

THE ROLE OF BASEL MISSION IN SOUTH CANARA

Dr Gowri Naidu
Associate Professor of History
Government First Grade College Kolar

The Basel missionaries contributed to the wellbeing of all people and it was really a magnificent task for them to note only bring about a new order in society but also a new social economy to bring about stability and create a resourcefulness among their people.

Social welfare was also high up on the list of priorities of the Basel Missionaries. The industrial establishment opened a provident fund for the workers. The protestant community had its impact on the economy of south Canara and provided their converts all necessary help towards achieving social welfare. The Basel mission was given the credit for industrializing South Canara, with its far sightedness in seeing the need and feeling the pulse for a stable economic life for their converts irrespective of caste or creeds.

The Educational and Philanthropic Involvement

The nineteenth century is a great century of the missionary work. It is only in the nineteenth century that there was a great evangelistic awakening in the protestant church for the missionary work. The Basel Missionaries came to south Canara in 1831. These missionaries came from a pietistic background and of western culture. The first three German missionaries belonging to the Basel German Evangelical Mission society who left for India from Portsmouth on the 12th of July 1834 were the Rev.Samuel Heibich, Rev. John Lenher and Rev Christoph Griener. The ship named 'Malabar' carrying these missionaries touched Calicut port on the evening of October 13th 1834. Accepting the invitation of Nelson, the District Judge of Calicut, the three German missionaries arrived at Calicut on the 14th October 1834. Although requested by Nelson to remain in Calicut and start work in Calicut area, being under orders to start missionary work in South Canara area they proceeded to Mangalore by a country craft arranged specially for their use by Nelson promising to return to Calicut after starting their work in South canara. On arrival at Mangalore on the 30th of October 1834 the three German Missionaries were given a warm welcome by Hindely Anderson, the then Sub Judge in Mangalore, who arranged to provide them with all facilities to carry out their work in that area. Anderson helped them in many ways throughout his stay in Mangalore. In those days about 320km-480km east of Mangalore the Wesley and Landon Missionary societies were engaged in evangelical works in places Belgaum, Bangalore, Bellary, etc. The L.M.S. and Wesley missionaries supplied them with tracts and other literature printed in Canarese which were of immense help to the B.G.E.M. Missionaries The Local People of Mangalore spoke Tulu and Konkan respectively. The Missions

were able to introduce social revolution in the community. They dealt very severely with caste system, and the status of women were raised up considerably. Rev. Hebich commenced learning Canarese while Rev. Greener and Rev. Lenher learned Tulu and Konkan respectively. At Mangalore Rev Hebich started on the 2nd May 1836, the first school to be started by the Base1 Mission in that area. Due to the increase in the number of students another school was started in 1837. To assist Rev. Hebich in his work Rev.Dr.H. Moegling and three other missionaries arrived in Mangalore on 6th December 1836. In January 1837 Rev. Hebich left for Hubli, Dharwad etc along with Dr. Moegling and worked 54. Ibid., p.18. in that area. On his return to Mangalore he came across Thomas Strange the then judge of Tellicheny who happened to be there at Mangalore area as a member of a Commission appointed by the Government to enquire into an agitation by the Coorgies settled in Mangalore. As per the instruction from Basel a general conference of all B.G.E. Missionaries was convened at Mangalore on the 25th and 26th of July 1838. It was decided at the conference that Rev. Dr. H. Moegling to be the Chairman of the Council formed in Mangalore and also be in charge of the Seminary started for training new converts in Evangelical work. Accepting the invitation of the Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society Dr. Gundert and his wife left Tirunelveli for Mangalore on 2nd of November 1838. Rev. Hebich after visiting Dharwad, Belgaum, Bangalore, Coorg etc got ample opportunity to win over Christ many civilian and military personnel. In the meantime, he was invited to go over to Malabar area for evangelical work. The committee at Mangalore therefore decided to send Dr. Gundert and his wife to Tellicherry and work in that area.

Education was another important work in which the Basel Missionaries engaged themselves. They generally ran three types of school. The missionaries brought about the uplift of the lowly among the low in Mangalore and in other parts of South Canara. The three types of schools were: **Parochial school** which were partly elementary schools, partly boarding institutions meant for the education of Christian children or converts. They were trained to become school masters or Evangelists and the study of the bible was important. **The Elementary school** for non-Christians were started in 1850 when they were taught the three R's and manual instruction was given. The mission society founded Kannada schools at Jeppu, Bolar, Kudroli, Mercara Hill and Bocka Patana. A small boarding school for girls of the Christian community was also started and which was later shifted to Light House Hill under the charge of European Lady Missionaries. **The English school** for higher education was founded at Mangalore.

Economic Measures

The Basel Mission took up industries as part of their work for upliftment and the poorer people were inducted as workers of the household or in their workshop. The Mission made some experiments to try out coffee plantation in 1840 on a piece of land donated by collector H.M. Blair. But it had to be given up as it had not proved successful for the converts were indolent. Also attempts to make sugar out of toddy proved an unprofitable venture as the expense of the fuel was too much Rev.Ott made a trial with farming in Mulky as

most of the girls belonged to the agrarian class. The experiment succeeded. One interesting contribution of the Basel Mission was that of F Metz to the study of botany in South Canara. He was the first to begin the collection of plants from this district. The publication of the book 'Five Hundred Indian Plants and their use in Medicine and the Art' written in Kanarese (1881) was a great contribution to medicine.

Industrial Establishment

An industrial commission was formed as early as 1846 but only 1854, was it given greater importance when it was made a department of the Basel Missionary society and with a separate treasury. The reason for venturing into industrial undertakings was not merely for profit but to have a kind of an educational institution. It was part of a modernizing programme and since suitable school education was necessary in the civilizing process, primary education in Mission schools was made compulsory for the children of the converts.

The first industrial undertaking that met with real success was a printing press with a book binding department attached to it. The printing press started in 1861 at Balmatta more for, the Christians than the weaving establishments for while it benefited the industrial worker, it also acted as a height to the world in the printing of religious books, tracts etc.

The Weaving Establishment

In 1854, the industrial Commission sent to India to manage the industry with a Knowledge of it. He set up shops and helped the growth of industry through buying raw material and sale of finished goods in the weaving establishment. The main difference in their weaving was that these factories in Mangalore (the other two were in Calicut and in Cannanore) used the imported technology fly shuttle loom of European design thus allowing for greater speed in work, 11,408 yards of different fabrics were woven weaving had been introduced on a commercial scale by the Basel Mission through Rev Metz in 1844. In 1851, Hallers, a European weaver was sent and he erected a little factory in Mangalore with 21 handlooms of European construction and a dye house. He was the inventor of the dye, the Khaki colour and the famed Khaki cloth which Lord Roberts took for the British military uniform and is now universally popular, was first manufactured in Mangalore.

The Tile Industry

The basic material for manufacture of tiles is clay or feldspar, which is found abundantly in the river beds in the western coast. Much of the credit of starting the first modern tile factory in India goes to the Base1 Missionary, George Plebst. Plebst came to India on the invitation of Joseph Joesenhans in 1858. Plebst a trained machinist from Germany went back to Europe to study the latest techniques of tile making, seeing the famous Gillardon Tiles in Alsace, thought it was a remarkable article for India. Returning to India with a set of moulds as well as screw press, he went about making the necessary tile drying frames etc. Plebst collected the soils of the river bed of river Nethravathi and had then tested in the laboratories of Switzerland and Germany with the help of

the native potters he established the first tile factory in Jeppu, Mangalore. The factory produced 500 tiles a day and used a Pugrill powered by bullocks.

Contribution of the Basel Mission to Tulu Literature

The contribution of the German missionaries to the progress and modernization of Indian languages is a well-known fact. They worked not only on the more advanced languages like Tamil, Telugu and Kannada but also on tribal languages and other less known ones which do not possess much of written literature. They made significant contribution to alphabetization, standardization and modernization of those languages so that they could progressively be used in creative writing education and mass media. Though Tulu was well developed and spoken by a highly advanced and educated community, it had not developed much of classical literature worth the name due to historical reasons. Because Tulu chieftains of the past were under the political influence of the Karnataka rulers and due to the fact that Kannada was the language of administration and creative Expression. Tulu did not get the proper environment required for the production of classical literature.

Lack of script of its own was considered as a reason for this lacuna in Tulu Literature in ancient times. But Tulu did possess a script though it was not popularized through mass media of creative writings. The Tulu Brahmins who migrated to Kerala made a significant contribution to the development of literature and culture in Kerala along with the Nambudiris there. They were also responsible for the evolution of what was then known as Tulu-Malayalam script. Later on Malayalam literature developed through a modified form of that script whereas Tulu Brahmins continued to use it for writing Sanskrit.

The 'Renaissance' of Tulu literature began with the advent of the Basel missionaries in the middle of the 19th century. Their arrival marked the inauguration of printing and gave a great boost to modern Kannada literature as well as to Tulu literature. Their works can be classified into the following four categories.

1. Translations of many religious works like the New Testament, Gospel of Saint Mathew, Catechism, The Book of Genesis, Daily Prayers, Hymn Book, Tulu Liturgy Hymns for Children, Stories from Bible etc.
2. Linguistic work: Preparation of two lexicons - Tulu-English Dictionary and English Tulu Dictionary by Rev.A. Maennar. Preparation of a Tulu Grammar Book through the medium of English comprising chapters on phonology, Etymology, and Syntax by Rev. J. Brigel.
3. Research in Tulu Folklore: (i) Transcription of Tulu folk epics and ballads by A. Maennar (ii) a work on spirit worship, namely The Devil Worship of the Tuluvas by A.C. Burnel and (iii) Collection of Tulu Proverbs.
4. Primers for learning Tulu, First Book of Lessons in Tulu, a Kannada Guide to Tulu-English Conversation, etc.

The first important publication of these missionaries was the Tulu translation of the Gospel of St. Mathew in 1842. The priests started their missionary work in Udupi and adopted Kannada script for writing in Tulu. Rev. Carnerar translated New Testament into Tulu in 1847 Rev. Amman's 324 page, New Testament was published in 1859. A weekly magazine in Tulu was being published during that time. A religious conference was held in Mangalore in the year 1865 with Tulu as the medium. Apart from the translations of the bible and other connected religious works, the missionaries also produced many hymns and devotional songs in Tulu. More than two hundred and fifty devotional songs were set to music and sung in the churches. These songs are well known for their literary content as well as the emotional and musical contexts. The first Tulu grammar book written by Brigel in the year 1872 and the Tulu-English Dictionary published in 1886 by A. Manner became two important reference works on Tulu for students of linguistics.

Rev.A. Manner had two dictionaries to his credit - the Tulu English Dictionary (1886) and the English Tulu Dictionary (1888). The compilation of Tulu vocables began in 1856 by Rev. G. Camerar who passed away in the year 1858 leaving behind him a manuscript containing about 2000 words. Maennar continued the work started by Camerar by adding new words and phrases from different sources, though he had at that time no idea of publishing the dictionary. The Government of Madras agreed to finance the printing and the dictionary was published in 1886. Manner was assisted by the local Munshi's like Madhwaraya of Kaup, Sitaram of Mulky and Sarvottam Pai of Mangalore and Israel Aarons of the Basel Mission in compiling the two dictionaries. One notable aspect of this dictionary is that it employs modified Raman script in addition to the Kannada script in recording Tulu words, retroflex sounds, accent mark above the letter to indicate the special variety of 'e' in Tulu. Another important feature of this dictionary is that it records the Tulu equivalents of nearly 600 plants found in the Tulu speaking area. Considering personnel and other facilities available at that time, this dictionary is a monumental work and the first organized effort in the 'renaissance' of Tulu language.

Rev. Manner was also interested in the collection, transcription, and translation of the Tulu folk epics and ballads. More than twenty-eight paddanas were published by him A.C. Burnel compiled a monumental work. 'The Devil Worship of the Tuluvas' giving an account of the Bhuta cult practiced with the Paddanas or the epics relating to the origin and the exploits of the spirits worshipped. The epics are given here in Roman script along with English translation. The Missionaries pioneering efforts paved the way for the alphabetization, standardization and modernization so much required for the renaissance of literature in Tulu. The Tulu movements started in the pre-independence period and the renaissance in the second half of this century owe much to the Basel missionaries and their manifold activities in the field of education, printing, linguistic research and the study of folklore.

Some important Tulu publications of the Basel Mission were, *Hosa Odambadike* (27 books), *Haleya Odambadike*, *Utpatti*, *Tuluvinalli Bodhanegalu*, *Tulu Bible Kategalu*, *Tulu Prarthanegalu*, *Tulu Ratnamale Maneya Adarshagalu*, *Lutharana Bodhanegalu*, *Tulu Grammar*, *Tulu English Dictionary*, *English Tulu Dictionary*, *Sahasrardha Tulu Gadagalu*, *Taulava Gatha Manjari*, *Tulu Paddanolu*, *The Devil worship of the Tuluvas*, *Tulu Paathale Dumbuda Pusthaka*, *Tulu Ashara Maale*, *Kannada-Tulu-English Bhasha Manjari*

