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Unravelling the Dynamics of Christian Missionary Evangelical Activities in Colonial Punjab (1849-1947)

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ABSTRACT

The article focused on the evangelical activities of Christian missionaries to convert the natives to Christianity in the colonial Punjab, with particular reference to Lahore and Sialkot districts. With the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the cultural and social ethos took a surprising turn, and a new community of converted Christians started to form progressively. This new societal drive was unique because it attracted individuals from affluent backgrounds and triggered mass conversion in socially and economically side-lined communities of Punjab. After annexation, missionaries flocked to the Punjab from all parts of India. Most missionaries, who moved to the Punjab, were either associated with the American Presbyterian Church or with the Church Missionary Society of England (CMS) and the Church of Scotland. Nonetheless, along with these two mission societies, other established missions in India also contributed to converting natives to Christianity, though to a lesser extent. In the conversion process, missionaries used institutions, e.g., schools, colleges, and medical centres, but they also employed different conversion techniques already being deployed in other parts of India. The primary aim of the missionaries was to convert a large part of Punjabi society to Christianity by employing various techniques of evangelicalism. The conversion among lower caste degraded the image of Christianity and further handicapped further activities of missionaries.

Keywords:

Conversion techniques, techniques of Evangelicalism, Missionaries, Christian Community, the colonial Punjab.

1. Christian Missions in Colonial Punjab: A Historical Overview

Protestant Missions

Among the Christian missions in India, the most important Mission, which contributed to the conversion of native communities in Punjab, was a Protestant mission. Protestant mission played a significant role in the mass conversion to Christianity in Lahore and different areas of Sialkot.

American Presbyterian or Ludhiana Mission

Among the Protestant missions, the American Presbyterian mission held a central position in India. American Presbyterians John Eliot (1631-1690) and David Brainerd (1780-1747) were advocates of Calvinism.(1) During the Sikh period, American Presbyterian Church started dispatching missionaries to India. In this regard, the names of Reverend John C Lowrie and Reverend William Reed are worth mentioning. The Presbyterians began their activities in Punjab from Ludhiana by establishing a mission station in Ludhiana in 1834. After the arrival of Reverend John C Lowrie and Reverend William Reed (1833), several other mission stations were set up in different parts of Punjab, including in Jullunder (1846), Amritsar (1848), Rawalpindi (1856) and Peshawar (1857). The first mission to Lahore was sent under the supervision of John Newton and Charles William Forman (2) in 1849. After the Lahore mission, their operations expanded to other parts of Punjab, i.e. Sialkot (1855), Gujranwala (1863), Zafarwal (1880), Pasrur (1884) and Kasur (1912). (3)

Presbyterian Church of America

The mission was established in 1855 by Reverend Andrew Gordon. It started its work in Punjab under 'Associate Presbyterian Church,' later known as 'The United

(1) Calvinism was a Protestant reformist movement of Christianity that followed the theological tradition of John Calvin (1509-1564), a French Theologian. After the Lutheranism, founded by Martin Luther (1483-1546), Calvinism was considered to be the second major sect of Protestantism. Both the movements were the part of reformation movement of the Roman Catholic Church and were against the pope's authority and nepotism. See for detail Andrew Pettegree and Alastair Duke, *Calvinism in Europe (1540-1620)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1-3.

(2) Dr Charles William Forman was born in 1821 in Washington. He received his BA degree in 1844 from Kentucky USA. After getting the degree, he joined Princeton Theological Seminary and ordained to the Gospel Ministry on July 1874. Charles. W. Forman left for India in 1847 and reached Calcutta in January 1848. See for detail The History of Forman Christian College, Selection from the Records of the College 1869-1936, pp.14-16.

(3) Dr. Muhammad Nadir Siddiqi, *Pakistan ma Masihiyat*(Lahore: Pakistan Muslim Academy,1979), p.305.

Presbyterian Church of America. Reverend Andrew Gordan reached Sialkot on 8th August 1855 with his wife, Elizabeth Gordon and established their mission in Sialkot.(1)

Methodist Church

The Methodist Church from America started work in different parts of India at the end of the nineteenth century. The mission began its work in Lahore in 1883 and worked among British military regiments in the Lahore cantonment. Their converts were mostly from the servant community of the cantonment of Lahore.

Anglican Communion and Church Missionary Society (CMS)

Along with the American Presbyterian Church, Anglican Communion also showed interest in Indian society. The Church Missionary Society was founded in England in 1799 in England. The Church Missionary Society was established in Punjab in 1852 and established its mission station in Amritsar, also known as the Amritsar Mission. The work of the CMS mission was crucial regarding Christian activities in Punjab, especially in Lahore. In Lahore, the Society started its work in 1867. Its regional headquarters in other areas of Punjab included Jullunder Batala, Fatehgarh, Tarn Taran, Bahrwal, Jandiala, Ferozepur and Pind Dadan Khan. The influential missionaries of CMS in Punjab were Bishop Thomas Valpy French, Mr Robert Clark (1825-1900), Mr Bateman (1860-1916) and other missionaries, including Mr Wade, Mr Gordon, and Mr Hooper.

Roman Catholic or Belgian Capuchin Mission

The Foundation of the Catholic Church in Punjab was laid by Belgian Capuchin missionaries who got the order from Rome to begin work of evangelisation among natives in Punjab. The Capuchin missionaries have been working in Punjab since the 1840s. However, their activities were confined only to civilian and military officers. They established Churches only in surrounding military establishments, e.g., Church of Mian Meer (1852), known as St. Joseph's Church. After establishing the Lahore mission, Mr Paul Tosi was appointed its first Vicar Apostolic. Later in 1886, the mission was promoted and became known as 'The Diocese of Lahore, and Bishop Symphorien Mourd became its first bishop.(2) Before the 1880s, there was no mission station for Catholics in

(1) Indian Mission Directory: 'The Sealkote Mission of the United Presbyterian Church in America' Methodist Archive: SOAS University, p.195.

For North in India, A Survey of the Mission Field and Work of United Presbyterian Church in Punjab, p.187.

(2) The Diocese of Lahore covered the enormous area i.e., 90,991 Sq miles. Diocese of Lahore had eleven mission station such as Lahore, Multan, Nohshera, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Ferozepur, Dalhousie, and Amritsar.

Masih Emmanuel, 'The Belgian Capuchin Mission in Punjab, Pakistan (1888-1994)2010-2011' retrieved from <http://www.Puranprdiapak.com.pp.12,29>. See also Punjab District Gazetteers, Volume XXX A Lahore District 1916 (Lahore: Government Printing Press, 1916), p.76.

Punjab. The direct Mission work was started in the Sialkot district in 1889 and opened a station at Adah, Daoki, Sahowala and Seowale by Bishop Mourad.(1) In 1889, Bishop Mourad established a centre for mission activities (Archdiocese of Lahore) at village Adah in Sialkot District.(2)

Church of Scotland

Along with the American Presbyterian Mission and Church Missionary Society of the United Kingdom, the Church of Scotland started working in Punjab. It started its mission in Sialkot in 1856. Reverend Thomas Hunter was the pioneer missionary of the Church of Scotland. Under his supervision, the Church played a vital role in promoting Christianity, especially in Sialkot. The mission was under the authority of the 'Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland in Edinburg. The mission's centres were in Sialkot, Wazirabad, Daska and Gujrat.(3) In Sialkot, new institutions were opened, and several Christian converts rose, especially from lower castes. Other Scottish missionaries were John Taylor, Messer, Robert Peterson, William Harper, and John Youngson, who worked in Sialkot, Wazirabad and Gujrat.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army was founded in India in 1882. The founder of this mission was General William Booth, who came to Indian Sub-Continent from England. The mission started its work in Lahore and Sialkot in 1883. The mission's headquarters was established at Ferozepur Road, Lahore, in 1883. Salvation Army took some steps to reform society. For example, a settlement was made in Changa Manga Lahore for criminal tribes; Colonial power gave job opportunities to the offenders. Besides, another settlement was established in 1910 in Sialkot, along with a weaving factory to accommodate male members of the *Pakhiwara* criminal tribe.(4) Similarly, a settlement was set up on Jail Road, Lahore, known as the Danepur settlement. The criminals from Borstal Jail were allowed to settle in the Danepur settlement to enjoy a healthy environment.

2. The Proselyting Activities of Christian Missionaries

Converting the natives to Christianity was difficult. Missionaries were not only trained in Christian theology, but they also knew about native religions. In other words,

(1) John Rooney, *Into Deserts* (Rawalpindi: Christian Study Centre, 1986), p. 16.

(2) Emmanuel Zafar, *Concise History of Pakistani Christians* (Lahore: Hamsookhan Publication, 2007), p.38.

(3) Report on the Administration of Punjab and its Dependencies for 1901-1902 Punjab Government Press, Lahore 1901-1902, p.190.

(4) Census of India 1911, Punjab, Volume XIV, Punjab, Part 1, Report (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazetteer, 1912), p.188.

they were properly trained in the art of missiology. Missionaries' inspiration to convert natives to Christianity was based on the message of Jesus. According to the message, Jesus inspired his disciples to go out and spread the message he preached. (1) "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.... I am with you always." (2) According to Christian theology, sin is in human nature. However, to mitigate Adam's sin, the proclamation of the Christian faith is essential. After Jesus, it was considered the duty of missionaries to bring all human beings under the banner of Christianity to alleviate Adam's sin. Under the influence of this philosophy, Missionaries in Punjab constantly tried to convert natives to Christianity by using different techniques.

(a) Evangelicalism Through Education

It was not a new strategy in Punjab. It had been in use in other parts of India. The pioneer missionaries of India from the Church of Scotland, like William Carry (1761-1834) and Alexander Duff (1806-1878), were the first missionaries who used education as an essential conversion tool. Some British policies also increased the importance of education by patronising the English language and reserving most of the jobs for individuals who knew the English language in 1835. At this stage, missionary institutions became a source of providing economic incentives by imparting modern education to natives. The natives were also inclined to Western education to prepare their children for their livelihood.

At the time of the appointment of Lord Macaulay as a member of the Committee of Public Instructions (1835), whose job was to make educational policy for natives, the committee members were divided into two groups, i.e., Orientalists and Anglicists. The Orientalists favoured classical Indian learning. On the other hand, the Anglicists selected Western education with English as a medium of instruction. (3) Similarly, Missionaries

(1) Rev. Robert Clark, A Sermon Preached at Anarkullee Church Lahore, 24th January, Lahore Committee for Medical Mission, 1864, pp.4-7.

(2) Viqar Zaman and Gul Afroz Zaman, *Religions of South Asia, Unity in Diversity* (Karachi: Paramount, 2002), p.52.

(3) Lord Macaulay was a member of Governor General in Council and appointed as a president of the general committee of Public Instruction. He gave his educational policy in 1835 in which he laid more stress on Western education through the medium of English. However, a debate was started among Orientalist and Anglicist. Orientalist or Classical wanted to promote Indian education through the medium of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian. Contrary to this, Anglicists favoured English education as a medium of instruction. For detail See Rama Nath Shanu and Rajender Kumar Sharma, *History of Education in India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2004), pp. 80-84.

like Alexander Duff supported English education. Because education in English, including biblical literature, was inherently considered a '*praeoaratio evangelica*'.(1)

Besides the missionaries' interest in establishing educational institutions, the British government supported missionaries' schools. For illustration, let us consider the case of Charles Wood's Education Dispatch (1854).(2) In the Dispatch, financial assistance is provided to the local private educational agencies as a 'grant in aid.' At that time, missionary institutions were the only private body working in the field of education. The sole sponsorship of these missionary institutions was in the shape of grant-in-aid. However, this grant-in-aid had conditions. Against the aid, missionary institutions had to allow inspection by the British education officer. The dispatch appreciated the British government's withdrawal from educational activities and, at the same time, encouraged the missionaries to fill in the gap with their educational activities as a private education agency.(3) After the transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Empire in 1857, the British continued to support the missionaries in their educational work. W.W. Hunter (president of the First Indian Education Commission, 1882) further strengthened this policy of grant-in-aid. Lord Macaulay also became a staunch supporter of English education. Macaulay wrote, "no Hindu who has received English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion."(4)

Missionaries in Punjab established many educational institutions. The pioneering missionary of the Presbyterian mission, John C Lowery, started his activities in Punjab by creating 'Ludhiana Mission high school.' The children of leading families of Sikhs got admission to the school. The primary aim of education was to prepare the minds of natives to accept Christianity. In this regard, the pioneering institution of American Presbyterian was Rang Mahal Mission School, Bhati Gate Lahore, established by Charles W. Forman in 1849. (5). This school became Rang Mahal Mission High School in 1899.

(1) The term was deployed by Sanjay Seth which means the education was used a source of conversion to prepare the mind of students for acceptance of Christianity. See for detail Sanjay Seth, 'Secular Enlightenment and Christian Conversion: Missionaries and Education in Colonial India, retrieved [http:// www.in/pdf/educ-soc.pdf](http://www.in/pdf/educ-soc.pdf).p.31.

(2) Tim Allender, *Ruling through Education: The Politics of Schooling in Colonial Punjab* (New Delhi: New Dawn Press, 2006), pp.5-7.

(3) Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat, 'Development of Education in the Colonial Punjab: The Role of Christian Missionaries (1849-1947)' PhD Dissertation, History Department, University of Punjab, p.4

(4) Sanjay Seth, "Secular Enlightenment and Christian conversion; Missionaries and Education in Colonial India" p.34,

(5) Emmanuel Zafar, *Concise History of Pakistani Christians* (Lahore: Hamsookhan Publishers, 2007), p.45.

Dr Forman purchased Land from the British government of 13 *begha* for this school.(1)It was considered the first English school in the whole province.

In 1850, Charles W. Forman helped in building Rang Mahal School and a small chapel in the walled city of Lahore. It attracted people when native girls used to sing Christian songs, and non-Christians came to see them. In Rang Mahal Mission school, the children of four religious' communities, i.e. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian, were admitted. Most of the children were Hindu, whereas Sikhs were very few. To increase the strength of students, the school used economic incentives to motivate native communities to send their children to school. Under the economic stimulus, one *pasa* per month was given to school students.(2) After its inauguration, the mission school started finding space among the native communities of Lahore. As a result of its popularity, only after one year of its establishment, 55 Hindus, 22 Muslims, and three Sikhs were enrolled.(3) Similarly, the U.P mission also opened a school in Kanak Mandi, Sialkot.

The prominent Presbyterian missionary Charles W. Forman believed that education could be an excellent tool to convert natives to Christianity. Under the influence of the Presbyterian Mission, in 1865 Charles. W Forman established a 'Forman Christian College (FCC)' in Lahore. The College was affiliated with Calcutta University and provided education up to graduation. Along with English education, vernacular languages were also taught to students, i.e. Urdu, Hindi, and Sanskrit. Charles W. Forman remained successful in winning a few converts from FC College.

Church Missionary Society also deployed the strategy of educational evangelism. Robert Clark, and Thomas Valphy French, supported the idea of evangelism through education. Under the philosophy of school evangelism, 'St. John's Divinity College' was founded in Anarkali, Lahore, in 1870 by T.V. French. After its establishment, it was decided to shift the college to '*Mahan Singh ka Bagh*' near Mayo Hospital, which the Church Missionary Society purchased with Rs.10 000 in 1871. This college's primary goal was to enhance Christianity education among native students. From 1870 to 1883, students who attended the school were seventy-four. Among the student converts, Mian Sadiq was the prominent native. He converted from Islam by CMS and remained the cordial colleague of Robert Clark in Amritsar. After his conversion, he spent thirteen years with the Divinity College as a native catechist.(4)

(1) It was a traditional land measurement unit used in pre-colonial India. However, owing to multiple measuring units being used in colonial India, there was no standardised size of measurement. Muhammad Tufail, *Naqosh Lahore* (Lahore: Adara-i- Urdu, 1962), p.684.

(2) Dr. Syed Sultan Mahmood Hussain, *100 Years of Forman Christian College Lahore: 1864-1963* (Lahore: 2012), p.3.

(3) The History of Forman Christian College; Selections from the Records of College 1869-1936. p.3.

(4) Arthur Lewis, George Maxwell Gordon, *The Pilgrim Missionary of Punjab: A History of his Life and Work* (1839-1880 (London: Seeley Co, 1889), p.20.

On the same footing, Roman Catholics also established schools for educating native boys and girls. Among the schools, St. Francis primary school for Catholic native boys (Katcheri Road) and St. Joseph's School for Catholic native girls (Thornton Road) were considered direct contributions by Roman Catholic Church. During the twentieth century, especially from 1901 to 1947, missionaries introduce some changes to their educational policies. Under the new strategies, a few further mission colleges were established, i.e. Forman Christian College Lahore (1865) and Murray College Sialkot (1889). Both of these colleges were imparting higher education. The primary purpose of establishing these institutions was to fulfil the needs of an elite section of society, who wanted to educate their children with modern education to get jobs.

(b) Mission Orphanage

Together with schools, colleges, and boarding schools, Missionaries established an orphanage to target the vulnerable segment of society. In the first stage, they provided shelter, housing, clothing and food to orphans, and during the second stage, they initiated them into Christian education. In the absence of their parents, the chance of acceptance of Christianity was always great. Mostly the children in missionaries' orphanages were of two kinds. There were children of soldiers, who died performing their military duties, and children whose parents died during natural disasters like floods, famines, plagues and cholera. Among the two categories, children affected by natural calamities were in the majority, especially those struck by the famines of 1813, 1823, 1833, 1867 and 1896 in Lahore.(1) Similarly, the Sialkot district suffered from severe famines in 1783, 1812, 1843, 1861, 1870 and 1899.(2) Due to these natural disasters, in Sialkot, the district mortality rate was 1,500 to 2, 000 per week in 1902.(3) Under this situation, in 1857, Miss Elizabeth Gordon established an orphanage in Sialkot. In the orphanage, education and professional training along with Christian teachings. Seventeen girls were brought to the orphanage in the early days, all except three converted. Similarly, United Presbyterian Church missionaries Andrew Gordan and Samuel Martin opened an orphanage in Haji Pura- Sialkot.(4) Catholics were also interested in the care of orphan children since the times of Father Caffarel (1846). The famous orphanages were St. Joseph's Orphanage, opened in the 1880s by the Convent of Jesus, and St. Francis' Orphanage, founded in 1893 by Fr. Living in Lahore.(5)

(c) Public Preaching

(1) Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series, Punjab, Volume: II, p. 24.

(2) Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series Punjab, volume II, p. 82.

(3) John Rooney, *Into Deserts* (Rawalpindi: Christian Study Centre, 1986), p. 42.

(4) Emmanuel Zafar, *Concise History of Pakistani Christians*, p.46.

(5) Fr. Leo, *Te Capuchin Mission in the Punjab, with Notes on the History, Geography, Ethnology, and Religion of Country* (Punjab: O.M.C, 1910), pp. 94-99.

Along with Christian institutions in conversion, missionaries relied on public preaching. Most of the missionaries considered public preaching a potent tool for mass conversion. In public preaching, missionaries visited different *bazaars*, villages, houses and shops to convince natives to convert to Christianity. Moreover, in Lahore, they focused mainly on the walled city (Delhi Gate, Bhati Gate, and Taxali Gate) due to its population diversity and density. Due to these mass interactions, most missionaries utilised this technique to convert natives to Christianity. Mr Pfander, Mr French, Robert Clark, Mr Bateman, Mr Forman, Mr Ewing, and Mr Youngson all used the technique of public preaching in their respective areas.

Presbyterian missionaries were the first ones to employ the method of public preaching. Among Presbyterians, Mr Forman visited shopkeepers, students, and merchants in Lohari Gate, Delhi Gate, and Hira Mandi. He used to teach for five hours in his mission school, and afterwards, he would come out to preach in Public. He used to spend time with shopkeepers in the walled city and read the Bible before them. However, his public preaching never went without notice, and sometimes he had to face the worst reaction. He narrated a story of a *mullah* near Akbari Gate who used to teach his students against Christianity. However, under the influence of his teachings, his students, after some time, started to tease Forman daily. Besides this, they always followed him wherever he went. Similarly, on the 26th of April 1857, a mob attacked his tent and tried to stone him to death.(1)

Presbyterians in Sialkot also followed the lead of Charles W. Forman, and Mr Youngson started preaching in the markets of Sialkot and Wazirabad. Moreover, Mr Youngson, with the help of his student, Didar Singh, also began targeting the Gujarat district. Their *modus operandi* was similar to that of the Presbyterians in Lahore. However, they also published Christian literature in Urdu to target the educated class of Sialkot and Wazirabad. Conversely, CMS's Amritsar Mission was also engaged in public preaching. According to one of the CMS s missionaries, Mr George Maxwell Gordon, the CMS mission in Lahore used the *Bazaars* as a primary place to preach publically. The Christian missionaries sometimes invited the Presbyterian missionaries to showcase their power to the natives of Lahore. However, during the public preaching, they faced opposition from all the major communities of Lahore.

(d) Preaching Native Sepoys

Different missionaries showed interest in preaching among native soldiers. Robert Clark was among those missionaries who tried to convert native sepoys. In 1857, under the influence of Robert Clark, thirty *Mazahbis* Sikhs of the 24th Punjab Infantry at Peshawar garrison converted to Christianity. However, after the War of Independence

(1) Stanley Elwood, 'Protestants in the Punjab: Religion and Social Change in a Indian Province in Nineteenth Century', PhD Dissertation, California University, 1971, p. 87.

(1857) and the mutiny of the 'Native Infantry Regiment' at Mian Meer (Lahore), which resulted in the murder of some British officers,(1) the British government issued 'Draconian Orders' to stop missionaries from converting native sepoys. Moreover, British officers were prohibited from discussing religion and were barred from participating in religious rituals with natives.

However, due to these conversions, the Chief Commissioner of Punjab, Sir John Lawrence (G.C.B), chalked out a clear policy in 1858 for native sepoys. Chief Commissioner showed interest in preaching among Native sepoys and produced a new coherent policy for the native converts. According to the new policy, missionaries were allowed to teach the native sepoys and meetings were organised for those who wanted to consult with the Christian missionaries. Moreover, they were authorised to distribute Christian literature to whomever they wanted. Moreover, under the new policy, sepoys who had converted to Christianity were moved from their regiments to some other crops where they might find the Christian companion.(2) Utilising these new policies of the Chief Commissioner of Punjab, Robert Clark of CMS adopted flexible techniques to convert native sepoys. He visited barracks in the evening when troops preferred to spend time alone to distribute literature about Christianity. (3)

(e) Health Care

Missionaries' activities were not only confined to education. They also provided health facilities to the natives. There were four main reasons behind their willingness to participate in medical activities. Firstly, according to the missionaries, it was their duty to help needy people. In Robert Clark's words, 'Our saviour sent forth his disciple to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick.(4) Secondly, medical facilities could allow the missionaries to interact with natives who do not welcome the missionaries in their respective areas.(5) For example, Dr Newton from the Ludhiana mission used to visit his patients' houses. His patients were from all walks of life. Sometimes, according to him, after the treatment, the people showed their willingness toward the message of Christ. Thirdly, missionaries invested heavily in the medical facilities in Colonial India, especially in Punjab, primarily to win the sympathy of the natives. Lastly, people in colonial India suffered due to the lack of medical facilities. According to Reverend John

(1) Their rebellion was curbed by Mr. Cooper Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial series Punjab. Voll, ii,p.19.

(2) Occasional papers on India No. v Dispatches by Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of Punjab: Christianity in India reprinted from the times of Oct 23, 1858 (London: Church Missionary House 1858), p.9.

(3) Lahore Diocesan Magazine No:3 March 1923. Volume IX, p.26.

(4) Robert Clark, *Medical Mission: A Sermon Preached at Anarkullee Church Lahore* (London: Church Missionary Society 1864), p.7.

(5) Robert Clark, *Medical Mission: A Sermon Preached at Anarkullee Church Lahore*, pp. 7-10.

Newton," When I was stationed in Lahore, I engaged in the medical practice of sometimes having 20, 30 and even 40 patients in a day. Sometimes there were many patients, and it was difficult for one person. In that case, it was recommended to take them to the native doctor at the government dispensary."(1)

(f) Bible Societies

The Bible society's primary work was the publication of the Bible in the native language. Punjab Religious Book Society was established in 1863 at Anarkali in Lahore. It was created to publish and supply religious books in various vernacular languages and English. The society also published many secular books on science and history in Urdu. It also achieved a gold medal at the Lahore exhibition (1909) for vernacular publication. Along with this society, 'The British and Foreign Bible Society' started its work in Lahore in 1891 and published a Bible in all languages of Punjab. It was recorded that from 1891 to 1900, 17,895 Bibles and 34,623 testaments were printed.(2) With the growth of Christians, the number of publications also increased. From 1901 to 1910, 24,448 Bibles and 48667 testaments were published to full fill the needs of the growing Christian community.(3)

3. Conclusion

Christian missionaries employed different conversion techniques to influence natives towards Christianity. Missionaries came to India with varied denominations. However, they set aside their differences in the denomination and focused only on the conversion to Christianity. The techniques which Christian missionaries employed in Punjab were not new. Most of the techniques were already in place in different parts of India. There were primarily four main techniques which Christian missionaries employed. Firstly, to build a positive image, Christian missionaries established different institutions for native people, e.g., Hospitals, dispensaries, schools, orphanages, churches, and Christian villages. These institutions helped the missionaries not only to socialise but also to build a philanthropist image. However, missionaries failed to convert a large section of Punjabi society due to discrimination against lower caste converts and reactions from other religious groups.



(1) Report on the Punjab Missionary Conference held at Lahore, in December and January, 1862-63 edited by the committee of compilation, Ludhiana, Printed at American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1864, p.109.

(2) Census of India, Punjab, 1911, Volume XIV, Part 1, Report (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette, 1912), p.190.

(3) Census of India, Punjab, 1911, Volume XIV, Part 1, Report (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette, 1912), p.190.