Chapter VI

Conclusion

Christianity brought the western faith systems in India. During the 19th century many Indian leaders, writers and scholars gave interest in Christ and his teachings. Among them some in fact actively opposed Missionary teaching but all of them, in one way or another, were deeply influenced by what they learned about Christ. In this regard mention the name of Raja Ram Mohan Ray who from 1800 onwards, began to study the New Testament, and in 1820 he wrote a book with the title 'The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness.' Here and elsewhere he wrote of his beliefs that the teachings of Jesus are the best guide to living:"

He said, "The consequences of my long and interrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted to the use of rational beings, than any others which have come to my knowledge."2

The Missionaries who came to India in the 19th century were the product of the modern western culture that had to disclose. Therefore, they brought along with Christianity this fund of knowledge which had served as the source of new energy and power that had given the west a ridge over Asia. Christianity did not make progress merely as a moral and spiritual stimulus in Europe. Even the cultural achievements of Europe with its language, literature, scientific achievements, art, architecture and music remained a part of it. The Missionaries thus brought along not only Christian faith but also positive aspects of western culture which gradually became a global heritage.

Scholars have given their own different interpretations of the impact of Christianity on non-Christian societies. Analysing this in the hey day of Missionary optimism in 1893, George Isham after his stay in India wrote: "The greatest work of Christianity is to Christianise the earth, making converts is but a small part of this great work. The word civilise has crept into our speech, and leads us to think that there is some great power some where in the spirit of human progress or in evolutionary laws or in the discovery of liberty and modern institutions or in

something else apart from Christianity—which is improving the world. But the fact is, this onward and upward movement of the earthly conditions of the race is traceable to the power of Christianity. It is true that this power is stored in and exercised through various institutions and agencies, but since it comes from Christianity originally, it is more nearly just to speak of the Christianisation than of the civilisation of the world. We have many institutions which exert a steady and powerful influence for good over every member of the society who comes in their reach.⁴

Acknowledging the impact of Christian influence on the social change in modern India, an Indian scholar wrote: “It cannot be denied that the ideas and activities of the Missionaries did eventually become a vital force for social reform in modern India. The Missionaries contributed to it in several ways. They emphasised the conviction that the spiritual salvation of the individual has bound up with that of his community, and that the social and economic advancement of a community must proceed simultaneously with its spiritual advance. They preached the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. They established schools and colleges for the education of boys and girls. They initiated the movement for abolishing the practices of sati, infanticide and untouchability. They worked for the uplift of the backward tribes and for the amelioration of womanhood in India. They pioneered numerous other movements for the welfare of the poor and the needy.”⁵

But some scholar pointed out that the Missionaries did harsh treatment with their converts. In this regard they gave an instance of Frensis Xavier. ‘Saint Xavier, who used to experience the highest joy of his life when he used to see the new converts trampling upon their former Goods and Goddesses, razing their temples to the ground and insulting their own parents and elders who remained Hindus. And even as recently as during the congress rule (a de-facto Christian rule!) in Kerala after the quitting of the British, hundreds of ancient and sacred Hindu temples, including the famous one at Shabarimalai, were desecrated and their idols broken by the Christian Vandals. It is the same Christian fanatics who smashed the Vivekananda Memorial Tablet on the Vivekananda Rock at Kanyakumari. Such are the men who come to us to preach that Christianity would shower bliss of peace and milk of human kindness on humanity.’⁶

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4. *Mission cross-cultural encounter and Western India* p.21
5. *Ibid* pp. 21, 22
Regarding the question of conversion and human culture some scholars think and talk as if it involved no great movement, and little if any change in the converts life style other think that such a complete change as virtually to applyfumes to the convert from all the supposed to pollute of his former culture. But conversion is not the automatic renunciation of all inherited culture. True, conversion involves repentance and to express regret is renunciation. Yet this did not require the convert to step right out of his former culture into a Christian subculture which is totally distinctive. Conversions become a major outlet after independence. Hindu traditional Congress men like K.M Muhshi discussed during the Constituent Assembly debates that conversion should be regulated, and the Indian Constitution eventually emphasized that all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and to the right freely to practice and propagate religion. However, at the state level things were different. In Madhya Pradesh, for instance, the conversion of large numbers of tribal to Christianity resulted in the mobilization of Hindu-nationalists. In 1952 the Vanavashi Kalyan Ashram by R.K-DeshPande, an R.S.S man who wanted to counter the growing influence of Christian Missionaries among the ‘Asivasi’. In 1954 the JanaSangh organized an ‘Anti-Foreign Missionary Week, but the local congress immediately appointed an inquiry committee. Thus, the Niyogi committee prepared the ground for a low.7

The Japanese Novelist Shusaku Endo wrote a historical noval called Silence (1966) about the Church in Japan. He compared the Church to the young sapling planted by St. Fmcis Xavier in 1549. His theme was whether Christianity can ever take root in a culture such as that of Japan. He thinks it is dying in the mire of the Japanese soil, which is not conducive to this new sapling brought from the west. Rev. D. T Niles says that the Church in Asia is like a “potted paint” i.e. unless it takes root in the soil of Asia it can not thrive.8 Sunder Raj in his book, the confusion called conversion has demonstrated that “Christianity is about as ancient, eastern and indigenous in India, as any other faith” (Sunder Raj 1986:8) one important phase in the emancipation of women in India started with the coming of Christianity through the ministry of Apostle Thomas. Syrian Christian women started wearing “chatta”, their bear tops like Hindu women. They were much more free in their relationship with men then other groups. The Women of India should not forget this.

8. Focus on Christianity in Northeast India p.64
In indigenization of Christianity, J.W. Gladstone informs that indigenization is not going back to Hinduism but going forward to a new relevant expression of faith. Hence the challenge of indigenization to the Church and the need for indigenization was felt as the identity of the Christians was difficult. Regarding the indigenization the pioneer attempts of Robert de-Nobili of Madurai Mission needs special mention. Because he wanted to present Christianity to the Indians in an Indian way. In this regard we can mention the name of K.p. pfander a C.M.S Missionary in Agra. He introduced a panchayat system within the Mission to stimulate the development of leadership within the Christian community. He consulted with this panchayat or board in all cases of discipline, admission to Baptism and Lords supper etc. The Church fund, which was the contribution of the people was also kept under the management of the panchayat. 9

Considering Christianity was foreign religion Lal Behari Dey had realized that after the revolt of 1857 Indians' hatred of Christianity had become more extreme than before simply because they regarded Christianity as the religion of the Europeans. The educated Indian found that in nature organization, and leadership the Christian community was very unindean brahma bandhab upadhyay lamented: “our Hindu brethren cannot see the subtlety and sanetity of our divine religion because of its hard coating of Europeanism”. He characterised western Christian Missionaries as “evangelists of the European Gospel” 10 later in the 1930’s a significant promoter of the Indian Christianity Movement, p chenchiah, articulated this deep consciousness among Christian Indians of the foreign nature of Christianity in India.

Considering Christianity as foreign religion caused conflicts in the minds of the educated Christian who were converts from high castes, between their inherited indigenous culture and spirituality which determined their Indianess and their new religion which expressed their sparch for a new identity. They knew that Christianity which they received in the nineteenth century India was shaped by Graeco Hebraci metaphysics and philosophy the confessional forms in which Christianity spread in colonical India carried also the marks of political and social developments within Europe and North America. Its pre-eminent image was that it was the religion of the

10. Ibid pp.21-22
colonial master. Further, Christian Indians resented the dominant and paternalistic attitude of western Christians Missionaries towards them. All this led to the rise of the national churen Movement in the nineteenth century which mooted the idea of a "national churen" or an Indian churen" in the place of western denominations of Christianity.

The Bengal Christian Association founded in 1868 raised the question of a true Indian Christian nature of the Church. Some of the leading periodicals like Indian Christian Herald, the Eastern star, the cosmopolite of pulney Andy the Christian patriot were started during these years.

In 1887, under the chief initiative of K.C Banerjee, in Calcutta founded 'Christo Samaj'. The objective of christio Samaj was "the propagation of Christian truth, the promotion of Christian union, and the welfare of Indean Christian" Among other things the movement of Christian Indeans for freedom from foreign control. In the same way in 1886 the national Church of India was founded by pulney Andy at Madras taking the Same concern. The aim of the Madras movement was that of "Uniting the various denominations, and to have one united Church as suited to the national peculiarities and instincts of the people. It sought "to encourage independence and self reliance and self government".

The National Church Movement rejected the western denominational differences as irrelevant for India and greets to its fellowship any Christian irrespective of his denominational affiliation. The New Testament was considered "the only code or canon for guidance for its form of ministry, the Church envisaged the development of system of voluntary pastors. Regarding the national Church movement Andy said on L.B. Dey’s plea for a national Church in Bengal;"You will find in it much patriotism, sincerity and belief in Christianity and a generous desire that the knowledge he possesses should be equally spread among his countrymen".

A world famous example of Christian social witness is the work of Mother Teresa and her sisters in Calcutta. She has become a symbol of Christian selfless caring. She works among the very poor of Calcutta, and from there her work has spread throughout the world. There are many people in Calcutta so poor that they had poor.

12. Ibid p.23
no home at all. Even when ill or dying, they have nowhere to lie but the streets. Mother Teresa and her sisters seen them as people in whom Christ lives, and who should be cared for with a love like Christ's love. So they collect the dying off the streets and give them a chance to die with dignity and with some one caring for them. The sisters also help lepers and orphan children. The sister receive a long and thorough education and training—nothing but the best is good enough for the destitute of Calcutta. In 1955, Nehru in the Journal “the Adivasi” betrayed his feelings towards the Christian Missionaries. He remarks that ‘the Missionaries did very good work, and I have all praise for them, but politically speaking they did not particularly like the changes in India. In fact, just when a new political awareness dawned on India, there was a movement in Northeast India to encourage the people of the Northeast India to form separate independent states. Many foreigners (Missionaries) resident in the area supported their movement. Barpujari has emphatically refuted these charges against the Christian Missionaries. To quote his own words, “True, the Missionaries converted against tribes into Christianity and brought them in contact with the western thought through English education, but there is hardly any evidence, barring perhaps a few individual cases, that the Missionaries ever made any organized move to set up an independent state or instigated tribes men to unfurl the standard of revolt against the Indian government. Infact political unrest or separatist tendencies of some of these tribes was the endeavour on their part for the assertion of separate identity, political and cultural, following British pull out of India. They were inspired in no less extent by the insurrectionary movements beyond the borders- Burma, Malaya or Indonesia in the wake of Japanese invasions.”

The Welsh Missionaries who established their Mission center in this valley in 1893 and worked till the end of the year 1958. In this Sixty five years they did hard and tremendous work but they failed in their Mission of Conversion into Christianity as they expected compared with to the same amount of efforts that they rendered in neighbouring Hill areas viz., Lusai Hills, Khasi and Jainta Hills and North Cachar Hills etc. In these Hill areas they did much less toil and endeavour they gained much

14. *Christianity World Wide* pp. 70, 71
15. Gangte T.S. *Nehru and Northeast India* pp. 117, 118
16. *Ibid* p. 118
converts than that of Barak Valley. The reasons for failure of the Welsh Missionaries in this valley are as follows:

1. The population of plain area comprising of Hindu, Muslim and few Jain and Buddhist had already their own religious faith. The Western Missionaries could not get any foothold in this firm socio-cultural and religious faith.

2. Although Welsh Missionaries provided services like education, medical relief, and rehabilitation of distressed people of Barak Valley these had hardly any impact in the spiritual life of the people to convert them into Christianity. It was mainly because of the fact that the plain people of this valley did not consider the method of Missionaries's conversion as the indigenous method of spiritual attraction. Moreover, during that period most of the plain people of Barak Valley did not consider themselves as financially backward people. So that they did not accept the services of the Missionaries.

3. In those days, the plain people of Barak Valley did not want to have close relation with them. They used to boycott the native people belonging to their society who attended in the preaching meeting, Missionary school and Missionary Hospital. Therefore, the native people were afraid of attending the functions or taking part in the activities of the Christian Missionaries.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Welsh Missionaries established their Mission center in Barak Valley considering that this valley is the only gateway to enter into neighbouring Hill states like Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. The activities of Welsh Missionaries in this Valley produced some effects which are given below-

It was the Welsh mission that established the System of higher education as well as the Female education in this Valley is a historical fact approved so far. They are rightly called the pioneer of modern education in Barak Valley. They established several beneficiaries in terms of Christian people and their deserving children in terms of stipends, vocational trainings and similar things. The Oriental English School of Silchar which was started by Welsh Mission at Jail Road Silchar to serve the people of this valley. Baptist Mid-Mission (USA) at Alipur in Cachar and at Markunda in Karimganj district opened educational institutions and hospitals for the neglected communities like Monipuries, the Rongmeis, the Pangals (Manipuri Muslims) and other tribes inhabiting in Barak Valley. Besides these, there came up mission employment facilities for deserving native Christian members in terms of pastors, teachers, evangelists, Nurses and other Mission workers etc.
The Missionaries established schools in Barak Valley for preparing teachers from native people like Namasudrus and Brahmins for Christian teaching. Moreover, they used Bengali as the medium of instruction in the initial stage of the Schools. Because of the fact that at that time Bengali was the only medium of this valley. They also provided native leadership through Christian education.

The role of the Welsh Presbyterian mission in the transformation of the position of women in Barak Valley was significant. Because they brought about Social changes in the areas where the Missionary activities were in Vogue. Before the advent of Missionary activities they walked within the allotted boundaries of their Superiors. For the upliftment of the women of this valley they started female schools. Moreover, by organizing Church meeting for native Christian women in every Sunday, giving them the responsibilities of ricecollection and also the other works of the Churches etc. helped them to learn the method of the formation of women society and association.

Welsh Missionaries were the first workers who played a great role for spreading western education and western life style to the tribal people of this valley by setting up schools and Churches. Because of the Missionary activities people were brought to one place through Churches and schools and thus earlier's minor subdivisions among the tribals were removed. Through English education and conversion they adopted Christian culture.

Regarding the affairs of tea garden communities of Barak Valley the Welsh Missionaries could hardly had any impact upon them. Almost every tea garden in Barak Valley had few Christian and some of them belong to Welsh Mission's care. Moreover, the Christian members of the tea garden communities of this valley were not the direct converts of the Welsh Mission. But they came already as Christians from their original home states like Orissa, Chotonagpur and Andrapradesh etc. As a result of this, no significant addition is found in the statistics as such. Proper assessment clearly shows that Welsh Missionaries did not establish any institution for imparting akin to modern education to the Tea garden communities of Barak Valley. They gave them such kind of education by which they could only know the English language for the reading of the Bible. Hence, their education of this placed witnessed success for easy convert.

Welsh Missionaries were not capable of adopting any successful medical Mission in Barak Valley. For their Mission purpose i.e for spreading Christianity they
started the medical work in Karimganj district which was for a time being. Moreover, no other Missionaries of Welsh Mission except Dr. O.O. Williams, were interested for medical mission in this valley. For this reason when he received a home call, the medical work in Barak Valley could not function properly and the medical Mission operations in the plains came to an end. Leprosy hospital of Makunda of Karimganj district and Alipur hospital of Baskandi, Cachar are the hospitals of Baptist Mid Mission.

The traditional structure of the Church is still retained in the Churches of Barak area which decreas a subordinate place for women in the Church. Due to the old, patriarchal, hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of the Churches. In theologically trained women are not being adequately used in the Church services of Barak Valley.

Prior to independence Karimganj was the subdivision of Sylhet district of present Bangladesh. At that time they established a co-operative credit society for low caste Hindu people of Surama valley. This society granted farming loan for them at a low rate of interest. But after independence Karimganj subdivision was became part of India and emerged a district of Barak Valley later. Christian Missionaries did not set up such kind of co-operative societies for the low caste Hindu people of Barak valley. This was mainly because of the fact that Hindu people did not gladly accepted the Christian Missionaries interference in the Hindu majority area’s like Barak Valley. The people of this valley thought that the Missionaries interference in any affairs means indirectly conversion into Christianity. Besides this, in educational affairs Missionaries establishment of schools at primary level in Nasasudra villages of Barak valley was not also welcomed by the people of this valley. As a result in 1916 two schools of Christian Missionaries of Namasudra areas in Silchar were closed down. Further, people came to realize the conspiracy of the Missionaries in preparing Namasudra workers by setting up schools at the villages of Namasudras to send them as workers to tea garden and tribal areas of Barak valley. So that the Missionaries are not directly blamed for conversion into Christianity.

In Barak Valley for the widows and orphans, Dr Halen Rowlands one of the Welsh Missionaries established a rehabilitation centre where she taught them the basic skills of knitting, sewing, cooking, gardening, cattle rearing, hygiene, first aid and child care etc. But no other Missionaries except Halen Rowlands were interested in
promoting her job, therefore, the Missionary activities in Barak Valley cannot be given the credit of promoting the interest of widows and orphans in this area.

As the benefit obtained by the native converts from the side of the Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries it is to say that not more than 10% converted Christian of the Barak Valley got the job of the different services of the Missionary centers according to their individual qualification like nurses in the Missionary dispensaries, teachers in the Missionary schools, the pastor and the other services of the Church. Therefore, it can be said that the native converts obtained the direct benefit from the Christian Missionaries is very insignificant.

The establishment of Mission stations in Cachar and Karimganj districts of Barak Valley during second half of 19th century by the Welsh Missionaries was not very successful in the perspective of spreading Christianity in this area. Because their evangelistic works could not make it possible to change the firm faith of the people of this valley viz. Hinduism and Islam religion which were deep rooted in this area prior to Christianity. The rate of Conversion from the population in Barak Valley by the Missionaries was very insignificantly poor. Out of one thousand people the converts gained were not more than 20 to 30 persons only and this also was an uneven proportion of the demography. Moreover, it was an irony that Christianity through the Welsh Mission did miraculous impact in both the places of Khasis in terms of numerical increase and in Barak Valley that of intellectual.

Though the Missionaries have converted the people of different communities and tribes of Barak Valley like Bengali, Khasis, Nagas, and Tea garden labourers etc. But inspite of their conversion in to Christianity they are still following the rituals, customs and traditions. They also used the title which they obtained from their forefathers. These have made in a dilapidated condition of choosing their identity whether to follow christinity or their original religion.

Welsh Missionaries could not spread Christianity in most of the tea garden areas of Barak Valley. It was due to the fact that the tea garden labours of this valley were the followers of Hindu religion. As a orthodox Hindus they thought that if Christianity entered in their areas through Missionary works then they would lost their traditional culture and religion. So, for the fear of conversion they did not welcome any Christian Missionary activities in the Tea garden areas of Barak Valley.