

**WILLIAM CAREY AND HIS MISSIONARY ACTIVITY DURING THE MID-
NINETEENTH CENTURY IN INDIA**

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Abstract

When the Company's Charter came up for renewal around 1813, it was agreed to allow Christian missionaries to come to India and allow them to use its territories for the spread of Christianity. William Carey the pioneer and "the father of modern mission" stands out as one of the most notable missionary in India. Carey, his eldest son Felix, Thomas and his wife and daughter sailed from London aboard an English ship in April 1793. They landed at Calcutta in November. He translated the Bible into 35 Indian languages including Bengali, Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Assamese, Gujarati, Pashto and Khasi. He founded the first newspaper to be printed in any oriental language, the "*Samachar Darpan*". In this newspaper we find agitation and protest against Sati and infanticide and its contribution to Bengali literature is unique. Carey was one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society, in Srirampur. Though not very successful as a missionary in converting the locals into Christianity, he was an obsessive linguistic, and a passionate worker who loved the Bengali dialects for which Rabindranath Tagore remarked that the revival of Bengali language and its improvement must be acknowledge and attributed to Carey and his coworkers.

Keywords: Bengali, Bible, Carey, India, Missionary, Sati.

Introduction

Any missionary movement believes in the spreads of its religion and makes others confirm to their beliefs. The best examples from our country are; one- the missionaries sent by Asoka to Sri Lanka and other Asian countries to spread the teaching of Gautam Buddha and second- the entry of Christian missionaries in India during the British raj to preach the teaching of Jesus Christ (Jain, 2005).

Towards the mid of nineteenth century with the arrival of British, missionaries activities also extended to North India. The impact of British rule on Indian society and culture was widely different from what India had known. Most of the earlier intruders who came to India had settled within her frontier and become one of the land and its people, but British conquest was different (Hans Raj, 1987). Nineteenth Century Europe had experienced

intellectual reasoning and created an age of Enlightenment. The development of science and scientific outlook had affected every aspect of activity. Contrast to Europe, India presented the picture of a stagnant civilization. Thus for first time India encountered an invader who considered himself racially superior and culturally more advanced (Majumdar & Srivastava, 2003). The first English factory in Bengal was established at Hughli in 1651 under permission from Sultan Shuja, the second son of Emperor Shah Jahan, then Subhadar of Bengal. The same year he was very much pleased with the service of Mr. Boughton in curing a royal lady and he granted the East India Company the privileges of free trade throughout Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Soon English factories spread at Kassim bazaar, Patna and other places in the province. In 1717 Emperor Farrukhsiyar confirmed the trade privileges granted by earlier Subhadars of Bengal (Grover & Grover, 2004).

After the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the British East India Company virtually monopolized the trade and commerce of Bengal. This battle had far reaching consequences in the fate of India. After the battle of Plassey, England became the major political force behind the Nawab of Bengal and with the arrival of Wellesley the Company's relation with the Indian states underwent a change. He aimed at bringing the Indian states within the British control. Lord Hastings opened a new stage in the relations of the East India Company and at the time of his retirement the influence of company rapidly increased in the internal administration of the state (Majumdar & Srivastava, 2003).

In the beginning, when the English came to India as traders, for a very long time they did not bother about India. Even after establishing themselves in India, they decided not to interfere in religious and social customs of India. They were also discouraged in their efforts because earlier to them, the Portuguese had made an attempt to spread Christianity very vigorously and had failed in their effort. During the 18th century the company therefore did not allow Christian missionaries to come to their territories (Hans Raj, 1987).

Meantime, after the victory of Plassey and Buxer, the English East India Company had changed from trading company into a politically oriented organization. By the 19th century it was clear to the Company that in India, no native prince was capable enough to root the Company out of the country. When the Company's Charter came up for renewal around 1813, it was agreed to allow Christian missionaries to come to India and allow them to use its territories for the spread of Christianity. In the Charter Act of 1813, it was provided that there was no need for any Englishmen to seek the Company's permission to either come to India or to settle down in the country. A large a number of Englishmen came to India to

settle down and propagate their faith in India (Hans Raj, 1987; Majumdar & Srivastava, 2003).

The Father Of Modern Mission

William Carey “the father of modern mission” stands out as one of the most notable preacher of his time. The English cobbler turned Orientalist, translated the Bible into 35 Indian languages including Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese and Gujarati. He published the bible in Sanskrit language in 1809 and followed it with a Hindi translation in 1811 (Schirmacher, 2013). He learned Telugu and Kannada to translate the Bible. Later he worked for the bible’s translation in Pashto and Khasi language. He influenced his team resulting in the Bible’s translation into 35 Indian dialects. He and founded the first newspaper to be printed in any oriental language, the “*Samachar Darpan*”. In this newspaper we find agitation and protest against Sati and infanticide and its contribution to Bengali literature is unique. Carey was one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society, in Srirampur (William, 1791). As a linguistic he was a passionate worker who loved the Bengali dialects for which Rabindranath Tagore remarked that the revival of Bengali language and its improvement must be acknowledge and attributed to Carey and his workers (Schirmacher, 2013).

Carey, the eldest of five children, was born to Edmund and Elizabeth Carey on August 17, 1761. At the age of 14, Carey’s father apprenticed him to a shoemaker in the nearby village of Hackleton, Northamptonshire, England. He married Dolly Plackett in 1781. In 1789 Carey became the full-time Pastor of a small Baptist church in Leicester. Carey, his eldest son Felix, Thomas and his wife and daughter sailed from London aboard an English ship in April 1793. They landed at Calcutta in November (Marshman, 1859).

During the first year in Calcutta, the missionaries sought means to support themselves and a place to establish their mission. They also began to learn the Bengali language to communicate with the locals. A friend of Thomas owned two indigo dye factories and needed managers, so Carey moved with his family to Mudnabatty, a village located between Malda and Dinapur (West Bengal). During the six years that Carey managed the indigo plant, he completed the first revision of his Bengali Bible and began formulating the principles upon which his missionary community would be formed, including communal living, financial self-reliance, and the training of indigenous ministers. His son Peter died of dysentery, causing his wife Dorothy to suffer a nervous breakdown from which she never recovered and died in 1807. Meanwhile, the missionary society had begun sending more

missionaries to India. The first to arrive was John Fountain, who arrived in Mudnabatty and began teaching in the school. He was followed by William Ward, a printer; Joshua Marshman, a school teacher; David Brunsdon, one of Marshman's students; and William Grant, who died three weeks after his arrival. Because the East India Company was still hostile to missionaries, they settled in the Danish colony at Srirampur and were joined there by Carey on January 10, 1800 (Smith, 2004).

Once settled in Srirampur, the mission bought a house large enough to accommodate all of their families and a school, which was to be their principal means of support. Ward set up a print shop with a secondhand press Carey had acquired and began the task of printing the Bible in Bengali. In August 1800, Fountain died of dysentery. By the end of that year, the mission had their first convert, a Hindu named Krishna Pal. They had also earned the goodwill of the local Danish government and Richard Wellesley, then Governor-General of India (Moore, 1994). The conversion of Hindus to Christianity posed a new question for the missionaries concerning whether it was appropriate for converts to retain their caste. In 1802, the daughter of Krishna Pal, a *Sudra*, married a Brahmin. This wedding was a public demonstration that the church repudiated the caste distinctions (Walker, 1951).

In 1801, the Governor-General founded Fort William, a college intended to educate civil servants. He offered Carey the position of professor of Bengali. Carey's colleagues at the college included pundits, whom he could consult to correct his Bengali testament. He also wrote grammars of Bengali and Sanskrit, and began a translation of the Bible into Sanskrit. He also used his influence with the Governor-General to help put a stop to the practices of infant sacrifice and Sati, after consulting with the pundits and determining that they had no basis in the Hindu sacred writings (Moore, 1994).

From the printing press at the mission came translations of the Bible in Bengali, Sanskrit, and other major languages and dialects. Many of these languages had never been printed before; William Ward had to create punches for the type by hand. Carey had begun translating literature and sacred writings from the original Sanskrit into English to make them accessible to his own countryman. On March 11, 1812, a fire in the print shop caused £10,000 in damages and lost work. Amongst the losses were many irreplaceable manuscripts, including much of Carey's translation of Sanskrit literature and a polyglot dictionary of Sanskrit and related languages. However, the press itself and the punches were saved, and the mission was able to continue printing in six months. In Carey's lifetime, the mission printed and distributed the Bible in whole or part in 44 languages and dialects. In 1820 Carey

founded the Agri-Horticultural Society of India at Alipore, Kolkata, supporting his enthusiasm for botany. Carey's second wife, Charlotte, died in 1821, followed by his eldest son Felix. In 1823 he married a third time, to a widow named Grace Hughes. He lived a quiet life until his death in 1834, revising his Bengali Bible, preaching, and teaching students (Walker, 1951; Moore, 1994).

Conclusion

Carey started by living in the wild rural area, in a hut which he constructed himself, saw his children dying of diseases and also saw his wife going mad because of the alien environment but still he refused to go back to England. He not only translated the bible in various Indian languages, but also published the grammar and dictionaries in local languages and also translated the literary and scientific work in various Indian languages. He was the pioneer in introducing education to women under stiff opposition. Though Carey was not very successful in converting the Indians in fact it is almost next to nothing, but his translation of Bible into various Indian languages and his other academic and scientific translations into Indian vernacular and his strategy of his translation to be based on Sanskrit established a foolproof process for the future. One cannot forget his service in perusing in drawing the governments attention towards social evils of infanticide and sati (Schirmacher, 2013).

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