

Chapter 1 Social Formation

Introduction

India is a multi-religious country. An analysis of the socially situated experience of the religions such as Christianity in the colonial period is part of an overall project to understand the nature of their transformation in the context of colonial modernity. During the colonial period, the emergence of print culture and culture of translation can be regarded as key milestones that developed with the active intervention of Christian missionaries in India and Gujarat. Indeed, it can be argued that Christian missionaries paved the way for the rise of print culture and the culture of translation. In this chapter, I will be exploring the social structure of colonial India as well as colonial Gujarat in the context of Christianity.

Keshari N Sahay argues that “Indian Christianity is almost as old as Jesus Christ and it is considered to be as much a part of the Indian scene as the temples, tigers, bazars and sacred animals” (Sahay,1). Scholars of Christianity often regard the history of Christianity in India as beginning with the arrival of Saint Thomas. Stephen Neil in his book *A History of Christianity in India*, Volume 1, says that when, in order to spread the teachings of Christianity, the apostles divided the world between them at Jerusalem, Saint Thomas was allotted India. He visited Muziris in Kerala in AD 52. Some historians say that the apostle Thomas first came to north India and some believed that he came to Kerala first. Regardless of these differences, it is clear that Christianity found its way to India in the first century AD (Neil, 24).

The European empire in India started at the end of fifteenth century when Vasco Da Gama discovered a sea route to India and landed at the port of Calicut in 1498 and following his arrival many European powers like Portugal, France, Holland, Denmark and Britain extended their control over different parts of India. On the other hand, Christianity emerged in India in 1st century AD but it was well established only at the end of the 19th century alongside the consolidation of colonial rule. Christianity and colonization both introduced many developments and changes in India.

Christians form the third largest religious community in India (Neil, xi). Sue Penney defines Christianity quite simply in her book *Christianity: Discovering Religions* Christianity is the religion of people who are Christians (Penney, 06). The followers of this religion derive their belief in God based on the teaching of the book The Holy Bible. Jesus Christ is the central figure in this book and he is considering as the savior so the word Christianity was derived after him. Christianity was spreading very fast. Robert Eric Frykenberg in his edited book *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross Cultural Communication since 1500* says the word “Christian” is a term of diminishment. Further he says “It is subject to something else and is subordinated to it. Things “Christian” - Christian missions, Christian individuals, Christian institution, or Christian activities - pertain to things concerned with or defined by faith in a person and in the gospel delivered to his followers (Frykenberg 4,5)”. So Christians are a group of people who are interconnected with the faith in God and following the words of Jesus Christ given in the Holy Bible. The belief and way of life everything in the life of Christians are surrounded by the words of Jesus Christ. They are following it and believing in it. They are following the gospels of Jesus Christ and connected with each other by this faith so they are called Christians.

The word dual identity refers Christians connected with both, belief and to the relationship with the person at the centre of that belief, Jesus Christ. Belief refers to the command of Jesus. The followers are commanded to spread the good news of faith which is a gift of God itself. This faith is that God creates all human being like him. All human being are imagined as a replica of God. They believe that God sacrificed his life for them only and he himself gives the power to spread this faith and enable everyone to connect with the ultimate God. This faith is at the core of what is meant to be a Christian mean. And so, Christianity can be read as a basic theological and historical term which has according to Frykenberg “consisted of individualised and institutionalised expression of such belief” (Frykenberg, 5). Christianity, in this perspective, is an ongoing continuous and still unfinished work within the heart and mind of all people and in every culture at different times.

In 1498, the Portuguese entered India. With their arrival, India faced the vast changes in culture, politics, and society. Their arrival inaugurated colonialism in India. They warred with many states in India. Between 1500-1515 the Portuguese governor Albuquerque won several victories in India. The victory in Goa became very important for them. After that, Goa became the centre for their rule in India. Portuguese entered in India for business as well as for spreading Christianity in India (Boyd, 5). At that time Portuguese government used diverse strategies to spread Christianity. They fomented Hindu-Muslim conflict (Boyd, 5). They razed some Hindu temples as well as some mosques of Muslims and built churches in their stead. No one could worship their own God except Christians on Portuguese land. Only Christians can could meet openly and worship in open spaces (Boyd, 6). They used many other strategies which compelled people to convert to Christianity.

Colonialism and Christianity in India

The history of India is marked, among others, by two momentous events: the arrival of colonialism and of Christianity. In what follows, I shall discuss Christianity and colonialism in India. The principal objective of the discussion is to study the relationship between Christianity and colonialism. Since the beginning of the modern age Colonialism and Christianity were tagged together as if these two terms are interrelated and signified the same meaning. Historians thought that these two terms were linked together. Historians strongly believed that since the 16th century Christianity has been an arm of Western Imperialism. K. M. Panicker, in his book *Asia and Western Dominance* describes the “Vasco da Gama period” in the following way: “The captain general’s ship flew on its mast a flag on which was painted a large cross of Christ and also carried cannon, symbols of the new power entering the East (Panicker, 28)”. He further commented on the causes of the failure of Christianity and its mission’s activities in Asia, feeling that, “the missionary brought with them an attitude of moral superiority and a belief in their own exclusive righteousness. The association of Christian missionary work with aggressive imperialism introduced political complications. That diplomatic pressure, extra-territoriality and sometimes support of gun-boats had been resorted to in the interests of foreign missionaries could not be easily forgotten.” (Panicker, 28). Hans-Ruedi Weber, in his book *Asia and the Ecumenical Movement 1895-1961* commented about the link between colonialism and Christianity; he argued that “no Christian can be proud of this combination of the cross and cannon, but it is a fact that the spiritual and earthly powers symbolized by the two have together fundamentally changed the course of Asian history” (Weber, 20). The combination of the cross and cannon symbolizes the positive as well as negative. So Christianity is a religion of the mixture of missionary work and

the aggressive capitalism. The early Christian Missionaries were known for their social work as well as in some areas Christianity has some dark issues like forcefully conversion. The early missionaries have many controversies regarding the social works like education, medicines as the same time about the forcefully conversion for example the forcibly conversion at Dang in Gujarat. I will discuss this further in the chapter.

In *Colonialism: A Primary Source Analysis*, Philip Wolny discusses that “Colonialism” comes from the word ‘colony’. A colony is a group of people living in a territory under the rule of a parent state (Wolny, xi). In Wolny’s opinion, a colony develops in a place where indigenous people have lived for generations with their own established culture and traditions (Wolny, xi). According to him, the age of exploration brought the European powers to many places which were strange to them. And eventually they tried to merge their government with native rule and rule over natives and become the locus of power. People living under the foreign rule often struggled to maintain their own traditions and culture. By 18th century British had established control over India (Wolny, xi). Melvin Eugene Page in his *Colonialism: An International Social, Cultural and Political Encyclopaedia*, Volume 1, says the term ‘colonialism’ occasionally came to signify the domination or assertion of control by a human group over other by illegitimate means (Page, xxi). He also gives some pseudo synonyms of colonialism and those are ‘imperialism’ and ‘empire’ (Page, xxi).

As before mentioned, the British colony came to India in the 18th century. The British East India Company, as Page says, ruled the region of Bengal indirectly from 1757 to 1773 and directly from 1773 to 1857. After 1857 it was ruled by British government (Page, 56). The British East

India Company established a major existence in Bengal in 1690 with the establishment of a factory at Fort William which is now in Calcutta (Page, 56). In that century Bengal emerged as the pivot of the company's commercial operation and the administrative centre of what would become an increasingly significant territorial empire (Page, 56). Page adds that "Of all religions, Christianity has been most associated with colonialism because several of its forms were the religions of the European powers engaged in colonial enterprise on a global scale (496)". He means to say that Christianity and colonialism are often closely associated because the three traditional categories of Christianity 'Orthodox (Thomas or Syrian), Catholic (Roman), Evangelical (Protestant) were the religions of the European colonial rulers. Some critics of colonialism is targeted Christianity because the doctrine of the religion were used to justify the actions of the colonists. For example, Toyina Falola in *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* says that there were some missionaries who believed that the agenda of colonialism in Africa was similar to that of Christianity (Falola, 33). Historians have looked the Christian missionaries in two ways, firstly the missionaries are considering as saints, exemplars of ideal for others and the second Christian missionaries by the middle of the twentieth century viewed differently. Instead of godly martyrs, historians describe missionaries as arrogant and rapacious imperialists.¹ The big issue which we already discussed before is the notion that Christianity is essentially European and that Europe has traditionally espoused the religion Christianity. Both the notions are not true because Christianity in the non-western world was already strong long before the Great Councils began to organize the institution of a Latin Christian Culture (Edward, 5). Another thing which is very important for this discussion is that by the time that Christianity in Europe was becoming the

¹ Andrews, Edward (2010). *Christian Missions and Colonial Empires Reconsidered: A Black Evangelist in West Africa, 1766-1816* Journal of Church and state. 663-691.

religion of the west its very dominance in the west was already beginning to recede and this withdrawal was largely because of the influence of the non-western world (Edward, 5).

Portugal, one of the pioneers in geographical discoveries was granted Padroado rights (Spiritual Patronage) by the Pope to evangelize, establish missions, appoint clergy and set up Christian congregations. The rights guaranteed to them exclusive dominance over the eastern territories. D. Arthur Jeyakumar in his book *History of Christianity in India: Selected Themes* has stated that “armed with the Padroado rights, the Portuguese colonial effort championed the cause of the Church more zealously than the others who followed them. The Portuguese made Goa, in the western coast of India the center of their Eastern Empire” (Jeyakumar, 04). Another aspect of the Portuguese power in India was their determination to evangelize and promote Catholicism that led to the imposition of Christianity. In this, the Jesuit missionary Saint Francis Xavier played a critical role, and to this day he is respected among the Catholics of India. Spreading Christianity in India became a significant part of the declared aims of the Portuguese colonial empire. Church priests and friars accompanied every political, military trade established by the colonial power in India. Therefore, Portuguese colonialism had a closer link with Christianity and its mission activities in India. Churches were built and missionaries were paid from the royal treasury (Jeyakumar, 04)

The Dutch East India Company had a relatively small colonial area in their control and they established trading posts in different parts along the Indian coast. They controlled part of the Malabar southwest Coast, Cochin, Cannanore, Kundapura, Kayamkulam, the Coromandel south eastern coast and Surat. They had no interest on spreading the Christian faith in India and they did

not have labor for the growth and development of the church. They considered evangelization and Christian mission politically and economically unprofitable as their main concern was on trade and commerce. Thus, their impact on India was very little.

Cyril B. Firth in his book *An Introduction to Indian Church History* gives an account of the Danish missionary. The Danish colonial power (Denmark and Norway) was able to acquire two settlements in India i.e. Tranquebar in the Southern part and Serampore in the North Eastern part in their course of trade. The connection between the Danish Colonial Power and Christian mission was very small and insufficient. In fact, the early Protestant missionaries were put into lots of difficulties and obstacles. Thus the Danish Colonial connection with Christian mission differed from person to person. For instance, the Danish missionary, Christian Friedrich Schwartz had closer connection with British in India than Danish. (Firth 05)

The British East India Company joined the fight in establishing their political power in India during the 17th century and eventually emerged as the most powerful colonial power in India by the middle of eighteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British domination extended over a large part of the Indian subcontinent. The British East India Company primary concern was trade and commerce rather than religious activities. C B Firth comments that ‘the company initially did not combine commerce and Christianity, as its religious interest was secondary but it was not reluctant in proselytizing activities.’ (Firth, 10).

J. P. Naik and Syed Nurullah have stated in their book *A Student's History of Education in India* that in 1659 the Board of Directors of the British East India Company resolved that “it was

their earnest desire by all possible means to spread Christianity among the people of India and allowed missionary to embark on their ships” (Naik and Nurullah, 24). In 1698, the British Parliament inserted the famous Missionary clause in the company's charter. "This clause directed the Company to maintain ministers of religion at their factories in India" (Sharp: 1920). The company had learnt to use Christian mission activities to its advantage whenever necessary. But the scenario changed when the company emerged as a political and economic power in India by the end of the 18th Century that lead them to give less importance to the spread of Christianity and declared religious neutrality as their policy.

The relationship between India’s Christians and questions about caste, conversion and colonialism have been always complex. Robert Eric Frykenberg in his edited book *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross Cultural Communication since 1500* says “Simplistic conflations between Christians and Colonialism, conversion or caste have almost invariably resulted from confusing complex forms of *dual identity* (Frykenberg, 02).”

This meant that the Indian Christians have had a dual identity, an identity formed with cultural ambiguity and ambivalence. Indian Christians accepted Christianity as a religion but they could not completely abandon their previous culture and this confusion created a confusion and ambiguity in their identity in India and Gujarat too. This confused identity led to a specific shaping of the new religion in colonial India as well as in colonial Gujarat. The dual identity created hybridity in society which gave birth to the new public and public sphere. Even the emergence of new religion and the struggle of being inserted into it introduced new cultures like print and the translation. Now further in my third and fourth chapter I will discuss how these two new cultures

changed the Indian and Gujarati society and what are the roles of Christian missionaries in this change.

The history of Christianity in India as I discussed before was a remarkable movement. Accounts of Christianity in India have suggested that Indian Christianity is older than Christianity in the West and has developed over many centuries. Pius Malekandathil, Joy L. K. Pachuau and Tanika Sarkar in their introduction to *Christianity in Indian History: Issues of Culture, Power and Knowledge* say Christianity has been always studied as the branch of Western imperial impact meditated by European missionaries. The two differences which have systematically marginalized the historical experiences of Indian Christians according to them are: “the first, accentuating supposedly constant collaboration between European missionaries and Western empires in India, and the second, focusing exclusively on the conversion efforts of missionaries” (Malekandathil, ix).

I have observed that most accounts of Christianity in India usually label Indian Christians as converts. They follow Malekandathil’s definition of conversion: “the shift from an older religious identity to a new one” (Malekandathil, x). It acknowledges dual identities. If we understand this meaning in context of colonial India the identity of Indian Christians in history is hyphenated rather than a completed one (Malekandathil, x). This will lead to the concept of hybridity.

The basic understanding of hybridity is mixture. Hybridity commonly means the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. Hybridity, shifting

self-states, multiplicity, shifting voices are the different meanings or the names of the hybridity according to Homi Bhabha (Bhabha, 8). The word 'hybridity' itself suggests the multiplicity. Sudipto Chatterjee in the introduction of his work *The Colonial Staged: Theatre in Colonial Calcutta*, says that hybridity records difference and sameness, mimesis and alterity at the same time (Chatterjee, 11). But he said that the notion of hybridity is complex and responds to the specificities of a geo-temporal location, which makes generalized theorizing about hybridity and tough project (Chatterjee, 11). If we see hybridity in the context of Indian Christianity, it is possible to argue that this religion and the British empire entered India at the same time. With this religion, British Empire came with a totally different culture compared to Indian culture that had existed prior. Before the arrival of the British, Indian Christians were distinguished from other groups by and large on the basis of religion. But with the arrival of the British, Christianity was tied to the political power. The people from India noticed this difference and tried to follow the new culture put in place by the British. We can say that there was an attempt to mimic them.

The Christian missionary who was embedded in English culture tried to teach not just the new religion but also a culture that he believed to be superior to native culture. Native people also imitated them and tried to be like them. The British culture also gave a further support to the inequality in the Indian culture which was already existing. The native people, by imitating new culture, tried to be equal to the bearers of the new culture, the missionary, but this was extremely difficult as they did not leave behind their own old Indian culture. As a result, the native converts found themselves in situation of sameness in difference. With the arrival of colonizers, the new religion and culture of Christianity intermixed with the culture of India where the religions like Hinduism, Islam, Jainism and others were prominent. Within Hinduism, the multiple castes carried

their own cultural practices. These, too got intermingled with the practices that came with the new religion. In short, hybridity came to be the defining feature of the Christian convert. In Bhabha's words, they could be considered the contact zone where many cultures mix and this led to the emergence a very new hybrid culture (Bhabha, 08).

According to Bhabha "because of the society was organized on the primary concept and the categories like 'class' or 'gender' the awareness of the subject positions- of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation comes and that populate any claim to identify in the modern world (Bhabha, 02)". Rather than thinking that it is theoretically innovative and politically crucial you can consider about the narratives of originary and initial subjectivities, and also be the need to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences (Bhabha, 02). So according to Bhabha.

These 'in – between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha, 02).

Because of this difference the collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are consulted. The questions like How are subjects formed 'in – between', or in the excess of, the sum of the parts of difference? are emerged (Bhabha, 2). And with these questions the 'language' of recent social crises also highlighted in the history of cultural difference (Bhabha, 2).

According to Bhabha the social articulation of difference is very much complex, to see as the authorize cultural hybridity that comes in moments of historical transformation from the minority perspective (Bhabha, 3). The 'right' to signify from the border of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition but it is depend on the incidents happened in the life of them who are in the minority. According to him the credit to the tradition because it gives us is a partial form of identification (Bhabha, 3). Bhabha says that the social differences are not simply given the experience through an already genuine cultural tradition but they are the signs of the emergence of community imagine as a project- at once a vision and a construction- that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political condition of the present (Bhabha, 4). The very act of going beyond he says is unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the present which in the process of repletion becomes displaced. The present can no longer imagined as a break or a bonding with the past and the future. Our close self- presence, our public image, comes to be reveled for its discontinuities, its inequalities, its minorities.²

In the new culture of Christians, we can find several constitutive parts. When we see the history of Christianity in India as well as in Gujarat we can see the inequality within equality. In Christianity in India, differences such as the hierarchical difference between castes as well as the difference differential treatment of races and regions came to be built into the formation of the Christian public sphere. In the many autobiographies of the Christian missionaries one common

² Introduction *The location of culture* P-4 Homi Bhabha

thing that can be noted was their encounter and faces the difference within the process of the spreading of the Christianity in the new area where the other religion was already ruled³.

Homi Bhabha in his “Of Mimicry and Man” discusses about a mimic representation of the British Constitution. He discusses mimicry as the one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. “Mimicry is the sign of a double articulation, a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha, 122). Mimicry is according to him the symbol of a dual identity, a very difficult strategy of change which assumes the other has the power of the self. In the process of mimicry, the person by imitating the self assumes that he has the same power. He behaves like the self. He imagines himself equal to the self. In the past the Indian society had many inequalities in which the lower people tried to acquire equal rights to the upper people; they had mimicked them and dreamed to have the power to be equal. In this new situation of colonialism, not only the lower caste but people from upper castes also tried to mimic British rulers and tried to be like them. In colonial Gujarat nearly all the early converts who converted their religion and became Christian were from upper castes like Brahmins, Vaishya etc. The early translations and printed tracts make the lower caste aware about the concept of liberation. Side by side, the presence of upper caste converts also served

³ *They Went to India: Biographies of Missionaries of the Disciples of Christ*, United Christian Missionary Society, 1948. Print

- Parkhe, Camil. *Contribution of Christian Missionaries in India*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2007. Print
- Bhurajibhai, Rev. Mannasheh. *Jivan ni Vate*. Noel Printers, Ahmedabad. 2007. Print
- Murphy, Edmond C., S. J. *The Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre: The Memoriale and selected Letters and Instructions*. Gujarat Sahitya Prakash. 1999. Print

as an encouragement leading to Dalit conversion. This not only give birth to the new religion but it also introduced the new mixed culture and new public.

The effect of mimicry according to Bhabha on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. Because of this the colonial states were forgot their own language of liberty and produced another type of knowledge of its customs. The use of words also changed in this context. Language is one of the other parameters which can measure whether the person is of upper caste or lower caste. So, to establish their equality to the upper caste within the new cultural space of Christianity, the lower castes started to mimic them, mimic their language their way of living and so on, to lay claim to the same power as that of upper caste Christians as well as the missionaries themselves. The mixture of British and Indian culture within the realm of Indian Christianity gave birth to the new hybrid culture.

In this form of colonial mimicry, we can say the subject tried to be like the self but this could not be done in totality. The example given by Bhabha is that of the education of women in colonial India; he shows how eastern women imitated the western women when they were given the right to education but this imitation had its own limitations (Bhabha, 122). In this regard the role played by nationalist thought in India is important. Bhabha further explains that in the time of colonialism this area like mimicry and mockery, the dual face of people challenges the civilizing ideology of the colonizers. The people were imitating the colonial people but not totally. They were trying to imitate them by taking their own personality and drawing from their own traditions on other hand so this created the dual personality. According to Bhabha is central to the idea of nationalism (Bhabha, 122).

The effect of this mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse according to Bhabha is quite disturbing. Because he said that because of the dream of post- Enlightenment civility their own language of liberty was forgotten and the new the other knowledge of its norms emerges. (Bhabha, 123) This the time when this double look threatens the reforming and the civilizing mission. Mimicry and mockery mean the same in some extent. They both are satirizes the world. Bhabha says that “It is from this area between mimicry and mockery where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double.” (Bhabha, 123)

Bhabha wanted to say that in the time of colonialism this area like mimicry and mockery, the dual face of people challenges the civilizing. The people were imitating the colonial people but not totally. They trying to imitate them by taking their own personality tradition on other hand so this creates the dual personality and according to Bhabha it is very danger for the nation.

In other word the hybridity refers to the group or the area when the people from the same culture and at the same time the people from the different comes and lives together. Homi Bhabha called it ‘the contact zone’, the place where different cultures are engage with each other. Bhabha used architecture as a reference, using the top story, the container room, and the stairwell to make associations between certain binary divisions such as higher and lower and black and white. He says that the stairwell as liminal space, in between the description of identity, becomes the process of symbolic communication, the connective tissue and constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white (Bhabha, 30). The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal

movement and passage that it allows, stop identities at either end of it from settling into primal division. And this passage between fixed identifications let make possible the cultural hybridity.

Colonial Christianity in Gujarat

Before we discuss the Christian encounter in colonial India further, it will be useful to offer a brief historical account of colonial Gujarat. Geographically the region of colonial Gujarat was divided into three distinct units namely, mainland Gujarat, Saurashtra (Kathiawar) and Kachchh. There is a substantial area that was under the rule of princely states, the princely state of Baroda under the Gaikwads being the most prominent. Mainland Gujarat included northern and southern parts of Gujarat while Saurashtra and Kachchh were western and coastal. Nalin Mehta and Mona G. Mehta in their article “Gujarat beyond Gandhi: notes on identity, conflict and society” offer a succinct account of and introduction to colonial Gujarat. They state that the region now known as Gujarat is a land of firsts. It is the land where the British encounter first began in 1608 when William Hawkins docked his ship in Surat (Gandhi, 1). A recent history points out that the earliest reference to the land now known as Gujarat probably goes back the eight- century work *Kuvalayamala*, which refers to Gujardesh (Gandhi, 2). The fifteenth- century poet Padmanabh used the term ‘Gujarati’ in *Kanhadde Prabandh* and by the seventeenth century, Premanand Bhatt in *Nalakhyan* could proclaim ‘Garvo desh Gujaratji-Gujarat is Majestic (Gandhi, 2).⁴ Colonial rulers have left their mark in Gujarat. Many accounts suggest that Surat in Gujarat was the oldest commercial Indian outpost for the British East India Company (Gandhi, 2). The Dutch, Armenian and English cemeteries in Surat point to a colonial era when European settlers come on Gujarat’s shore to do trade from as early as the 1600s. In the 16th century, Portuguese ran their commercial

⁴ For convenience, I will refer to this diverse area that was under diverse political rule as Gujarat.

empire from Gujarat. K. S. Mathew in *Portuguese and the Sultanate of Gujarat* suggests that Portugal was the first European power to arrive in Gujarat and after the battle of Diu and Treaty of Bassein, acquired several enclaves along the Gujarati coast, including Daman and Diu as well as Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The English East India Company established a factory in Surat in 1614.

Christianity, like in other places in India, arrived in Gujarat before the colonial encounter, and like in other places, came to be consolidated only after the firm entrenchment of colonial powers. According to Mathew there are many Christian denominations that have established their presence in colonial Gujarat such as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Malankara Orthodox Syrian. Today, the Catholic church in the state is governed from three ecclesiastical districts. These are the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ahmedabad, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Gandhinagar, the Catholic Diocese of Baroda, and the Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Rajkot. The Protestant church of North India has jurisdiction over Diocese of Gujarat. The Methodist Church in India, one of the largest Protestant Christian denominations, also has Diocese of Gujarat. The Salvation Army and the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church too can be found in the state. The Malankara Syrian Church in the state governed by Orthodox Diocese of Ahmedabad (Mathew, 8).

If we talk about the history of the early conversion in Hinduism to Christianity in Gujarat Robin Boyd, an Irish Presbyterian Historian opens his book *History of the Church in Gujarat* with Jourdain, who was a French missionary. He and his four friends arrived in Thana in 1321. Though Jourdain was from a Nestorian family, Franciscans were also interested in his preaching and invited him to Thana for preaching. His four friends were from Europe; Thomas from Tolentino,

James from Padua, and Peter from Vienna and Georgia from Russia. Georgia was a translator who knew many languages and he played an important role in popularizing Jourdain's preaching. In Thana Jourdain baptized more than ninety people (Boyd, 1). Then they were invited to Bharuch to preach. With the arrival of Jourdain and his friends Christianity was introduced in Gujarat where many religions were prevalent at that time (Boyd 1).

In Bharuch they stayed with a Muslim couple. The couple had difficulties with each other and so a Muslim religious leader who was impressed with these missionaries invited them to solve their problem. But in the discussion with Muslims, Thomas mistakenly called Prophet Mohammad "the son of a destroyer" and so in the anger the Muslims killed Jourdain's four friends (Boyd, 3). Jourdain took the dead bodies of his friends to Thana and buried them at St Thomas Church. Then he went back to Bharuch and within six months he baptized more than 150 people. He wrote a letter to the main office asking for more missionaries to be sent to Gujarat. In 1330 Jourdain was appointed as the bishop. In his letter from Thane, dated 28 January, 1324, Jourdain explains how he had been harassed by the Saracens, jailed, robbed of his habit and wrongly accused (Suria 8). There is very little information after Jourdain and before the Portuguese arrival in Gujarat. The Portuguese had quickly established Goa as the centre of their political and religious ambitions. In 1537 Portuguese entered in Gujarat by challenging the rule of the Sultan of Gujarat.

K. S. Mathew in *Portuguese and the Sultanate of Gujarat* said Portuguese had been in India almost a century prior to the arrival of the English (Mathew, 2). Gujarat, the most commercialized region which attracted the attention of the Portuguese from the beginning of the 16th century. At the end of a prolonged operation the Portuguese crossed the Cape of good hope and the undaunted

admiral of the Indian Ocean, Vasco da Gama attached at Melinde, on the East African coast (Mathew, 3). There they met few Gujarati merchants and under their guidance they resumed the further journey. At Calicut also they were given couple of Gujarati merchants for the guidance of how to do business in India (Mathew, 04). From their personal experience the Portuguese realized the importance of Gujaratis and Gujarat itself (Mathew , 4). After dealing with a crushing defeat on the combined forces in the vicinity of Diu in 1509 Francisco de Almeida made the entire Gujarat along with Malik Ayaz a tributary to the King of Portugal (4). Malik Ayaz the Governor of Diu and Junagadh in the name of sultan of Gujarat liberated the Portuguese captives of 1508 and permitted the Portuguese to have commercial relation with Diu (Mathew, 4).

In the discussion of the history of Christianity in Gujarat Armenians have a very important role to play. They had extensive trade links with Gujarat, and some had settled in places like Surat. They brought their religion with them. The Christian religion of Armenians was a mixture of the Portuguese Roman Catholic religion and the Protestant religion of the Dutch and British (Boyd, 10). The first Protestant missionary, Carapeit Chater Aratoon, was from Armenia.

In the sixteenth century, the British entered India. By 1600s the East India Company was well established in India. On 4 August 1608 English men entered Surat, the key port of India. All the trade and business of India was done from the port of Surat. In 1612 the English got permission for doing business in Surat, Khambhat, Ahmedabad, and Ghogha. British businessmen had their own religion like the Armenians. The British did not force other people to convert their religion and accept their religion at that point. Yet, there was a certain encouragement that was given to the Indians that they came into contact with to accept their religion. For instance, in 1618 when

they built a factory they built a small church beside it. The workers got together every morning at 6 o'clock and evening 8 o'clock for prayer. The priest who escorted them for prayer stayed at the Church of England (Boyd, 14). The Anglican priests everyday led prayers at the church as well as preached everywhere. They were also performing like marriages, baptisms, and death rites. The salary of those priests was fifty pounds (Boyd, 14). This salary was paid by East India Company. Rev. Henry Lord was the first priest in Surat came at 1624. The second priest was Rev. Patrick Copland. Rev. Ovington was the priest in Surat between 1690 and 1693. (Boyd, 14).

The next Christian missionary who came to Surat was Roman Catholic. In 1640 the French Capuchin religious priest started his missionary work. Priest Zenon Baugh and his two friends has started the preaching work at very firstly (Boyd, 5). In 1654 they build churches in Surat. Till 1651 Priest Zenon Baug do preaching in Surat then after priest Ane Ambrose of Pryuily came to Surat.

The most important personalities which emerge very brightly in the history of Christianity in Gujarat were William Carey and Carapeit Chater Aratoon. These both were considering as the two most influential people in 18th century. William Carey is considered as the father of preaching. He was the one who started the culture of translation in Christianity. He translated the Bible into Gujarati and almost all Indian languages. He undertook these translations with the help of some pundits (Boyd 5).

The Anglican mission did not have a proper centre till nineteenth century. There was no bishop appointed so there was no one to distribute work and all. But in 1813, the East India Company asked British Parliament to appoint a bishop and three Dickens. And the other request

was to allow the Christian missionaries to enter in the areas that they controlled and British Parliament accepted both the requests. Finally, in 1814, Thomas Fanshawe Middleton was appointed as bishop. He was appointed as the bishop of the Church of England. His work was to take care of the different chaplains who were appointed to take care of the new converts. In 1833 East India Company divided the Anglican domain into two dioceses, Mumbai and Madras. Then, they appointed Thomas Carr who was the Chaplain of Surat as first Bishop of Mumbai Diocese. With the hard work of Rev. Thomas Carr in 1850 the government accepted the request of giving the equal rights to the people who converted and accepted Christianity. It was a change from the earlier policy that held that those who converted their religion would lose all rights of their family and family property. With the spread of colonial administration, the post office and railways were established in the 19th century. Because of that many European, Anglican and Indian Christians could get government jobs. They could also get jobs associated with the army. In 1830 Bharuch was an army centre but afterwards it also became centre for civilians also. Many churches were consequently built there.

Surendra Asthavadi in his *Gujarat Na Christi Itihas Na Prarambhic Prushtho (The Initial Paper and List of Christianity in Gujarat)* said Other missionaries who play very significant role in the emergence of Christianity in 19th century Gujarat were Rev. Glasgow and Rev. Montgomery (Asthavadi, 25). According to Mannadeh Bhuraji in *Matina Patro ma Daivy Khajano* They preached at Rajkot, Porbandar and the Ghogha mission centre (Bhuraji, et al 11-12). Montgomery was unfamiliar with the Gujarati language so he needed a translator who helped him in understanding the language and making others to understand the preaching so Abdul Rehman Munsif from Porbandar became his translator (Asthavadi, 25). The translation of the preaching of

missionaries developed his faith in Jesus and Christianity. So, in 1843 he, with his wife Miriam Bibi, accepted Christianity and was baptized in Rajkot by Rev. Montgomery himself despite opposition from the people from Porbandar (Asthavadi, 25). Not only him but the early convertors who convert their religion in the early phase accepted a new religion because of the printed and the translated tracts and books. The books which helped them to understand the new concepts and to relate them to their own life so that they can change their life. I will discuss further in the next section of the chapter how these two cultures and a new religion play role in the question of caste.

Christianity and the Question of Caste

For the early missionaries there were two types of people in India; the first was the target people—the upper caste Hindus who were mostly unwilling to convert—and the second category was the ‘lower’ castes⁵ who were keener to embrace this new religion and culture. Lower castes had many limitations which they were forced to follow. They were not allowed to enter temples, they were not allowed to touch the statue of God, they had to maintain distance from the higher caste people. But when the missionaries came, and with the arrival of new religion, lower castes started to get a new identity which made them free of some of these limitations. Therefore, they were ready to accept the new religion from the early missionaries. As against this, the people from higher castes were not easily attracted to the missionaries as the social possibilities on offer were available to them already to a large extent. Another way of understanding the situation is to recognize that the life of upper caste people was the dream life for the lower caste people who they blindly wanted to mimic. Hence, that missionaries realized that converting upper castes could lead

⁵ Lower caste is here used as a nomenclature to designate subordinate castes in the 19th century and in no way represents a value judgement or description.

to the conversion of lower castes as well. So the upper caste people becomes the target public for the Missionaries who were here to spread Christianity which can be impossible without conversion because people here were already have a very old religion and culture to follow.

As elsewhere in India, in Gujarat too certain conditions in the Hindu system proved useful to the establishment of Christianity. In this context, the caste hierarchy and restrictions on the lower castes in Hindu society were significant. The missionaries offered a relief from these restrictions to attract the lower caste people to Christianity. They were allowed to enter the churches, worship Christ, and touch to the statue of God and so on. The social deprivation of Dalits resulted in their need for true social liberation. Dalits who were socially deprived and oppressed by the other higher caste people in the light of religious faith were naturally drawn to such a philosophy and they became the particular focus of the early missionaries in Gujarat. The missionaries who came to spread the new religion in India during the colonial period began educating people and for the first time Dalits could access learning.

James Staples, in his article, “We Are One Caste, One Disease, and One Religion” says that “conversion occurred largely as an act of expediency on the part of the converted- for material and social gain- and/or in response to coercion from a powerful agent of conversion (Staples 25)”. Several accounts suggest that the early converted Christians mostly changed their own religion into Christianity for the material and social benefits (Staples 25). Staples, for example, discusses leprosy in India and the role of Christian missionaries in leprosy. Keshari N Sahay in his work *Christianity and Cultural Change in India* says that Christianity in its history was known for the hospitals, education and a larger rich material life (Sahay 27). In the beginning Christian missionaries restricted their activities to purely evangelical work where they got little success

(Sahay,36). Sahay says later they understood that a productive way to attract the tribals was to assume the defence of their interests, importantly, of the question of their rights regarding land tenure and landlord services.⁶ By fighting the oppressors legally and helping the tribals and the lower caste people to gain their rights, missionaries attracted a large number of Christians. Sahay refers to Forrester who wrote an account of the conversion of the Depressed Classes to Christianity during 1860-1960 who says that in the 1860s and 1870s Christian missions primarily became aware of the fast rate that churches grew through group conversion among untouchable caste (Sahay, 30). This mass conversion happened specially in protestant denominations. This came as a surprise, as they mostly expected individual conversions, not group conversions. Because it came in caste groups rather than as individuals, this new experience was considered as “the mass movement” (Sahay, 30). Sahay quotes Forrester who held the view that before 1860 the missionaries focused their efforts totally towards the conversion of significant individuals from higher castes and looked upon them as agents of a “gradual penetration of Christianity to the lower sectors of society” (Sahay, 30). Sahay also mentions here that “on the whole the Roman Catholics have all along been fairly consistently favourable towards group conversion and have seldom put as much emphasis on the values of individualism and equality as have the Protestant (Sahay, 31)”.

The downtrodden tribal laborers slowly began to realize that they have at last found defenders in the missionaries who were more than equal to deceitful landlords and so they were ready to willingly listen to the preaching and the number of Christians thus increased day by day. There is also a new face of conversion showed by Sahay by saying that the Niyogi Enquiry Committee by the State Government of Madhya Pradesh in 1954 investigate about the allegation

⁶ Sahay, Keshari N. *Christianity and Cultural Change in India*. 1963: 36.

against Christian missionaries that they either forcibly or through fraud and temptations of monetary and other gains, convert illiterate aboriginals and other backward people (Sahay, 37).

The history repeats now also this allegation is the same against Christian Missionaries.

By fighting for the rights of lower caste people the missionaries realized that they could convert a substantial number of marginalized natives. The native people began to come to them in large numbers for consultations and to tell them long tales of misery (Sahay, 36). At Majhwari, a village in Sahabad district where a study was conducted as Sahay says “The Chamars⁷ had accepted the Christian faith as at the time of *Zamidary*, the people belonging to lower caste were ‘hated’ and socially discriminated by higher caste (Sahay, 37)”.

Further Sahay says that the children of the lower caste were excluded from educational facilities and so these castes were attracted to the Christian fold (Sahay, 37). There were many other reasons to accept the new religion; for instance, at the time of marriage of a girl they were forced to bear heavy expenditure owing to the dominance of dowry system but nobody was ready to give them loan because they did not have anything to pledge for the loan (Sahay 37). At this time the Methodist Missionaries came to these people and gave them material support and preached the religion to them. They opened new primary schools, and gave them opportunities to have the free education, free medical facilities and provided jobs to those who wanted it.

Here Sahay refers to M. N. Srinivas while arguing that: “...The opening of schools, hospitals and other welfare agencies by Missionaries in areas where Harijans and the tribals live,

⁷ The word is used by Sahay in his book *Christianity and Culture Change in India* so I used it. By using this term, I don't want to hurt any person or caste.

appears to the Hindus as only baits in the trap of conversion. The linking up of humanitarianism with proselytization has made the former suspect. Even very liberal, westernized Hindus feel this way... (Sahay, 38).”

Here as the discussion of the conversion and the public sphere in India is incomplete without discussing the ‘pariah problem’. Rupa Viswanath in the introduction of *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion and the Social in Modern India* discusses this. A pariah is someone that has been soundly rejected by their community. Pariah takes its name from a tribe in Southeast India. The pariahs were drummers, sorcerers, and servants who became untouchables in Indian society because of the unsanitary jobs they did. Viswanath discusses the way the pariah problem emerged and what happened after that. The pariah problem means the problem of the people whom nowadays call Dalits, untouchable castes and the descendants of unfree agricultural laborers. Viswanath quotes the first public statement of the problem, an editorial published in the presidency’s leading daily, *The Hindu* in June 1891, which announced the miserable condition of these castes (Viswanath, 22). It talks about how the Hindus did not accept them as part of community life and the intolerable treatment they received at the hands of higher caste Hindus (Viswanath, 22). She also mentions that the Hindus may think that the Pariah has no right to a better condition than which he is in now (Viswanath, 22). While talking about the current situation, Viswanath refers to the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s observation that “even after sixty years of constitutional and legal support (provided by the post-colonial Indian states) there is still discrimination against Dalits.... the only parallel.... (is) apartheid (Viswanath, 22). The book shows how during the thirty years from roughly 1890 to 1920 these ways of thinking emerged through the concerted efforts of “a caste state nexus” “a de facto alliance between British and

Indian officials and native high caste employers of Pariah labour to first elide and when it was no longer possible to downplay and avoid the problem that pariah posed” (Viswanath, 22).

The introduction of *Margins of Faith* Rowena Robinson and Marianus Kujur tells how Christian Dalit are still marginalized in Indian society. In the north Indian context what Schmalz refers to “how the distinction develops in the north Indian context, describing the Catholic and Chamar⁸ as respectively the *asli* (real, true) and the *Phasli* (trapped) Christians (Robinson and Kujur, 2). The *Phasli* Christians according to them is trapped between Catholic Christianity and untouchability. The Dalit Christians, it is also pointed out, have been marginalized in scholarship which still focuses on the sphere of caste Christianity. Further, they discuss the condition of Dalit Christian. Before conversion they face discrimination from the higher Hindu caste and after conversion also they get discriminated against from the upper caste Christians (Robinson and Kujur, 2). There are many layers in the marginality of Dalits. Their marginality makes them the target of practices of discrimination. As M. Ashok Kumar and Robinson point out, caste Hindus in the countryside do not differentiate between converted Christian Dalits and Dalits. All Dalits experience the same treatment from the upper caste (Robinson and Kujur, 3). Mosse shows us the dominance of upper caste in Church hierarchy does not sit well with converted Dalit Christians. S. M. Michael in the same volume shows how the sitting arrangements for Dalits are made in Churches. Dalits are asked to sit on the floor though raised seating was already available and there are some places where there are separate cemeteries and hearses for dead bodies. In some places two queues are formed for receiving holy communion. The Indian state also discriminates against Christian Dalits (Robinson and Kujur 101). They are not eligible for the reservation which other

⁸ The term used in *Margins of Faith* by Rowena Robinson and Marianus Kujur

Dalits receive. In some states the Dalit Christians are placed in the category of Other Backward Classes. In the Indian context many authors in this text point out that “60 to 70 per cent of Indian Christians have Dalit roots (Robinson and Kujur 5) ” This indicates the caste character of 19th century religious conversion in India.

The early Christian missionaries in their biographies clearly mention their difficulties which they experienced when they came to the new country, faced with the new land and a varied culture. One of the common problems which almost all missionaries faced that was the language barrier. To overcome this barrier, Rev. Clarkson and some other missionaries with the help of Indian pundits prepared some grammar books to help the other missionaries survive in the new culture. This led to the development of a print culture which carried a uniquely Christian character. Not only print culture but the culture of translation which are the main components of my study in the further chapters. The missionaries prepared the grammar books as well as some other books which not only help the Christianity to be flourish but those printed and translated material helps the society to develop in every way.