

Chapter III

THE CHURCH AND THE LOCAL SOCIETY

The establishment of the Christian Church and its expansion in the non-European lands can be adequately understood and appreciated only by looking into the cultural specificities of the society it tried to penetrate. In this chapter the social contextualization of the Methodist Christian church is attempted.

During the 19th century, a part of Gujarat came under the British rule and was governed under the Bombay Presidency. Rev. Frease the second Methodist missionary, Frease who came to Gujarat in 1889 notes: "The province of Gujarat contains about 70,000 square miles, a considerable portion being under direct British administration and the remainder under native princes. The population before the great famine of 1900 was ten and half millions"¹. Politically one fifth of Gujarat under direct British rule consisted of Ahmadabad, Kheda, Bharuch, Panchmahal and Surat districts of Bombay Presidency.

In keeping with the broad pattern of the Indian sub-continent, the people of Gujarat were divided on religious and caste lines. There were four major religious groups viz. the Hindus, Muslims, Jains, and Parsees. The Gujarati society had evolved as prominently a caste ridden society. The individual was born in a particular caste and his/her status and occupation

¹ Cited in Israel Domnik D, *A Missiological Evaluation of the Methodist Church in Gujarat during the period of 1921-1927*, Fuller Theological Seminary, U.S.A., 1989, pp. 1-2

were determined by the caste in which she was born. In fact caste was a sort of community in which the major part of the life of the individual was lived.²

The rigidity of the traditional Hindu social set-up based on hierarchy with the Brahmin at the top and the shudra at the bottom was reinforced by the traditional social system. Thus, there was little scope for social change outside the hierarchical frame work of the caste-ridden Hindu society.³ Hindus formed the largest chunk of Gujarat population. The society was infested with various kinds of superstitions. The mental horizon of the people was narrowed down to their immediate surroundings. Even the use of the traditional means of transport and communication was restricted because of the political instability of the eighteenth century. People had no recourse to new avenues of life for enlightenment.⁴

Besides the caste Hindus there were people who were considered as 'untouchables'. The caste Hindus did not have any connection with these people. They were not allowed to enter into the temples where the high castes attended. They were not allowed to draw water from well which the caste people used. The depressed were not even allowed to have any education.⁵ Among the seven classes of untouchables, the Dheds were considered of the highest rank. Hindu treated Dheds directly-according to the occupation they followed.⁶

² Robert Jeffrey, *Our Mission in Gujarat*, 1890, p. 9. Neera Desai, *Social Change in Gujarat*, Bombay, 1978, p.312, *Gazetteers of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. IX Gujarat Population, part 1: Hindus. Bombay, 1901, p. 339.

³ R. L. Raval, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in Gujarat during the Nineteenth Century*, Delhi, 1989, p. 9

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁵ Robert Jeffrey, *op.cit.* p. 11

⁶ *Bombay Gazetteers*, Vol. IX, Part I, 1901, pp. 339-344.

Many Dheds were weavers while some were agriculturists. They worked either in their fields or in their master's in return for their midday meal and a fixed daily wage. The farmer could insist besides this on a well-defined of forced labour.⁷

Around this time the missionaries started working in Gujarat the fake forms of religious beliefs dominated the social and religious relationship. Inhuman customs like sati and female infanticide prevailed in some parts of Gujarat.⁸ The social set-up did not allow the scope for new changes.⁹

The British government tried in different ways to abolish the evil customs like sati and female infanticide. In the early nineteenth century it was a common belief that the spread of western knowledge particularly western scientific knowledge would undermine the non-Christian's inherited beliefs making way for the coming of Christianity.¹⁰ The Christian missionaries had to work in hybrid Indian society and naturally they had to face many challenges.

The introduction of western ideas and values through English education had a great impact on the Gujarati society. The Christian missionaries played a crucial role in this interface of the east and west. The missionaries were never entirely free to do as they wanted. The British authorities supported them when it suited their purpose and placed restrictions on them when it seemed necessary in the light of their own

⁷ Margaret Sinclair Stevenson, without the pale: *The Life Story of an outcaste*, Mysore 1930, p.86.

⁸ Alice Clark, 'Limitation on Female Life chances in rural central Gujarat', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 20, 4, 1983, pp. 1-25

⁹ R. L Raval, *op.cit.* p. 20; Neera Desai, *op. cit.*, p.313.

¹⁰ Louis de Silva, *The Christian Community and the National Mainstream*, Poona, 1988, p.12.

aims.¹¹ Moreover the missionaries were not taken kindly by the local elite. The proselytism and Bible-teaching were disliked by the high-caste people. On the other hand the lower caste people displayed their curiosities and happiness with the new dispensation. Bible teaching provided them a chance to attend schools and more in the company of high class missionaries which they were denied in the Hindu social structure.¹²

Many people who accepted the Christian faith in the central Gujarat came from humble social backgrounds except a few cases of Hindus from the high castes as well as some Muslims and Jains.¹³

There have been many attempts to define conversions. It is a process by which people move out of one's religious community into another.¹⁴ It is a specific process of mobilization and transformation triggered by some deeper, more profound and radical shift of personal and communal perceptions about intimate practices especially if these might relate to immediate behaviour, customs, and institutionalized life.¹⁵ To Frykenberg conversion is a change (event or process) from one set of beliefs or opinions to another, from one particular religious as 'spiritual' state to another.¹⁶ It normally implies (1) an individual or a group of persons (2) changed beliefs, group identifications and personality traits and (3) changed 'religious' beliefs as 'ideological' positions of the individual or group. Conversion movement occurs when a single group or groups convert. These

¹¹ A. Mathew, *Christian Missions, Education and Nationalism*, Delhi, 1988, p. 9.

¹² Carlos Suria, *History of the Catholic Church in Gujarat*, p. 75, Anand, 1990, p. 75.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 75

¹⁴ G. A. Oddie, ed. *Religion in South Asia: Religious conversion and Revival Movements in South Asia in medieval and Modern Times*, p. 4. New Delhi, 1977. Review in *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 6 No. 1-2 (July, 1979- Jan. 1980), p. 320-22

¹⁵ R. E. Frykenberg, "On the study of Conversion Movements: A Review Article and a Theoretical Note", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 17, No.1, 1980, p. 122.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 129

have occurred within and across all religions: Hinduism Islam and Christianity. The untouchables saw in Christianity the possibility of human betterment, of education of concerned help in situated crises such as famine, floods and droughts.¹⁷

The missions working in Gujarat were the (1) Methodist Episcopal Church, (2) Salvation Army, and (3) Irish Presbyterian Mission. Of these the Methodist mission was the most important and has secured the largest number of followers within last thirty years. The first missionary who came to Baroda was a representative of the London Missionary Society and arrived in that city in the year 1844. Two years later, the work was taken over by the Irish Presbyterian mission. In the year 1870, representations of the Methodist Episcopal Church mission came to Baroda for work among the English-speaking people and commenced work for all classes in the year 1881. This mission was working in many parts of the Baroda and Kadi districts with headquarters at Baroda. In the year 1880, a small church was erected in the cantonment, a boarding school for boys and another for girls were soon opened and both of them were in a flourishing condition before the great famine. They were thrown open to receive destitute children and during the time of the Great Famine of 1899-900, when three thousand children were cared for. After the close of the famine, the majority of the children, who had gone in the boarding schools returned to their native villages.¹⁸

The classes most receptive of Christianity were those who were outside the Hindu system or whom caste Hindu regarded as degraded and

¹⁷ John, C. B. Webster, *The Christian community and change in Nineteenth century North India*, Delhi: The Macmillan Co. of India, 1976, p. 58.

¹⁸ G. H. Desai, *Census of India- 1891*, Vol. XVI, Baroda Part-I p. 61.

untouchable and treated unjustly. It was for this reason that missions generally succeed in having converts from Dheds and similar castes. Amongst the higher Hindu castes, there were serious obstacles in the way of conversion of which family influence and the caste system were the greatest. By accepting Christianity, a man was seen at once to cut himself off from all his old associations and was regarded even by his family as an outcaste. Moreover, the project of such an occurrence was viewed with the greatest dread, and when any one was suspected of an intention to become a Christian, the greatest possible pressure was brought to bear on him by his relations and friends, in order to make him change his mind.¹⁹

The earliest report available in 1895 gives a historical epitome which tells us that many men belonging to Bhangi-sweeper caste went from Gujarat to Bombay in order to better their economic condition. Large wages were paid to them for scavenger's work. They accepted this work and came under the influence of Rev. A.W. Prautch, a probationary missionary, who had opened a class in 1887 for Gujarati's working in Bombay. Many were converted.²⁰ As early as 1888, nineteen Gujarati Bhangis had been baptized in Bombay among whom were two leaders. The converts along with Karsan Ranchod, visiting their homes in Bhalej village, had brought the gospel with them. Their relatives and friends began to inquire about their changed circumstances. Thus, the work among Gujarati began in Gujarat.²¹

In the beginning of the Methodist mission in Baroda, there were about 12 Christians in the year 1872.²² In 1881 six adults and five children were baptized. The next year there were several conversions among the weavers

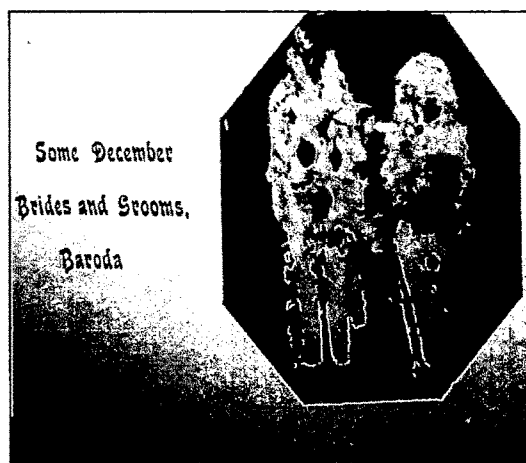
¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 60

²⁰ Badley B. T, *Visions and Victories in Hindustan* Vol.-I, p. 711.

²¹ Israel Domnik, p.26.

²² Christie Christopher and Nimrod, *The Centenary Celebration of Methodist Church Souvenir*, Baroda, 1880-1980 p. 10.

of the Dhed caste, all of whom contributed a tenth of their income to maintain the missionary work. Baptisms in the Baroda Gujarati circuit in 1895 numbered 470-327 adults and 143 children.²³



Group Marriages of Newly Converts

The Baroda Methodist Christians came predominantly from Dalit community of Dheds, Vankars, Chamars, Bhangis and included only a sprinkling from the middle castes like Garassia and Patanwadia Rajputs. The

²³ Wada Crawford Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, Methodist Episcopal Church-1845-1939, Vol. III, *Widening Horizon*, New York: Board of Mission Methodist Church, p.552.

Methodist missions started its work among Bhangis (Harijans) in Bombay. These Harijans came back to Gujarat and started impressing their own people. Hence, the Methodist work spread in this community from Bhalej to Pij Bhagol, Kapdvanj and Balasinore. Many of these new Christians later migrated to Baroda for jobs and education and became the member of Fatehgunj Methodist church.²⁴

Dheds constituted another untouchable caste group which was open for the Gospel during the famine which occurred in 1889 and 1900. Frease wrote in 1895 that the Baroda missionaries were urged to go and baptize people residing in the north of Mahi River. Dheds was worked as labouers for farmers in the villages joined the Church Majority of the members of the Methodist church in Baroda belong to this cultural group. Dheds who mainly worked as weavers came to be known as Vankars. During famine period, many were converted to Christianity.²⁵

The Chamars, the leather workers, also responded to the gospel during droughts of 1889 and 1900. There seems to be pattern that people became Christians in order to survive during the period of famine as the missionaries offered food and work. After becoming Christians they left their traditional calling and have changed completely in Baroda due to education and jobs.²⁶

²⁴ Israel Domnik, *op.cit.* p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 31

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 32

Occupational Mobility

The occupation of the first generation of converts was agriculture, largely working as farm labourers. After converting Christianity, many of them migrated to Baroda city and the Methodist missionaries employed them as peons, cooks, Gardeners, clerks, preacher on small salaries.²⁷

Rev. E. F. Frease opened two schools in 1889 one for boys and one for girls. These were both boarding and day schools combined. In the beginning the girls were only three in number. The famine of 1900-1901 filled both the boys and girls schools.²⁸ These schools contributed greatly for the improvement of the bad condition of the local people of Gujarat especially those belonging to the low caste. Through education the missionaries slowly won the confidence of some sections of the people in their endeavour to fight for poverty, illiteracy, unemployment. The education opened new avenues for the take up varieties of jobs whether government or private.

Untouchability in Gujarat

Untouchability was deep-rooted and entrenched in the society of Gujarat. The caste Hindus were keeping distance from Christians as well as considering their origin from the untouchables. Initially the newly converted Christians suffered doubly due to their original caste as well as due to hostility towards Christianity.

The vankars and other lower caste people were victims of *veth* (forced labour), which the upper castes had traditionally imposed and

²⁷ Interviews with Mr. Samuel Lawrence and Mr. Joseph Chauhan on 3.10.2005 & 10.10.2005 at Vadodara

²⁸ B. T. Badley, *op. cit.* p. 716.

exacted from them under the threat of punishment. They were humiliated at every step and could not use wells, water tanks, schools, temples or dharamshala which were other wise used for common purposes without discrimination.²⁹

In several villages, missionaries had begun to help the outcastes. The report of BRD vol. 1897/16 stated:

"This is probably the first attempt ever made to redeem those who have been the outcastes of society. The attempt is naturally not relished by the other castes that show their displeasure by boycotting and in one or two instances that came before the courts criminally assaulting Dhed converts".³⁰

The upper caste people were against having outcastes in government schools. They also violently opposed having exclusive schools for outcastes. Hostility towards lower castes was at its height. The dalits were obliged to leave the road when they saw a higher caste man approaching. They were not even allowed to dress themselves with clothes. They had to work as labourers and sweepers.

One of the community members, Pratapsinh Parmar testifies that in 1930s when Christians used to go to Sadar Bazar in Fatehgunj to buy milk, the shopkeeper would ask them to keep their milk vessel at distance so that the shopkeeper would not accidentally touch the Christians. Even after Independence the caste people sustained hidden dislike for the Christians.³¹ According to Mr. Raiji Masihi untouchability was no way less severe in

²⁹ Lobo, Lancy, *Religious Conversion and Social Mobility: A Case Study of the Vankers in Central Gujarat*, Centre for Social Studies, Surat, 1991 (Mimeo), p. 3.

³⁰ Cited in Alice Clark, 1979, p. 335

³¹ Interview with Mr. Pratapsinh Parmar on 10-6-2006 at Vadodara

Baroda city as practiced in the villages. When he was studying in the Methodist Boys' Hostel in Fatehgunj the barbers were not ready to cut the hair of hostel students because they were Christians. It was difficult for Christians to get a rented house in Baroda due to their lower caste origin.³²

An eminent industrialist in the Methodist society of Baroda, Dr. Dhirubhai Swayampati experienced untouchability practiced by barbers shop in Fatehgunj. On barber's learning that he was a converted Christian he suddenly stopped cutting the hair, leaving the job half way. His only fault was that he was a Christian.³³

Prabhudas Christian recounted how caste people observed untouchability with the newly converted Christians. In the bazaar, the Christians were told to put down the money by the shopkeeper when the latter would sprinkle water on money and then take it as if they were purifying the money from the touch of the Christians. There used to be a separate glass for the Christian students in the school.³⁴

Mrs. Shirinben J. Solanki recalled how during the old times it was very difficult to get a rented house in the Baroda camp. Her father's family was a big joint family and they had to rent a house in Mogalwada where Muslims lived.³⁵ Solomon Dhanjibhai Simon joined as a clerk in the Baroda Archives in 1966 where his higher caste colleagues used to keep a separate water vessel (Pot) for him. They even demanded a separate toilet for him in the office. He suffered this discrimination up till 1975 after which over

³² Interview with Mr. Rajibhai Masihi on 12-07-2006 at Vadodara

³³ As per written statement in the Personal Dairy of Dr. Swayampati, Vadodara

³⁴ Interview with Mr. Prabhudas T Christian, on 15-9-2007 at Vadodara

³⁵ Interview with Mrs. Shirinben J. Solanki on 3-3-2007 at Vadodara

untouchability of that kind gradually it disappeared due to the education and changing urban environment.³⁶

Mr. Soloman Solace the member of Christ church is only Christian in a housing society in the Harni area. He observes that the upper castes Hindus don't like Christians assuming that Christians means only lower caste people. So they dislike Christians in their mind.³⁷ Rev. L.K. Parmar says that in the beginning untouchability was observed with much severity but gradually it withered away and personally he has not experienced untouchability for several decades now.³⁸

Mr. Ratikumar Macwan was the only Christian reporter in Baroda in 1960s. His upper caste colleagues were highly prejudiced against him. Due to his bold and truthful nature he suffered a lot in his profession. That made him leave all the daily newspapers and throughout his life he worked as freelance journalist and writer. He recalled that inter caste marriages were strictly prohibited in Baroda. One boy from Patel community had to commit suicide as he was not allowed by his family to marry a Christian girl.³⁹

The converts from the upper caste Hindus becoming Christians had also to undergo severe persecutions. When Jacob Dass's family accepted Christians in Tundav village near Savli, the village people had beaten them so badly that they lost their 7 years son. The anti Christians feeling was even stronger in the Baroda state than in the British districts. A school opened in Baroda by Clarkson and J.V.S. Taylor was suppressed within a fortnight in

³⁶ Interview with Mr. Soloman D. Simon on 19-5-2006 at Vadodara

³⁷ Interview with Mr. Soloman S. Soles on 25-10-2007, at Vadodara

³⁸ Interview with Rev. Mr. L.K. Parmar on 28-10-2007

³⁹ Interview with Mr. Ratikumar M. Macwan on 12-10-2005 at Vadodara

the name of the Gaekwad though the Maharaja would not have approved such an act.⁴⁰

Late Mr. Ratikumar M. Macwan remembered how his father Morarjibhai Macwana was serving in a weaving factory of Nadiad. Morarjibhai Macwana started a hotel for Dalits in 1922 where many of them used to come there for their meal since Dalits Hindu and Muslims were not allowed in the houses and hostels of the upper-caste Hindus.

When Ratikumar M. Macwan was studying in the city high school, a separate glass was kept for the dalit students for drinking water. In those days, separate glasses written with the different caste tugs were kept for the use of students according to their castes. He lamented that before Independence, untouchability was observed with severity. Poor Christians Dalits were given things from distance. There were separate wells, for Dalits. When later Dalit Christians went to live in the Mission compounds they had their own water facility.⁴¹

According to Mrs. Floraben R Macwan rented house was not given to Christians by the caste Hindu and her father's family had to stay at Mogalwada where Muslims though kept good terms with Christians but they also avoided inter home sittings. She recalled how dalits used to wash the road in the very early morning so that their shadow should not fall on the caste Hindu. Mrs. Floraben, started serving as a teacher in school at Bhillapur village in Baroda district in 1954. In that village, water tap was not available and Dalits were not allowed to take water from upper caste wells. So, Dalits

⁴⁰ As per written statement in the questionnaire, dated on 1-1-2006

⁴¹ Interview with Mr. Ratikumar Macwan on 16-10-2005, at Vadodara

including Christians had to go to river or pond to wash their clothes. In village, there was a well in the Temple compound. The Pujari allowed her to take drinking water from that well in the early morning before other people would awake. While serving at another school she was not allowed to eat together with higher caste. The principal lied to the organisers that 'Ben is Patel' when she went to Sankheda as a teacher for Adult education, but she admitted she was a Christian for which reason she was not given food and remained without food. On her instance for Christian's identity, she was transferred from to another place. She became so much upset due to this ill treatment and social discrimination that she left her teaching job in 1955 for ever.⁴²

Rev. Immanuel Kant, District Superintendent of Baroda Methodist Church also confirmed his experience of untouchability when he was a child at Tranja near Kheda where postmaster's wife used to pour milk from upper side of her vessel in a Dalit's vessel in such a way that she will not allow Christian child touch anywhere. In some places of Baroda also untouchability was as prevalent as same in Gujarat villages. People will not allow dalits to take water from their wells.⁴³

Cecil Robin Williams, a well known cricketer, and retired Marketing Manager of G.S.F.C., admitted that his grand-parents faced untouchability in their native village Nadiad. Christianity was not acceptable to the local communities. His grand parents had to fetch water from a far. When he was born his parents were already Christians, living in urban area and he did not experience personally in any overt form. During his GSFC job, he experienced

⁴² Interview with Mrs. Floraben Macwan on 10-5-2007, at Vadodara

⁴³ Interview with Mr. Immanuel Kant on 1-3-2007, at Vadodara.

discrimination at the time of promotions when others got promoted without merit by passing him. He felt that it was because he was a Christian and at that also coming from a dalit background.⁴⁴

Cultural Continuities and Discontinuities among the Methodist Christians in Baroda

This study shows that after conversion to Christianity a fusion of the old and the new traditions which is known as 'Syncretism' emerged among newly converted Christian community. Obviously it was not for anyone to completely switch over to different cultural norms. The converted Christians continued following their previous cultural values. At the same time they started adapting to the Christian culture.

There was continuity of *gols*, the marriage circles, choice of mate selection confined to a territorial zone. Apart from endogamous caste and marriage circles they also created religious circles within their traditional regional circles. The marriages of Christians continued following the Hindu religious and social pattern.⁴⁵

The lower Stratum including Christians was known for having greater incidence of divorce. Divorce and remarriage among the Hindu vankers offered freedom of choice to a female as compared to the high caste females. But in the official Christian moral order this freedom of females came to be curtailed. Here Christianity came close to high caste Hinduism. Though converting to a religion implied giving up traditional beliefs and

⁴⁴ Interview with Mr. Cecil Robin Williams on 16.-2-2008, at Vadodara.

⁴⁵ Lancy Lobo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

practices and accepting the new ones, yet the traditional religious personnel such as Garoda and Turi continued to visit the Christian Vankars in villages while the latter obliged them with gifts of cash and kind. The reliance on the traditional health practices such as Hindu spirit-medium and Muslim fakir continued while in many cases the traditional health and religious personnel were replaced by priests and nuns. Though the reading of Christian scripture and active participation in church association and activities became strong, a small percentage of Christians continued their interest in Hindu festivals such as Diwali, Holi and Rakshabandhen, which have religious significance.⁴⁶

A slightly contrasting picture emerges regarding the Christians in cities where education and intimate connection with the church was matching the difference. With reference to marriage and religion, the age at marriage is higher in cities. The traditional marriage circles had less importance in cities as compared to the villages. Most of the marriages in the cities came to be solemnised with Christian religious rites. The practice of bride price also decreased substantially in the cities. There were more inter-denominational marriages than inter religious ones.⁴⁷

The change among Christians may be due to embracing the new religion as well as due to modernization-a-package delivered through educational and economic institutions associated with the missionaries. Gradually in villages of Baroda district, the newly converted Christians started staying in quarters separated from the non-Christian localities. Methodist missionaries made such arrangements that the newly converts needed not mix again with their original caste-Hindu families. Gradually the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 15

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 16

physical segregation between the Hindu and Muslims Vankars weakened the interaction between two.⁴⁸ The second generation Methodist Christians of Baroda came to be from most of the old Hindu customs and started following only Christian's rites and customs because of their Christian nurturing by the church and also because of education and urbanization.

The testimonies of some of the Methodist Christians highlight the continuities and discontinuities in the social practice. On the question of bridge price Hildaben Varma says that they were educated daughters in their family but her father did not take a single penny from the bridegrooms. She does not find anything wrong in outcaste or inter caste marriage. Her daughter got married to a Hindu converts from the Kayastha Saxena family but the whole family was converted.⁴⁹

Mr. Charles Spurgen says that they do not believe in dowry system. His daughter-in-law is Punjabi but they did not ask for dowry. Marriage expenses they have met. According to him bride price is still prevalent but there is difference. If the girl is also educated and employed and the demand is not from the boys side it should be ignored. Now the status of women is in power part with the Gents that is due to transformation through education after conversion into Christianity.⁵⁰

Mr. Valentine Thakkar who followed all Christian customs as he studied in the missionary hostel, asserted that the bride price is almost abolished from amongst the Gujarati Christians.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Interview with Mr. Joseph Chauhan on 12-5-2007 at Vadodara

⁴⁹ Interview with Mrs. Hildaben S. Varma on 5-6-2006, at Vadodara.

⁵⁰ Interview with Mr. Charles spurgen on 5-7-2008, at Vadodara.

⁵¹ Interview with Mr. Valentine S. Thakkar on 9-3-2008, at Vadodara.

In the Methodist society, very few families agree with the bride price. Even if some poor families take bride price as marriage expenses, educated families don't prefer to take bride price. There are more inter denominational marriages than inter religious one. The incidence of divorce is not higher in the Methodist society due to official Christian moral order.⁵²

The Life Style of Gujarati Christians

Gandhiji heard as a boy is still sometimes made against Christianity in India that it denationalises people, and cuts them off from their cultural heritage. How much truth has there been in this charge in the history of the church in Gujarat, there is evidence to suggest that it has little to support it. In Gujarat, the growing members of the church in early days were mainly rural, and Christians were not discouraged from maintaining those features of their cultural background which did not clash with Christian moral standards. There were, however, several factors which led to a definite separation between Christians and non-Christian relations and neighbours. The protestant missionaries in Gujarat were virtually unanimous in insisting that there must be no caste within the church, and this cut a man off from his family, who in any case disowned him. Then there was the fact that because of pressure and persecution Christians were often settled in farm colonies. This helped to develop a strong sense of community among Christians but it weakened their links with non-Christians as indeed it was intended to do. Contrary to what many non-Christians believe, meat eating among Christians has never been anything but optional, although gradually the tendency has been for the Christians to adopt meat eating, if they can afford it. The custom of eating carrion, which was prevalent among

⁵² Lancy Lobo, *op.cit.* pp. 15-16 and Interviews with Dr Arupama Shah. On 28-5-2006., at Vadodara.

some of the depressed groups from whom many converts came, was from the beginning stringently outlawed by the missionaries. And from the earliest days among the vast majority of protestant Christians in Gujarat, the drinking of alcohol has been condemned, though it has not been easy to eradicate the habit among certain village Christians who have carried over from pre-Christians days the custom and technique of home distilling.

Many features of Indian cultural life were brought over virtually unchanged into Christianity. The Gujarat missionaries from the first discouraged the imitation of western names, modes of dress and way of life. The joint family system and the method of arranged marriages were continued in the Christian society, no less than in Hindu, as were such customs as the segregation of the sexes in church and the removal of shoes on entering church or a house though in this matter the spread of western habits has affected Christians no less than other communities.

In their way of public worship, Gujarati Christians combine features from both India and the west, the west perhaps still somewhat in the ascendance. In the protestant churches, natural conservatism allied to democratic procedures has made innovation difficult. Yet there has always been a great deal that is thoroughly Indian in worship especially in village churches where the congregation remove their shoes at the door and sit on the floor men on the right and women on the left.

The shape of the service is, however usually recognizably western, either the Anglican or Methodist liturgy or the hymn, reading, prayer, hymn, sermon pattern typical of 19th century Presbyterianism. Free prayer as in the west, tends to become stereotyped, and to be a long catalogue of petitions

rather than a quiet act of adoration. There is a room for a movement of renewal in worship leading to a pattern which is truly Indian, yet faithful to the biblical witness, and in harmony with the treasury of worship of the whole church throughout the world.⁵³

Relations with their Original Caste People

Most of the members of the Methodist church of Baroda left all their original caste relatives in different villages of Gujarat and settled down in Baroda. Some members of the Church Baroda were already citizens of Baroda. Mr. Samson Tulsibhai Christian, now a U. S. citizen, says that past was forgotten as he was brought up in the Methodist boys' hostel in Baroda since his childhood; he did not maintain ties with original caste people. But quite contrary to the above experience according to Joseph G. Chauhan in the beginning there were few Christian families and they had to keep relations with their Hindu relatives for reasons of emotional and social bonds.⁵⁴

Robert David Christian recalled that his father and his uncle's firmly followed Christianity after conversion as they became members of the church. His uncle's family who remained non-Christians throughout their life maintained relations with each other as blood ties were always strong. Similarly the Christians and their non-Christian relatives visited each other during sickness, marriages and death. Most converts affirmed that conversion had not distanced them from their non-convert relatives. They continued all normal relations except in the spheres of marital relations a pronounced exclusivity was perceived.⁵⁵

⁵³ Israel D. Domnik, *op.cit.* pp. 142-143.

⁵⁴ As per written statement in the questionnaire dated on 6-6-2007

⁵⁵ Interview with Robert D. Christian on 30-10-2007 at Vadodara

A large majority of the non-Christian Hindus and Muslims in villages perceive look at Christian and non-Christian dalits as equal in the social sphere. However, some rank the Christians higher. In the cities the Christians are perceived to be higher than their non-Christian dalits which indicates that greater urbanization has resulted among Christians on account of education after conversion.

Change of religion unless accompanied by economic freedom, often has left the Dalits in the same place. Without economic transformation, the Dalits, whether Christians or Hindus can have little hope of change. Although 'caste' is fast loosing its operational value in the cities still continues to be a centrally important factor in rural social stratifications.⁵⁶

Contribution of the Methodist Church in the Development of the Community

The Methodist Church in Baroda has played a vital role in the development of the Methodist community. It provided a concrete base over which the super structure of the community of believers could be erected. Over the last hundred years it has provided the community its cohesiveness, its social fabric and its moral strength to stand and live with dignity and grace.

According to Prof. Arvinda Chandra, the contribution of Methodist church is commendable as right from their childhood the missionaries stressed and inculcated in them the values of regularity, hard work and honesty while emphasising a high moral and a good social life. These virtues

⁵⁶ George Ooman and John C. B. Webster, *op. cit.* pp.105-107

helped the Methodists to be good students and teachers. She attributes her personal success to effective missionary and teaching that shaped her life.⁵⁷

The church helped and encouraged the community to send their children for education and to medical institutions in Baroda. To Prof. Anupama, church life and personal life are very close and quiet interrelated. Apart from regular Sunday service the other activities like M.Y.F. meetings, seminars, gatherings and yearly conventions gradually help the Christians in their personality development. Sunday schools and Bible study courses conducted quiz competition helping the children development these learning skills. Prof. Anupama was told that Sunday was a special day dedicated to God and worship and no work except cooking was to be undertaken. Her sister who was a teacher in the college would say that whenever there was some important work in the college they used to assign to Christians because of their way of handling it with responsibility. People learnt from the Sunday school and revival meetings the virtues of honesty, hard-work, discipline, right-roughness, punctuality and service to help the needy and poor people.⁵⁸

The Methodist Church of Baroda also managed to grant scholarships for the intelligent students, to send them abroad for their bright future. Johnbhai Kanjibhai Dabhi whose children are well settled in U.S.A. credited it to the World Church Council for granting scholarship to his daughter Sharlet (M.S.W.) to join Ph. D. in U.S.A. which made possible the progress of his family.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Arvinda Chandra on 24-5-2006, at Vadodara.

⁵⁸ Interview with Dr. Anupama Shah on 28-5-2008, at Vadodara.

⁵⁹ Interview with Mr. Johnbhai K. Dabhi on 10-12-2007, at Vadodara.

Rev. Prabhudas, the in-charge of Methodist of Boys hostel of Baroda says that the church used to prepare sponsors from within the church community to help poor village students staying in the boys' hostel and paying for their fees and livelihood. Many Methodist families have settled abroad are helping the poor people here remembering their own old days when they were also in poor condition.⁶⁰

The Methodist leadership believe in the total personality development of a person, not only meeting the spiritual needs. That's why they established Institutions like Methodist Technical Institutes (MIT), schools, nursing college hospital, teacher's training institutes etc. The first time evangelists were sent to remote villages to survey the needs of the people. The missionaries talked to the people respecting their personal needs to help them and they sent their children to the schools. They would employ some poor people in their own institutions also taking special care of the neglected or widow by rehabilitating them.

Social Change

The Methodist Church contributed a treasure of things to its local community and also by introducing some regulatory principles due to which a social change, occurred in the Christian society. What is noticed in the last 50 years, people became aware of the importance of education? Earlier girls were given education up to 7th at the most up to 10th standard. Now girls go for post graduation as well as for professional courses and degrees. They are working outside as teachers, nurses, secretaries, computer professional's professors and doctors. The objective conditions have also imported the lot

⁶⁰ Interview with Rev.Mr. Prabhudas T Christian on 15-9-2007 at Vadodara.

of women as now single salaries are not sufficient the pressures of modern life.

The expansions in the middle class Christians have further improved the image of the community. Many Christian families live in bungalows and respectable flats. They are well employed in government as well as in private sectors taking up professions like teaching in schools, colleges, universities banking, nursing, medicine engineering and business. Ms. Seema Jayant Shah, daughter of Mr. Jayant Shah and Prof. Aunpama Shah is the first Woman Auto-mobile engineer in the Methodist society of Baroda. She is running her own garage and financial is very sound. She has become a role –model for other girls in the society.⁶¹ Similarly, Dr. Mayuri Anil Jaituni is a successful orthodontist and works as the Prof and Head of the department in the college of Dental Sciences in Hyderabad. Prof. Arvinda, Prof Anupama Shah and Mrs. Prem Palmer were professors in the University and colleges. Siddhi Ratikumar Macwan, Ms. Shilpa Gurjar and Mrs. Palmer are lecturers in colleges/university.⁶²

Changing of Names and Surnames after Conversion into Christianity

In the caste-conscious society the names and surnames become very important makers of identity. And the colonial rule played its crucial role in sharpening the question of identity especially in the nineteenth century. It first began with the educated elite who started imitating their colonial western masters who brought this tradition of family names or surnames to India. Secondly, the census project technically introduced this

⁶¹ Vipul Bhatt, Vama Vishesh, 'Automobile girl Seema shah May 23, 2003.

⁶² Interviews with Mr. Anil A Jaituni on 22-5-2006, at Vadodara and with Motilalbhai Gurjar on

system at formal level. The untouchables were not allowed by the caste Hindus to carry respectable names. But conversion whether to Islam or Christianity also meant assuming new identities. According a large number of converts also changed their names even though carrying the family names as surnames continued with several families indicating their original castes.⁶³ After converting to Christianity some abandoned their old names and surnames and adopted Christian names and surnames to show their new identity as a Christians. The Christian Biblical and English names like Ruth, Samuel, John Mariyam, Martin, Immanuel, Elliot. Hilda, Flora, Clara became common names. As against adopted the foreign names. Some adopted Indian and Gujarati names such as Christie, Paltanwala, Masihi, Suwartik, and Kant. Rev. Samuel Suwartik pointed out that before conversion they had 'Parmar' surnames. His grandfather was an evangelist (preacher) which in Gujarati means Surawrtik. People would call him Surwartik. His father also became Suwartik. Suwartik became the family name a surname. His uncle was very fond of hunting according by he came to be called 'Vanveer' which became his surname.⁶⁴

Other continued their original surnames like Chauhans, Solanki, Vaghela, Macwana Parmar while still other adopted surnames from their profession. Mr. Hiralal father of Solomon Kapadia, a senior member of Methodist church had adopted Kapadia surname as he started selling clothes during he time of rationing of clothes. Earlier they were using the Macwan surnames indicating that they originally came from Macwana.⁶⁵

19-1-2008

⁶³ Interview with Rev. Mr. Ashirwadbhai Kunjrawiya on 7.10-2005, at Vadodara.

⁶⁴ Interview with Mr. Samuel Suwartik on 23-10-2007, at Vadodara.

⁶⁵ Interview with Mr. Solomon Kapadia on 4-4-2007, at Vadodara.

Interesting surnames could be adopted with the life experience. Caroline Paltanwala says that their surname was derived by their ancestors during the British period when they were serving in a platoon of the Indo-British army. Platoon was Indianised as Paltan' and hence this surnames.⁶⁶ Many converts continued preferring Gujarati names like Punjabhai, Anupama, Sumitra, Prabhudas, Tulsibhai etc. as they also continued their original surnames such as Dass, Dabhi, Shah, Amin Patel, Jadav, Kapadia etc.

Dr. Anupama Shah makes it clear that from the traditional surnames people come to know about one's caste and religious identity and accordingly form the opinion and show their prejudices. People get excluded from jobs, promotions are detained and harassments inflicted.⁶⁷

S.E.B.C. Benefits

In 1973 the Government of Gujarat appointed the 'Socially and Educationally Backward Class Commission, (S.E.B.C) also called Baxi Panch, to identify other backward classes in Gujarat. Its report was published in 1976 identifying about 80 caste groups for ameliorative measures. One of them 'Gujarati Christi' whose description in the words of the commission was as follows.

The hereditary occupation of this group is that of weavers as this community is mainly constituted out of the persons who were originally Harijan weavers. They therefore resemble the class of Harijan weavers in almost all respects of social life. They have continued their marital relations with the members of the Harijan society and the people in villages treat them as they treat Harijans. Even though they have changed their faith, they have almost remained Harijans in other respects. Their economic conditions

⁶⁶ Interview with Mrs. Carolina Paltanwala on 15-8-2007, at Vadodara.

⁶⁷ Interviews with Dr. Anupama Shah on 28-5-2006, at Vadodara.

have also not improved and their income doesn't exceed Rs. 150 per family. Most of the members are also indebted. This community is akin to Harijans (Scheduled Castes) and suffer from almost all the disadvantages of the scheduled caste. The level of literacy in larger towns is high. Secondary education in larger towns cannot be said to be on the lower level. But the position in rural areas seems to be different where the level of both primary and secondary education is low. The percentage of higher education in towns as well as in rural area is very low.⁶⁸

The induction of 'Gujarati Christi' in S.E.B.C report had piqued the urban Christians especially the middle income group. To be labelled 'backward' would tantamount to losing the social advantage 'already' secured over the decades and be reminded of one's roots which one would like to erase from one's memory. The urban middle class Christians have even been urging all the Christians to refuse the benefits of the S.E.B.C which can endanger their own acquired status in the wider society.

During the interviews with the pastors, community leaders, community members most of them said they would not like to be called Dalit Christians and would not like to take advantage of provisions of S.E.B.C. Very few respondents force fully said that they are Indian Christians and hence, they would take S.E.B.C benefits to secure jobs provided by the Indian constitution.

Anil Jaituni one of the older member of the community said that though some of Methodist Christians have now good education, and they have improved socially and financially but they are still far behind other communities such as Patels, Baniyas, Brahmins, but many don't have good

⁶⁸ Cited in Lancy Lobo, *op. cit.*, p. 22

education, good house, good food, good vehicles, and do not live in good localities. Very few Christians have good jobs and if Indian government gives them benefits of reservation they should accept to produce doctors, engineers, C.A. businessmen, M.B.A., builders in their society. He was speaking from his own experience. When Mr. Jaituni had gone for job he was told to find working in the church rather than searching elsewhere.⁶⁹

Prof. Arvinda Chandra endorsed Jaituni's view saying that Christian were still economically backward and they must take financial help from the Indian government by availing the reservation benefits.⁷⁰

The principal of the Hill Memorial High School was also of the opinion that poor students should try to avail the facility of S.E.B.C. to develop them. There is no harm in taking financial help but by doing this one should not be going back to their Dalit background.⁷¹

Rev. Prabhudas Christian, former Pastor of the Methodist church of Baroda started that if Roman Catholics take S.E.B.C. benefits' why the protestant Christians should deny? Many Methodists used to come to him for getting a certificate to the effect of their Dalit origin. On the basis of such certificates Christians could avail the S.E.B.C benefits.⁷²

On the other hand there are other Christians who do not present to the idea of reservations. Mr. Raiji Masihi did not like to avail the S.E.B.C. or S.C. reservation benefits for his son's admission for his medical studies. His

⁶⁹ Interview with Mr. Anil A. Jaituni on 22-5-2006, at Vadodara.

⁷⁰ Interview with Dr. Arvinda Chandra on 24-5-2006, at Vadodara.

⁷¹ Interview with Mr. Subhas P. Christie on 8-6-2006, Vadodara.

⁷² Interview with Mr. Prabhudas Christian on 15-9-2007, Vadodara.

son who had second 352 marks did not avail reservation benefits and another student with 216 marks got admission in the S.C. quota. Rajibhai's son suffered the heavy loss but he was committed to his belief. He wants such a criterion of selection to be removed.⁷³

Mrs. Carolina Paltanwala, who belongs to an elite military family said that personally she did not grew up with such attitude because it was not needed. Her husband was an army officer for 53 years so socially and financially they were in a higher position. Similarly, Mrs. Kusumben Martin asserts that she doesn't like called to a Dalit Christians since she has accepted Christianity. They don't agree with taking S.E.B.C. benefits.⁷⁴

Though Mr. Charles Spurgeon believes getting thing punchy on in merit as he himself made progress on his merits but he supports reservation for Christian Dalits as they do not have many opportunities to come-up. Dalits are study under difficult circumstance and they can not compete with upper castes that have all the advantages and comforts to learn and pick up skills faster than the disadvantaged sections.⁷⁵

Mr Valentine Thakkar does not believe in any reservation. Both of his sons became Doctor and Engineer on the basis of their merits only. Mr. Valentine Thakkar whose two sons became doctor and engineer on their own merits, does not subscribe to the reservation policy for Christians. His elder son Chirag stood first in the HSC exam in his school scoring 92 percent.⁷⁶

⁷³ Interview with Mr. Rajibhai Masihi on 12-7-2006, Vadodara.

⁷⁴ Interview with Mrs. Carolina Paltanwala on 15-8-2007 Vadodara.

⁷⁵ Interview with Mr. Charles Spurgeon on 5-7-2008 Vadodara.

⁷⁶ Interview with Mr. Valentine Thakkar on 9-3-2008 Vadodara.

Mrs. Elizabeth Christian echoes Thakkar's sentiments when she says that Christians are socially forward and financially and hence sound don't need to take O.B.C. benefits. They don't consider themselves Dalit.⁷⁷

Vikram Vivek Hazare, a cricketer and man on the field is more practical and objective on the question. He personally would not take S.E.B.C benefits as he is socially and economically sound, but of opinion that other people whose financial position is not sound they must take S.E.B.C. benefits of the Indian government.⁷⁸ What could be seen on the question of dalit identity and reservation for Dalit Christian there is a divided opinion. The class dimension is clearly visible. The upper middle class Christians are not in its favour but people who work with the masses, the pastors and community leaders as well as practical people like cricketers and teachers see a merit in the reservation policy for the poor Christians. The Christian community had not been free from persecution. These upper caste Hindus had been hostile to them expressing mostly in subtle ways but of many times in very explicit ways and occasionally also violently. Hence the question of security for them had been important. It assumed significance in the last decade because of aggressive postures of fundamentalists.

Most of the Methodist Christians expressed that they haven't been affected by communal riots because Christians don't believe in quarrels and chaos. Majority of the Methodist Christians stay in Fatehgunj which is quite cosmopolitan in character and living harmoniously with cross-sections they

⁷⁷ Interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Christie on 22-8-2007 Vadodara.

⁷⁸ Interview with Mr. Vikram Vivek Hazare on 13-11-2007 vadodara.

have not experienced over of communal tension. Most of them believe that God protects them as they have committed themselves into his hands.

Prof. Arvinda Chandra recalls where there were riots in Dang and Ahva, they were scared. Though in cities it didn't happen because police protection in urban churches but villages people were so scared whenever some extremist party would organise any function people would fly to other places. Even in cities there is a dislike for Christians.⁷⁹

Advocate Mrs. Mariyam Dabhi did not experience any harassment at her work. Being a lawyer she had organized a procession to oppose the Gujarat Government's Anti-conversion Bill in 2003. Despite opposition to it from the government's lawyer who was against Christians a large number of people attended. Mrs. Dabhi a lawyer delivered a forceful lecture against the bill and her efforts proved successful as the bill was withdrawn. But she is clear that generally Christians do not feel insecure and scared due to their political neutrality.⁸⁰

The same is confirmed by K. G. Patel who asserts that Christians staying in Baroda has faced no persecution Christians have always worked together with non-Christians and the latter are impressed of their nature and attitude for which reason the Christians also feel free of any fear.⁸¹

The Chairman of the Gospel Committee, of Methodist Church, Soloman Kapadia puts it in the historical context. He says that even though in the earlier decades they faced some opposition but the permitting method of moving from door to door to spread the gospel openly has been stopped. The

⁷⁹ Interview with Dr. Arvinda Chandra on 24-5-2006 Vadodara.

⁸⁰ Interview with Mr. Mariyamben Dabhi on 15-7-2007 Vadodara.

⁸¹ Interview with Mr. K.G.Patel on 5-1-2006 Vadodara.

religious activities are restricted and confined to Christians alone and as they are peaceful, loving and hardworking, happily mixing up with all the communities of Baroda they do not face any problem. No one has attacked the Christians and their church in Baroda hence they feel protected in Gujarat.⁸²

Some of the Methodist Christians are staying in the scattered non Christians localities and in some cases there is only one Christian family living in the mixed society but they don't feel scared. The Pastor of the city Christ church, Mr. L. K. Parmar, testifies that during the communal riots between Hindus and Muslims in the Gandigate area, he never felt any threat from the non- Christians even in times of curfew. Once, during the 3 months, long curfew in that area he was safe and all his needs were fulfilled. Non-Christians never created disturbances for the pastors or the church. Some Christian families staying in the area for last 70 years protected even during tensions.⁸³

But some of the respondent Christians thought otherwise saying they don't feel protected any longer in the Baroda city. Prof. Anupama highlights the vulnerability of Christians especially in the later years. With the rise of competition in education and job, she feels more threatened. Johnbhai Dabhi reinforces that fear that with the ascendance of anti-Christian political party in Gujarat and at generally Christians feel threatened.⁸⁴

⁸² Interview with Mr. Solomon Kapadia on 4-4-2007 Vadodara.

⁸³ Interview with Rev. Mr. L.K. Parmar on 28-10-2007 Vadodara.

⁸⁴ Interviews with Dr. Anupama Shah on 28-5-2006 Vadodara.



Valentine Thakkar also confirms that he is always fearful. Christians do not feel protected in Gujarat as casteism has become very strong. He also attributes this fear to the abandoning basic Christian principles of love, peace, sacrifice, sympathy, forgiveness by the people. Valentine Thakkar holds the church leaders are responsible for all this. He laments that some kind of politics is going on in the church for last thirty years. There are many committees in the church and vested interests clash for position and power. There is dissatisfaction among the church members but the majority remain silent.⁸⁵

Even Mrs. Caroline Paltanwala, feels there is a hidden politics and there people who are at higher social level they dominate the community. She feels that even after 150 years of its existence their community is not well organised, and united. The Church and society is lacking in leadership as there is no vision and perspective. Missionary buildings and landed properties are scrupulously put on sale. She is bitter that many activities for the welfare of the society have been stopped. Evangelistic work is also not done properly.⁸⁶

SECTION II MEMOIRS

Working on a community of largely poor, illiterate and untouchables had posed its challenges. Archival sources are very few. What was thought as a best strategy and methodology was to get to the life histories of community members whether they were leaders, religious, spiritual or social or even the lay persons. The present section tries to peep

⁸⁵ Interview with Mr. Valentine Thakkar on 9-3-2008 Vadodara.

⁸⁶ Interview with Mrs. Carolina Paltanwala on 15-8-2007, Vadodara.

at the community through the lives of such people. It also gives a sense of time.

Henrybhai Narottamdas Shah



Henrybhai Narottamdas shah was born in 1874 in the village of Borsad. His father, Narottamdas was the first convert from the High Caste people. Henrybhai studied with his brother Benjaminbhai at Ahmedabad. He was first married to Karunabai by whom he had three sons, and they are all alive at present. One of them is served at St. John's College of Agra. After Karunabai's death Henrybhai was married to Jaikuverbai, by whom he had five sons and four daughters. One daughter became doctor and settled in Surat.

Henrybhai was first admitted into the Bombay Annual Conference in 1901 and became a full Member of Conference in 1905. His first appointment was at Vaso, after which he worked in Kathiawar before

becoming the pastor of the Central Church at Baroda. Gradually he rose to the pointing of District Superintendent of the Central District, being stationed at Umreth, where he worked hard to establish school and improve the evangelistic work with the aid of Miss Morgan and Miss Bailey. Later he was transferred to the Godhra District, as the District Superintendent from where he retired and settled in Baroda. He passed away on the 27th of March 1947. His house was always open to strangers.⁸⁷

Kalidas Muljibhai

Kalidas Muljibhai was born in the village of Wagashi in the year 1884. He was baptized by the late Rev. E. F. Frease somewhere in the years of 1894-95, when the work of the Methodist Church had just begun in that village. When a mission school was opened in his village of Wagashi, he was too old to sit with the smaller children; therefore he was admitted into the Night School. After that training he was admitted into the Theological School for training in Baroda where he finished the Fourth Reader. He began his ministerial career as a local preacher in a small village. Gradually, he became *vibhagdar*, circuited, local deacon, and then in 1917 was admitted on trial into the annual conference, then the Bombay annual conference, and worked faithfully until 1934. During these years he worked at several places of Gujarat and Saurashtra.

In Kathiawar he lost his wife and three children. Once he went to preach the Gospel in one of the Village Fairs where he was beaten severely and sustained major injuries. When he was asked to file a suit against the culprit, he refused by saying that his master had suffered more than he and

⁸⁷ *Gujarat women's conference report*. 1947, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press, 1948. (Note: Page number are not written in the reports)

prayed that he be forgiven. He was attacked by paralysis in 1935 but recuperated and survived cheerfully till his death in April 1946.⁸⁸

Rev. Whaljibhai Kalidasbhai



Whaljibhai was born at Bhalej in 1892, was sent to Baroda in 1896 to the baby fold. In 1901 he was baptized by Bishop F.W. Warne in 1901. He pursued his studies upto Gujarati 7th Standard. In 1906 he went to the Theological School and graduated in 1909 when he was appointed at Varnama in the Baroda District. In 1911 he was transferred to Godhra as teacher in the Training School department in the Theological School. In 1912 he was appointed as the house father of the Boy's Hostel at Baroda. From 1921 to 1923 he served as teacher-helper in the Godhar District and thereafter as pastor in Baroda Nadiad and Godhara. While pastor in Godhar in 1936, he went to visit a Christian home. While knelt down in prayer he was attacked by the man whom he was visiting with an axe. He recovered

⁸⁸ G. A. C. & G.W.C.R. 1946, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press, 1947 .

but with his mental faculties somewhat impaired and lived for nine years till his death on march 4th 1945. His widow and seven children survive him.⁸⁹

Dayabhai D. Thakore



He was born in 1893 in the Kahnawadi village of Kheda District. As his parents died when he was about 10 years he was brought to the Methodist Boy's Orphanage, now known as Methodist Boys Hostel in 1902. After passing his vernacular Final Examination he joined the Florence B. Nicholson School of Theology in Baroda. He married Hiribai of the Girls Orphanage, Godhra in 1910. They together worked in the villages of Godhra and Baroda Districts until 1928 when Hiribai died in Godhra. Later he married Alibai, a Bible woman in the Baroda district, originally from Ramabai Mukti Mission. They together served until the community his death on October 5, 1973 and Alibai's death just ten days later.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ G. A. C. & G.W.C.R. 1945, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press, 1946.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 1973, Nadiad, 1973.

Rev. Jethalal Masihi

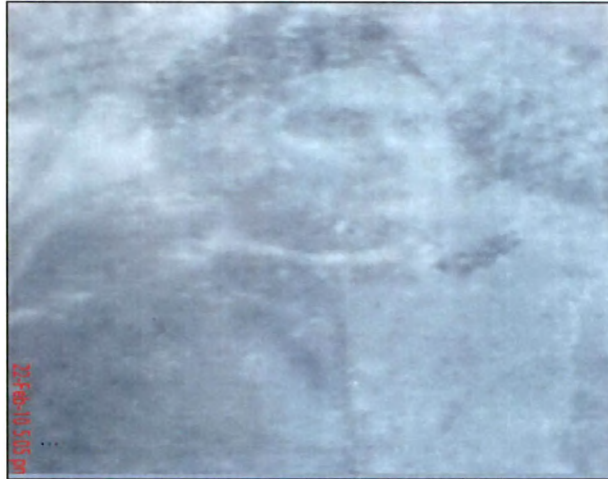


Jethalal M. Masihi was born in 1891 and admitted to the Baroda Boys Boarding House, where after finishing primary school he joined the F. B. Nicholson School of Theology in Baroda. He married Nanibai in 1916. After working in a village or two in Kheda District he was transferred to Narukot to start a boarding school for the adivasi children, which he did with great zest. He served at Dumad Jambusar, Gothda, Valvod and Christ Church in Baroda city. He was a good singer and used to attract large crowds in his evangelistic campaigns.

Always loyal to his superiors, he was never found grudging for anything. After retirement he lived in the Training Compound in Baroda and continued working as volunteer preacher and visiting pastor for many years. He died in November 1972 at his house in Baroda leaving behind his wife, two sons and two daughters.⁹¹

⁹¹ G. A. C. & G. W. C. R., 1972, Godhra, 1972.

Rev. Ulfilas K. Pundit



Ulfilas K. Pundit was born in the village of Mahudha in Kathiawar 1891. As a small child he was admitted to the Orphanage at Baroda and late in the Nadiad Boys' Orphanage in 1901 where he was baptized by Rev. Robert Ward, then a missionary. He was later transferred to the Baroda Boys' Hostel in 1905 where he studied. In 1911 he was sent to the Baroda Theological School and got in Nov. 1911. After graduating from the Seminary in 1913 he served in 20 different places as evangelist and circuit pastor. In those years he was placed in the city of Baroda where he worked to create a self supporting church. He died in Ahmedabad at his grand daughter's home on 7th July 1976. He was an ideal preacher with a good moral life and He lived a disciplined life full of tolerance and loyalty ⁹².

Rev. Prabhudas Madhavbhai Dass

Prabhudas was born in 1916 in the village of Khambholaj where he attended school up to the fourth class. Then he was admitted to the Methodist Boys' High School where he completed his matriculation. Soon

⁹² *Ibid.* 1976, Bharuch, 1976.

after he found a job in the railway mail service, but left the government job to enter the full time ministry in the Gujarat Conference. He married Naomiben, a daughter of the Salvation Army Major on 16th Dec, 1936. He joined the Gujarat United School of Theology in 1942 and completed the Diploma Course in 1946.

After completion of his seminary study he was placed to work in different villages and circuit centres. He was a good singer and led the large congregations in the united singing. He maintained very good relations with the government and police officers in his town and villages and was instrumental in helping the poor village Christians in many ways especially in their disputes and court cases. He always tried to have non-Christian children in his schools. He died in Baroda on 7th October 1976.⁹³

Rev. Jacob D. Merchant

Jacob D. Merchant was born in Bulsar on 11th March, 1905 where he and spent his early childhood. In a few years his father, Dhulabhai moved to Nadiad to set up a workshop and business there, and Jacob entered the Methodist Primary School where he received his primary education. He entered the Baroda Boys' Hostel and passed his Matriculation in 1927. From his early childhood he had a great interest in mechanics and electronics and would carry out experiments with batteries and electric motors in his hostel room. After finishing his Matriculation he served for two years in the D. S. P's office in Kheda. Few years later he entered the Leonard Theological College in Jablpur to graduate with the G. Th. Diploma in 1936.

⁹³ G. A. C. & G. W. C. R., 1976, Bharuch.

Returning to the Gujarat Conference, he first worked under Miss E. M. Ross as a teacher helper in the village education service. He was manager of the village schools of the Godhra district. For one year during that period he also served as superintendent of the Godhra Boys' Hostel. In 1955 the Merchants moved to Nadiad, where Rev. Merchant served as manager of village Educational Service. In 1962, when Rev. John Finney went on furlough, Rev. Merchant came to serve as Acting Superintendent of the Methodist Technical School and Hostel in Baroda. He became superintendent of the Methodist Boys' Hostel, Baroda, in 1963, and served there for four years, till the time of his death in 1967.⁹⁴

George W. Park

George Park was born in Canada and came to Bombay for missionary work in 1890. He early acquired a fluent use of the Gujarati language and he poured himself out for the Gujarati people with whom he identified himself as though they were his own people. From 1890-1893 he was Missionary in Bombay. He was the real founder of the Gujarati Church in that city out of which grew the Gujarat Conference. In 1894 he was transferred to Baroda and was associated from the beginning with Dr. Frease in the Gujarati Mass Movement which brought over 40,000 people into the church. While Dr. Frease could rightly be considered to have been the brain and statesman leader of the Methodist Gujarat Mission, Mr. Park was its tireless itinerant and successful evangelist.

For seventeen years- 1895 to 1909 his head quarters was at Nadiad. With remarkable courage he surmounted innumerable obstacles and

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 1968, Bharuch, 1968.

lived down strong prejudices; and when he left that city he was the Vice President of its Municipality and the trusted advisor of officials and citizens.

His labours during the awful famine of 1899-1900 were herculean. He saved thousand from starvation and rescued hundreds of children and orphans from a condition worse than death. The Nadiad school and Industrial Institute and the Nadiad Cathedral are lasting and worthy memorials of his self sacrificing devotion and service so widely known was his work that it attracted the attention of Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who paid a special visit to Nadiad; and in recognition of his valuable work the Kaisar-i-Hind medal was conferred upon George Park by the government of India. In 1908 he was acting Presiding Elder of the old Gujarat District. Through his labours a large corps of workers was raised up in Gujarat.⁹⁵

Yusaf Dhanjibhai



Yusaf Dhanjibhai was born in 1869 at Baroda Camp. Here he spent his childhood. At that time the Gujarati missionary work was connected with the Bombay District and the resident missionary of Bombay used to visit Baroda and hold meetings. Yusafbhai was one of the attendants

⁹⁵ G. A. C. R., 1922.

of his meetings. He was baptized in 1881 by Rev. D.O. Fox at Baroda Camp. He learned reading and writing and singing and playing on the violin. Then he went with his uncle to Surat where he continued to study privately and also took up work in the Mission Press. Here a missionary happened to go on furlough and Yusafbhai availed himself of an opportunity of singing a song at the farewell address of the missionary and came to earn publicity. His faithfulness and cleverness earned him the position of a teacher in a school at Randers, conferred upon him by a Presbyterian missionary who foresaw his usefulness.

Yusafbhai married to Jivibai in 1892 and the new couple continued teaching in the school. At this time a teacher was badly needed at girls' school in Baroda. They came to Baroda and took charge of the girls' school which prospered and was registered by the Government.

Dr. Frease opened a Summer Training School at Baroda to supply teachers and preachers to the villages and Yusafbhai received his new appointment in the Training school. He began to work in this department in 1896. This work developed necessitating a school of theology.⁹⁶

Rev. Hiralal Ukaji Kapadia

Hiralal was born in 1900 at Bedva village but lost his parents in his childhood. In 1918, his elder brother, a Christian evangelist, with the help of the missionary sent his younger brother to I. V. Theological School at Baroda. He did his diploma in theological study. In 1922, he got married with Mithibai, a daughter of Rev. Khandas Bhudharbhai and both of them were appointed as teacher and evangelist at village Duma. Thereafter they got

⁹⁶ G. A. C. R., 1924, Baroda, Bombay Methodist Publishing House, 1925.

appointed at different places. In those days missionary schools were given more importance than government school.

Gandhiji visited Bhetasi village during the time of Swarajya movement when Hiralal Ukaji with all his colleagues met Gandhiji and told him about his services as evangelist and teacher at the mission school. The village people were awed at and appreciated his courage regarding his talk with Gandhiji. When Rev. P. K. Dass was District Superintendent of the Baroda district, Hiralalbai was staying and serving in Dora village and giving his best services as circuit pastor. He sent many boys and girls from Dora village to Baroda Boarding school. His wife Mithibai cooperated him in to school and mission. Rev. Hiralabhai died in 1979 at Baroda.⁹⁷

Jacob D. Dass

Jacob Dass was born in 1905 at village Tundav of Savli Taluka near Baroda. His father Mr. Dahyabhai and mother Gangaben were religious persons. When for the first time missionaries entered in village Tundav this family warmly welcomed them. They knew about Christianity and accepted Christian religion. They dedicated their house for the church and farm for the missionary work in Tundav for which reason the village people started harassing them. They were badly beaten by the village people and their younger son badly injured by the *lathis* and died in Tundav.

Jacobbbhai lost parents in his childhood, but the Methodist missionaries put this orphan boy in the Baroda Methodist boys' hostel. Here

⁹⁷ G. A. C. & G. W. C. R., 1979, Bharuch 1980 and *Khristi Bandhu*, Rev. P.K.Das, Rev. Hiralal Ukaji Kapadia ni Jeevan Jharmar ,1979,PP 199-202,Ahmadabad.

he studied up to Matriculation and completed his diploma course in 1932 from Theological School of Baroda.

He served as clerk Ambica Mill for a long span of 32 years in but along with that he rendered his services as local preacher at different places of Baroda district. He was fond of religious books and had collected costly books from India and foreign countries for building his own Library. Many people were benefited by this Library. He died in 1985, at the age of 80 years.⁹⁸

Joseph. Prakash

Joseph Prakash was born in Mahudha, taluka Nadiad, in 1919. His father was a farm labourer but sent his son to the Baroda, Methodist Boys hostel for education. He had a thirst for knowledge and a passion for Indian classical music. He did his Matriculation in Baroda and got a job at the age of 26 as a clerk in the Western Railways. He possessed the spiritual and moral virtues of Methodist Christian and wrote several hymns. Five of hymns were including in the 'Bhajan Sangrah' a collection of devotional songs. His 25 songs were published in a Christian magazine 'Khristi Bandhu' and 8 songs were published in a magazine 'Marg Sangini'. He retired as a Personnel Officer in the Railway. His eldest son, Bipin Prakash became engineer and industrialist.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ As per written statement in the questionnaire, dated 1-1-2006 and *Khristi Bandhu*, Rev. P.K.Das, Jacob Das ni Jeevan Jharmar ,1986,PP 77-78,Ahmadabad.

⁹⁹ As per written statement in the Questionnaire dated 8-10-2005 and Maganlal Pravasi, *Khristi Sahityakaro'* part-I. p. 49. Nadiad, 2004.

Late. Mr. Laxmanbhai Bhabhare

Laxman was born and brought up in a tribal family of Dahod in Panchmahal district. As a child of Christian parents and with the help and guidance of the missionaries he got his degree of Master in Social Work in 1962 and became government Welfare Officer. He also served the state government's Chief Offenders and Head of Remand Home and Release Prisoners Institution. He also provided his dedicated services to the Methodist church Baroda. His wife Mrs. Mariyamben Dabhi is an eminent lawyer in Baroda. Laxmanbhai died in 1995 in Baroda.¹⁰⁰

Rev. Laxmanbhai Dhulabhai Rathod

He was born and brought up in Bhupel village of Kheda district, by his mother Tejibai who was widow. Tejibai was a kind hearted lady who served the poor and orphan children and women. She also encouraged them to avail the facilities provided by Methodist mission schools, hostels and hospitals in Nadiad and Baroda. She used to bring the sick people to the mission hospital in her bullock cart and eventually became the member of Methodist church of Baroda. She dedicated also worked for the people who were victim of 1927 heavy floods in Baroda. She encouraged his eldest son Laxmanbhai to become a pastor and sent him to the Theological College at Baroda where he stayed in the Methodist mission hostel. He served people of several villages in the Baroda, Padra and Savli circuits and later joined the Christ Church as a pastor in Baroda. He retired in 1942 and had sent his son James Rathod to U.S.A. for his higher studies in education. His son became Education Inspector with the Gujarat Government.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ As per the writings of Mr. Ratikumar M. Macwan (Writings are available with me) and Interview with Mrs. Mariyamben Dabhi on 15-7-2007.

¹⁰¹ As per the writings of Mr. Ratikumar M. Macwan.

Rev. Raijibhai Rathod



Raijibhai was born in April 1922 at Kharsaliya village of Kalol Taluka. His father Mulijibhai and mother Kasnaben's families of middle class farmers. To get a good education for their son they sent him to Methodist Boys' hostel at Baroda. He passed his matriculation exam in 1941 and learnt typing. In 1942 he worked as a typist at Kothi Kacheri of Baroda and after sometime he became a Rationing Inspector.

He resigned from his job in 1944 and joined the service with the Church. During the same he got married with Yarushaben Laljibhai Macwan, a teacher. Thereafter Raiji Rathod joined Leonard Theological College at Jabalpur for his Theological studies and finished his GTH. He received a service as a pastor at Godhra.

In 1952 he served as a House-father of the Methodist boy's hostel at Baroda and from 1952 to 1956 became the first Indian Hostel Superintendent. Thereafter, he went to USA for B.D. and M.Th. studies at

Asbary Seminary and Princeton University and after completion of his studies he returned India to serve from 1959 to 1963 as a Pastor of Baroda Methodist Church.¹⁰²

Ratikumar Morarjibhai Macwan



Ratikumar Macwan was born in a Dalit Christian family of Nadiad in 1932. His father Morarjibhai was a weaver and first Christian in his family. He was baptized at the hands of Dr. Cook, a missionary of Salvation armies. His father was a leader of Dalit Varg Mahamandal, fighting for workers' rights and Baba Sahib Ambedkar had visited him a few times, he had his own weaving factory in Nadiad. Late Mr. Ratikumar Macwan had inherited all the virtues from his father. He had lost his parents in his childhood and due to poverty he could not complete his studies. But he was very much interested

¹⁰² Gujarat Regional conference, Oct. 17, 1987, Methodist Mission in India, pp.5-7 and G. A. C. & G. W. C. R.. 1978. Bharuch, 1979.

in literary activities from the beginning and gradually developed his writing skills and journalistic talent. He didn't limit himself to small Christian community as his canvas was bigger to look at the Indian society as a whole and that is what made possible him to emerge as a public figure.

Initially he began working with his elder brother as a journalist but soon after he was employed in the daily Pratap as its editor at Surat where he was encouraged by Dr. George Solanki, Chairman of Gujarati Christian Association and Mr. Thomas, the then editor of Indian Express. Though writing was his passion he was also involved in social services in Surat. He worked for the Hindu Muslim harmony and also saved lives of 35 people who became victims of heavy floods. For his social work he got an award from the Gujarat government. Due to his meritorious services, he was called by the Lok Satta daily newspaper, at Baroda where he joined as a journalist in June 1960. As an honest sincere and hardworking journalist, he was in good terms with bureaucrats and politicians including cabinet ministers and chief minister. In the year 1963, he received the membership of Fatehgunj Methodist Church.

He was the only Christian journalist known for his honesty, truthfulness and independent nature. For his in-compromising nature, some of his co-workers from the higher class started harassing him in the service and became highly prejudiced against him.

As an upright journalist he used to write against corruption and dirty politics courageously for which he was harassed at his work place so much that he resigned from the local newspapers. But he continued working as a freelance journalist and published his own weekly news paper. 'Fateh'

based on the principles of poet veer Narmad. He also published 'Sardar,' another newspaper for 15 years. He had written 20 books¹⁰³ of which he himself was the publisher.

Though Mr. Macwan worked as an independent journalist, he got wonderful support from the people. He had also written his autobiography one year before his death. His wife Mrs. Floraben R. Macwan, who was a dedicated nurse and also a talented writer, had written many interesting and thought provoking short stories in the book "Zarmer Zarmer". Both of them are blessed with three children among whom their eldest daughter is a lecturer in a college while the second daughter is a financial adviser and son Siddharth is software professional in Canada.¹⁰⁴

Rev. David Bauman

David Bauman, a young man of 31 years came to India with a special mission to serve the people. Right from the beginning he was wandering in different villages of Gujarat, Kheda, Vadodara and Panchmahal districts to serve the people. He was given warm welcome by the village people at different places and became very popular due to his smiling face, simplicity, hard work and politeness.

In the year David was appointed as a Hostel Superintendent of Methodist Boys Hostel in Godhra. He also worked in Nadiad as a District

¹⁰³ These books are: (1) Aag, (2) Jharmar Jharmar (a collection of short stories), (3) Jivan Path na Tarla, (4) Gujarat na Gauraveshalio, (5) Aazadi na Ladvaiya, Rashtra na Ghadvaiya, (6) Gandhi Sardarni Gujarat ma Aandhi, (7) Hey Ram, (8) Jai Jai Garvi Gujarat, (9) Gujarat na Gauravshali Patidar, (10) Bharat na Mahanubhav Patidar, (11) Jhini Dorino Kordo, (12) Veer Narmad ni Amar Kahani, (13) Hindustan na Harijan Dalito nu Puran, (14) Bharat na Khristio no Samaj, (15) Vidhyarthio ni Ashanti na Vahemon vamal, (16) Vadodara Jilla na Vyakti Vishesh, (17) Who is who of Baroda, (18) Christ in India, (19) Watchdog of Society, (20) Greatest Patels of India

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Mr. Ratikumar M. Macwan on 12-10-2005 at Vadodara

Superintendent. Though he was looking after the administration but he was more interested in personal, family and groups meetings and was engaged in different programmes of spiritual awakening.

Young woman missionary from America, Ms. Faith Weber, who was working in Vanswada, Rajasthan and Nimach in Madhya Pradesh, met David Bauman in 1951 and thereafter they continued meeting on several occasions. In 1954 October both of them met at the workshop for tribals at Godhra where they decided to marry and eventually got married in December 1955 at Nimach church.

After their marriage they were appointed together in Methodist Boys Hostel at Baroda. After sometime Rev. Bauman was given responsibilities in agricultural field. Later Rev. Bauman was appointed as a District Superintendent in Baroda. Here Bauman couple started the Vacation Bible schools for the children as they also invited the adults to study. Later they continued with their adult literacy classes for the last ten years of their stay in India.

Rev. Bauman's Rural Economic Life programme became very successful. To execute the programme, five Gramsevaks were appointed and given personal guidance and training in gardening, bio-gas, family planning, and nutritional food planning. The Economic Life project helped the village Christian's in reorganising their life on scientific lines. For this project he was getting funds from the United Methodist Church Committee on relief for the villages.¹⁰⁵

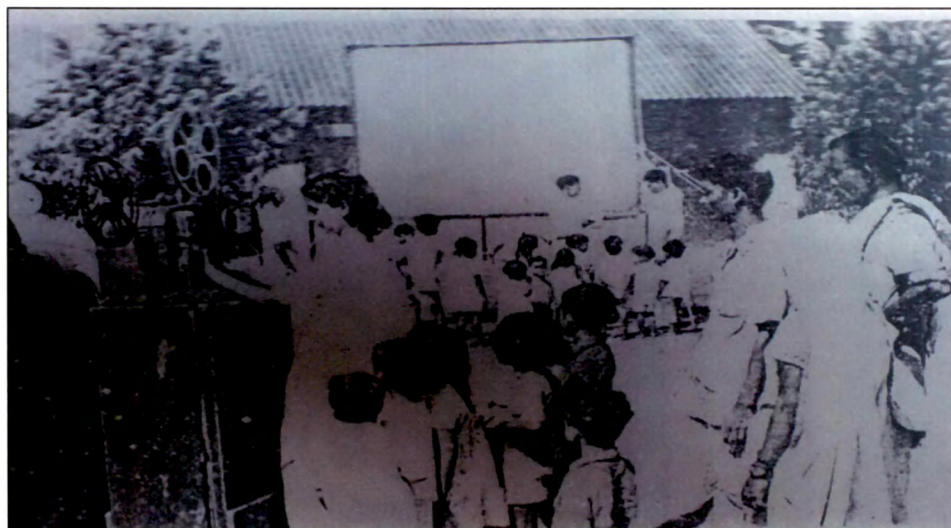
¹⁰⁵ Surendra Aasthawadi, *Gamda Jagavnar Missionary* pp. 61-65, 76-83, Gujarat Books and Tract Society, Ahmedabad, 1996 and Interview with Mr. David Bauman and Mrs. Faith Bauman on 2-11-2007, Vadodara

Faith Bauman

Faith Bauman was a wife of David Bauman, a Methodist missionary from USA. Before marriage she was serving for 5 years in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Both the missionaries got married on 9.12.1955 at Nimach church. She stayed with her husband at Nadiad, Mahudha, Godhra and Baroda serving as evangelist. She worked for the development of children and women specially focusing on children in Gujarat. She also started classes for the adult literacy.

Mrs. Faith Bauman was a pioneer to start vacation Bible schools at various places in Baroda district. She also guided Mahila Mandals children services. She made her teaching effective by using teaching aids such as flannel graph, puppets, wall paintings, charts, pictures, filmstrips and audio-visual aids.

Visual aid used by Missionaries among Village



She had five film projectors and frequently arranged film shows on various subjects like religion, health and hygiene. True to her name she dedicatedly worked for the people who had lost hope in their lives and would rekindle their faith in life. During the last three years before her retirement she had also served as a part time lecturer in the Theological Seminary at Vasad.

The missionary couple David and Faith Bauman served the Gujarat mission for 35 year from 1951 to 1986. They were the last foreigner Methodist missionaries to serve in India. Both of them left India, on 22nd May 1986 and went back to U.S.A. They are fondly remembered by Barodians, Gujarati and Rajasthani Christians.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 65-70, 72-76 and Interview with Mrs. Faith Bauman on 2-11-2007 Vadodara

Dr. Dhairyasheel R. Swayampati

Dhairyasheel, born in Baroda, had to struggle a lot in his childhood as he lost his father when he was too small. As a student he was very bright and stood first in Baroda in the Matriculation exam in 1939 for which he was awarded scholarship for his college studies by the Maharaja Gaekwad. Another scholarship had taken him to Bombay from where he did M. Tech. He came back to Baroda and served with the Jyoti Limited but soon after served as a maths-science teacher at Baroda Boys High School. During this service he did his B.Ed. and M.Ed. He got a scholarship from the Methodist Conference and in 1951 went to USA where he did his M.Sc. from Southern Methodist University, Delas, Texas. Thereafter he got Iowa State University Fellowship and did his Ph.D. in organic chemistry and returned Baroda.

Back in Baroda he started working with Sarabhai Chemical Company as a Research Assistant but within a year he became Production Director with Gaigi. At that time this company was making 'Tinopal' with was a long and costly process but with his research Dr. Swaympati found the new method of making 'Tinopal' for which the company made huge projects and he was promoted to the designation of company's Deputy Director. After serving the Company for eighteen years he resigned and started his own factory named 'Fine chemical' in Baroda.

He contributed a lot to the society when he was a member of the Centenary Methodist Church of Baroda. Being Chairman of the peace and Discipline Committee, he ably served as a counsellor to many families. He was fond of music and he started choir in the English service. For many years he served as an organist in the church while also delivering lectures in the English service.

From 1975 to 1984 he gave his honorary services as a Director to the Methodist Technical Institute. Many times he went to Ahmedabad to see Education Department and made sincere efforts to have the government grants to introduce several subjects in the M.T.I. The result was that in 1979, he started a 'secretarial course' for girls and made some arrangement of girl's student to stay in the girls hostel. Till then only boys could educate there.

During the year from 1977 to 1984 he had also served as a founder president of Baroda Y.M.C.A. and made sincere efforts to make it self supported and financially sound. 'Service to humanity is service to God' was motto of his life. He used to financially help many poor students until they finish their studies.¹⁰⁷

Benjamin Soloman Suwartik

He was born in August 1944 at Baroda and did his SSC in 1962. He served in the science faculty of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda for several years. Being a good writer he is a life member of 'Premanand Sabha' and 'akshara' organizations of Baroda. He had written many books and of some of them are: *Yahudi Jawan, Arman, Kala Akshar Bhens barabar, He Pavitra Aatma aavo, Janver Boli Uthaya, Durghatna ma Saravar, Dangerous dogs drink Tobacco, Vignana Darshan, Pankhinagar, Ajadini Aatamkatha, Gyan Vignan* etc. In 1995 he received 'Padmakant Shah' award for *Gyan Vignan* from the Premanand Trust.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ As per written statement in the personal diary of Dr. Dhirubhai Swayampati and as per written statement in the Questionnaire, dated 2-2-2007

¹⁰⁸ Mr. Maganlal Pravasi -*Khristi Sahityakaro op.cit.* p.55,

Mr. Christopher R. Christie

He was born in 1926. Mr. Christopher was the son of late Mr. R. P. Christie as well known poet and district superintendent of Baroda district. Mr. Christopher was his eldest son. He had inherited all the literary qualities from his father. He was M.A., M.ED. and teaching in secondary school. He participated in world youth conference at Cochin. He actively participated in various church activities like M. Y. E. And official board, throughout his life. He had written hymn number 518 in the 'Bhajan Sangrah'. He had written many articles which were published in the various Christian magazines like 'Khristi Bandhu', 'Christian news' 'Margdoot' and "The Upper room". He had also written a history of Methodist church in Baroda on the centenary celebration of Fatehgunj, Methodist church. He had written total 70 songs. He had also translated 3 English hymns into Gujarati :

- (i) *Jesus calls by thy mercies.*
- (ii) *O Master let me walk with thee*
- (iii) *Ones to every men and nation*
- (iv) *Khrist bolave aapan Saune*
- (v) *Gauravee raja isu amaro*
- (vi) *Mafi aap mane patit chu, mafi aap mane*
- (vii) *Pyaru madhuru Isu nam*
- (viii) *Mujne males kya Sahay¹⁰⁹*

Rev. P.K. Dass

Rev. P. K. Dass was born in 1904 at village Vadu, Padra Taluka. His father was a farmer and also working as a shoemaker. Due to his origin from lower caste, he had bitter experience of untouchability in the village school.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. P. 51 and as per written statement in questionnaire dated, 8-10-2005

As he had to sit in the corner of the class as a Dalit his father was very much concerned about his studies. In the year 1890 American Methodist Missionaries came to village Vadu and started class for children education later, he was sent to Baroda Methodist Boy's hostel where he was provided all the educational facilities by the missionaries. Thus, child Purshsottam did his primary education and Matriculation from Methodist boy's high school Baroda. Thereafter he joined theological college at Jabalpur and did his Bachelor of Divinity. Later he became District Superintendent of Methodist church. He gave higher education to his children. His son Habel was a family doctor of the King of Arab-Emirate. His second son is social work's consultant. His daughter is married with Bishop Paul of CNI church.¹¹⁰

Radhaben Sadashiv Jadav

Though her ancestors were from a village near Poona, Radhaben was born and brought up in Baroda as her father was working as a mission worker. Due to her father's job, they were given a quarter in the mission compound. After completion of her matric from the Web Memorial High School Baroda, she did PTC from Godhra Methodist Teacher's Training College.

After graduating from M.S. University of Baroda she did her B.Ed. from the Rajpipla College and joined service as a teacher in Godhra. In the year 1976 she became the principal of Godhra Methodist Primary Teachers Training College where she served till her retirement in 1992. She was loving, caring and encouraging the poor and orphan girls in the college whether they came from Christian non-Christian families. She was an

¹¹⁰ As per writings of Mr. Ratikumar Macwan

efficient administrator and admissions were decided on the basis of merits irrespective of caste, religion or any other consideration. She was strict, sincere, and hardworking and dedicated in her duties in the college.¹¹¹

Mrs. Mariyamben Dabhi

Mariamben Dabhi was born in Baroda where her father was and serving with the missionaries Mariyamben did her BA, B.Ed. and LLB. from Baroda and became a first Christian woman lawyer in the Methodist society. She is a bold, intelligent, good orator and spiritual leader. At present she is fighting cases for women's rights at Baroda courts where she has been practising law for last 38 years. Her husband, Mr. Laxmanbhai Bhabhor was a government officer who passed away several years ago.

Mariyamben has emerged as a community leader as she has been engaged with church activities for last 40 years. She had organised successful procession to in the city to oppose the Gujarat Government Anti-Conversion Bill in 1972. She delivered an inspiring and thought provoking lecture and strongly expressed her resentment towards the bill. Her attempts were successful and this anti-conversion was withdrawn by the Gujarat government.¹¹²

Dr. Arvinda Chandra

She was born in 1933 at Baroda to parents who were teachers in the Methodist Mission schools. She did her B.Sc.in Home science in 1954 and went to U.S.A. and studied at Harvard University for her M.A. degree. Back home, she started teaching at the M.S. University of Baroda. In 1965, she

¹¹¹ Interview with Ms. Radhaben S. Jadav on 22-9-06 Vadodara

¹¹² Interview with Mrs. Mariyamben Dabhi on 15-7-07 Vadodara

received Ford Foundations scholarship and again went to U.S.A. and did her Ph.D. in 1969. She served the university as a professor and Head of the Department and retired in 1993 as the Dean of the Home Science Faculty. She was the first Methodist Christian woman to get this opportunity to go to USA for her further studies. As an educationalist she stresses importance of girl's education she believes in the equal rights for men and women in the society. She is a woman with her own ideas and opposed following old traditional practices of the church.¹¹³

Dr. Anupama J. Shah

She was born in 1939 at Baroda. Her father was a principal at the Hill Memorial High School of Baroda. She married Mr. Jayant Shah who passed away in an accident at his early age. She did her M.Sc. in Home science from M.S. University of Baroda and went to USA for her Ph.D. at the age of 40. She was served the University a teacher, Head and Dean, Faculty of Home science. She is blessed with two daughters. Her eldest daughter is Ph.D. in Micro biology and is living in U.S.A. while her younger daughter Seema Shah is an automobile engineer and is running her own car Garage with the help of her mother.

Dr. Anupama Shah, being a research oriented person, is having very radical ideas she is opposed to some derogatory laws of the church as she also contests the interpretations of the scripture. She stresses the role of church in making people educated and wants to see positive development of the Christian community. She firmly believes in women empowerment and works for equality of women in all spheres.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Interview with Dr. Arvinda Chandra on 24.5.06 Vadodara.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Dr. Anupama Shah on 28-5-06. Vadodara.

Hardin Issac Vaghela

Hardin Vaghela was born in 1946, at Butler Memorial Hospital of Baroda. He did his SSC. and started working as a senior supervisor at a Textile Mill which was closed in 1996. His family are members of Sharon Church. He testifies that his grandfather was staying at Barukhel, a village in Baroda district at the time of famine when he was reserved in Godhra orphanage by the Methodist missionaries. Thereafter missionaries took him to UP at Moradabad where he served them as watchman or security guard of the village. During that time there were a number of attacks by nomads in the village. His grandfather used to beat those criminals to make them mend their ways. For many years he worked in such condition murdering some of them. But he was forgiven for three murders by the Britishers. Later he came back to Baroda and worked as a Butler of the British officers. Afterwards he was given a job of the chief gardener in the military hospital at Baroda. Mr. Hardin's father who died in 1995 was doing cycle repairing work in Baroda. One of Hardin's brother is a pastor while another lives in the U.S.A. Hardin has two daughters a son but he does not believe in taking S.E.B.C. benefits as a Christian.¹¹⁵

But despite these critical voices, which is a healthy trend for otherwise a non-critical community, the majority of the Methodist Christians feel proud of their destiny, even while they would like to forget their past. The developments of last few years have given them new hope of a forward march with their faith in Christ. They are equally proud of their Christian identity. This is very largely due to a strong historical legacy backed by constantly encouraging pastors and the existence of permanent church

¹¹⁵ Interview with Mr. Hardin Issac Vaghela on 28-12-07, Vadoadra.

buildings. Even though all have not uniformly prospered materially their faith has not been shaken as they have also started looking at economics disparities in socio-political terms. There is a slow but steady rise in the collective consciousness where a self critical outlook is playing a constructive role for the community.

The short biographical sketches of the community members of the church deal with the important phenomena of their past, and also give the vivid picture of their experience, faith and transformation which took place after embracing the Christianity. Majority of the biographies are greatly oblige the loving social and remarkable contribution of missionary activities and support in their lives. They also describe the life and experience of their parents and themselves, before and after coming into Christianity, which shows a drastic change during the period.

According to the biographies these are people who faced persecution, separation from their relatives and also discrimination while study in schools and in work place. On the other hand a number of people who rejected these views saying, "there was not much discrimination faced by other caste people due to good witnessed and education. Missionary institutes played a very vital role in the development of individuals and gave them the practical ways to live a reputed life as per the interviews concern.