

## Christian Missionary Activities in Rajputana: Some Social Aspects

N. Benjamin\*

### Abstract

*Christian Missionaries became active in erst-while Rajputana in the British period. They established several missions which were involved in, among others, social welfare activities. They were pioneers in establishing modern schools and medical facilities. They played an important role in famine relief work and fought against opium consumption. They were concerned with the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society. They established churches and in effect introduced a new style of architecture. They have been accused of converting the local people to Christianity. Many people believe that on balance their role was positive.*

Key words: Missionary Activities, Social Aspect, Rajputana

### Introduction

During the British Period, Christian Missionaries became active in Rajputana. In 1858 the United Churches of Scotland Mission Board decided to start evangelical work in Ajmer-Merwara. Rev. Shoolbred and Rev. Thomas Blair Steele volunteered to do it. In 1859 they reached Bombay where they met Rev. John Wilson. Steele died on the way and Shoolbred reached Beawar on March 3, 1860. He opened a school there. He and other missionaries visited the princely states also. Mission stations were opened in almost all the big cities<sup>1</sup>.

In course of time, other missions followed. By 1921, seven missions were working in Rajputana. Their names, years of establishment and chief areas of work were<sup>2</sup>: (i) United Free Church of Scotland - Beawar (1860), (ii) Church of England Societies - Kherwara (1880) and Bharatpur (1902), (iii) Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America - Jaipur and Bikaner (1882) and Bharatpur (1892), (iv) Roman Catholic Mission Church, Ajmer (1892), (v) Baptist Mission, Dholpur (1899), (vi) Canadian Presbyterian Mission, Banswara (1914), and (vii) Irish Presbyterian Mission, Abu Road and Mt. Abu. These and other missions made an impact on the socio-cultural life of Rajputana. This paper seeks to discuss it.

### I. Education

The Missionaries brought modern education in Rajputana. R.N. Chowdhury says, "Education in Rajasthan suffered from many drawbacks such as paucity of funds and reluctance of the rulers to allocate adequate sums for its expansion - the major States of Jaipur, Udaipur, Bikaner and Kota spent less than 1.4 per cent while Jodhpur only .89 per cent annually of the total revenue of these States. Hereditary appointments, indifference of the nobles and Jagirdars, conservative outlook of the higher castes, dearth of qualified teachers, shortage of text-books, imperfect system of inspection, and indifference of the public were other hurdles on the path of development and expansion of education in the State"<sup>3</sup>. H.J. Manglani adds, "The credit for

---

\*N. Benjamin, Visiting Fellow, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004. Email: benjaminnaseeb@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Solomon A.D. Rozario, *Living witness Diocese of Rajasthan Silver Jubilee Celebration (29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1981 to 29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2006)* (Ajmer, 2006), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Census of India, 1921. Volume 24, Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara. Part I. Report by Brij Jiwan Lal Sharma* (Calcutta, 1923), 107. Hereafter *RBJLS*.

<sup>3</sup> R.N. Chowdhury, "Growth of education in Rajasthan in the nineteenth century," *Rajasthan History Congress: Proceedings of the third session Udaipur - 1969* (Jaipur, 1970), 157. Hereafter *RHC*.

introducing modern education in Rajasthan goes primarily to the British Government and secondly to the Christian missionaries”<sup>4</sup>.

The first modern school was established in Ajmer and perhaps in Rajputana by an English missionary. The year of its establishment is not known. It was supported by the Government which gave a monthly subsidy of Rs. 300/-<sup>5</sup>. Subsequently, the United Presbyterian Mission established five Anglo-Vernacular schools at Ajmer, Beawar, Nasirabad, Deoli and Todgarh. In addition, it founded vernacular schools for boys and girls<sup>6</sup>.

The Mission records refer to the establishment of several schools by the Missionaries. Mission Young Primary School was founded at Nasirabad as early as 1850, followed by the Husband Memorial Higher Secondary School at Ajmer in 1862. The Mission Boys' Primary School and Mission Higher Secondary School were both started at Nasirabad in 1865. Mission Girls' Secondary School was founded at Beawar in 1900. The Sharansthan Utch Madhyamic Vidhalaya was founded at Banswara in 1915 and the Mission Boys' Middle School at Beawar in 1921<sup>7</sup>. In 1940 the Mission Girls' Primary School and Mission Girls' Secondary School were established in Ajmer. Roman Catholic schools were also set up.

In 1921, the Census officials collected the following information regarding the missionary activities<sup>8</sup>: (i) Presbyterian Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland had vernacular schools attached to every mission station and Anglo-Vernacular schools at six cities. Besides, it had boarding houses – two each for boys and girls. It had an industrial home for women in Beawar; (ii) Church Missionary Society maintained a central school in Kherwara, eight schools in Bharatpur and village schools in six places. It carried out teaching work in the *zenanas* where about 100 women were under training. It tried to impart education in industrial work but without success; (iii) Methodist Episcopal Mission of America ran vocational schools for the economic and social betterment of the converts. It had four primary schools. It conducted boarding schools for boys and girls in Ajmer; (iv) Roman Catholic Mission maintained four village schools in Ajmer-Merwara and Kota; (v) Baptist Mission had a school for Hindu and Muslim girls; (vi) Canadian Presbyterian Mission opened two elementary schools for Bhils in Banswara; and (vii) Irish Presbyterian Mission ran a primary school at Abu Rd.

Apart from Ajmer-Merwara, the Missionaries started schools elsewhere. Rev. John Traill and Rev. George MacLister did useful work at Jaipur in the late nineteenth century<sup>9</sup>. The United Free Church of Scotland Mission had a school for girls in Jodhpur since 1902.<sup>10</sup> Other princely states had the benefit of education because of the Missionaries. The two most conspicuous Mission schools which continue till date are St. Patrick's Vidhya Bhawan in Jodhpur and St. Xavier's School in Jaipur. They are both run by the Roman Catholic Mission.

St. Patrick's School was established in 1937 by the Mission Sisters of Ajmer at the invitation of Maharaja Umed Singh. It started with 35 girls and three Mission Sisters. In those days the education of girls was uncommon and the problem was compounded by the *purdah* system. Girls came to the School in horse-carriages which were covered with curtains. The girls were not left outside the gate of the School but brought inside it. The popularity of the School grew and its students made a mark on social life. One of the alumni of the School held the position of Kamla Nehru Hall for Women of the Jai Narayan Vyas University, Jodhpur. Sylvester Johnson rightly

<sup>4</sup> H.J. Manglani, "Growth and development of modern education in Jhalawar," *RHC 1977* (Jodhpur: RHC, 1978), 87.

<sup>5</sup> "Gazetteers of Ajmer-Merwara," *The Rajputana Gazetteer*, Vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1879), 71. Hereafter RG.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>7</sup> *Diocese of Rajasthan Ekta Utsav Celebrations 40 years of unity witness and service of the Church of North India* (citation not given), 24. Hereafter *Ekta Utsav*.

<sup>8</sup> *CNI St. Andrew's Church Jaipur* (Jaipur, 2001), 4.

<sup>9</sup> *RBJLS*, 107-9.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Holbein Hendley, *General medical history of Rajputana* (Calcutta, 1900), 169.

comments, "The various alumni of the school spread over in diverse fields and many shouldering important responsibilities vouch for the high standards the school has maintained over the years"<sup>11</sup>.

Secondly, in 1942 Sir Mirza Ismail, the dewan of Jaipur, visited St. Xavier's School, Patna which had been started by the Jesuit Missionaries. He invited them to the city. Fr. Frank Loesch, the Jesuit Superior, accepted the offer. But the School had its origin in 1941. Its initial name was St. Mary's and it was started by two French priests - Fr. Arthur and Fr. Ignatius. But Fr. Arthur, the principal of the School, had to leave Jaipur for reasons of health. As the Bishop of Ajmer had no church personnel to replace him, the School faced the prospect of closure. Thereafter, it was given the present name. Its Souvenir informs us, "For thirteen years Fr. Pereira gave encouraging leadership to the all-round development of the school, and when he left at the end of 1969, St. Xavier had not only become the premier boys school in Jaipur but one of the leading schools in the country"<sup>12</sup>. The School's alumni include Rohit R. Brandon, former IAS and Registrar, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. He recollected, "The books found in school library, like L. Mookerjee (Indian History), Percival Spear (Modern India), Collin Davies (Atlas), Vincent Smith (Mughal India) etc., were helpful even for the Civil Service Examination and still adorn my personal library"<sup>13</sup>.

The Missionaries spread education, specially among the native Christians. This is proved by the Census Report of 1901 for Ajmer-Merwara. The numbers of religion-wise literate persons (men and women) per 1,000 were 52 Hindus, 54 Muslims, 303 Jains and 585 Christians. R.C. Bramley remarked, "The Christians naturally have the highest proportion of literates." Moreover, among the literate Christians, the highest proportion was of those literate in English, i.e., 379 males and 398 females per 1,000 persons. The proportion was 229 males and 105 females in Hindi, 139 males and 65 females in Urdu, and 338 males and 346 females in other languages. The Muslims followed the Christians a long way down in the proportion of English literates, then came the Hindus and Jains<sup>14</sup>. B.L. Cole wrote after some years that when it came to literacy in English, "The standard is high among Indian Christians and the small number of Sikhs and Parsis"<sup>15</sup>.

The Missionaries regretted that the progress of village education in India was not as good as it should have been. Hence, they appointed a commission under the chairmanship of A.G. Fraser to inquire into the matter. It toured British India and made observations for it as a whole. Many of them would be applicable to Rajputana. It found "unsatisfactory conditions" and attributed them to a shortage of Christian workers, indifference of the parents, poverty of the people, absence of public opinion in favour of education, faulty methods of education and oppression of people inclined to educate their children. The Commission wrote, "Outcastes who have the temerity to send their children to school - even if the school be in their quarter, so that there cannot be complaint of defiling caste children by contact - find themselves subject to such violence and threatening that they yield and withdraw their children. If the outcastes want, not mere education, but Christian teaching, the persecution, for a time is all the fiercer, for the caste people are afraid that if the outcastes become Christians they will no longer be available for menial service"<sup>16</sup>.

Lady Missionaries showed interest in the education of girls. Mrs. Drynan worked for the spread of primary education. Ms. D.M.P. Martin imparted training for vernacular education. Ms. Annie E.I. Fisher worked for higher education<sup>17</sup>. The Missionaries faced many problems. There was the fear among the parents that their children ran the risk of conversion. Secondly, the custom

<sup>11</sup> Sylvester Johnson, "Christians of Jodhpur," *Souvenir Third Jodhpur Christian Convention Billy Graham Evangelistic Association 6-10 Nov. 1996* (Jodhpur, 1996), 52.

<sup>12</sup> 1941-1991 50 Xavier Jaipur Golden Jubilee Souvenir (citation not given), unpaginated.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Census of India, 1901 Ajmer-Merwara*, vol. 2, part 1, Report by R.C. Bramley (Ajmer, 1902), 83. Hereafter Bramley's *Census Report*.

<sup>15</sup> *Census of India, 1931 Ajmer-Merwara Report and Tables*, Vol. 26 by B.L. Cole (Meerut, 1932), 65.

<sup>16</sup> *Village education in India The report of a commission of inquiry* (London, 1922), 18-22.

<sup>17</sup> Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, 31.

of early marriage prevented the continuation of education. Thirdly, seating the high and low caste girls in the same class room was a formidable problem. In some cases it led to the withdrawal of high caste girls from schools. The Missionaries tried to open separate schools for Muslims and sweepers but the effort failed. Fourthly, there was a shortage of qualified teachers. In 1869, a school at Pushkar was closed because the teacher died. Finally, the public attitude towards the education of girls was indifferent. The school at Taragarh was closed because of the dearth of students. Nevertheless, as R.N. Chowdhuri points out, "It must be admitted that without the initiative and enterprise of the Missionaries, the origin and growth of female education in Rajasthan would have been considerably delayed. It had also a direct impact not only on the rulers of the neighbouring States but also on the other communities like the Arya Samaj and the Jains who promptly came forward to provide educational facilities to the girls despite their traditional conservatism and orthodox outlook"<sup>18</sup>. But G.C. Verma takes a contrary view about the role of the Missionaries. He talks about their opposition to the establishment of government schools around 1880 and remarks, "... the Missionaries often twisted facts and departed from truth to achieve their objectives. There was no wonder, therefore, if they resented the opening of Government schools where only secular education was given. And if they could oppose the establishment of Government schools, they could with greater force and vehemence, resent the opening of schools by other private agencies. That may perhaps be one of the reasons why we do not come across any private school in Rajasthan till 1881. It may be a mere coincidence but it is a fact that the first private school in Rajasthan – besides the Mission schools- was the Dayanand Ashram School opened at Ajmer in 1881"<sup>19</sup>. Thus, while Chowdhuri thinks that the Arya Samaj and others entered the field of education because of the Missionaries, Verma holds that they came in spite of them. Verma mistakenly bases his opinion on the interaction of Shoolbred with the Government. But Shoolbred was only one of the Missionaries and to generalize for all of them on this basis is not fair. Colin S. Valentine, another Missionary, in his evidence before the Education Commission, 1884 said, "...the wealthy Native gentlemen should be encouraged to endow colleges and schools for themselves, and that the Government, on the other hand, should be most careful as trustees to administer such endowments in the way in which the donors intended." He accounted for the popularity of Missionary institutions. The education which they imparted led to the development of intellectual and moral faculties of the pupils. The teachers were industrious and painstaking. The common people trusted the Missionaries more than other Europeans. High class natives appreciated the truthfulness, sincerity, scholarship, etc., of the Missionaries<sup>20</sup>.

## II. Medical facilities

Treatment of the sick was generally done by unqualified and uneducated persons in Rajputana when the Missionaries arrived. Foremost among them were the voids or Hindu physicians of whom very few were learned. Secondly, there were Jain and other priests who depended on Sanskrit authors. Thirdly, Hakims or Muslim physicians practiced the Yunani or Greek and Arabic systems of medicine. Fourthly, Jarrahas or barbers bled, extracted teeth, applied the actual cautery and bandaged limbs in case of fracture. Fifthly, Sathyas or couchers practiced reclination of the crystalline lens in cases of cataract. Sixthly, Bairagis or Hindu sadhus, Muslim fakirs, women and others claimed to drive away diseases with charms. Seventhly, pansaris or druggists had shops where voids sat to do business. Besides, people resorted to temples, made pilgrimages, etc., in search of cure.<sup>21</sup>

The first Medical Missionary who came to Rajputana was Dr. Colin S. Valentine. He reached Beawar in 1862, followed by Andrew Steele in Todgarh in 1864. Others were Robert Gray, John Husband, James Sommerville, George Maclister, James Shepherd, William Clark, William Huntly, J. Shaw McLaren, Theodor Chalmers, W. Bruce McQueen, K.S. MacDonald

<sup>18</sup> R.N. Chowdhuri, "The genesis of female education in Rajasthan," *RHC 1974* (Jodhpur, 1975), 35-39.

<sup>19</sup> G.C. Verma, "Government-Missionary educational controversy in Rajasthan," *RHC 1968* (Jaipur, 1969), 173.

<sup>20</sup> *Education Commission. Report by the North-Western Provinces and Oudh Provincial Committee; with evidence taken before the Committee, and memorials addressed to the Education Commission* (Calcutta, 1884), 362.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Holbein Hendley, *op. cit.*, 39.

Smith, Donald Robertson, etc<sup>22</sup>. Although many of them started work in Ajmer-Merwara, they moved to the princely states. The first qualified medical woman to come to India from the west was Clara Swain from the US. She reached Bareilly in 1870. The Raja of Khetri invited her in 1885 to take up the post of a physician for his Rani and her ladies<sup>23</sup>. Ms. Joan Helen Grand, Jean Helen Grant, Susan D. Campbell, Grace Giffan, Beatrice Garvice, Jessie Hawkes Worthsmith, Agnace McMichael, C.D. McLand, E.E. Emslie, M.P. Mair, Maria Mowat, Margaret McNaught, Jean MacReady, Jean A. Gemwell, M.D. Hardie, Irene Glass, R.J.M. Gilruth, Nancy J. Logan, etc., were other lady Medical Missionaries. There was an acute shortage of nursing sisters. Many Missionaries worked as nursing sisters. They included Ailie Smith, Jane MacReady, Isabella Anderson, Jean G. Dingwell, A. Nora Dunlop, Margaret McLean, Jennifer Nical, etc<sup>24</sup>.

In 1872 the Rajputana United Presbyterian Mission opened a dispensary in Ajmer under John Husband. In 1896 a new building was constructed by the Mission from the funds collected in Scotland. The new Hospital had 20 beds. Nearly 21,000 new cases were treated as out-patients and 135 in-patients were admitted. The cost of maintenance, wages, medicines, etc., was Rs. 2,253. This was in 1897<sup>25</sup>. The work of the Hospital evoked much appreciation. J.W. Watson wrote in 1922-23 that it was one of the seven mission hospitals and dispensaries in Rajputana and two lady doctors were attached to it. He added, "They and their subordinates have done much good work in the Hospital and in Zenana work"<sup>26</sup>.

The Mission Hospital in Jodhpur was opened on July 14, 1885 as a small dispensary at the instance of James Sommerville. It was extended in 1900 and had some 40 beds. The Missionary-in-charge and his assistants visited people at their homes in and around the city, and sometimes toured the districts. Around 30,000 cases were treated and 900 operations were performed every year. The yearly expenditure came to about Rs. 2,200. It was entirely borne by the Mission. For Sommerville's good work, the Government of India awarded him the *Kaiser-i-Hind* medal<sup>27</sup>.

Subsequently, other hospitals were established like the Shepherd Memorial Hospital in Udaipur, Mission Hospital in Nasirabad, Central Hospital and Dispensary in Banswara, etc. In those days tuberculosis was a widely prevalent and fatal disease. The American Episcopal Mission ran a sanatorium for women in Tilaunia and another for men in Ajmer. They were mainly used by the Christians. There were some non-Missionary hospitals where the missionaries rendered services. One of them was Lady Hardinge Memorial Hospital, Dholpur which was under a Baptist Missionary. However, the common people hesitated to accept the medicines prescribed by the Missionaries. Hindus feared that the European drugs would contaminate them. Even when cholera raged, the people urged "Give us dry medicine, as your liquids will break our caste"<sup>28</sup>. They accepted western medicines gradually.

### III. Social Life

The Missionaries made a healthy impact on social life. Zenana Missions composed of lady Missionaries worked among the women for their general upliftment and evangelization. The first Zenana Missionary was Ms. I.R. Alexander who came to Beawar in 1867<sup>29</sup>. Zenana Missionaries

<sup>22</sup> CNI St. Andrew's Church Jaipur (Jaipur, 2001), p. 4 and Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, 41-43.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret I. Balfour and Ruth Young, *The work of medical women in India* (London, 1929), 87.

<sup>24</sup> Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, pp. 31 & 44-46.

<sup>25</sup> P. Durrell (with additional notes by D. Ffrench-Mullen), *A medico-topographical account of Ajmer, Rajputana* (Calcutta, 1900), 47.

<sup>26</sup> J.W. Watson, *Annual report on the sanitation, dispensaries and jails in Rajputana for 1922 and on vaccination for the year 1922-23* (Calcutta, 1926), 9. Also see subsequent reports for such remarks.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Holbein Hendley, *op. cit.*, 173-74. Also see Regina Sudhir-Alexander, "Dr. James Sommerville: A cameo," and Neeraj Benjamin, "Mission Hospital at Khanda Falsa: Breaking the ice," *Marks on sands Three Christian institutions* (Jodhpur, 2007), 5 & 7.

<sup>28</sup> R.N. Chowdhury, "The establishment of the United Presbyterian Mission in Rajasthan (1860-72 A.D.)," *RHC 1968* (Jaipur, 1969), 155. Hereafter "United Presbyterian Mission".

<sup>29</sup> Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, 27.

were wives of Missionaries who came with their husbands as well others. In the late nineteenth century, child marriage was common. The Missionaries exercised their influence against it. In 1891 there were only two married Christian females in the age group of 10-15 years in Ajmer-Merwara<sup>30</sup>. In the early twentieth century there was a mission industrial home in Beawar for teaching embroidery and needle-work to women<sup>31</sup>.

The Missionaries worked for relief from natural calamities. In 1868-70 locusts and plague afflicted Rajputana and they tried to alleviate suffering. Brij Kishore Sharma writes, "A large number of unclaimed orphans were there on each famine. Either the parents of the children became victim of the famine or sometimes children were abandoned by the poor."<sup>32</sup>. In 1968-69 rains failed and the entire autumn crop (the chief crop) was almost entirely lost. In some parts water was so scarce that it was impossible for the cultivators to keep the cattle, or for the traders to import grain on bullocks and carts or any other means except by camels. Communication of Rajputana with other territories was cut off. The only recourse open to the people of the native states was emigration. Relief works were opened in large towns and cantonments, and many chiefs tried to give employment to the people. But they had neither the resources nor the organisation to do it on a large scale. The British Government opened relief works in Ajmer but only skilled and able-bodied labourers were employed. Hence, famine victims who needed help the most were unable to earn a living<sup>33</sup>. The Missionaries rescued many of them. They organized famine relief works at Balakpura and took responsibility to keep over 500 famine orphans<sup>34</sup>. They distributed grains to more than 1,600 people daily and the Mission incurred a debt of Rs. 9,614. It also dug two tanks, one each in Ajmer and Ashapur. The latter was founded by a Scottish missionary named William Martin. The Missionaries planted a colony of Christian farmers (four miles from Nasirabad) from among the famine orphans in their care in 1872. The village thus formed was called Ashapura (Town of Hope) for a new hope to its residents. About 700 bighas of land was given by the villagers as a gift, while 600 bighas were purchased. The tank was constructed at a cost of Rs. 2,400. The Missionaries intended it to be the abode of righteousness<sup>35</sup>.

The worst famine in living memory occurred in Rajputana in 1899-1900. Describing it, Miss Marks wrote, Horrible stories come to us... of bodies by the way-side being devoured by vultures, jackals, and dogs.... No pen can exaggerate the suffering. Families separate to seek food, never to meet again. Children are beaten and turned from their homes. Wives are thrust out with two or three children clinging to them. The aged, the crippled, and the blind are left by the road-side to die<sup>36</sup>.

It aroused the sympathy of the Missionaries and they began to work for the relief of the sufferers. Referring to it, Kamala Maloo writes that the Presbyterian Missionaries of Udaipur gave private charity during the great famine of 1899-1900<sup>37</sup>. But this statement is incomplete. The relief work which they did was much more extensive. R.H. Lesser writes, But whatever the cause, the Fathers and Sisters moved out among the famine victims helping wherever they could, instructing and baptizing the dying, and rescuing the children who could live. The boys were sent to Jaipur and the girls to Ajmer and Mhow where new orphanages were started for them. When they arrived they were skin and bones with distended stomachs from the mud they had eaten to assuage their fierce pangs of hunger. They were either naked or clothed in rags and infested with vermin and all

<sup>30</sup> Bramley's *Census Report*, p. 65.

<sup>31</sup> *RBJLS*, p. 242.

<sup>32</sup> Brij Kishore Sharma, "The socio-economic consequences of the famines in Rajasthan during 1868-1900," *RHC* (1984), vol. 14 (Jodhpur, 1986), 88.

<sup>33</sup> *Report of the Indian Famine Commission .Part I. Famine Relief*. Parliamentary paper no. C.-2591 of 1880, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Brij Kishore Sharma, *loc. cit.*, 88, *Ekta Utsav*, 58 and Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> R.N. Chowdhury, "United Presbyterian Mission," *op. cit.*, 152 & 156-57. Also see E.D. Edwin, "A brief note on missionary work in Ajmer, Nasirabad and Ashapura" in *Shatabdi Samaroh C.I.N. 1900-2000 Samarika* (citation not available), unpaginated.

<sup>36</sup> J.E. Scott, *In famine land observations and experiences in India during the great drought of 1899-1900* (New York & London, 1904), 127.

<sup>37</sup> Kamala Maloo, *The history of famines in Rajputana (1858-1900 A.D.)* (Udaipur, 1987), 227-28.

kinds of skin diseases. As soon as they arrived they were given a shower bath and treated with black ointment to rid them of itch.... They were also clothed neatly<sup>38</sup>.

Ajmer was the chief centre of Missionary activity. J.E. Scott writes, "It was a mart for our grain for the hungry, and a storehouse for clothing for the naked, and a dispensary from which medicines were dispensed to the sick, an asylum for the widows and orphans, and a rest-camp for waifs rescued and carried to other places of refuge"<sup>39</sup>. A few examples will suffice to illustrate missionary philanthropy. A famine committee was formed in Ajmer which temporarily organised relief work in Rajputana. This was made possible through the munificent contributions of Christian givers throughout the world under the direction of Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society, American Sialkot Mission Committee, *Christian Herald*, *Christian*, *Indian Sunday School Journal*, etc. From all sources over Rs. 2/- lakhs passed through the hands of the committee for the relief of the starving poor<sup>40</sup>. Scott writes, "Thousands of homeless, naked, and starving ones wonder about from village to village in search of work, water, and food.... We continue to take in widows and orphans, and have no difficulty in finding homes for those we cannot keep permanently. Our kitchens, where, for months, we have fed several hundred people daily, are kept up, and will be so long as there is need for them. We are distributing as much clothing as possible. We gave a contract to-day for 6000 blankets for the poor. The famine people are weaving the cloth, we are furnishing the thread and paying them enough for the weaving to buy their food"<sup>41</sup>.

Missionaries organized free doles for the famine victims. They organized relief kitchens in Tilaunia, Naraina, Phulera and Sojat Road where famishing people were fed. Rev. Dennis Clancy gives a graphic account of one such kitchen, "For hours before the time to give out the food the people gathered in a great crowd around the gate.... When the gates were finally opened, the people rushed madly in.... When those who had tickets were fed, what was left was given to those on the outside.... Most of them bring an earthen dish of some kind to receive the food. Sometimes people come without dishes, and to receive the food make a hole in the ground and put a cloth over it. They pick up every morsel of food given them. They get food but once a day, at most"<sup>42</sup>.

About 7,400 bags of maize were received from *Christian Herald* corn-ship *Quito* from which the kitchens were supplied and grain shops were opened at convenient places where the very poor could get gratuitous daily dole and others purchase for a nominal price.<sup>43</sup> Scottish and American missions at Ajmer established cheap grain shops, and American maize was principally sold at them.

Children drew the attention of the Missionaries who were told that desperately hungry. Father Fortunatus walked through the localities and narrow lanes. Seeing him, the people said, "The Saviour has come." Children, abandoned, naked and lean, ran behind him to kiss his feet<sup>44</sup>. Various missions in native states collected famine orphans and sent them to Ajmer-Merwara<sup>45</sup>. To quote Scott again, Every few days saw a miserable little company of rescued children on their way to Ajmer, to the rescue camp, where they would be washed and clothed and carefully attended, and fed and nursed back to health, and then fitted for some useful employment in life. It was hard sometimes for mothers to give up their children to entire strangers, but it was harder still to see them pine away and die of starvation. Often parents would beseech us to save them<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> R.H. Lesser, *The Rajputana Mission Pioneers and shepherds* (Ajmer, 1989), 40.

<sup>39</sup> J.E. Scott, *op. cit.*, 153.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-24.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-67.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>44</sup> R.H. Lesser, *op. cit.*, 42-43.

<sup>45</sup> Evidence of A.L.P. Tucker, *Indian Famine Commission, 1901. Appendix*, vol. V. *Evidence of witnesses. Madras, Bengal, North-Western Provinces, Punjab and Ajmer* (Calcutta, 1901), 484.

<sup>46</sup> J.E. Scott, *op. cit.*, 138.

When accommodation fell short, mission property was sold to build new dormitories. Rev. J. Anderson Brown and others of United Presbyterian Mission rescued about 1,300 children who were distributed among the orphanages in Beawar<sup>47</sup>. Children for these orphanages were collected in the streets, etc., both from villages and native states. Many of them were not really orphans for often parents brought them. Although each orphanage had a European medical missionary in attendance, mortality was high because many children, especially from native States, were very much run down when they arrived. Some of them died when they reached the mission compound<sup>48</sup>.

Besides, the Missionaries provided work to the sufferers. Many people were employed at Ajmer in connection with building operations. At Phulera shoe-making was encouraged by giving materials and some very good native shoes were made. Some carpenters were given work. Weavers were supplied thread and their cloths were purchased for distribution among the famine victims. This was especially done in Ajmer, Tilaunia, Phulera and Bikaner. Christians in Bikaner alone wove about 2,000 blankets<sup>49</sup>. The Church Missionary Society trained famine orphans of 1900 and 1902 as school teachers and employed them in its schools<sup>50</sup>. Some princely states took help from the Missionaries for organizing famine relief. As an illustration, for the relief of sufferers in the city and the villages could neither work nor accept relief conveyed officially, the Maharaja of Jaipur constituted an eight member committee with Rev. Macalister as president. It issued an appeal for subscription which was generously answered. It divided the city into wards and each member was responsible to ensure that no person entitled for relief was overlooked and that only such persons as were in real distress were assisted. Each case was treated on merit. Relief in the villages was distributed on the same lines by local officials.<sup>51</sup>

In trying to mitigate the distress of the famine victims, the relief agencies including the Missionaries faced problems. There were many semi-independent estates in princely states where the chieftains provided very little relief. Many of them had exaggerated ideas of their own importance and independence. They resented interference in their territories even by the Durbars. Collecting children presented difficulties at times. Once, a relief worker was imprisoned under the false charge of kidnapping them. Another relief worker was beaten. Some children died in trains and at railway stations<sup>52</sup>.

General poverty resulted in low expectancy of life. Hence, many children became orphans even in normal times. The Missionaries took charge of them. As early as October 1860, six orphans were handed over to Shoolbred at Beawar to take care of them<sup>53</sup>. The United Presbyterian Mission established four orphanages in Beawar, Ajmer, Nasirabad and Todgarh. A total of 220 orphans - both boys and girls - were fed, clothed and educated there. Some of the orphans of Beawar were settled on land secured for them near the villages of Balad and Nundri<sup>54</sup>. Once tuberculosis spread among the children of famine victims. They were admitted in the missionary-run sanatorium in Tilannia. An interesting feature of the sanatorium was that it had a Middle school for patients of school-going age, of which the teachers were patients or ex-patients<sup>55</sup>.

Another social problem which the Missionaries sought to tackle was of opium consumption. It was rampant in Rajputana since time immemorial. The League of Nations laid down an index figure for the legitimate consumption of opium at 12 lbs. or 6 seers in countries with well-developed medical service. It was 12 seers in India as a whole. In Ajmer-Merwara it was

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>48</sup> Evidence of J.A. Brown, *Indian Famine Commission, 1901, loc. cit.*, 535.

<sup>49</sup> J.E. Scott, *op. cit.*, 127 & 192.

<sup>50</sup> *RBJLS*, 108.

<sup>51</sup> Report of J.R. Dunlop-Smith, Famine Commissioner dated March 6, 1900. *East India (Famine). Papers regarding the famine and the relief operations in India during 1899-1900. Volume II. - Native States.* Parliamentary command paper C.-206 of 1900, 373.

<sup>52</sup> J.E. Scott, *op. cit.*, 190.

<sup>53</sup> *Ekta Utsav*, p. 57. However, Solomon A.D. Rozario mentions October 1861, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>54</sup> "Gazetteers of Ajmer-Merwara," *RG*, vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1879), 74.

<sup>55</sup> Margaret I. Balfour and Ruth Young, *op. cit.*, 87.



52 seers<sup>56</sup>. This was because of its proximity to the princely states where it was a part of social etiquette. The Missionaries denounced opium consumption. Rev. C.H. Plomer (Methodist Episcopal Mission, Ajmer) told the Opium Commission, Wherever I have been I have seen the evil effects of the opium habit. It is almost invariable, especially amongst the poorer classes, for those who begin with small doses to go on increasing the quantity of opium consumed.... Poor men who have acquired this habit are compelled to spend on opium money that ought to be spent on food<sup>57</sup>.

Rev. C.W. Souza of the same Mission spoke likewise, "In my work as a missionary I have met both opium eaters as well as smokers; in no case was the habit defended, but in every case it was apologized for, and was admitted to be disgraceful by all users as well as non-users." The church discouraged the consumption of opium and no opium eater was admitted as a member<sup>58</sup>. Women were also addicted to opium. They told Mrs. Louise Dryman (Zenana Missionary of the United Presbyterian Mission, Ajmer) that they started with a little pill, but the dose went on increasing as the consumers suffered great pain if they did not increase it. Several women regretted that their husbands and brothers were opium addicts. She pointed out, "They all mourn over it... because they lose a great deal of money thereby. They also get so careless about their clothes, so untidy, and inattentive to their duties."<sup>59</sup> Miss C.A. Swaine (Medical Missionary, Khetri) highlighted the bad effects of opium addiction, viz., (a) it interfered with the action of medicines, (b) it unfavourably affected mental faculties, (c) it made people untrustworthy, and (d) it made them thriftless and indolent<sup>60</sup>.

Missionaries made an impact on the society in other ways too. They made converts among the depressed classes, notably the Balais, Bhambis, Bhangis, Bhils, Chamars, Dhanaks, Kolis, Meghwals, Mers and Minas. Conversions were made from other classes also like Bhats, Brahmins, Gujars, Jogis, Kayasthas, Mahajans, Malis, Patels, Rajputs and Sonars. Most conversions took place among the Hindus although in Alwar, Marwar, Merwara, Jaipur, and specially Mewar, a few conversions were reported among the Muslims. There were no instances of marked outbursts of wholesale conversion, though the famine of 1899-0 brought a large number of orphans into the Missionary orphanages a greater number of whom were gradually converted. The movement was, in fact, slow. No material inducements were held out to persuade the people to become Christians. The only material advantages accruing to the lower castes were the rise in the social scale and liberation from the caste bondage, and possibly better education. The disadvantages of conversion for the higher castes were social ostracism from their old castes and consequent isolation which could ensue loss of a share in the family property and the difficulty of marrying their children. In the earlier days there was a tendency to exclude Christians from the use of caste wells but it gradually declined. Converts in Alwar and Kota were freely admitted to them. In Merwara in few instances objections were raised about it. In Jaipur, the converts were debarred from some wells which were reserved for the highest castes. Among the Bhils the converts were allowed access to any well, there being no caste feeling among them.

The extent to which converts adhered to their original caste customs, restrictions about marriages, etc., varied from place to place. In Kota, Alwar, Jaipur, Marwar and Merwara Christians cut themselves off completely from their old castes and married freely among themselves regardless of their former caste. Converts were allowed to inter-dine with their old caste people when invited by them. But the caste people did not accept invitations to dine with the converts. The latter never married in their old castes. The Balai converts in Jaipur clung to their caste customs in matters relating to marriage and death ceremonies. The Bhil converts adhered to traditional dances, methods of embracing on meeting, etc., and were less ready to give up old customs. As they did

<sup>56</sup> W. Paton, *India and opium: the present situation* (Mysore city, 1925), 12-13.

<sup>57</sup> Evidence of C.H. Plomer. *Royal Commission on Opium. Minutes of evidence taken before the Royal Commission on Opium from 29<sup>th</sup> January to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1894, with appendices*. Vol. IV. Parliamentary command paper C.-7471 of 1894, Q. 21,383.

<sup>58</sup> Evidence of C.W. de Souza. *Ibid.*, Q. 21,465.

<sup>59</sup> Evidence of Louise Dryman, *Ibid.*, Qs. 21,530 and 21,532.

<sup>60</sup> Evidence of C.A. Swaine. *Ibid.* Vol. V. Parliamentary command paper C.-7473 of 1894, 127.

not have caste scruples, they did not have difficulty in dining with the converts. Most converts kept their old customs in food and family life, except that the women enjoyed greater freedom. They enjoyed celebrating Christmas and Easter but with a local tinge. They adopted European dress and liked to educate their children in English. E.H. Kealy, Superintendent, Census Operations, wrote, "The Census Superintendent of the Mysore State, Mr. V.R. Thyagaraja Aiyar, writes of the Indian Christians in Mysore, that "The enlightening influence of Christianity is patent in the increased standard of comfort of the converts and their sober, disciplined, and busy lives." The same, no doubt might be said of those in Rajputana and Ajmer- Merwara....<sup>61</sup>".

#### IV. Miscellaneous activities of Missionaries

By constructing churches, the Missionaries introduced a new style of architecture in Rajputana. The first church is believed to have been built at Sambhar by Mirza Zulqarnen, a Roman Catholic officer of the Mughal Government in 1648<sup>62</sup>. But churches built by the Missionaries built and most of which survive till date were distinct. The ground plan of a church resembles a cross. Above the entry rises a belfry where hangs a large bell rung at the beginning of the worship. The imposing arched door opens into the nave. There is a baptismal font. There are pews on both sides and in the centre of the aisle that leads up to the altar. On either side of the altar is the sacristy or vestry. A protestant church has a cross on the altar but a Roman Catholic church has a crucifix. It has also a statue of Virgin Mary. Stained glass windows were unknown in Rajputana and the churches were the first and still the only buildings which have had them. The five oldest churches are: St. Paul's Church, Nasirabad (1820), St. Savior's Church, Mt. Abu (1853), St. Paul's Church, Abu Rd. (1854), Shoolbred Memorial Church, Beawar (1860) and Robson Memorial Cathedral Church, Ajmer (1862)<sup>63</sup>.

Second, the Missionaries established printing presses. In 1864 the United Presbyterian Mission installed a lithographic press in Beawar. Although it started by printing tracts for evangelization, other materials like the books of tables, weights, measures, poems, almanac, etc., were also printed. This press claimed, "We can assure those friends who favour us with their orders that they will be executed with neatness and dispatch, and at terms as low as can be offered by any other Press." It earned so good a reputation that the *Rajputana Gazette* (weekly) was printed in it from 1869 onwards<sup>64</sup>. In 1894 James Inglis settled at Ajmer who was a printer<sup>65</sup>. Rajputana Mission Press was a premier press. Another notable press was St. Anselm's Press, Ajmer. It was founded in 1917 by Fr. Anatole.

Thirdly, the Canadian Presbyterian Mission worked chiefly among the Bhils in Banswara who were agriculturalists. The Mission tried to impart better methods of agriculture among them. In 1892 the Missionaries opened a Bhil Home in Udaipur for their welfare<sup>66</sup>. Charles Steward Thompson, Arthur Outram and Foss Westcott worked for the upliftment of the Bhils. By the efforts of the United Presbyterian Mission, criminal Mairs were changed from robbers to peaceful farmers. Female infanticide among them came to an end<sup>67</sup>.

Fourth, there were Prabhu Dasi Sisters. Their institution was established in Ajmer by Bishop Fortunatus Henry Caumont to promote evangelization. They visited villages, imparted education and conducted medical and social services. They began work from 1908<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> *Census of India, 1911 Volume XXII Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara. Part.- I Report* by E.H. Kealy (Ajmer, 1913), 97-98.

<sup>62</sup> Sylvester Johnson, *op. cit.*, 39.

<sup>63</sup> *Ekta Utsav* and Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, 32.

<sup>64</sup> R.N. Chowdhury, "United Presbyterian Mission", *op. cit.*, 156.

<sup>65</sup> *Ekta Utsav*, p. 60 and Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Solomon A.D. Rozario, *op. cit.*, 28.

<sup>67</sup> R.N. Chowdhury, "United Presbyterian Mission", *op. cit.*, 157.

<sup>68</sup> *Love Peace Joy Ajmer Diocese Directory - 2010* (Ajmer, 2010), 93.

In early twenty-first century (2003), there were several Christian institutions. Sophia Girls' College, Ajmer was one of the leading colleges in the country. Another important institution was St. Francis Hospital and Nursing Home, Ajmer. There were two Christian engineering colleges, viz., St. Margret Engineering College, Alwar and Stand Memorial College of Engineering, Jaipur. An allusion may also be made here to Industrial Training Centre, Madar, Ajmer, St. Martin's Vocational Training Centre, Nasirabad and St. Joseph's Tailoring Centre, Parbatpura, Ajmer. There were six theological institutions. There were hostels for boys and girls. There were four homes for the disabled, aged and destitute. There were five presses and publishers. Lastly, there were Christian social service centres, notably the Hope for Crying World, Ajmer<sup>69</sup>.

## V. Conclusion

Brij Jiwan Lal Sharma wrote, "The spread of Christianity is not to be judged solely by the number of its converts, but by the influence it has had on persons who have come into direct touch with its teachings or have been influenced by its institutions. It must be admitted, without fear of contradiction that these societies have been more conspicuous by the help they have rendered through medical and educational work than by preaching",<sup>70</sup> B.D. Sharma corroborates, The Church Fathers have rendered meritorious services for the advancement of Western education, Western medical system and the eradication of social evils and superstitions. They have offered every possible help when the famine stricken people needed help. The virtues of the Church Fathers are worth emulating and if they are inculcated they will go a long way in paving the emotional integration so badly needed at this hour of trials and tribulations in our country<sup>71</sup>.

---

<sup>69</sup> *A glimpse of Christians in Rajasthan* (Ajmer, 2003), 25-27.

<sup>70</sup> *RBJLS*, 107.

<sup>71</sup> B.D. Sharma, "The role of the Christian Missionaries in Rajasthan" (summary), *RHC 1969* (Jaipur, 1970), 155.