

**Early Christian Print Culture and the Culture of Translation in  
Colonial Gujarat: A Study**

**SYNOPSIS**

Submitted to:

The Department of English

Faculty of Arts

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

Vadodara, Gujarat, India - 390002

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Under the guidance of:

**Professor Deeptha Achar**

Professor

Department of English

Faculty of Arts

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

Vadodara, Gujarat, India - 390002

Submitted by:

Onvi Ignas Parmar

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### **Synopsis**

The colonial time, the milestone of the development of the two cultures like print culture and the culture of translation occurred with the help of the Christian missionaries in India and Gujarat. Gujarat has witnessed the emergence of new religion by this new cultures. The social formation suggested that the inequality and suppression attracted people who are mostly affected to change their religion and accept the new *firangi* religion which is totally new for them. In this conversion apart from the social formation the introduction of two new cultures, like print and culture of translation plays very vital role. Which attracts me to study about them.

The arrival of different colonies gives many remarkable changes to country like India. The history of Christianity in India and Gujarat, how Christian missionaries pave the way as the rise of two cultures – print culture and culture of translation. Further it discusses the history of print culture. The discussion of the history of Christianity in India starts with the arrival of Thomas. Stephen Neil in his book *A History of Christianity in India*, volume 1 says that when the apostles were together at Jerusalem and divided the world among them Thomas get India. And then he visited Muziris in Kerala in AD 52. The inequality of castes led to the Dalits in Gujarat adopting Christianity from the nineteenth century onwards. The role of printed material and translations in this process was very important. The Christian gospels introduced them to the concept of liberation which allowed them to think about their own position in society. The Christian gospels and the preaching of the early priests as well as the translation and the printed version of the Bible gospel played an important role in this process. This attracts me to study the print culture in the context of Christianity in colonial Gujarat. The importance of this study, according to me is to show how the early print culture and translation helped to locate the big question of liberation in the early

history of Dalit Christians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In my research I propose to study the printed materials of Christianity which were the first hand, most important source of diffusion of Christianity in colonial India. Some key words which are very important for my future research are public sphere, printing, colonialism and liberation theology.

The history of Christianity in India is the remarkable movement. As those history books suggest 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 of *Christianity in Indian History: Issues of Culture, Power and Knowledge* says Christianity has been always studied as the branch of Western imperial impact mediated by European missionaries. The two differences which have systematically marginalized the historical experiences of Indian Christians according to them.....

“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, np).”

I have observed from reading of many history books that usually the Indian Christians are called converts. As Malekandathil has given the meaning of conversion “the shift from an older religious identity to a new one (x)”. If we understand this meaning in context of colonial India the identity of Indian Christians in history is hyphenated rather than a completed one (x). This reminds me the concept of hybridity.

The basic understanding of hybridity is the mixture. Hybridity commonly means to 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. The word 'hybridity' itself suggest the multiplicity in it. Sudipto Chatterjee in the introduction of his work *the Colonial Staged* says that hybridity records difference and sameness, mimesis and alterity at the same time. If we see the hybridity in the context of Indian Christianity this religion and British empire was enter in India at the same time. With the religion British Empire came with the totally different culture compare to Indian culture. The people from India noticed difference and trying to follow it. We can say that trying to mimic them. The Christian missionary has the English culture trying to teach to the native people and the native people also imitate them and trying to be like them. The British culture also give rise to the inequality in the Indian culture which was already there. The native people by imitating new culture tries to be equal to them, but they did not leave their own old Indian culture which gives birth to the sameness in difference. The culture of India where the religions like Hindu was ruling with the arrival of colonizers the new religion and culture Christianity mixed and this mixture is called the hybridity. In Bhabha's words the contact zone where multi culture mixes and emerge a very new hybrid culture. In the one new culture of Christians also many different cast are there. When we see the history of Christianity in India as well as in Gujarat we can see the inequality within equality. In Christianity also different casts emerges as well as the difference like lower and higher as well as the difference like black and white was present. In the many autobiography of the Christian missionaries one thing is common that 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 ruled. The difference like Black and white lower and higher.

Homi Bhabha in his forth Chapter of *Location of culture* "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” (p-122).*

Mimicry is according to him the symbol of a dual identity, a very difficult strategy of change which assumes the other as if have a power. In the process of mimicry, the person by imitating others assumes that he has the same power like others. He behaves like others. He imagines himself equal to others. In the past the Indian society has many inequalities in which the lower people tries to have equal rights to the upper people so they had mimic them and dreams to have the power to be equal.

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 produces another knowledge of its customs. The use of words also changes man to man. Language is one of the other parameters which can measure whether the person is of upper caste or lower caste. So for making themselves equal to the upper caste the lower caste had started mimic them, mimic their language their way of living etc, to have the same power as they have. At those days the British people had the power and so the Indian people mimic them. And in this the Indian people list their own language or culture. The mixture of British and Indian culture gave birth to the new hybrid culture.

So in mimicry we can say the subject tried to be like other but not totally he/she can. The example given by Bhabha is that of the education of women in colonial India that the eastern women imitated the western women and they gave the right to education but this imitation has their own limitations. 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 tradition on other hand so this creates the dual personality according to Bhabha is central to the idea of nationalism.

In other word the hybridity means the group or the area when the people from the same culture and as 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 luminal 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. 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.

How can this process be understood in the context of the early Christians in India? Viswanathan in her work *Outside the Fold* clarifies how people who convert manage to control and confuse the discourse of identity. She takes the example of Narayan Waman Tilak, an upper caste Marathi man who converted to Christianity much consciously. She states that in his creative writings he not only tested the principles of Hinduism but also that of traditional Christianity (40).

On the same page Viswanathan notes that Tilak wanted the Indian Christians not only to leave casteism but also to be nationalistic; he wanted them to learn the English language and the principles of equality in Christian theology but also to study the Marathi saint poets like

Jnaneshwar and Tukaram as they also gave the message against caste and propagated equality. More importantly she notes how Tilak often launched a severe criticism against the “paternalistic attitude” of the European missionaries (40).

In the Indian context if we see hybridity the major focus should be Christianity. The missionaries who came to spread the new religion in India in colonial time has started educating people. The caste system which was already there in Indian culture in one hand helps missionaries to introduce a new religion to the Indian people. For the early missionaries there were two types of people in India the first one was the target people under the term the upper caste of Indian culture had included and the second was the ready people under which the lower caste people included. In Indian culture the lower caste has many limitations which they must to follow. Like they were not allowed to enter in the temple, they can't touch the statue of God, they have to make distance from the higher caste people or else their impurity makes the people from higher caste impure. But when the missionaries came with the arrival of new religion the lower caste people started to get a new identity which makes them free from some of these limitations and so they became ready to accept new religion for the early missionary. And against it the people from higher caste were not easily attract to the missionaries so they were becoming the target group of people. And the another way of understanding is the life of upper caste people is the dream life for the lower caste people and they blindly wanted mimic them and because of that also missionaries target the upper caste people so that they can attract both upper and lower caste.

When missionaries first came to Gujarat they were faced with the problem of vocabulary. Christianity has many concepts which were new for the Gujarati people. At that time, missionaries had to struggle to make people understand concepts like ‘mass’, ‘communion’ and

‘crucifixion’ of Jesus Christ’ etc. Especially the old culture and beliefs of Hinduism posed a strong difficulty for the spread of Christianity.

There seem to have been specific difficulties regarding the communication of Christian concepts. It seems that in the early phase the missionaries translated them in words familiar to the public. Thus it was common to translate Christian concepts into concepts from Hinduism. For example, in the pamphlet like *The Three Worlds: An Exposition of the Great Themes of Heaven, Hell and Human Life* (1831) the idea of the three worlds was translated into the well-known Hindu concept of ‘*triloka*’ (Boyd “An Outline” 44).

Very soon, however, the missionaries began creating a vocabulary of Christian concepts in Gujarati. The translation committee of Drery, John Wilson, Rev. Hormazdji Pestonji and Rev. J. V. S. Taylor produced *Vocabulary of the Principal Words* in 1857 which we find in the Bible, with Gujarati equivalents for each of them. The *Vocabulary* contains 780 terms (Boyd 43).

Against this background, it is very important to discuss the collections of hymns and prayer books at that time too. The publications of Gujarati hymns were started in the Mission press, Surat in 1834 (Bhuraji, et al 32). These hymns were composed to the English measures or tunes. Some songs in that collection are taken from the Hindi *Geetmala* (32). After that in 1851 Rev. J. V. S. Taylor published a collection of hymns written by Rev. Clarkson and himself named *Dharma Geeta* (32). This collection was printed in Ahmedabad by the Tract Society. In 1856 Rev. Glasgow also compiled all the songs from the *Geetshastra* in a new compilation titled *Geet Sanghrah*. From that collection twenty eight songs are still sung by people and they are also included in the *Bhajan Sanghrah*, the contemporary collection of hymns (32). It can be noted that within the time span of 1842 to 1900 Rev. James Glasgow was a leading figure in every aspect of the print culture, so that



this particular period in Christian literature called ‘Glasgow Yug’ (27). Many of these hymn books drew from English hymns, and some were a direct translation.

In the discussion of translation in colonial Christianity the translation of The Bible is a very significant. The first Bible translation in Indian languages was in Tamil (Varghese 662). Bartholomew Zeigenbalg and some missionaries who were settled in Tranquebar studied Tamil and then in 1714 published the first Bible in Tamil. In 1772 J. B. Francis published an improved version. In the Indian history of The Bible translations the name of William Carey (1761- 1834) is very important as he translated The Bible in many Indian languages and the principal dialects (Smith 89).

William Carey and his Serampore colleagues published a Gujarati translation of The New Testament in 1820, but that version was not used much as it was printed in Devanagari. At the time the Gujarati font had not been invented (Chauhan 8). It was followed by the translations of the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) published in 1821 and printed in the newly founded printing press Surat Mission Printing Press (Boyd “An Outline” 43). The Old Testament was published in 1823 and the complete Bible in 1829 which continues to be in use (8). After the publication of The Bible L.M.S. missionaries published many pamphlets, printed sermons, the fundamentals of Christian doctrines, etc. too. This can be considered as the beginning of the circulation of new forms of writing in Gujarati.

In 1847 Rev Glasgow wrote *Christi Aacharan* (Conduct of the Christians) which was the first book published by I. P. Mission, Surat (23). This followed the establishment of the ‘Gujarat Tract and Book Society’. English books were also translated and published. *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as *Yatrakari* translated by William Flower (1844), *The History of Christian Provision* by Garth translated by Rev. J. V. S. Taylor (1851) and a 342 page compilation by James Glasgow

titled *Scripture Extracts on Doctrine and Duty with Introduction and Explanatory Remarks for Believers and Inquires* are some titles printed by the Gujarat Tract and Book Society (Boyd129). Gujarat Tract and Book Society published books on Hinduism and Islam too (129). The establishment of this Society was a significant event in the Gujarati Christian literature. In 1853 this Society published its first year report and according to that report in the very first year society published thirty thousand and five hundred copies of fourteen tracts and thereafter published seventy thousand copies each year (23).

The emergence of magazines and newspapers related to Christianity contributed to the print culture and the public sphere in Gujarati. In 1856 Rev. Glasgow started the monthly Gujarati magazine named *Gyan Deepak* (The Flame of Knowledge) but in 1860 the publication of this magazine stopped, so in 1862 I. P. Mission began publishing a new magazine *Satyoday* (The Rise of Truth) (131). It was for children at that time, but after some time it became the magazine of I. P. Mission (131). Subsequently, other missions published their magazine *Harshnad* (The Voice of Happiness), *Prakashpatra* (The Page of Light) (Brothran Mission), *Jangi Pokar Mukti Samachar* (The Call for War and News of Freedom) published by Muktiroj Mission, *Harshvartaman* by Alliance and *Dut* by Roman Catholic (131) contributing in the process to the production of a large corpus of original and translated material in Gujarat.

### **Methods:**

1. Theories of the public sphere: To understand the construction of the public sphere as well as the literary public sphere.

2. Theories of Liberation Theology: To understand how the categories of liberty and salvation as manifested in print culture played an important role in the consolidation of 'lower caste' commitment to Gujarati Christianity.
3. Theories of colonial discourse: To understand how the discourses of colonial modernity came to shape and be shaped by print culture put in place by colonial Christianity. Sanal Mohan's book *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* would prove to be useful as he discusses these issues in the context Christianity in colonial Kerala.
4. Theories of Nation/Nationalism: To understand the importance of print culture in the construction of the imagined nation in colonial India. Apart from Benedict Anderson, I would draw on *Language, Politics, Elites and the Public Sphere* by Veena Naregal and *Sexuality, Obscenity and Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* by Charu Gupta to help me understand the relationship between print culture, public sphere and colonial context.

## **Chapters:**

As I am trying to locate the nineteenth century Gujarat. I have studied the changes in the textual culture of Gujarat in the light of the emergence of the print culture and the culture of translation in the nineteenth century. Focusing on colonial modernity, public sphere and the question of inequality in castes in Gujarat, I studied the role played by Christian print and translation cultures in the constitution of the Gujarati imagination. So in this context in my first chapter I gave an account of the emergence of print culture and culture of translation which

affected the textual culture of India as well as Gujarat in the nineteenth century. All the conversion or the difference in cultural context which is because of the introduction of this two new cultures. How print and translation helped a new religion to grow in a new public. The emergence of this two cultures paved the path to the change of the new faith. In the emergence of these two cultures the role of Christian missionaries is a very remarkable. Though they used they used it as the one of the strategies to attract people for new religion but it gives liberation to many people who were lived in such a miserable life since many years.

In the second chapter I have located the social formation of India as well as Gujarat in nineteenth century. Where I took help from the autobiographies of early missionaries who shared their experience in this very difficult journey. The castism which was heart of Indian culture gives the missionaries chance to attract the target people to accept the new religion.

In the third chapter I have studied the role of print culture and public sphere. Fraser discusses about Habermas concept of public sphere and adds her own views on it. Habermas in his work discusses about the bourgeois public sphere here Fraser argues that there never was and never should be, just one public sphere but rather a number of public spheres. Habermas define the meaning of public sphere is 'a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk'. He means to say that it is a space in which citizens discusses about their common affairs. This space is conceptually different from state (Fraser, 519). This is arena where citizens criticize the state. The public sphere according to Habermas is also conceptually distinct from the official economy. It is a theatre for debating not for buying and selling. Christian church in modern time can be considered as different public sphere where Christians come together and discuss about their common interest. In the public sphere in Habermas sense printed material

were used for conducting the critical debates. Newspapers, magazines, etc were used as the medium of the discourse in public sphere.

In fourth chapter again I have tried to study translation and the public sphere. The nature of translation that developed out of the proselytizing efforts of Christian missionaries in Gujarat. Here I have studied about the new forms of writing influenced by English and in what way did they affect the development of modern Gujarati literature. These new forms of writing address the question of liberation and salvation and it also affect the articulation of 'lower caste' identity.

The fifth chapter concludes the dissertation and pulls together the arguments made in the previous chapters in a comparative perspective. It loops back to question of liberation and the role of print culture and culture of translation.

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