schools for Indian girls in this state in 1840. The Christian girls of the boarding school were

from an early period taught English as well as the Vernacular, and were long in advance of the general standard of Female Education in the state.

Chikkaballapur was made a head station of the Mission in 1891. In February 1913, a well-equipped general hospital, called the Wardlaw memorial hospital, with 60 beds, was opened there, by the mission. The members of this mission also contributed to the literary works. Rev.W.Reeves complied the earliest kannada-English and English-Kannada Dictionaries. The earliest complete version of the Bible in Kannada was made by Mr.Reeves and Mr.Hands of this Mission.

The Wesleyan Mission Commenced its work in the Mysore state in 1821, but for many years, the missionaries laboured only among the Tamil People of the Cantonment of Bangalore. The Kanarese Mission had begun in Bangalore in 1835. The following year, a lengthened tour through Mysore and Coorg was undertaken by two of the Missionaries and suitable stations were selected. Gubbi was made the residence of a Missionary in 1837, and Christian Preaches regularly visited a considerable number of populous villages in the neighborhood.⁵

In 1923 the Wesleyan mission had employed 18 European missionaries, 18 women missionaries, 11 Indian Ministers, 50 Evangelist and 30 Bible-Women. The Mission maintained two collegiate High Schools for boys, 2 normal training Institutions- one for men and one for women, 70 vernacular and Anglo-Vernacular Boys schools, 1 High school and 40 vernacular and Anglo vernacular schools for girls, 1 orphanage for boys and 1 for women. Four hundred and fifty teachers of both sexes were employed and instruction was given to 6,863 boys and 3,878 girls.

While distributing prizes to the successful students of the Wesleyan Mission High School, Bangalore city on August 28 1914 His Highness Sri,Kantirava Narasimharaja wodeyar said “I believe I am expected as is usual on such occasions, to say a few words, but beyond expressing my thanks for the warm reception the principal, the teaching staff and the students of the Wesleyan Mission High School have given me in this venerable hall of learning of 80 years standing, and the pleasure it always gives me to meet and reward the pick of our young men, I wonder If I can say anything which has not already been said a hundred times. I think I should rather welcome the situation which leaves so little soon to originality or ingenuity, in any other case, I fear I would not have had quite an easy task to face.

There is one thing I can readily allude to, which bears any amount of repetition I mean the commendable missionary enterprise and its extent and sincerity. We see that in many fields of human action the Christian missionaries have been the pioneers. It is they that have opened our first schools and our first hospitals, and it is no wonder that this school should have been the first institution in Bangalore and perhaps in the whole province, to have brought the western lore to us. It speaks to the great sincerity and ability of the executive of the school that it has fast developed in every direction, and has neglected no part of a boy’s training. I need not mention the heroic self-sacrifice of the missionaries themselves who have renounced all desire of health or wealth and risked our climate in order that they may better fellowmen”.

Thus the Christian missionaries electrified the Mysore state by inflicting a valuable education to the people and were successful in implementing it in a proper manner.

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