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CHANGES TAKEN PLACE DUE TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES ON TRIBALS OF JHARKHAND:

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Introduction:

A Christian mission is an organized effort to spread Christianity. Missions often involve sending individuals and groups, called missionaries, across boundaries, most commonly geographical boundaries, for the purpose of proselytism (conversion to Christianity, or from one Christian tradition to another). This involves evangelism (preaching a set of beliefs for the purpose of conversion), 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. Christian doctrines (such as the "Doctrine of Love" professed by many missions) permit the provision of aid without requiring religious conversion.

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 Tribes. In this circumstance, the Oraons of Chotanagpur, a major settled agriculturist tribes who constitute a large tribal population in South Bihar, attracted the Christian missionaries at the first sight.

Towards the middle of the 19th century, the Oraons of Chotanagpur 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. While the missionaries were waiting for God's guidance in selecting a field, **Captain Hannington**, the then Commissioner of Chotanagpur, learnt about these missionaries and wrote to the Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Calcutta asking him to send them to Chotanagpur to preach the Gospel to its people.

Consequently, they arrived at Ranchi on 2nd November 1845. But they failed to make convert till June 1850 where four Oraons namely Keso and Bandhu of village Chitakono, Nabin of village Hesakota and Ghuran of village Kasand were christianised. The christianisation of the Oraons received impetus from the moral support and many cases pecuniary and other assistance which the generous European Missionaries extended to their converts in their manifold miseries. The Oraons witnessed their gods and spirits could afford no relief or protection against their manifold economic miseries nor could the cult be of much use to them in their struggle.

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.

Fuchs (2005), in this regard, observes that the welfare work carried out among tribal communities by Christian missionaries seems to have been much more successful and impressive than that of the government agencies. They work wholeheartedly as insiders thank to which they have developed a community feeling with the local population. However, it is also true that missionaries offered this community education in missionary schools, primarily teaching Christian scriptures to make them loyal subjects. Missionaries propagated Christianity widely, distributing tracts and condemning superstitious practices.

Jharkhand is one of the predominantly tribal states, in which 26.3% habitants are tribals and Jharkhand contributes 8.4% 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 Chotanagpur region.

Chotanagpur is a large area of Jharkhand 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. Social capital is a collaborative process in which different groups of people are engaged in the development of something or some specified group of people. The concept was first used by the **Hanifan (1916)** but was developed systematically and sociologically by **Bourdieu (1986)**, Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995). Background The role of Christian missionaries has been extensive and highly visible in almost all areas of tribal development but education is one area in which it has given particular momentum to development.

Its importance can be recognized from the words of **Dominic Jala (2007)**, “If there is one field in which missionaries among the tribals have contributed in a very tangible way, **it is education**. It opened for the tribal people immediate access to ways of coping with a fast developing world”.

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. In a speech delivered at the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Area Conference in 1952, **India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, observed: “The Christian missionaries went to various tribal areas and some of them spent practically all their lives there...I do not find many instances of the people from the plains going to the tribal areas ...Missionaries did very good work there and I am full of praise”**.

The contribution of the Christian missionaries towards the education of the Adivasis (tribals) of Chotanagpur has been praised by many educationists. In the words of the anthropologist Sachchidananda (1967), who is very familiar with the work of the missionaries in the area, “the Christian missionaries have been pioneers in the field of tribal education. They have a rare sense of dedication to the cause. Their teachers learn the tribal language of the area... They gain the confidence of the villagers. The amount of labour they put in is very much greater than other teachers. They create in the heart of the tribals the zest for education. All these qualities must be emulated by teachers employed by other educational agencies”.

Even a staunch critic of Christianization in India, the historian Pannikar (1963) honestly admitted: “the work of the missionaries among the aboriginal tribes may be said to have created a tradition of social service which modern India has inherited. If the Indian Constitution included special provisions for the welfare of the tribal communities, and Adivasis, and if the Centre and the State are making concentrated efforts to bring them up to the general level of India, much of the credit for such activities must be given to the missionaries”.

A distinction needs to be made here between the church-related school and Christian education. A church related school is constrained to operate within the educational system and Christian education that reaches out beyond, to the least and last members of the marginalized communities who are waiting to be conscientized and liberated.

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. The Christian missionaries, under the charismatic leadership of **Constant Lievens, Sylvain Grosjean, Baptist Hoffman**, and the like, skillfully used the frustrations of the Adivasis to win their confidence by helping them save themselves from such oppressive conditions.

The result was mass conversion among the Adivasis to Christianity, which considerably changed the power relations in the society. It was a social revolution which brought about many more changes, in addition to religious change.

It may be noted that education did not come as the sole offer from the missionaries but rather it came with acceptance of membership of the Church. But this does not mean that only those who converted were educated; instead it opened up **education to all, irrespective of caste, class, colour and religious affiliations**. However, preferential treatment was given to those who converted to Christianity. Most importantly, the different studies on missionary education have confirmed that those who benefitted most from Christian education were **non-Christians**.

The Contribution of Christian Missionaries to Education in India Despite having a small percentage of Christian population in India and it being a country with a larger concentration of Hindus, Christians' involvement was very deeply rooted in all parts of the country. The only reason was that the educational institutions were meant only for the upper caste of the **Hindu hierarchical system** or only for twice-born castes under the **Varna system** marginalized, exploited and deprived of educational opportunity.

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.

However, when they started serving these people, other sections of the population also benefitted even more than them. The contribution of the Christian missions in pioneering modern education in India has been both qualitative as well as quantitative. The Christian educational institutions were among the best organized and managed in the country. These missionaries helped the tribals to proceed from **savagery to modernity** and thereby took off a heavy load from the shoulders of the government of India.

Enormous work has been done by the Christian missionaries in educating the youth of India. Christian missionaries take especial care of the youth of the country, irrespective of sex, creed, colour, and caste and have built for them numerous **elementary, secondary and higher educational institutions**. It was **St. Francis Xavier** who led the way in elementary education by exhorting his companions to build a school in every village. St. Francis Xavier was the **first Jesuit** to come to India and started the Indian mission in **1542**.

These schools were the pioneers of the modern system of primary education.

Looking back, the earliest conversion in India took place among the Parvars of South India. These people were harassed by **Arab pirates** and powerful Hindus and ultimately protected by the Portuguese at the cost of adopting Christianity and the whole caste was baptised.

A number of schools and colleges were established by the missionaries. Many Christian colleges existed in Goa, Angamalle, Cochin, Vaipin, Cranganore and Bassein from as early as the 16th century.

Jesuits founded several educational institutions in India and engaged in scholarly pursuits following the legacy of St Francis Xavier during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

Gradually many colleges were established in different parts of the country. The idea of teacher training schools was firstly established by the Christian missionary as early as the 16th century. The system of boarding school was also firstly initiated by **Jesuits in India**: The missionaries were also pioneer of vocational education. Not only that but Christian missionaries also worked enormously for **the education of Indian women**. It was the Christian missionaries who first realized that no sound community could be created under conditions in which women were incompetent to teach the young and heal the sick.

Thus, it is not surprising that the three major needs of Indian women, **for teachers, doctors and nurses**, were met at first almost entirely by Christian women.

It is also necessary here to see the link between the Christian missionaries and the British rule in India.

The Christian missionaries were the first to come forward. The Baptist missionary **William Carey** came to India in the year 1793 A.D. and he along with his friends established a Baptist mission in **Serampore (1800 A.D.)**.

And they established many primary schools nearby the Baptist Mission. They even opened a printing press and started printing booklets in Bengali. Carry translated the Ramayana into English (1800 A.D.).

Under his inspiration the Bible was translated into different Indian languages and a new edition of **Halhead's Bengali Grammar** was published. By their zeal an English school was established in Serampore in 1818 A.D., which is now known as Serampore College.

Before the Charter Act 1813, the British rulers agreed not to interfere via missionaries activities and even sometimes opposed them. This was because of the fear that missionary education in English might offend the Hindus on the subject of religious conversion and in that way cause unrest among the Hindus and finally lead to problems for the Company. The Charter Act of 1813, under British Rule, emphasized the advancement of education in India and finally a missionary clause was attached to Charter Act 1813 passed by Parliament. The Charter Act of 1813 granted permission to those wishing to go to India for promoting moral and religious improvement, which meant Christian missionaries to spread the use of English and propagate their religion.

In addition to this an important clause in the act allocated a sum of not less than 1 Lakh rupees each year for the revival and importance of literature, for encouraging the learned natives of India, and also for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India. But the act was not clear about ways in which the money was to be spent for educational development.

The Charter Act of 1813 is also known as the East India Company Act 1813. It is an Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom which renewed the charter issued to the British East India Company, and continued the Company's rule in India. The Charter act of 1833 laid down regulation about the permanent presence of missionaries of other countries also to carry out their educational work in India and increased the educational grant from 10,000 pounds per annum to 100,000 pounds per annum. The Government of India Act, **1833, appointed Lord Macaulay as the first Law Member** of the Governor General's Council. He played an important role in building the foundations of bilingual colonial India, by influencing the Governor General, to adopt English as the medium of instruction from the 6th year of schooling onward, rather than Sanskrit or Arabic that was then used in the institutions supported by the East India Company.

In his minute dated February 2, 1835, Macaulay insisted that the government should not withhold from Indians Western learning. As mass education was neither feasible nor desirable, Macaulay insisted that the best policy would be to **“do our best to form a class (of persons) who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”**.

Another major development in education under the colonial regime was the educational dispatch of 1854, popularly called **Wood dispatch**. It is considered as the **Magna Carta of English education** in India, as it emphasized mass education, female education and the improvement of the vernaculars, and favoured secularism in Education. The dispatch emphasized improving knowledge of the arts, the sciences and the literature of Europe, and insisted on English as the medium of higher education. But it was not to replace the vernaculars. The dispatch replaced the provincial boards and councils of education by creating departments of public instruction in each of the five provinces into which the territory of company was divided at the time: **Bengal, Madras, Bombay, the North-Western province, and the Punjab**.

By 1854, only 36,000 pupils were educated in government elementary schools, the missionary schools were instructing almost twice the number. Therefore, the education dispatch of 1854 had rightly encouraged the spread of mass education through a grant-in-aid system.

With few exceptions, Indian Christianity had enjoyed a favourable relationship with the colonial government and often used this 'special status' to engage in 'aggressive proselytization.

The Report indicates that more than 50 percent of educational institutions were in the hands of missionaries before 1932. The most significant features of the Christian contribution to Indian education was that the Christian schools and colleges had the reputation of being first-

rate educational institutions which had been of great service to the nation in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. The colonial era provided the freedom for missions to operate. But after Indian Independence, the foreign missionaries began to decline in the context of the end of British rule in India in 1947. **“Missionaries had a protected position in this subcontinent since at least 1813 when they were first permitted into territories controlled by the BCI Co. British imperial power had a protective shelter for their work.”**

By the beginning of the 1960s all missionaries who required visas had been withdrawn. Following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, the final loophole was closed and all foreign missionaries were effectively withdrawn. These days, a transitional phase has occurred in the history of missionaries in India and hence Indian Christians have found their place in the missionaries’ activities by striking a balance between limited internal resources and foreign support.

Table gives details about the growth of missionaries from 1972 to 1997. The Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) and Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM) had 800 and 463 missionaries respectively.

The FMPB was formed from amongst the newly empowered Dalit communities in Tamil Nadu, and the IEM drawing on similar resource centres. The FMPB started their work as a small prayer group among university students in 1967 but has now grown into a group of 1800 missionaries and 800 field workers who work in 130 different locations in India.

They work mainly among the tribal and lower caste people (Dalits) in the country. It includes Malto, Santal in Bihar (Jharkhand), Lambari, Gond in Tamil Nadu, Chamar in Uttar Pradesh, Mazabi and Roya Sikhs in Punjab, Kuknas, Basawa, Gamit and Bhil in Gujarat, Worli, Pora and Wagi in Maharashtra, Kho, Munda and Kalang in Chhattisgarh.

The IEM had a very different origin than the FMPB. IEM was the outcome of the Lausanne International meetings in 1965. The follow-up meeting held at Devalali in India resulted in a move amongst Indian leaders to form their own missionary group dependent on India resources rather than foreign funding and support. The first action was to appoint the **Rev. Theodore William** as the Secretary. He was a Bible college teacher in Bangarapet. He started to support the existing Indian missionaries in the **Andaman Islands**.

The Contribution of Christian Missionaries to Education in Jharkhand: In Jharkhand, significant changes in society have occurred since the first arrival of Christian missionaries in 1845. The first Christian missionaries (Lutherans) came from Germany under the leadership of Rev. Gossner to the region in 1845. Catholic missionaries came in 1868 and became well established after the arrival, in 1885, of the Jesuit missionary **Constant Lievens**, honoured as the Apostle of Chotanagpur.

Most interestingly in 1857, the year of India’s First War of Independence, there were only three middle schools, i.e. the English School of Kishenpur (now Zila School of Ranchi) founded in 1834 by the British government, a Lutheran Middle School for Boys, and the

Bethesda Middle School for girls. The latter two were run by the Lutheran missionaries for the children of new converts.

There has been a sizeable investment especially by the Catholic Church, in terms of infrastructure and personnel dedicated to educating the poor and the rural youth. The network of educational institutions that exists today is the fruit of the early initiatives taken by missionaries, especially after the founding of the Catholic Church in Jharkhand. In fact, the Christian missionaries felt the need for social transformation which is always associated with education of the masses. That is why **Lievens** settled down in Ranchi and thought of starting a school for the tribals, so that they could safeguard **their rights** over **their property** and **liberate themselves** from the **dikus**. German Evangelical Lutheran schools were initially used for inculcating Biblical knowledge first and foremost, whereas the Catholic missionaries saw general education as the gateway to social change.

Education for tribals was meant to restore their lost human dignity and restore their dignity as human beings. Therefore these schools developed a **curriculum** which was suited to them and their curriculum incorporated animal care, local herbal medicine, land measurement in its ramified form, carpentry, blacksmithing, weaving along with reading, writing, maths, history, geography, physics and religion. The learning of Hindi and English was given special emphasis in order to make tribals stand on a par with others.

The Catholic missionaries began to build schools in the villages from 1885 onwards. Formal education was hardly known here before the arrival of the Lutheran missionaries. Within one year the Jesuit missionaries opened 30 schools. By 1887, the number of schools had risen to 70 with 2400 boys and 70 girls.

The development of education can be seen and realized now, it is clear that Christian missionaries have done tremendous work in the field of education. In fact, government's main effort was centred more on establishing schools in urban and semi-urban areas or big market centres, whereas the missionaries opted for villages and rural areas. They even started schools in the middle of deep and inaccessible forests. In the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, the **Catholic Church** began to take the lead in the race to start schools. It was at this time that schools in places like Katkahi, and Tetra, Bendora and Khunti, Dighia and Rengarih, Kurdeg, Noadih, Raja Ulhatu, godforsaken places like Tumbaktu, began to teem with youngsters due to the school-going children, most of whom were boarders.

The period between 1872 and 1914 can rightly be called the period of educational awakening of the Christian tribals as is shown in the Survey Report of 1911 which is given below in Table 5.

The performance of Christian tribals was high as the survey report indicates that in 1911 out of 607,820 non-Christians in the district only 4,385 were literate, whereas among the Christian tribals who numbered only 1,77,473 the number of literates had risen to 10, 436.

This trend continued for many more decades. It was only during the last decade of the 20th century that Non-Christian tribals took to education in a big way.

In 1949, the **Catholic diocese of Ranchi** alone was running 841 primary schools, 51 middle schools, 15 high schools, 2 academic colleges, 1 theological college, 6 teacher training colleges, 18 industrial training schools and 16 hostels, to cater for some 10,317 students (The Catholic Directory of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon). The expansion of the Church's educational and other missionary service institutions up until 1998 in the different districts of Jharkhand can be seen from the following data.

Empirical Findings on the Role of Missionary Schools in Tribal Education. This research is based on the empirical studies of two villages, namely Itki and Bhagwanpur, of Ranchi and Deoghar districts respectively in Jharkhand State on the role of missionary schools in tribal education and found many issues of relevance. The data was collected during 2006 – 2007 from the students of the age group 6 – 14 years through the **interview schedule** technique. The data was collected through the random sampling method on 200 students. The data, in fact, collected from the students was verified against the views of other groups of people present in these areas. These groups are NGO representatives, tribal and non-tribals, local leaders, administrators and elected officials with the help of focussed group discussion, personal interviews and ethnomethodological investigation.

This study confirms that the Christian missionaries have contributed greatly to the improvement of the lives of the tribal people, especially in the field of education. The larger impact of the Christian missionaries could be seen in the **Ranchi district** itself. The missionaries have been involved, at mass scale, in the entire Chhotanagpur region. They have also opened a number of schools and a few colleges. Due to this impact, the village of Itki has a high literacy rate of 79.30 per cent, which is even more than many developed towns and cities in India. Thus, the findings of this study show that the missionaries have played a key role in imparting education to the tribal students as is evident from the village of Itki. In the village of Itki, the Christian missionaries work, via their school teachers, with the tribals, particularly in enrolling their children and motivating them to further their education. It is also evident that missionaries have been involved in other activities also, such as health, making the tribals aware of various issues and providing hygiene and sanitation. The first and foremost issue that comes up in the analysis of the missionaries' contribution is whether the tribal children join the missionary schools directly or before joining them they study in some other school (s). In this regard, most of the tribal students (65%), in the village of Itki joined the missionary-run schools directly without attending another type of school. However, it has also been noted that out of 35 per cent, 24 and 11 per cent of tribal students in the missionary schools have joined these schools after their study in the government and private schools respectively. The main reasons for leaving government schools as pointed out by the students were the non-availability of schools with higher classes in the nearby area, schools for higher classes located at a greater distance from their home, and lack of motivation among teachers concerning their education in the government schools. It has also been observed that the teachers from the government schools are not student-friendly, especially when it comes to the tribal students, and these students themselves feel alienated from other groups of students. So, it can be argued that they are forced to join the missionary schools, as they do not feel government schools to be a suitable place to study. Similarly, the main reasons given by the

tribal students for their leaving a private school were: they had to pay fees to study in the private schools and there were no provisions for other educational facilities such as **scholarships, text books, mid-day meals, etc.**

The second issue concerns the problem of boarding facilities, which is closely linked with the schooling of students. In this regard, it is found that there has been lack of boarding facilities in all types of school, including missionary-run schools in the villages studied. In fact, the study did not find a single boarding facility attached to any school in the villages studied. This indicates that the government and civil society organizations have failed to provide hostels to the students from the disadvantaged sections of society, though there is provision, in the government scheme, for providing boarding facilities for such students.

Conclusion:

The contributions of Christian missionaries in the tribal areas have made an everlasting impact on the educational development among the tribals of India in general and in Jharkhand in particular. There are, in fact, many types of missionaries who worked or have been working in different parts of the country for the holistic development of Tribals and Dalits, who are deprived of equality of opportunity. This article has discussed the various forms of their contribution in educating the tribals of Jharkhand 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 Itki. This study also confirmed that in the village of Bhagwanpur, the educational level among the Tribals is much lower in comparison to Itki, because in this village, only a Government school is present there. In this way, it can be said that the contribution of Christian missionaries is enormous in the life of Tribals. The whole credit goes to the Christian Missionaries for education, health and uprising status of the Tribals in utter rural areas of Jharkhand and the other States of Tribal areas. The tribals cannot just forget and ignore their immense contributions for the lives the poor people. Unending gratitude and thankfulness to the Christian Missionaries in the field of education, health, jobs, making them aware of their basic equal rights and for providing the dignity of lives.

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