

William Carey and His Associates: Towards Transformation

CAREY DAY 2022

Commemorating the 261st Birth Anniversary
of Rev. Dr. William Carey
Founder of
Serampore College

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Carey Day 2022 Program

Contribution of the Serampore Trio—William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward—Toward Social Transformation Through Education and Their Role in the Bengal Renaissance

D. Arthur Jeyakumar*

Introduction

It was 1998. I was having a walk on the main road of Serampore on August 17, when I noticed ‘Pandals’ (temporary sheds) at different street junctions. Those ‘Pandals’ were having a portrait of William Carey garlanded and kept on an elevated place. Traditional Bengali music was being played there over the mike sets. I was pleasantly surprised as those ‘Pandals’ were kept by local Bengali people who had nothing to do with Christianity and the Church. Since I do not remember having come across such observance of Carey Day during my student days at Serampore College (1963-1966), I made inquiries and I came to understand that the Bengalis observe ‘Carey’s Day’ to recollect the contribution made by the Serampore Trio, especially William Carey, to the Bengali language and literature. In 1998, that day had been declared a State-Government holiday. I do not know whether such a practice is continued nowadays. So, we can understand that the Bengali people still consider William Carey and his colleagues as those who brought a renaissance in Bengal in addition to social transformation through their educational activities.

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Though the Serampore Trio are mentioned in the title of this article, the emphasis will be given to the activities and contribution of William Carey, to the Bengal Renaissance, though each of them was as remarkable as Carey himself.

William Carey (1761-1834) was born at Paulerspury, Northampton shire, England. He was a village cobbler (mender of shoes), Baptist Pastor, teacher, student of languages, and botanist. His first great work was *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*, published in 1792. He prepared the way for the foundation of the 'Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen' in 1792. It came to be known as the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). William Carey was sent as its first missionary to India.

Carey spent the first thirty-two years of his life in England. It was a period when England was going through social change due to many factors, such as industrial, commercial, and political expansion and growth. It was an age of awakening. Education was available to the children of the poor. Rural folk in England were aspiring for change and self-determination. All these made their imprint on Carey and they influenced him in his ministry in Bengal, which, by the time Carey arrived in Calcutta, had come under the rule of the British East India Trading Company (EIC). The disorder in the fields of economics and the lives of rural Bengalis due to a severe famine in 1772, motivated Carey to work for the upliftment of the common people of Bengal. He soon became one of the architects of the Indian Renaissance.

Language Study

Carey was a product of the Evangelical Awakening transforming England of that time. The German Pietist Movement which was a cause, if not the cause, for the evangelical revival, was noted for five principles out of which three, viz. 1. emphasizing learning the native language of the people on the mission field, 2. translating the Bible in the local languages as soon as possible, and 3. fostering a close link between Educational Ministry and the Mission (Church), were promoted by the Serampore Trio. So, Carey began learning the Bengali language during his five months long sea-voyage.

Carey had the good fortune of having John Thomas, a medical doctor, as his fellow traveler on his sea voyage from England to India, since John Thomas had been designated as a BMS missionary along with Carey. Thomas had earlier served under the EIC, so he was proficient in

the Bengali language and able to teach Carey. On landing in Calcutta, Thomas introduced Carey to Ram Ram Basu, his former tutor in the Bengali language, and Carey appointed him as his Munshi. “Testifying to his aptitude and his interest in learning the Bengali language, Sajani Kanta Das, the noted writer, has mentioned that William Carey was an industrious and steadfast person with a great deal of perseverance,” recalls Malay Dewanji.¹

We come to know from Carey’s biographers that he had an interest in learning Hebrew and Greek even at his workplace in England. That indicates his interest in languages and made full use of this talent for the benefit of humanity.

Apart from Bengali, in 1794, Carey began learning Sanskrit and Hindustani from Mohan Chandra and Ram Ram Basu. By April 1796, he was sufficiently fluent in Sanskrit that he began collecting Sanskrit materials. Hearing of Carey’s skill in Bengali and Sanskrit, the EIC authorities invited him in 1801 to teach those languages at their staff training college, Fort William College at Calcutta. This appointment helped Carey in many ways. “Within a few years, it was established beyond any doubt that William Carey was one of the most outstanding Sanskrit scholars of his time...”² Then in 1804, he was asked to teach the Marathi language in addition to Bengali and Sanskrit.

Publications and Translations

As pointed out earlier, based on the evangelical movement’s principle, Carey began to translate the Bible into the vernaculars. First of all, he translated the New Testament into Bengali, of course with the help of John Thomas and a Pandit. This was accomplished while he resided at Madnabati, besides attending to his indigo business. It was ready for printing on a wooden press purchased in Calcutta by 1798.

When he heard of the arrival of four missionaries sent by BMS and of their landing at Serampore, a Danish Colony on the banks of Hooghly, Carey decided to shift his residence from a village in Malda District to Serampore. He left with his family on December 25, 1799, and arrived at Serampore on January 10, 1800. He took along with him the press he had purchased and the manuscripts of his Bible translations.

¹ Malay Dewanji, *William Carey and the Indian Renaissance* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1996), 17.

² *Ibid.*, 34.

Carey wanted his Bengali New Testament to be printed first, and so he set up the printing press at Serampore and entrusted it to William Ward, a printer, one of four newly arrived missionaries. Early in 1801, the printing of the same was completed. Its publication led to an unexpected result, as the EIC offered him the post of professor of Bengali in the College of Fort William, Calcutta.

The printing press established in the Mission compound at Serampore eventually grew into, what may be called, a translation industry. It became a source of strength to the Mission and it served the general public also. People of different faiths laboured at the Press. When Johannes Gutenberg invented movable type printing in the 15th century, it brought Renaissance to Europe, in the same way, the Serampore printing press brought about an awakening among the Bengalis.

William Ward, who was in charge, described the Press in a letter he wrote to a cousin in 1811, which ran as follows:

As you enter, you see your cousin, in a small room, dressed in a white jacket, reading or writing, and looking over the office, which is more than 170 feet long. There you find Indians translating the scriptures into different tongues, or correcting proof-sheets. Your observation laid out in cases, types in Arabic, Persia, Nagari, Telugu, Punjabi, Bengali, Marathi, Chinese, Oriya, Burmese, Kanarese, Greek, Hebrew, and English. Hindus, Mussulmans, and Christian Indians are busy – composing, correcting, and distributing. Next, are four men throwing off the Scripture sheets in the different languages; others folding the sheets and delivering them to the large store-room, and six Mussulmans do the binding. Beyond the office are the varied type-casters, besides a group of men making ink; and in a spacious open walled-round place, our paper-mill, for we manufacture our own paper.³

Needless to explain the impact the printing press made on the minds of ordinary people in Bengal. It brought in a sense of pride in the Bengali language and culture.

Carey's Bengali grammar was published in 1801. When we realize that it was brought out within eight years of his arrival in India, we understand his love for the language as well as his zeal for making it an

³ C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, rev. ed. (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 151; M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials* (Madras: CLS, 1982), 87, citing S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, rev. & enlarged 8th ed. (London: Carey Press, 1934), 286.

elegant language. R. K. Das Gupta wrote, “it is impressive that Carey’s Bengali grammar appeared at a time when the Brahmin scholars of Bengal thought that the language (Bengali) was not respectable enough to deserve the attention of qualified grammarians.”⁴

Bible translation was given a prime place by the Serampore Mission. Some of the translations were made by the missionaries with the help of pundits. By 1834, when Carey died, six versions of the entire Bible had been published, twenty-three versions of the New Testament alone, and smaller portions of the Bible (Gospels) in ten other languages. It must be admitted that many of the translations thus made were very imperfect and needed drastic revision. Yet they deserve our appreciation, especially for the serious attempt made during the first half of the nineteenth century.

About the translation work of Carey, Roger E. Hedlund says,

Translation involves more than the transmission of words, grammar, and vocabulary. Quite contrary to common supposition, translation of the Bible has served to suppress the transmission of Western culture... The language which is the heart of culture was enriched through the translation process and provided a powerful weapon of cultural resistance and assertion... Translation served to preserve the cultural heritage of Bengal and thus provided the basis for further studies and revitalization. The translation gave tools to the people for withstanding colonialism.⁵

Carey was involved in other translation work as well. Intending to introduce Oriental studies to Europe, he submitted a proposal for translating into English a few of the Sanskrit classics and publishing them through the Asiatic Society and Fort William College. After the scheme was approved, he and Joshua Marshman translated the *Ramayana* from Sanskrit into English, a first. From 1806-1810 three out of nine proposed volumes were published at Serampore. Though Carey translated a part of *Sankhyadarshan* into English, we do not know why this philosophical work never got published.⁶

⁴ R. K. Dasgupta, “William Carey and Bengali Grammar” in *Carey’s Obligation and India’s Renaissance*, ed. J. T. K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund (Serampore: Council of Serampore College, 1993), 187-192.

⁵ Roger E. Hedlund, “William Carey’s American Connections: Implications for the Serampore Mission, Indigenous Christianity and Indian Renaissance” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Madras, 2003), 130.

⁶ Malay Dewanji, *William Carey and the Indian Renaissance*, 39.

The reason why Carey is remembered even now by Bengalis is because of his steps to develop the Bengali language and literature. In August 1801, he compiled, edited, and then published a book entitled *Kathopakathan or Dialogues to Facilitate the Acquiring of the Bengalee Language* for College students. It was the first book in Bengali prose. It was a useful source material for the study of the social history of Bengal at that time. It was admired for its use of colloquial language and easy style. It was full of idioms of rural Bengal and so it throws light on the style of living, mode of thinking, and the way of talking of rural folk. Since Carey had employed Bengalis to compose the dialogues on subjects of domestic nature, *Kathopakatan* (later named *Colloquies*) became a book of substance and relevance.⁷

Malay Dewanji gives excerpts from the writings of some eminent Bengali scholars regarding their perception of Carey and his contribution to the Bengali language and literature. I reproduce them here: “The most significant acknowledgement and tribute to William Carey came from one of his contemporaries, Ram Kamal Sen, the grandfather of Keshab Chandra Sen. He says in the introduction to his compilation, *A Dictionary in English and Bengali* (1834): “I must acknowledge here that whatever has been done towards the revival of the Bengali language, its improvement and in fact, in establishing it as a language, must be attributed to the excellent man, Dr. Carey.”⁸ Sisir Kumar Das in his *Early Bengali Prose, Carey to Vidyasagar* (1866) gives Carey “the honour of being the pioneer of Bengali fiction to the extent that he was the first man to create fictitious characters in a prose work in Bengali....” Sushil Kumar Dey writes in his book, *History of Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century 1800-1825* (1919) “To Carey belongs the credit of having raised the language from its debased condition of an unsettled dialect to the character of a regular and permanent form of speech, capable, as in the past, of becoming the refined and comprehensive vehicle of a great literature in the future.”⁹ From these appraisals, we understand the respect and honour accorded to Carey by Bengali scholars. He inspired future authors which in turn brought a renaissance among the Bengalis, not only in their use and perception of their language but also in their social, cultural, and political life.

⁷ Ibid., 35-37

⁸ Ibid., 36

⁹ Ibid., 36.

Another notable literary achievement of Carey was his *Itihasamala* which was published in 1811/1812. It contained 150 Bengali stories written in a very easy and simple style, which not only enriched the Bengali language but also inspired Bengali scholars in many ways, resulting in the rapid and extensive expansion of Bengali prose.

In 1818, the Serampore missionaries entered the field of journalism. Joshua Marshman and his son started a weekly newspaper in Bengali called *Samachar Darpan* and an English monthly *The Friend of India*. The *Samachar Darpan* is believed to be the first newspaper ever printed in any Oriental language. Both were to play a valuable part in educating public opinion on social questions. These two journals became instruments in the hands of Carey and his colleagues to promote social reform. One such matter which caught their attention was ‘Satisahagamana’ (in short ‘Sati’), the burning alive of Hindu widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. In his diary entry dated April 1, 1799, Carey described the first time he witnessed the practice of ‘Sati’. From that time onwards, he began to raise his voice against it. The first number of *The Friend of India (Quarterly)* carried an article on widow-burning, which was described as “a powerful and convincing statement of the real facts and circumstances of the case.” And the newspaper continued “to keep the matter before the public by reporting actual cases as they appeared.” As a result, protests against this practice grew. Ram Mohan Roy (later Raja) and a few other enlightened Hindus also raised their voices against it. So, in 1829, the then Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck issued an order prohibiting Sati in the East India Company’s territories.¹⁰

Carey and his associates, throughout their lives, were very concerned about women’s emancipation and social justice in India. In 1819, the *Samachar Darpan* supported the cause of widow re-marriage. In the following years, the Serampore Mission’s papers, journals, and press continued to lend support to the re-marriage of widows.¹¹

“A study of the history of nineteenth-century India would be incomplete if the contribution that Carey and his associates made in the sphere of vernacular newspapers is not remembered with respect and gratitude. William Carey inspired the new thinking in Bengal as well as in

¹⁰ D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *History of Christianity in India: Selected Themes* (2007; reprint Chennai: The Author, 2014), 71-72.

¹¹ Malay Dewanji, *William Carey and Indian Renaissance*, 76.

the rest of India that heralded the dawn of the golden age of modern India,” writes Malay Dewanji.¹² “Observing the impact that the newspapers and periodicals published by the Serampore missionaries had on the people, the Bengali intellectuals also came forward and started to publish newspapers... On December 4, 1821, Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhaya published the weekly, *Sangbad Koumudi*, the first Bengali newspaper to be edited and published by a Bengali.”¹³ Kalidas Nag, a distinguished Bengali scholar and former Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, highlighted the contribution of Carey to the Bengali language. In his essay in the 1961 edition of *The Story of Serampore and its College*, mentions with appreciation Carey’s Bengali *Colloquies*, his Bengali Grammar and Dictionary, *Itihasamala*, the translation and publication of a Bengali *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and says that these “entitle Rev. Carey to immortality among the workers in the field of Bengali language and literature.”¹⁴

Formal Education

Missionaries, who were influenced by German Pietism, felt that education (meaning reading, writing, and arithmetic) should go hand in hand with missionary activity. So, Carey even while at Madnabati established a charity school in 1794 which had about 40 boys. We do not know much about this educational enterprise. But in Serampore, a Bengali school was established in 1800. At the same time, Joshua and his wife Hannah Marshman started boarding schools for Anglo-Indian boys and girls, children of fee-paying parents. These schools quickly became popular and brought in much-needed funds. Vernacular schools soon came to be emphasized and the Serampore Mission’s schools extended outside Bengal too. It is said that by 1818 there were 111 schools and their number rose to 250 by 1828. The emphasis on education through the vernacular in these schools was very significant as it gave impetus to the Indian Renaissance.

Some of the notable features of the Serampore native schools were: they were open to anyone for admission; they were free schools; their main objective was to remove illiteracy and ignorance of the poor and marginalised of the native society; modern science, history, and geography

¹² Ibid., 63.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kalidas Nag, “Carey’s Contribution to Bengali Literature,” in *The Story of Serampore College*, ed. Wilma S. Stewart (Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1961), 100.

were taught with tables, charts, etc; there was a synthesis of oriental and western ideas; the medium of instruction was the mother tongue; classes were conducted with the help and patronage of the villagers.¹⁵ These schools provided the impetus to the Indian Renaissance.

In India at that time, girls were not sent to schools at all. Being sensitive to the need for education for girls, the Serampore missionaries tried to encourage girls to join schools. It is said that they permitted girls to sit behind curtained partitions and attend classes in the Boys' schools, but this early attempt at co-education was not successful. Yet female education was a singular contribution of the Serampore missionaries. Beginning in 1821, female schools were organised in Serampore and eventually in other parts of Bengal/North India. Hundreds of girls were enrolled in their schools. Hannah Marshman is much remembered in the Serampore Mission for her pioneering role in girls' education. Girls' education became a social reform movement and it helped to overcome local conservatism. The emancipation of women through education was accompanied by other reform efforts such as the campaign against 'Sati'.¹⁶

Encouraged by the success in school education, the Serampore missionaries stepped forward to establish Serampore College, which was considered a bold step. The College began to function on August 15, 1818. Its doors were open to all, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, or nationality. Its main aim was to give training to Indian Christians in order to transfer responsibility from Western missionaries to Indians and thus create a truly indigenous church. But there were other aims also. In the prospectus of the College, they explained that "This Institution is to be a College for the instruction of the Asiatic Christians and other youths in Eastern literature and Western science. The College aims to improve the minds of the pupils to any extent which might appear desirable, eventually supplying them instructions in every branch of knowledge".¹⁷ In higher education also the Serampore missionaries chose vernacular as the medium of instruction and made adequate arrangements for English teaching. The College pioneered in many fields which were covered by the broad definition of 'Eastern

¹⁵ Malay Dewanji, *William Carey and Indian Renaissance*, 76.

¹⁶ Roger E. Hedlund, "William Carey's American Connections," 152.

¹⁷ Serampore College Prospectus published on 15 July 1818 cited in Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, "Missionary Impact on Socio-Religious Movements in Early Nineteenth Century India," in *India's Christian Heritage*, ed. O. L. Snaitang and George Menachery (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 2012), 591.

Literature and Western Science.’ It flourished in a slow but steady manner. Upon Marshman’s request, the King of Denmark, Frederick VI being very pleased with the activities of Carey and his brethren presented a Royal Charter to Serampore College in 1827. By virtue of this Charter, Serampore College received the right to confer degrees and became the first college to have been established by a missionary group or a Society from the West.¹⁸ Throughout the 19th century, Serampore College continued to play a vital role in the reformatory process of Bengali literature and culture.

Conclusion

William Ward died in 1823, Carey in 1834, and Marshman in 1837. They indeed “expected great things from God and attempted great things for God.” They aspired to remove ignorance through the spread of education. They published books and newspapers. They resisted social oppression and attempted to establish social justice. Through their multifaceted activities, Carey, Marshman, and Ward contributed to a cultural renewal in Bengal which resulted in movements for social reform and national awakening. They performed an essential catalytic function in the Bengal Renaissance. All Bengalis, indeed all Indians will remain grateful to William Carey and his Associates for what they were able to do for the betterment of the Bengali language, culture, and society. Long live their memory.

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¹⁸ The Serampore College functioned independently until 1854, when it was handed over to the BMS. At the transfer of Serampore to the British in 1845, its status was left unchanged. From 1883 to 1910 it was in abeyance, though the BMS carried on a Seminary for Bengal. From 1910 its college status was revived and a reorganization took place, whereby the Arts and Science departments were affiliated to the Calcutta University, but the Theological department was left free to exercise its right and powers as a University under the old Charter. Provision was also made for other theological colleges and seminaries in India to become affiliated to it. C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 154, fn. Through *The Serampore College Act: Bengal Act No. IV of 1918* a Senate was constituted, and also a Council to administer the Theology Department. M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India*, 315-316.

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Dr. William Carey: From Maldah To Serampore

Anup Kumar Sengupta*

Dr. William Carey was born on August 17, 1761. In 1792 on October 2nd, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) was set up for the purpose of religious preaching abroad. Carey's plan was to sail to Africa with a team of religious preachers, but he changed his mind after meeting Rev. John Thomas.

Thomas was a doctor and a religious preacher. He had already visited India twice before and had a deep-rooted love for Bengal. He was in search of a good companion and some financial help to return to Bengal again.

As per Carey's request, the BMS agreed to help Thomas and so Carey decided to accompany him to India. But by this time, the East India Company had restricted the entries of the missionaries into their territory; Carey and Thomas did not receive permission for their planned expedition. However, they decided to travel to Bengal without the permission-letter in a Danish ship, and thus on 13th June 1793, Carey with his family and Thomas set out for Bengal. After a long journey, they reached Calcutta on 11th November 1793.

In the course of their long voyage, Carey had learned to speak Bengali from Thomas. In Calcutta, they met Mr. Ramram Basu, a professor of Bengali from Rishra (adjacent to Serampore). Carey soon appointed him as the Munshi (Personal Assistant) and started learning Bengali and Sanskrit

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from him. But after a short stay in Calcutta, he went to Bandel (then the Portuguese colony) and then to Nabadwip in search of employment. Later, he also went to Debhatta in the Sunderbans (Forest Area in South Bengal). By this time, his family was already facing a financial crisis. Thomas managed to get him a job in George Udny's Indigo cultivation factory in the post of a manager. In 1794 Carey accepted the job and shifted to Madnabati in Maldah. By this time, he had already learned Bengali well; he also wrote a dictionary and a grammar guide for his own help. In Maldah he established a school for the Natives.

In 1796, John Fountain started helping Carey and supporting him in religious preaching. Carey translated 'The Bible' into Bengali and also took the initiative to bring it into print. By this time printed reading materials in the Bengali language were well prevalent in India. In 1778, "A Grammar in the Bengali Language" by Halhed was printed on a printing press in Chinsurah (a Dutch colony); the name of the printer was Charles Wilkins.

However, Carey failed to publish his translation of the Bible at that time due to the lack of financial resources. In 1772, Wilkins was transferred to Maldah as the company writer. Wilkins, previously when working in Calcutta, had crafted wooden English and Bengali letters with the help of Mr. Panchanan Karmakar. The former superintendent of the Indigo factory of Goamalti, Maldah was George Udny. In 1794, when Carey joined the Madnabati Indigo factory as the manager, Thomas was employed as the supervisor of the Mahipaldighi. During his stay in Maldah, Carey attempted to set up a printing press there and bring the Bengali alphabet in print. George Udny, keeping in mind Carey's interest in printing, soon gifted him a wooden press which was brought in Madnabati in the year 1798. After this, Carey was so involved with the press, both the Madnabati Indigo factory and the Mahipaldighi faced serious business loss and, shortly after, Udny decided to close both. Carey became unemployed. He purchased an Indigo factory at Khidurpur, near Madnabati.

At this time something important happened in 1799. The BMS sent a group of missionaries to India. These missionaries started staying in the Danish colony Serampore. The Danish Governor promised to provide them with every kind of help in publishing the translation of 'The Bible.' On the basis of this agreement, William Ward came to meet Carey in Maldah and requested him to set up a printing press in Serampore. Ramram Basu also did his best to convince Carey to come to Serampore. Finally, Carey

agreed to Ward's proposal and set out for Serampore on 25th December 1799 along with his printing machine and his friend Fountain. They reached Serampore on 10th January 1800 and that very day the Serampore Mission and Serampore Mission Press were established.

Gradually over time, the contribution of Maldah in the introduction of printing in the Bengali language in India was forgotten. Due to Carey's joining the Serampore Mission, people of Maldah lost the glory of having witnessed the establishment of the first printing press. Maldah lost him, but Serampore gained and that was the onset of a glorious history.

Skillful Contrivance of the Founders of Serampore College

Tapan Kumar Banerjee*

True it is that any nation's system of education is an integral part of its culture and social values, physical and geographical environment, philosophical ideology, history and tradition, overall economic conditions. The culture and education of a nation do not simply reflect the nation's past, they reflect the present status, but also look forward and show the path to the future. This is true even in case of education in India. The solid foundation of Vedic Brahmanic Education had absorbed the influences of Buddhist Education by making necessary adjustments and reforms of itself. In the next phase, Mediaeval Indian education consisted of the parallel existence of the Hindu and Islamic systems with some isolated remnants of Buddhistic learning. Actually, this Mediaeval education composes a foreign pattern education being Indianised and it has become an integral part of a broader spectrum of Indian culture.

The medieval era had been a period of faith, submission, and superstitions. Though the next phase of the modern period became a period of science and rationality causing the consistent development of urban life, yet the society do still cling to casteism, submerged in superstitions and conservative rituals, and the advanced technological education coexists with mass illiteracy. But this new era witnessed the growth of a new commercial monetary economy, the development of new social values,

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new education and a new political pattern. However, the Missionaries of 17th – 18th centuries provided a link between medieval education and modern education and helped the transition from the former to the latter.

Consequently, upon the discovery of the sea-route to India by Vasco da Gama in 1498, the Portuguese merchants were the first European to enter into a regular commercial relationship with their Indian counterparts. Also, from the second half of the 16th century, there was a spate of missionary activity throughout the vast global field and particularly the subcontinent of India. The merchants infused a new economic relationship whereas the missionaries functioned as a religious and cultural vanguard. Credit goes to the Portuguese missionaries like the Jesuit fathers St. Francis Xavier and Robert de Nobili for initiating missionary educational enterprise in India. The hey-day of Portuguese enterprise declined in the 17th century with the advent of the Dutch. But as their major attention was directed to Ceylon, the contributions of the Dutch towards education in India were insignificant. But the vacuum thus created was filled by the French, Danish and English missionaries. In their educational enterprise, the French missionaries imitated the Portuguese founded institutions at Karaikal, Pondicherry, Madras, and Chandannagore. But they had to withdraw after their mortal contest with the British Company in Southern India. However, most of the schools started by the Portuguese and French missionaries owe their existence to the herculean efforts of those early missionaries, which continued under the hegemony of the British Indian Empire.

The British East India Company did not accept direct responsibility to provide education for the Indian society, but their efforts were directed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) through the Danes, their Protestant-partners, avoiding the Catholic Portuguese and French, their political rivals. In 1706, two young men of German origin, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, were sent by the Danish Mission Society (formed by King of Denmark, Frederick the Fourth in 1701) from Copenhagen to the small Danish colony of Tranquebar. After they had overcome the difficulties of the Malabar language they continued to preach, teach, write and translate. Ziegenbalg finished the translation of the New Testament in the Tamil language by March 21, 1711. By that time Johann Ernst Gründler along with two other missionaries landed in Tranquebar with a font of Tamil types cast at Halle in Saxony. Ziegenbalg then started a printing press and a paper mill to publish the Tamul version of the Bible and a Grammar. Charity schools were established at Madras. A teacher-training school was founded at Tranquebar in 1716. But his

translation of the Old Testament was completed by Schultze in 1727 after Ziegenbalg's death in 1719 at the early age of 36 years.

The first Protestant mission in India, established by Ziegenbalg in the Danish settlement of Tranquebar on the Coromandel coast, was maintained and extended by a succession of able missionaries. Schultze, a German was employed by S.P.C.K. after Ziegenbalg, was instrumental in starting schools at Madras, Tanjore, Travancore, Cuddalore, Ramnad, Trichy etc. and in preparing a Telugu version of the Bible and a Grammar. In 1739, the Swede John Zachariah Kiernander joined the S.P.C.K. and within three years established a Charity school at Fort St. David. But the occupation of Cuddalore by the French from the English drove him to Calcutta, where he received a cordial welcome from Colonel Robert Clive and Lady Clive. In 1785, he opened a school for educating the poor and gratuitously instructed them in the rudiments of learning and the doctrines of Christianity in Calcutta, which became his arena of missionary activities. In 1750, the greatest of all the Tranquebar missionaries, Christian Frederick Schwartz, a man of high integrity, joined to serve as a diplomat and a statesman, who enjoyed the trust of people from all walks of life. In 1763, responding to the disastrous situation caused by the explosion of the ammunition depot of Tiruchirappalli, he established an orphanage for the fatherless children of the deceased. Also in February 1785, he entered on the plan of founding English Schools throughout the country in order to facilitate the intercourse of the natives with Europeans. Eventually, he became the pioneer of introducing English education in this country. But with the death of this 'Apostle of India,' in 1798, the first stage of the Protestant Mission in India might properly be said to end. However, the legacy the works of Ziegenbalg and Schwartz influenced the Baptist Missionary William Carey to formulate the plans of the Serampore Mission early in 19th Century.

William Carey and John Thomas, coming to Bengal at the end of 1793, settled in Maldah in June 1794, wandering about from place to place for means of subsistence. Mr. Thomas undertook the superintendence of the indigo factory owned by Mr. George Udny of the Company's civil service at the village of Mypaldiggy and William Carey that of his Mudnabatty factory, about 30 miles north of Maldah. At the end of that year, Carey had commenced a native school, but the poverty of natives caused them frequently to take their children to work. To prevent this he proposed to feed, clothe, and educate a limited number of youths by setting up two colleges, one at each of those two places, but that plan could not be

executed. But he thought to set up schools in hope that the natives would embrace Christianity.

In October, 1799, four missionaries – William Ward, Joshua Marshman (with wife Hannah and son John Clark), Daniel Brunson (with wife), William Grant (with wife) and Miss Tidd, sent by the BMS, landed at the Danish settlement at Serampore, where they were received by the Danish Governor, Colonel Ole Bie with most cordial affability. Colonel Bie assured them of protected shelter and pressed them to make Serampore their headquarters of their missionary activities, to set up a printing press and a school for their support. Accepting these reasonable proposals, they sent Mr. Ward to meet Carey in North Bengal. After a long discussion, Mr. Carey and Mr. John Fountain (who joined Carey at Mudnabatty at the end of 1796) resolved to remove to Serampore. Reaching Serampore on the 10th of January, 1800, William Carey took the initiative to form the Serampore Baptist Mission and to establish the printing press with the gift of the wooden-press from Mr. Udney.

It may be noted here, “If the settlement of Serampore had not existed, or if it had not been at the time under the Danish flag, Mr. Marshman and Mr. Ward would, in all human probability, have been constrained to return forthwith to England, and the mission might have expired in its cradle. Mr. Carey would not have been permitted either to establish a press for the printing of the Scriptures at Mudnabatty or to receive any addition of missionaries, and his labours would probably have become extinct on his death.”¹

On his arrival at Serampore, William Carey rented a little house having no convenience for the erection of the press, the first of their wants or to establish a school, so, within a week a house with moderate accommodation was bought for Rs.6,000/- in the name of the Society constituting themselves as the trustees. William Ward then started printing religious tracts, pamphlets and the first sheet of the Bengali New Testament was handed over to Carey on March 18, 1800. Joshua Marshman and Ward being engaged in the study of native language set out to preach publicly along with Carey and Fountain.

The establishment of two boarding schools for European children on the 1st of May, 1800 by Mr. and Mrs. Marshman assisted to develop the

¹ John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), 1:124.

common fund of the Mission. On the 1st of June, they opened a vernacular free school for native youth. The Mission established a letter foundry when the expert native blacksmith, Panchanon Karmakar joined the mission along with Manohar and others. About the middle of the year, Ram Ram Basoo, who was the language teacher for many years of John Thomas and was for some period Mr. Carey's moonshee, came to meet Carey at Serampore. He was then engaged in the compilation of the 'Gospel Messenger' and he also composed another pamphlet exposing the absurdities of Hindooism. As long as all the missionaries worked whole-heartedly for the cause of mission, but with the premature deaths of Mr. Fountain (20 August 1800), of Mr. Brunson (3 July 1801) and of Mr. Thomas (13 October 1801), the responsibilities were shouldered by Carey-Marshman-Ward, who worked together, earning the epithet 'The Serampore Trio'.

Just at the beginning of the 19th Century, feeling the necessity of training the newly arrived civilians on the native customs, religions, laws and above all the languages, Governor General Lord Wellesley formally established the Fort William College on 18 August 1800 in Calcutta. Mr. Carey was appointed as a lower grade teacher in the Bengali language to the civilians on a salary Rs.500 a month on the 12th of May, 1801. At this Serampore missionaries became independent of financial support from England. Actually, Lord Wellesley thought of imparting an education in which knowledge about India would be integrated with the knowledge of Western science and literature, without emphasizing only Orientalism. But with the approval of the Court of Directors, Haileybury College for training the civilians in England, was established in 1806. Thus, the College of Fort William being reduced into a centre of Oriental languages, evidently contrary to the wishes of its founder, continued to function until 1854 as a language institution for Europeans.

Lord Wellesley took keen personal interest in the appointment of European Professors and Teachers, and from 1801, men like G. H. Barlow, N. B. Edmonstone, John Baillie, John Gilchrist, C. Buchanon, H. T. Colebrooke, and others were appointed as Professors (salary Rs.1500 p.m.) and Teachers like James Dinwiddie, Du Plessy, M. Lumsden, Rev. Poetzold and Edward Scott Waring (salary Rs.1000 p.m.), and others as Heads of Departments of the College. As the Head of Sanskrit and Bengali department in 1801, William Carey appointed the finest scholar, Mrityunjoy Vidyalkar as Chief Munshi at Rs.200 p.m., Ramnath Vachaspati as Second Munshi at Rs.100 p.m. and Assistant Munshis at Rs.40 p.m. like

Sripati (Ray), Ananda Chandra, Rajiblochan Mukhopadhyay, Kashinath (Mukhopadhyay), Padmolochan Churamoni and Ramram Basoo. In the history of India, for the first time so many scholars from different parts of this country with different social, religious, linguistic – backgrounds were assembled at Fort William College. The Heads and their associates in all the departments of the College were engaged in writing and printing the text-books for their students.

William Carey and his associates had initiated to publish their school-books and the college textbooks most of which were printed at the Serampore Mission Press. At the beginning of 1807, when the College of Fort William was remodeled and reduced, the professorships were restricted to three – the Hindoostanee, the Persian and the Bengali. But Mr. Carey, who had hitherto been ranked only as a teacher, was then raised to Professorship in Bengali, Sanskrit, and Maratha, and his allowances were increased from Rs.500 a month to Rs.1000. He continued his service in the College up to 1831 and he was the only one receiving a pension, which he for the next two years after retirement.

Along with the translation of the Bible in 35 Oriental languages (between 1800-1832), William Carey's earnestness to cover a wide field of literature was remarkable. At his inspiration, he together with Indian scholars, published Text-Books and other books of interest, including Agriculture, Geography, Botany, etc., as well as seven vernacular Grammars, and three Dictionaries for language learning. Even his contributions towards the development of Bengali prose literature were praiseworthy. However, the beginning that Serampore and Fort William College made in language, literature, and education affected the whole cultural life of Bengal and prepared the soil for a new type of education – Western Education.

Meanwhile, at William Carey's intervention, Lord Wellesley in 1802 was the first Governor-General to break up the system of guilty connivance of sacrificing children at the great festival at Gunga Saugor. Mr. Carey also pointed out that the burning of women, or burying them alive with their husbands, the exposure of infants etc., the practices connected with superstitious vows, ought to be abolished. By 1804, the Serampore missionaries planned for the translation of scriptures or portions of them firstly in at least seven languages spoken in India – Bengali, Hindoostanee, Oriya, Mahratta, Telinga, Kurnata and Tamul, obtaining the assistance of the learned men due to Carey's connection with the Fort William

College. Moreover, his association with the Asiatic Society in Calcutta (founded by Sir William Jones in 1784) helped him and Marshman to finish the first volume of the translation of the Ramayana in 1806. Two successive volumes were published in 1808 & 1810. For the publications of his translation works, Mr. Carey, on the 8th of March, 1807, received the diploma of Doctor of Divinity, from Brown University, in the United States. Likewise, Joshua Marshman was also honoured with such diploma for his literary labours in the Chinese Language in the month of June 1811. Furthermore, William Ward in 1811 compiled his work on the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos.

The Serampore missionaries had evolved a set of note-worthy ideas for general educational development, which may be regarded as the first organized plan for the establishment of schools which had ever been devised in India. The report of 1814 stated that they had established twenty schools in various parts of the region. Even as early as 1809, they founded the first of their Benevolent Institutions at Calcutta for the education of neglected children of Anglo-Indians. For the introduction of a system of elementary education, they published the 'Hints relative to Native Schools' (1816).

The question of education in India for the advancement of the inhabitants of British possession in useful knowledge and their moral and religious improvement was first considered by the House of Commons in 1793. At that time, a Sanskrit College had been established by Mr. Jonathan Duncan, at Benares, to cultivate the laws, literature, and religion of the Hindoos (1792). Meanwhile, the Serampore Missionaries were endeavouring to enlarge and improve their system of native education according to their plan of establishing schools, translating the scriptures and preaching of the Gospel. Dr. Marshman introduced the Lancasterian System of education in the Benevolent Institution of Calcutta. By 1814, they established twenty native schools in various parts of the country, supported from their funds, supplying relevant books to impart valuable secular knowledge in simple arithmetic, geography, modern and ancient history of India, intending to form the elementary branch of the Hindoo juvenile library. But the question of superintendence was considered the most important part of the system. The youths educated in the Benevolent Institution would be ideally suitable to be equipped to undertake the superintendence of the schools under the direction of a missionary. It was indeed the first organized plan for setting schools which had ever been devised in India.

The impulse given to the cause of education by the enlightened measures of Lord Moira produced early in 1816 among the most opulent and influential natives a strong desire to establish a Hindoo College in Calcutta for the education of their children in the English language and in European science. It was the first national movement in the cause of improvement of the upper class. Such was the origin of the Hindoo College, which has produced the most memorable results among the upper ten thousand of Bengal (1817).

On the other hand, the Serampore missionaries, who had enlivened their scheme of native education, determined to take advantage of this impulse of improvement. Dr. Marshman accordingly drew up 'Hints relative to Native Schools', to propose a well-organized system of national education. But at the end of forty years of comparative inaction, the Board of Control sanctioned a system of vernacular education here, the germ of which lies in the pamphlet 'Hints' published in Serampore in 1816. The Serampore missionaries advocated almost single-handedly vernacular education as the only means by which the common people could be rescued from the evils of ignorance and superstition. Even they intended to give a more complete education to a few than an imperfect education to the multitude, and to promote the cultivation of a language already enriched with a noble literature, rather than one which is immature. Upon those views, the 'Hints' for native schools was based. For the schools springing up on all sides, through the encouragement of Lord Hastings, the Calcutta School-Book Society was established in the year 1817 intending to supply their needs. Within a year, at the earnestness of the inhabitants, around Serampore forty-five schools were opened in which two thousand students received elementary knowledge in their own language.

The Serampore missionaries, excepting suspicious Carey, intended for some time to publish a newspaper in the Bengali language for the purpose of diffusing information and exciting a spirit of inquiry among the natives. According to the proposal of Mr. Marshman on 13th of February, 1818, the first number of the periodical, *Dig-dursun*, the magazine for Indian youth, published on 30th April, 1818 was confined to articles of general information devoid of political intelligence. To their surprise, copies of this magazine which were sent to the most influential members of the government were received with approbation without causing any alarm of censor. Under these circumstances, the first newspaper *Sumachar Durpan* or the 'News Mirror', ever printed in an oriental language, was

issued from the Serampore Press on the 23rd of May, 1818, which also faced no objection from the members of the Council Board. The novelty of the weekly journal gave the *Durpun* great popularity among the natives of Calcutta. At the same time, the missionaries in the month of April commenced to print a monthly magazine in English, titled *Friend of India* under the editorship of Dr. Joshua Marshman, which continued up to 1828. But in order to accommodate longer essays on subjects connected with India, a quarterly series of *Friend of India* was published regularly between 1821 to 1827. However, John Clark Marshman renewed the publication of weekly *Friend of India* from 1835, which continued to 1873 as a true and trustworthy friend of India.

Prior to 1813, the important role played by the London, Scottish, and Church Missionary Societies, was mainly in the field of promoting primary education through the modern Indian languages and proselytize where and whenever possible. But with the Governor Lord Hastings's liberal views for the improvement of the natives as expressed in the Charter Act of 1813, the Serampore missionaries became desirous of establishing an institution to train up efficiently native schoolmasters, preachers and translators by giving higher and more complete education to native students, mainly of Christian parentage, so that they could acquire sufficient knowledge both of the sacred scriptures and of those philosophical and mythological dogmas which formed the soul of the Buddhist and Hindoo systems. The sacred doctrines of this country could not be attained without the knowledge of the Sanskrit and Arabic. After completing the studies of those languages, a selected number of students were to be engaged to acquire a complete knowledge of the English language for diving into the deepest recesses of European Science and enriching their own language with its choicest treasures.

Moreover, the Serampore missionaries revealed that the oriental erudition of a few European missionaries might not be able to face the learned heathen arguments, but presenting the Gospel in Indian Society would only be possible by the converted Christian natives opposing the heathen by demonstrating its excellence above all other systems.

Thus, on the 15th of July, 1818, they issued the *Prospectus of a College for the instruction of Asiatic Christian and other youth, in Eastern literature and European Science*. An extract from the First Prospectus of Serampore College issued under the joint signature of the Trio-William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward follow. The College started functioning on 15th of August, 1818.

Specific Objects of the College:

1. "The college shall secure the instruction in the Sungskritu language of all the Native Christian youth admitted; and of a certain number in Arabic, and Persian, for which purpose, the ablest native teachers shall be retained in these languages, at adequate salaries.
2. It shall secure their being farther instruction in the various Shastras of the Hindoos; and in the doctrines which form the basis of the Pouranic and the Bouddhist systems. They shall also be instructed in those which relates to Hindoo Law.
3. They shall be also instructed in the Sacred Scriptures, which they shall regularly study, and in the elucidation of which, Lectures shall be constantly delivered.
4. They shall be farther instructed in general history, chronology, geography, astronomy, and the various branches of natural science.
5. The Institution shall secure their practical instruction in the nature and management of Schools, as adapted to the various countries of India and Eastern Asia.
6. It shall farther secure the instruction of a certain number in the English Language; and of a number selected for that purpose in Latin and Greek.
7. As many of these youths as shall give decided evidence of piety, and of possessing fitness for the ministry, shall be placed on a course of studies preparatory to the ministry of the Gospel.
8. The Institution was to be open to native youths from all parts of India, without distinction of caste or creed. Every native who supported himself, or was supported by benefactors, was to be admitted to all the benefits of the college.
9. Christian youths of Asiatic parentage, of every denomination, were to be admitted into it, with the understanding that the instruction should be divested of everything of a sectarian character.
10. The College was likewise to include the formation of a normal school and educate teachers in the science of instruction.
11. A philosophical apparatus was also to be provided. A library was to be formed, to include, in addition to works of classical and European literature, every manuscript of any value, Sanscrit or vernacular, which could be obtained in the country.

12. It shall finally carry forward by means of the Officers and Students of the College, the translation into Sungskritu of the best works in the English language, till the Sungskritu with its dialects shall be enriched with the most valuable works on science, morality, and religion which the English language possesses.

An edifice was also to be erected at Serampore suited to the objects of the institution. The government of the College was to be vested in the Governor of Serampore for the time being, and the three senior missionaries.”

The prospectus of the College was submitted to the Governor Jacob Krefting of Serampore, who gave his cordial sanction to the establishment of the Institution and accepted the first place in the Committee of Governors. Likewise, when the plan of the College was sent to Lord Hastings, he expressed his approbation of it, but he marked an intention to aim at converting the native students. Dr. Marshman in reply referred to two distinct objects of the College – It was primarily intended to educate the children of native Christians and was also intended to give the benefit of its literary and scientific instruction to other youths, Hindoo or Mahomedan, but without placing any strain on their conscience. It may be proper to remark here that the difference between the tuition given in government and in the missionary colleges consists in this, that in the former Christianity is completely ignored, and the Bible is systematically excluded; whereas in the latter secular knowledge is blended with Christian instruction, based on Christian principles, but without any attempt to interfere with the rights of conscience.

The first report of the College stated that the number of students on the foundation in the first year of the experiment was thirty-seven, of whom nineteen were native Christians and the remainder heathens. They were taught the languages Sanskrit and Arabic, European science and knowledge, along with the English language later on. A library and a laboratory containing philosophical apparatus were formed in the newly built College building. During this period William Ward proceeded to England for restoration of his health, healing the breach with the Home Committee and to collect funds for the improvement of the College. In the previous year, the Serampore Mission had made some extensive purchases, the most eligible plot of land adjacent to their premises, extended to more than five acres. They resolved then to appropriate them for the College buildings, the ground plan and elevation of a noble edifice, for the accommodation of professors, teachers, and two hundred students, together with the requisite public rooms, were prepared by the best

architectural skill in the country. The plan of the building was submitted to Lord Hastings for his consideration. On returning he put forward the suggestion of modified plan of the building, and the present edifice, with its classical Ionic portico, considered one of the noblest in India, came into existence for the long and unbroken range of buildings originally designed.²

It is hearsay that College – classes started in the unoccupied rooms of Aldeen House on and from 15th August 1818. Actually, this house was the residence of Rev. David Brown, the Provost of Fort William College, who purchased it with extensive grounds on the confines of Serampore, (in April 1803) in which he continued to spend the weekends to the period of his death in 1812. At the end of 1821, when the noble specimen of the edifice, the Main Building of the College in Grecian Style (not of Gothic Architecture) was erected on the grounds appropriated to it, amounting to ten acres, built under the superintendence of Danish Major Wickedie, College classes were transferred to that building.

In the year 1820, for the benefit of native Christians, Dr. Carey and his colleagues established a Savings Bank at Serampore, which continued in operation for more than four years. But after some years, Lord William Bentinck following the same Philanthropic principle formed the Government Savings Bank, which still continues to encourage the principle of economy in this country.

About the same period, Serampore missionaries tried to manufacture improved papers for printing, which were made impervious to worm. Moreover, they set up a twelve-horse power steam-engine of Messrs. Thwaites and Rothwell of Bolton, in Serampore Press, at the advice of an enterprising European, Mr. William Jones, at the instance of one man having been accidentally killed while plying the wheels of a treadmill.

It may be reckoned that William Carey had a strong natural taste for botanical and agricultural pursuits, who used to maintain an extensive correspondence with the most eminent botanists in Europe and America. His own Serampore Botanical Garden on five acres of ground was stocked with the richest variety of valuable rare plants collected from all parts of the world, and in point of scientific importance, was second only to the Sibpur Govt. botanical garden, superintended by his friends William Roxburg and Dr. Wallich. In 1820, being encouraged by Lady

² John C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 2:203.

and Lord Hastings, Dr. Carey constituted the Agricultural Society of India in Calcutta for advancing the interests of the native cultivators through modern scientific technique. The benefit which Dr. Carey was enabled to confer on the improvement in this field by this spirited exertion has been held in grateful remembrance still by the Society he established.

About this time, Serampore missionaries communicated the information to the King of Denmark on the formation of the Serampore College. In reply, the King expressed his assured patronage for the progress and success of the College and he bestowed through the Governor of Serampore, Colonel Krefting, a gold medal on each of the Trio, as a token of his approbation of their labours. The King likewise transferred to them a large house and grounds adjoining their premises, as a more substantial token of his kindness.

It may be mentioned from the Second Report of the College and the *Periodical Accounts* that the Serampore Trio had been laboring to promote the evangelization of Indian according to their plans of preaching to the heathen, publishing translations of sacred Bible in important languages of India, and opening native schools. But the fourth and last plan of establishing the College for imparting scriptural improvement to the minds of native Pastors and Missionaries was the important one.

It is also mentioned that “They have bought a piece of ground adjoining the Mission premises, on which there is an old house (most probably the Aldeen House), and which, for the present, may be sufficient for the instruction of those whom God may give unto them; but they should be glad to see, before their removal by death, a better house erected. A row of small rooms for the students is immediately wanted.”³ The College is to educate “the children of English Missionaries, who may be the subject of saving influences, and may be called to the work of the Mission.... It is further intended, that a respectable but inferior education should be given at the college, to a number of the children of converted Hindoos and Musulmans, so as to qualify them for situations in life, by which they may procure a decent livelihood, and rear and educate their families.... In the illumination of large and successive bodies of the heathen, it is contemplated that the effects of this College on India may be most important...”⁴ From another letter, dated 25th March (1819), we learn that

³ *Periodical Accounts* (Bristol: J. G. Fuller, 1819), 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

two native Professors had been appointed, the one for Astronomy, and the other for the Hindoo Law. The scholars had then been removed into the house already purchased; but the rooms for the accommodation of the students had not been erected, for want of funds. Clearly, the above-quoted passage corroborates my deliberation.

During the years 1820 and 1821, the progress in organizing the College was not so remarkable. But on the 20th of October, 1821 when returned completing his visit to England, Mr. Ward brought with him Mr. John Mack, a missionary scientist, became overwhelmed to see the progress which had been made in the erection of the College buildings, in the assemblage of students, and the arrangement of the classes. Mr. Mack on his arrival at Serampore entered upon his duties in the scientific department of the College and undertook the general superintendence of the classes. For the native College students, Mr. Mack prepared the Map of India in the Bengali language in 1822 and sent it to an eminent artist in London, Mr. Walker by name to compile and engrave it. This first map which had ever been executed in any native language was very appropriately inscribed to Lord Hastings in 1824.⁵ Mr. Mack was also encouraged by Lord Hastings to give a series of Chemical lectures among about hundred gentlemen imbued with scientific taste at Asiatic Society, Calcutta. Based on those lectures he published the bilingual book on Principles of Chemistry – titled *Kimiya Vidyar Sar* – in 1834 from the Serampore Mission Press.

In January 1826, Dr. Marshman decided to visit England, first to patch up the Serampore controversies with the Baptist Mission Society and then to Denmark for the grant of a royal charter from the King to give permanent stability to the College of Serampore. The Governor of Serampore, Hon. Col. Krefting, on the publication of the plan of the institution ten years ago, entered warmly into the views of its promoters and made a very favorable representation of it at the court of his sovereign. He continued to take a very deep interest in its progress and prospects, and on Dr. Marshman's embarking for Europe, was so kind as to furnish him with the most friendly introduction to the members of the Danish majesty's court and to suggest to his Majesty's Council, the benefit which would attend the grant of a Charter of Incorporation to the College. The Royal Charter, embossed on vellum, issued by the Hon. King Frederick VI of Denmark on 23rd February 1827, endowed the same power of conferring

⁵ *Friend of India* (monthly series), VIII (1825), 382.

degrees to successful students of Serampore College, which was enjoyed by the Danish universities of Copenhagen and Kiel.

In the eighth report of Serampore College, it is found that “the Committee has deeply to regret the death of one of its earliest friends and most eminent supporters, the Hon. Col. Krefting, late Governor of Serampore, who died on the 7th of October, last [1828], ...The Committee feels a peculiar pleasure in thus publicly recording the deep obligations due to the late Governor, both for his long-continued kindness, and for his more recent exertions, in the matter to which the College may be said to be indebted for its prospects of permanent utility.”⁶

In the ninth report, while referring to the progress of college activities in the year 1829, the committee recorded with gratitude

the condescension of His Danish Majesty in bestowing upon this Institution a Charter of Incorporation and thus investing it with privileges highly important to its permanent utility. This Charter was brought to India by Dr. Marshman; and after having been duly verified by the public Authorities of this Settlement, on the 15th of August last, the eleventh anniversary of the Institution, it was publicly read and recognized as the authority for its future proceedings.⁷

Dr. Carey drew up the Regulations and the Statutes of the College according to the Royal Charter, and Carey, Marshman and John Clark Marshman became the first members of the College Council on 12th of June, 1833. The College was founded “to promote piety and learning particularly among the native Christian population of India,” and it was provided in the *Statutes* that “no caste, color, or country shall bar the admission of any student into Serampore College.”⁸ Also, Carey’s plan was for the maintenance not of an exclusive divinity college, but of “a divinity faculty as part of an arts and science college, in which converts study side by side with their inquiring countrymen; the inquirers are influenced by them as well as by the Christian teaching, and secular teaching in a Christian spirit and the Bible consecrates the whole.”⁹ The authorities determined that the College as organized will grant its own degrees in

⁶ *Eighth Report Relative to Serampore College for the Year Ending 31st December 1828* (Serampore: 1829), 4.

⁷ *Ninth Report Relative to Serampore College for the Year Ending 31st December 1829* (Serampore: 1830), 1.

⁸ *Charter of Incorporation*, Preamble: *Statutes*, 13.

⁹ George Smith, *The Life of William Carey*, D.D. (London: John Murray, 1885), 409.

Theology, but for Arts and Science will, until a much larger endowment than is at present contemplated, be forthcoming, would be in affiliation with the University of Calcutta, established in 1857 along with other two Universities at Bombay and Madras.

But in the meantime, in 1845 the settlement of Serampore was transferred by the King of Denmark to the British, and in the Treaty of Purchase, the following clause, at the express wish of the Danish King, was inserted : “The rights and immunities granted to the Serampore College by Royal Charter of date 23rd February 1827, shall not be interfered with but continue in force in the same manner as if they had been obtained by a Charter from the British Government subject to the general law of British India.”¹⁰

For the next forty years the College, at first independently, and then in affiliation with the University of Calcutta, gave a sound general and Christian education to a large body of Hindu, Eurasian and native Christian youth, and was admittedly one of the most successful institutions of the kind in India. But the right to grant degrees according to the Royal Charter has not been exercised.

However, in consequence of a change of policy on the part of the Committee in England, in 1883, the College and practically also the school classes were closed to non-Christians, and for the period of about twenty-five years the College maintained a Boarding School for Christian boys and normal and theological classes for Christian teachers and preachers, retaining its connection with the University only as a High School, abandoning thus Carey’s ideal of Christian education for all.

In 1895, a young Baptist missionary, George Howells, joined the theological seminary at Cuttack. Subsequently, he visited Serampore on a pilgrimage, but returned with a feeling that Serampore was a ‘graveyard of forgotten ideals.’ But as he recalled, only twenty years earlier there had also been flourishing University Classes, and somewhere hidden away among the archives was that Royal Charter, originally conferred in 1827 by the King of Denmark, granting University powers to the College. – Why should not the Charter be brought to the light of day and put into operation? Why should not the College be re-organized along the lines originally laid down by the founders?

¹⁰ *Bengal Act IV of 1918, Preamble.*

These were the thoughts that filled the mind of George Howells at the beginning of the 20th Century. His first five years of theological teaching in Orissa convinced him of two things which had formed the basis of all his subsequent proposals:

- (i) The theological study should be pursued wholly or in part in an open institution, and in conjunction with a liberal course of general culture.
- (ii) The scientific study of Christian Theology and Biblical Literature after a sound preliminary course in Literature, Philosophy, and Science should receive such academic recognition in India as it does in Western nations.

At the request of the Orissa missionaries, George Howells prepared a paper on Indian Theological Colleges, which was presented before the Triennial United Conference in December 1900, and it was then resolved unanimously to appoint a Standing Committee to aid in forming public opinion upon the proposal to establish an Interdenominational Senate for the promotion of theological learning in India. Regarding the organization and academic recognition of theological studies, Principal Summers of Serampore expressed that “if the Government felt it undesirable from their viewpoint --- they could hardly object to our making use of the Serampore Charter for the conferring of theological degrees.”

In the course of the next two years, as the proposals of Howells were sympathetically discussed in Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore, Poona and other missionary circles, the majority was in favour of utilizing the Serampore Charter on University lines rather than establishing a Faculty of Theology under any existing University. Even the Universities’ Commission when approached, expressed that “it is neither practicable nor expedient to make provision for a Faculty of Theology.”

Under these circumstances, in the presence of representatives of all the great Indian missions during the Madras Decennial Conference of December 1902, a thorough representative Committee was appointed to confer with the Council of the Serampore College to see if the Charter could be utilized on interdenominational lines.

Meanwhile, Howells met with Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, a well-known distinguished lawyer expert in University affairs, carrying the copy of the Charter and all related documents. After fully considering all those documents, Sir Asutosh declared that the Charter remained completely valid. The highest legal opinion in England has also been taken as to

the validity of the Charter and practicability of the formation of an Interdenominational Senate or Faculty of Theology. In this connection a few lines from the joint opinion of Arthur Cohen and Norman H. Baynes, Barrister-at-Law on the 27th March 1906, regarding the incorporated College of Serampore may be cited:

We are of opinion that the validity of the Statutes is not affected by the non-registration thereof, nor by the fact that the original Statutes are not now in existence, nor by any other circumstance that has taken place; and we are further of opinion that the power to confer degrees exists under the Charter notwithstanding the lapse of time during which it has not been exercised.¹¹

The question of the reorganization of Serampore College then inevitably came to the fore. At that time the vacant place of Principalship of the College was filled up with the appointment of George Howells in 1906. The following year he returned from England to Serampore in order to shoulder the responsibility first as originator and leader of the movement for the reorganization of the College devised through eventful and inspiring heroic endeavours, fruitful activities and enduring achievements, and next as its Principal for a period of twenty-two years up to 1929 as a faithful friend and benefactor of India, a veteran educationist and a highly motivated missionary. It was because of his vision and energy that Serampore College owes the resuscitation of its historic character, and consequently its present position as the only Christian University in India.

For the College on its secular side, and for the students in Bengal, Dr. George Howells from the beginning threw himself wholeheartedly into the work of Calcutta University where he enjoyed the confidence of Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee and other University leaders, and where he gave loyal service on the Syndicate and on innumerable committees throughout the years, often being entrusted with tasks of a very responsible and delicate nature.

Also, on the Theological side his breadth of sympathy and farsighted vision was shown by him successfully securing the co-operation of leaders of all the Baptist Churches in India as the members of the newly formed Senate, which from the beginning and through the years has been a true Christian fellowship. Under his leadership, the Senate recommended to the Council of the College the affiliation of other Theological Colleges

¹¹ George Howells, *The Cradle of Modern Missions* (London: Council of Serampore College, [1909], App. VI.

throughout India, so that they might benefit by all the Charter had to offer.

All the ordinary privileges under the College Charter and Statutes remain untouched under the Bengal Act passed by the Legislature and was gazetted on 1st May 1918. But to grant degrees in any other subject other than Theology, the College should be properly equipped for the purpose to the entire satisfaction of the Government.

After his retirement in 1929, he returned to England due to uncertain health but engaged himself in service to the Churches in England and Wales. During 1932 to 1935 he was Tutor in Hebrew and Old Testament at Rawdon Baptist Theological College. Thereafter for a time he was Honorary Lecturer in Comparative Religion at the University College, Cardiff. His love for the varied aspects of Indian life and thought, so notable in the delivered 'Angus Lecture' in 1909 at Regent's Park College, was later enlarged into his comprehensive book *The Soul of India*. The College Council used for the first time their right of conferring the degree of Doctor of Divinity to the Rev. Dr. George Howells on his date of retirement, but he served as Master of Serampore College until his 70th birthday in 1941, and also continued as a member of College Council until 1949 in which he took prominent part in the transfer of the Serampore College Council Headquarter from England back to India.

A true and worthy successor of the great missionary Triumvirate, Dr. Howells embodied in himself a living realization of the ideals set forth by the founders of the College and was inspired by a vision of what the College might be with a revived College Charter. That soon materialized through his untiring zeal and ceaseless efforts, his towering benign act, and magnetic personality, the heart of a philanthropist, the tact and sense of fair play of a sagacious and upright administrator.

Dr. William Carey and Dr. George Howells were two valuable gifts of the West to the East, whose educational dream, the dream of an Indian Renaissance, such as is thought to be still enshrined in a living, ancient seat of learning, namely a College which, once won high plaudits, the credential of a second Oxford, 'the Oxford of Bengal', would have lain enshrouded today in old musty records but for the almost providential intervention, the happy inspiration and constructive zeal of that talented and energetic man. Thus those two representatives of a small band of very distinguished western teachers and preachers, builders, and reformers, each of whom has acquired 'a niche in the Indian temple of fame' and should in the fullness of time find a worthy place in the portrait gallery.

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A Mission of/for Science: Notes on the Botanical and Agricultural Discourses of William Carey

Priyankar Dey*

Just about fourteen years after Robert Kyd had founded the Calcutta Botanical Garden (1786), a similar garden was laid out at the Danish settlement in Serampore, Hooghly. The garden was soon to be known by the name of its founder and superintendent: 'Carey's Garden'. In the years to follow, the two gardens would develop very intimate connections, forged not by common practices alone but also through certain common individuals. Twenty years after the foundation of the Serampore botanical garden at the local mission compound, William Carey would take the lead in creating yet another institution: the Agricultural Society of India.¹ The English missionary who had come to India to preach the teachings of Christ would emerge as a key figure in the history of *western* science pedagogy and practices in colonial Bengal in the course of time. This article revisits the history of Carey's science practices, with a specific focus on his works on botany and agriculture, and tries to locate those practices within a larger meshwork of early colonial science, contemporary evangelical discourses

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¹ The Society founded in September, 1820 later came to be known as the Agricultural and Horticultural Society after 1824. Carey served as the secretary and also the president of the society for different periods. Carey had written a 'Prospectus of an Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India' even earlier. The pamphlet, originally written in April 1817 and circulated was reprinted with some additions in the pages of *Friend of India* in 1820 and again in the *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, vol. 1(1829). Cf. William Carey, "Address Respecting an Agricultural Society of India," *Friend of India* (Quarterly), vol.1 (1820): 50-59.

and the liberal political economy of the colonial state. Instead of charting out the Serampore missionary's *differences* with the regime² of colonial science, this article highlights the points of convergences and unity between the two. Further, a critical analysis of Carey's discourses on botany and agriculture, it is hoped, would help one to situate his missionary works within the larger rubric of the history of ideas of his time.

The Botanical Garden at Serampore

Extending over five acres of the Baptist mission lands at Serampore, the botanical garden was designed and planted by Carey himself with the assistance of a few local gardeners or *malis*. As we are informed by his biographers, the garden, which was considered to be one of the 'best and rarest botanical collection of plants in the East'³, was a truly picturesque retreat located in the similarly beautiful colonial town governed by the Danes. The layout or the arrangement of the garden was, quite understandably, very important to Carey and his practice of science. As Jonathan Carey informed, the arrangement of the garden followed the Linnaean system and '[n]o one was allowed to interfere in the arrangements'—'to disturb the bed or border of the garden was to touch the apple of his eye'.⁴ Carey was critical of the indigenous orchards where he claimed, the fruit trees were 'often planted so close as to choke each other'.⁵ Though very little is known about the actual design of the garden,

² A recent article by Sujit Sivasundaram, for example, tries to show how Carey's science grew outside the networks of colonial science; Sivasundaram, "A Christian Benares': Orientalism, science and the Serampore Mission of Bengal", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 44/2 (2007): 111-145. Though this article does not completely dispute Sivasundaram's thesis, and in places heavily draws from his research and conclusions, it tries to argue that in spite of the independence enjoyed by Carey in his science practices he had a mutually dependent relationship with such networks. Moreover, similar epistemic concepts drove the two networks which were simultaneously developing in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century India and enjoyed a quite close proximity.

³ Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D. D. Late Missionary to Bengal; Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta* (London: J. Haddon, 1836), 387.

⁴ Carey, *Memoir*, 578; also quoted in George Smith, *The Life of William Carey. Shoemaker & Missionary* (London: John Murray, 1885), 306; reprint 1935), 223.

⁵ William Carey, 'Remarks on the State of Agriculture in the District of Dina'jpur', *Asiatic Researches; or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities; the Arts, Sciences, and Literature of Asia*, vol. 10 (London, 1811), 23.

but it could be surmised that it followed the pattern of the English gardens of the time: trees, both indigenous as well as those imported from abroad, were set in properly laid-out avenues and surrounding tanks.⁶

Carey had a friendship with the famous colonial botanists of his time such as William Roxburgh and Nathaniel Wallich, the two superintendents of the Royal Botanic Garden at Calcutta.⁷ Later Carey became associated with the management of yet another horticultural garden. The Horticultural Committee of the Agricultural Society of India for 1829-30, under Carey as its President, undertook the mammoth task of delineating a proper arrangement for the Society's newly founded botanical garden at Alipore. In the report of the Committee submitted before the Society, Carey was highly critical of the 'utter worthlessness and negligence of the superintendent, or head gardener formerly engaged by the Society' which led to *crowding* of trees in the garden. After taking the charge of the garden in its own hands, the Committee dug up the garden walks and laid them anew with pebbles, dressed the borders of the plots and planted flowering shrubs along the lines. It built 'a cistern of pukka masonry' for the Madras bramin-lotus and other aquatic specimens and also a new gateway for the garden.⁸

Carey and his associates at the Society had little doubt in mind that besides undertaking regular experimentations with the methods of cultivation, a proper scientific classification and documentation of the specimens grown in India was also a sacred duty of the horticulturalists in the country. *The Regulations for the Garden of the Agricultural and*

⁶ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: The Carey Press, 1934), 112. Smith wrote that 'The trees of the park were so placed as to form a noble avenue, which long shaded the [printing] press and was known as Carey's Walk'; Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 222.

⁷ William Roxburgh, a Scottish surgeon and botanist took charge of the Sibpur garden in 1793 and held the office of the superintendent till 1814. Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish surgeon who began his career in India as an employee of the Danish Company at Serampore, through dramatic turn of events, got to work for the English East India Company as a surgeon and a botanist. As an assistant to Roxburgh, Wallich got an opportunity to be involved in the development of the Sibpur garden from its initial days. Later he also held the post of the Officiating Superintendent of the Royal Botanic Garden from 1841-1846.

⁸ Carey, 'Report of the Horticultural Committee' [11 January 1830], reprinted in *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, vol. 2 (Calcutta & Serampore: Hurkaru Press & Serampore Press, 1836), 'Appendix IX' to the 'Introduction', 27.

Horticultural Society, adopted in 1827, justified the cultivation of fruit trees of foreign countries along with those which were native to this country on the ground that it would help to arrive at a ‘clear and unequivocal determination of the denomination of our Native Fruits, and the establishment of an authentic nomenclature in future’.⁹ Carey’s Committee has further ordered that each new specimen to be introduced into the garden must have ‘a small spelter plate, containing a number, fastened to it’ and those numbers to be duly entered into a journal kept at the garden along with the description of the tree, its donor’s name and other details.¹⁰ The trees at Carey’s own garden at Serampore were so well documented that it facilitated foresters like Dietrich Brandis or Hugh Cleghorn, who from time to time visited the garden, to arrive at a clear understanding of the rate of their growth.¹¹

The Function of the Botanical/Agricultural Institutions in Carey’s Science Practices

Both in the Serampore Garden as well as in the Alipore Garden of the Agricultural Society under the management of his committee, introduction, and naturalization of foreign plant specimens on Indian soil was central to Carey’s horticultural practices. In his ‘Remarks on the State of Agriculture, in the District of Dinajpur’ he complained that ‘even the Orange tree is almost a stranger to several parts of Bengal’.¹² Still residing in Madnabati, Carey wrote in his journal on 1 January 1798, ‘[s]eeds of sour apples, pears, nectarines, plums, apricots, cherries, gooseberries, currants, strawberries, or raspberries, put loose into a box of dry sand, and sent so as to arrive in September, October, November, or December, would be a great acquisition, as is every European production. Nuts, filberts, acorns, etc., would be the same. We have lately obtained the cinnamon tree, and nutmeg tree, which Dr. Roxburgh very obligingly sent to me.’¹³ In the Serampore Garden too, experimentation with the farming of nutmeg, clove, and coffee—species foreign to Bengal—was carried out.¹⁴ Carey and Roxburgh were perhaps the first to introduce the South American Mahogany tree to India (from the seeds brought from Jamaica by Roxburgh); it was reported that seventy

⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹¹ Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 222.

¹² William Carey, ‘Remarks on the State of Agriculture in the District of Dinajpur’, 23.

¹³ Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 222.

¹⁴ S. Pearce Carey, William Carey, 113.

years later the colonial government still collected its Mahogany seeds from the trees originally planted by Carey at Serampore.¹⁵

Many contemporary botany enthusiasts criticized Carey's obsession with acclimatizing European plants on the native soil of Bengal. For Lady Amherst, another amateur horticulturalist and a keen student of the Indian flora, Carey's insistence on cultivating English plants in a 'climate nature never intended them for' was nothing but irrational. Around 1829, a change in the outlook of the Agricultural Society was discernible. With many new members joining the Society and a growing public interest on its proceedings developing, it was felt that the Society had been spending too much energy and resources in the introduction of the 'exotics'. It was argued that the funds and the efforts should be turned to 'great staples of commerce' like sugar, cotton, coffee or silk, instead of spending heavily on acclimatizing European fruit varieties. Though a keen student of economic botany himself, Carey's imagination of an ideal botanic garden, it seems, was never limited to the scientific cultivation of *commercial* resources and researches on them only. For him, the botanic garden was also the site where, along with the ordinary, well-known specimens, the unknown, unique products of nature – the 'curious' of botanical science—could also find their due places. The ideal botanic garden, in his scheme of things, must grow 'plants from the different parts of the world'.¹⁶ It seems that the primary 'utility' of botanic gardens, according to Carey, was the role that they were supposed to play in producing botanical knowledge by facilitating the practice of specimen-collection. In the introduction of Roxburgh's much celebrated *Hortus Bengalensis*, which was published by Carey from the printing-press of the mission after Roxburgh's death, Carey argued that the botanic gardens could encourage the collection of plant-specimens from all parts of the world by providing a place to safely deposit them:

All the treasures collected by travelers with so much labour, and at such great hazard and expense, are thereby preserved, and a laudable ambition to search with diligence for the hitherto unobserved or undescribed productions of nature is excited and maintained.¹⁷

¹⁵ Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 222.

¹⁶ William Roxburgh, *Hortus Bengalensis, or a Catalogue of the Plants Growing in the Honourable East India Company's Botanic Garden at Calcutta* (Serampore: Mission Press, 1814), i.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Thus, the primary objective of a botanical garden, according to Carey, was to aid the ‘labours of scientific men’ in the development of the science of botany by serving as one of the *instruments* of specimen-collection. Without such an institution, Carey reminded, the ‘labours of Tournefort, Linnaeus, Smith, Jussien, Cavanilles, D’Herritier, Gaertner, Barton, and many others’ would be lost to oblivion. Both native or staple varieties and the European or more ‘exotic’ varieties must be grown side by side in the same garden so that

[t]he great number of genera, the number of species belonging to each genus, and the numerous varieties of some species, thereby brought together, and placed in one point of view, afford facilities for the improvement of Botanical science.¹⁸

Without the vantage-point of this ‘one point of view’, Carey doubted whether the botanical research would appear in the same ‘form’ as it had developed at that point in time. One must pay close attention here to the *form* of Carey’s own botanical-horticultural studies at Serampore. Doing science in the late 18th or the early decades of the 19th century in India, Carey and many of his contemporaries considered the arriving at taxonomic generalization to be the primary objective of their practices. The system of taxonomy after Linnaeus sought to suggest the particular location of a plant-species within the arboreal world by using a two-part Latin name which pointed out both unity as well as the difference at the same time.¹⁹ It is therefore not surprising at all that Carey believed that a comparative method was the only method to ensure a correct taxonomic generalization of the Indian plants.

Collecting and Circulating Specimens

Sundaram suggests that Carey had built a vast ‘network of correspondence’ well surpassing the colonial networks and extensively using the global missionary connections that helped him in procuring plant specimens from distant places. His ‘network of contacts’ covered a huge part of the world including England, America, South Africa, Australia, Amboyna, Assam, Sylhet, Burma, and Nepal.²⁰ His own son Jabez, while serving as a missionary in Amboyna and Java, acted as a collector for his father.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., iii.

¹⁹ The first part of the name indicates the genus whereas the second part denotes the specific species within that genus.

²⁰ Sivasundaram, “A Christian Benares”, 128.

²¹ Ibid., 125-126.

Sometimes the same network could be used in the *exchange* of different types of ‘curiosities’ between the colony and the metropole. One ‘Mr. Dolton’, going to England sometime in 1800-1801, carried a set of images of Hindu gods for the Bristol Museum from Carey. Carey wrote to John Sutcliff, a fellow missionary at the Baptist Society, asking him to send with Dolton, on his return to India, seeds of different English plants from Robert Brewin of Leicester.²² The schoolboys passed from the missionary school at Serampore and his students at the Fort William College, now posted in different locations across the world, also sent him seeds and plant-specimens from their work-stations.²³ Carefully pressed specimens, seeds, live plants or botanical drawings of them were prepared at the Serampore Garden and sent to famous botanists and horticulturalists like Hooker at Glasgow, Rev. W. Herbert at Yorkshire, Dean Herbert at Manchester or to the Liverpool Botanical Garden. It is not hard to imagine that being a keen supporter of collection and preservation of scientific information, Carey would put much premium on the practices of natural history drawing and art botany which were developed in the 18th century. To Andrew Fuller, his fellow Baptist Society founder, he wrote in 1803 about his intention to employ a natural history painter to paint the ‘birds, insects, lizards, fishes, and serpents’ at a remuneration of 30 rupees per month whenever he could arrange that money.²⁴ Beautiful coloured drawings of plant-specimens, discovered and sent by Carey to different persons, often found places in the issues of *Curtis’s Botanical Magazine* published in London.²⁵

The Garden as a Laboratory

The botanic gardens, in Carey’s imagination, had to work much like a laboratory space, where a particular natural condition could be artificially recreated or imitated to experimentally grow a particular plant. They were to serve as an instrument in the naturalization of acclimatization of the foreign species ‘in countries differing much in temperature from those where they are indigenous’.²⁶ He argued that foreign species like the *Quercus robur* (English Oak) would never grow under the ‘natural’ conditions in an Indian forest. But this issue could be easily resolved

²² Carey, *Memoir*, 298.

²³ Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 225-226.

²⁴ Carey, *Memoir*, 310.

²⁵ See for example, ‘Pl. 2292’ in Vol. 49 (1822); ‘Pl. 3018’ in Vol. 4: New Series (1830); ‘Pl. 2217’ in Vol. 48 (1821).

²⁶ Roxburgh, *Hortus Bengalensis*, iv.

by cultivating them in a botanical garden by *re-creating* the conditions favourable for their growth.²⁷ For Carey, one of the major ‘utilities’ of a botanical garden was that it served as an ideal laboratory space where experiments could be undertaken in a controlled environment. To shelter the bulbs imported from his homeland from the tropical sun, Carey had built ‘creeper-covered light frameworks’ in the Serampore garden.²⁸ In *Hortus Bengalensis*, Carey pointed out the benefits of attaching an Experimental Farm to the botanical gardens at the colonial possessions of Britain. The first thing that the new Horticultural Committee under Carey did after taking charge of the Alipore Garden of the Agricultural Society was to start an extensive experimentation on composts to improve the fertility of the soil.²⁹ However, Carey supported this agenda of aggressive experimentation to an extent only. In an address given by Carey as the President of the Agricultural Society on 21 September 1824, he acknowledged that some were of the opinion that improvement of Indian agriculture could only be achieved by the establishment of ‘an extensive farming establishment’ under the Society which would display the ‘best methods of culture practiced in Europe’ to the natives. A great flaw of this program, according to Carey, was the fact that such a ‘model’ farm could never address the different issues involving different plants, soils, and climatic conditions. Moreover, not all the improved European methods of husbandry could be easily adapted to the small farms in India without any modification. Carey suggested an alternative: a collection of ‘extensive information upon everything connected with agriculture, and then arranging and publishing’ them judiciously so that the best method could be identified by comparison. ‘If *knowledge* be power’, Carey wrote, ‘[Agricultural] Societies [in England and other countries] have acted a very wise part in thus collecting and communicating knowledge’ and that alone was responsible for the unprecedented agricultural improvements in those countries.³⁰ Production of scientific knowledge through the collection and publication of information was, therefore, the primary objective of the botanical-agricultural institutions proposed and managed by Carey at different points of time. After his arrival at Madnabati,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 112.

²⁹ Carey, ‘Report of the Horticultural Committee’, 24-25.

³⁰ Carey, ‘Introductory Discourse, delivered by the President, September 21, 1824’, *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, vol. 1 (1829), 4-6.

Carey had begun to keep separate journals – what he called ‘books of observation’ – to note and record ‘the natural productions of the country’ including different species of birds, animals, fishes, and reptiles.³¹ He intended to send these records as well as his own collection of natural history specimens to Europe in some future time. One has to situate the centrality of the taxonomic agenda in Carey’s botanical practices, his life-long investment in botanical catalogues, within this larger framework of scientific knowledge production which was deemed to be a ‘utility’ in itself. We must note here that Carey did not trust Indians as *informants* of botanical knowledge because of a lack of ‘inquisitiveness’ and the faculty of discrimination in them which often led to them confounding different species.³² This distrust of the Indian informants, more specifically of the vernacular names of the plants communicated by them, led Carey to suggest that the European collectors in India must possess knowledge of the local language so that he could dispense with the Indian middleman altogether.³³ Carey’s habit of keeping detailed records of his own studies, as he had hoped, often proved quite *useful* for future researchers. J. O. Voigt³⁴ used the Receipt-Book maintained by Carey for the Serampore Garden, ‘[s]everal printed [s]heets, (80 quarto pages,) embracing nearly the whole of the six first Linnaean Classes, limited to those species which had been cultivated in the Hon’ble Company’s and the Serampore Gardens’ – Carey’s last botanical works, as well as his private papers of botanical studies to prepare his catalogue *Hortus Suburbanus Calcuttensis* which was published by the famous colonial botanist William Griffith in 1845.³⁵ Observation and recording were thus the watchwords of Carey’s science practices; institutions like the botanical garden and the Agricultural Society

³¹ Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 218.

³² Roxburgh, *Hortus Bengalensis*, vii.

³³ Roxburgh, *Flora Indica; or Descriptions of Indian Plants*, vol. 2 (Serampore: Mission Press, 1824), 415. Also cited in Sivasundaram, ‘A Christian Benares’, 121.

³⁴ Joachim Otto Voigt was a Danish surgeon under the employment of the Danish government at Serampore and an amateur botanist who took charge of the Serampore botanical garden after Carey’s death in 1834.

³⁵ J. O. Voigt, *Hortus Suburbanus Calcuttensis: A Catalogue of the Plants which have been cultivated in the Hon. East India Company’s Botanical Garden, Calcutta, and the Serampore Botanical Garden, generally known as Dr. Carey’s Garden, from the beginning of both establishments (1786 and 1800) to the end of August 1841; drawn up according to the Jussieuan Arrangement, and mostly in conformity with the second edition (1836) of Lindley’s natural system of botany* (Calcutta: Bishop’s College Press, 1845), xxiv.

were primarily the instruments to facilitate those tasks. As Sivasundaram suggests, Carey's science was an example of the 'resident science' in early colonial India and was different from the genre of science practiced by the contemporary Romantic travelers described by David Arnold. It is true that Carey emphasized the need for residence and long-established contact with a land in the development of a thorough knowledge of the local flora. In order to observe and record every plant grown in a particular place, he stressed that

a man must be resident on the spot, and be in the habit of constantly examining the fields, the woods, and the different receptacles of water: he must let no opportunity escape him, but collect under his own eye everything he finds [.]³⁶

Still, the emphasis on *residence* should not gloss over the significance of *travel* in Carey's science practices. Even the *resident-collectors*, in Carey's proposal, would have to make regular excursions to the countryside or into the woods in search of plant specimens. His own garden at Serampore was highly indebted to a network of traveling Baptist missionaries and colonial officials who sent him specimens from far-off lands. Carey himself might not have traveled much, he depended on collectors who traveled to different countries.

Concerns of Economic Botany and Their Epistemic Structure

However, this is not to suggest that Carey's attention was limited to the taxonomic agenda ignoring all the 'practical' or 'utilitarian' benefits of a botanical or horticultural garden. As Sujit Sivasundaram's article also points out, Carey's introduction to Roxburgh's *Hortus Bengalensis* or his 'Prospectus of an Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India' clearly shows his utilitarian concerns and his devotion to economic botany. Carey's agricultural and horticultural vision included the development of cultivation of commercial produces like timber, grain, fruits, and plants with medicinal or dyeing properties. Undoubtedly, the underlying principle of the agricultural reforms envisioned by the evangelist-botanist was to promote the 'welfare' and the 'happiness of the country'.³⁷ Carey's proposed reforms were to achieve that by primarily improving the material wealth of the country. In Carey's scheme of agrarian reform,

³⁶ Roxburgh, *Hortus Bengalensis*, ix.

³⁷ Carey, 'Prospectus', 221.

improvement of cultivation was closely linked with the development of agrarian industries as well. Thus, he never forgot to remind his readers about the role of timber plantation in the contemporary ship-building and other industries.³⁸

It was reported by Carey himself that the cultivation of Teak was also encouraged by the colonial government at that time.³⁹ In *Hortus Bengalensis*, he noted how the introduction of the Mahogany tree to Bengal had just begun to help the furniture industry. There was no tradition of forestry in India, Carey claimed, before the British came. The native landed proprietors considered forests ‘highly disadvantageous’ and failed to see the ‘value’ of the underwood that generally grew in the forests.⁴⁰ According to Carey, Indians lacked in the virtue of human industriousness and ‘almost everything has been left to nature’. Not the naturally grown wild, oriental jungles, but planned timber forests, in Carey’s opinion, were desirable because they could add to the value of a landed property.⁴¹

Carey’s main criticism of the native practices of fruit cultivation in India seemed to be that ‘little regard is paid by the planter to the quality of the fruit’ and no attempts were made to improve it by methods of grafting or improving the mode of cultivation.⁴² ‘[T]he fruits of Hindostan’, Carey lamented, ‘are not far removed from a *state of nature*’. The epistemic foundation of Carey’s ideas on horticultural practices, it seems, drew its vitality from the same nature/culture dichotomy that dominated European ‘modernity’ and its metaphysics since the 16th-17th century.⁴³ In this order of things, human civilization and culture, agriculture being a sign of them, was opposed to wild nature. For Rousseau, ‘the passage from nature to culture’ signified

³⁸ Carey, ‘Remarks’; 22-23, Roxburgh, vi.

³⁹ Carey, ‘Remarks’, 22.

⁴⁰ Carey, ‘Introductory Discourse’, 7.

⁴¹ ‘[W]ere the underwood to be regularly cut and bound up in faggots for sale, and the whole land clothed with valuable timber, these forests would be found to be a source of considerable profit.’ Carey, *ibid.* ‘In many places, spots now unproductive, would be improved by clumps or small plantations of timber, under which ginger and turmeric might be cultivated to great advantage’. Carey, ‘Remarks’, 22.

⁴² Carey, ‘Remarks’, 23.

⁴³ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 63. For a provocative critique of this binary opposition in modern western metaphysics, see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

the realization of ‘the true nature of humanity’.⁴⁴ In this discourse, human beings were considered to be superior to other natural beings only because they alone could transcend the raw nature and control it. There is no reason to believe that the evangelical thought of the 18th century, with its claims of divine providence and God’s own designs, was opposed to this philosophy of nature/culture dualism. Carey, deeply influenced by Calvinist theology, naturally believed that nature could be effectively improved by human intervention under divine help.⁴⁵

Interestingly, it is to be noted that a year before Carey sailed for India and much before he started publishing his ideas on agrarian reforms, another evangelical missionary, Charles Grant, started his career as an official of the English East India Company and later became a member of the British parliament. In his *Observations*, Grant had complained the same as Carey would do a few years later: in spite of being grown in ‘inclosed gardens’, ‘the various fruits and esculent herbs, with which Hindostan abounds, are nearly in a state of nature’.⁴⁶ Grant’s tract, which as Eric Stokes argues was a typical example of the evangelical argument, called for a greater intervention on the part of the Europeans in the matters of Indian society, including the systems of agriculture, husbandry and industries, to ‘promote the prosperity of its inhabitants’ by ‘civilizing’ them.⁴⁷ In the evangelical arguments of Grant and Carey, the practice of agriculture was thought to be deeply integral to the missionary project of transforming the habits and conduct of the natives and the ‘gradual conquest of the indolence which in Asiatics is almost become a second nature’. Both of them criticized the native practices of agricultural and horticultural practices for leaving too much to the whims of nature – for still being in a *state of nature*. Reforms of the agricultural practices of India therefore, in Carey’s discourse, was closely associated with habits of cleanliness, and a neat arrangement of domestic conveniences, in the place of squalid wretchedness, neglect, and confusion; in a word, of industry and virtue in the room of idleness and vice [.]⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Stephen Horgan, *Nature and Culture in Western Discourses* (London:Routledge, 1988), 3.

⁴⁵ Sivasundaram, “A Christian Benares”, 126.

⁴⁶ Grant, *Observations*, 153.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁸ Carey, “Prospectus”, 214.

On a personal level, Carey's practices of science, more particularly natural history, as Sivasundaram has pointed out, sought 'to forge godly habits of mind and body' at his own home.⁴⁹ His ideas of agricultural reforms in India, one can argue, sought to extend the same project beyond home and among the millions of 'uncivilized' Indian masses. The September 1820 issue of the *Friend of India*, while republishing Carey's 'Address respecting an Agricultural Society in India', like many English Utilitarians of the time, held the system of despotic government of land in India responsible for the dismal state of its agrarian society and the degraded value of the landed property.⁵⁰ It acknowledged whereas agriculture was known to be a great help in fostering 'integrity of conduct and peaceful habits', the indigenous system of agriculture in India had prevented the classes dependent on farming from forming any such habits.⁵¹ The note preceding Carey's 'Address' further highlighted the Oriental imagination of 'Indian ryot' – submerged in irrational primitive customs, ignorant, indolent, easily corruptible: a *child-like* savage who was in constant need of paternal care:

few countries have ever presented more of a repulsive aspect, both as to morals and the exercise of the understanding; the absence of almost every virtue that can adorn life, and of every effort to remove the natural evils of life, was perhaps never more evident in any country. But these circumstances, so far from discouraging the mind, ought to urge it on to greater exertion. What parent ceases to seek a child's welfare because he is wayward and perverse, or even immoral?⁵²

The article emphasized that child-like indifference and ingratitude on the part of the Indian agrarian classes towards the attempts at agricultural reform should not discourage the European reformers as it was their duty 'to consider with *parental solicitude* in what way their present miseries can be removed or mitigated, and their welfare and happiness be secured'.⁵³ In other words, agricultural reform was thought to be a part of the 'white man's burden' – integral to the 'civilizing mission' in India of which the

⁴⁹ Sivasundaram, "A Christian Benares", 124-128.

⁵⁰ Anon, 'On the Agriculture of India', in *Essays Relative to the Habits, Characters, and Moral Improvement of the Hindoos*, ed. John Bentley (London: Kingsbury, Parbury, & Allen, 1823), 93.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 94-96.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 90. Emphasis added.

Christian missionaries were supposedly a part of. In one of his letters to Carey written in 1795, Samuel Pearce, a contemporary Baptist evangelist and a dear friend of Carey and Ward, informed him that a Baptist mission to Africa was planned and ‘by the practice of agriculture and the useful arts, together with frequent conversation on religious subjects, and a cheerful yet guarded behavior, they hope to civilize and Christianize the negro inhabitants’.⁵⁴ Expressing his admiration for the idea, Pearce wrote that he had read about a similar plan proposed by a 17th-century missionary.

Political Economy of Carey’s Discourse on Agriculture

One has to note that Carey’s remarks on agricultural reforms in India came at a time when the colonial state was still experimenting with the land revenue settlements in different parts of the country.⁵⁵ Writing nearly three decades after the Permanent Settlement had been notified in Bengal, Carey’s ‘Prospectus of an Agricultural and Horticultural Society in India’ claimed that improvement of agriculture in England had facilitated the rise in the value of landed property.⁵⁶ His proposals were therefore to associate native landowners with the proceedings of the planned institution so that the European experts could ‘gradually impart to them more correct ideas of the value of landed property’, teaching them effective methods to increase it by improving agriculture, and convince them in taking an interest in the welfare of their tenants. Given his deep concern with the augmentation of value in landed property through cultivation, it is not surprising that Carey’s writings on agricultural practices and their reforms always dealt with the issue of ‘wastelands’ in great lengths. One of the main agendas of Carey’s ideas about agrarian reform in India was an extension of sedentary cultivation to the wastelands.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Andrew Fuller, *Memoir of Rev. Samuel Pearce, A. M. who was united with Carey and Others in Establishing Missions in India, 1793* (New York: American Tract Society, 1830), 121.

⁵⁵ The Permanent Settlement was introduced in 1793, whereas experiments with the Ryotwari form of revenue settlement continued from 1820s to 1860s. The mature form of the Mahalwari Settlement emerged during the period 1833-53; see *Sabysachi Bhattacharya, Ouponibeshik Bharater Orthoniti* (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Ltd., 1988), 38-49.

⁵⁶ Carey, “Prospectus”, 212.

⁵⁷ The “Prospectus” deemed it as one of the main objectives of the proposed Society in India, 217.

We have already seen how he recommended setting up a timber plantation in the land unfavourable for farming other staple crops in order to make the estate *valuable*. ‘The quantity of land in India’ still ‘lying uncultivated’ in 1820, Carey lamented, ‘is so large as almost to exceed belief’.⁵⁸ Draining of marshes and embankments to prevent the overflowing river from turning its banks into wild grasslands of no value were, therefore, suggested as important tasks in the promotion of improved agriculture in India. Waste, quite expectedly, served as a quite *useful* concept in the elaboration of this discourse on agriculture. On the one hand, the quantity of actual ‘wastelands’ served as a proof of the degraded state of Indian agriculture and its abject failure in the production of economic value. Waste, in this context, was simply a waste of revenue or value generated from land. The lands on the banks of the rivers that were laid waste by the overflowed rivers, Carey suggested, were not only *wasteful* in themselves but also caused other forms of wastes within the agrarian structure. These wastelands, Carey argued, became haunts of wild animals such as the wild buffaloes during the rainy season and wild hogs and other ‘noxious animals’ in the winter, which in turn destroy crops and lives in the higher lands that were under cultivation.⁵⁹ Carey’s list of wastelands also included those natural jungle-tracts which were ‘wholly overrun by woods’ grown without following a proper planning or improved methods as they were ‘neither valuable as forest, pasture, nor arable land’.⁶⁰ In short, uncultivated lands, or lands ‘left to nature’, according to Carey, was without any *value*. In this discourse, the practice of cultivation – that is the improvement of God’s nature through human action – created value in land. In this respect, Carey’s discourse on agriculture shows remarkable epistemic commonalities with the labour theory of value that was developed by the British political economists of the early 19th century. First hinted at by Locke in his discourse on the origin of landed property, and later fully developed in the political-economic writings of David Ricardo, the notes on colonization by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, and in the British colonial policies in Australia, the labour theory of value accorded only a mediated and secondary status to land in relation to labour. In the context of the conceptualization of ‘waste’ in relation to ‘value’, we could identify a real continuity between the political imaginations of the evangelist-agriculturalist William Carey and that of the colonial state of his days.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 218.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Moral Teachings of a Western Science

On the other hand, ‘waste’ also appeared as a metaphor in the *Friend of India* article to explain the state of agriculture in India and its future hopes under European encouragement. The practice of cultivation in India, it was argued, had become ‘a stagnant marsh sending forth its pestilential vapours on every side’ instead of becoming a ‘healthful stream’.⁶¹ As Vinay Gidwani has shown, within the horizons of the political-economic discourse behind the Permanent Settlement of 1793 ‘in its displaced and ascriptive form ‘waste’ described not only kinds of lands – but also kinds of human behaviour, including ‘idleness, extravagance, and oriental despotism’ of the natives and was contrasted with the ‘superior’ behavioural traits reflecting ‘industry and economy’.⁶² It was the problematic of ‘waste’, with its dual character as a particular administrative category for land-tax records on one hand and as the description of a set of human habits with a moral injunction against them on the other, Gidwani argues, which drove the Settlement in Bengal. One could argue, that almost every aspect of the colonial discourse that ‘informed the social construction of ‘waste’ in India’ and ‘its critical connection to ‘value’ and ‘property’⁶³ had been anticipated in the evangelical missionary discourse of men like Carey on agriculture. Order, it seems, was not only a watchword of the colonial state which was cultivating a ‘scientific gaze’ but also of the evangelical missionaries labouring to propagate Christ’s message in a land of heathens. In this context, it is not at all surprising that metaphorical allusions to ‘wastelands’ and ‘farmlands’ would frequently appear in Carey’s writings on theological matters. Carey’s personal journal entry on 2-4 March 1794, for example, recorded the following thought: ‘then my soul would be like a well-watered garden, but now it is a mere jungle’.⁶⁴ His contempt for the agents of ‘waste’ can again be discerned in one of his letters to his sisters (written on 10 April 1796 from Madnabati) in which he shared his concern about the mission in following words:

I know not what to say about the mission. I feel as a farmer does about his crop: sometimes I think the seed is springing, and thus I hope; a little time blasts all, and my hopes are gone like a cloud. They were

⁶¹ Anon, “On the Agriculture of India”, 90.

⁶² Vinay Krishin Gidwani, “Waste’ and the Permanent Settlement in Bengal,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 27/ 4 (1992): 41.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁴ Carey, *Memoir*, 157.

only weeds which appeared; or if a little corn sprung up, it quickly died, being either choked with weeds or parched up by the sun of persecution.⁶⁵

Without the existence of the Christian faith, the minds of the Indians seemed to be ‘wastelands’ that were required to be brought under *culture*. ‘This part of the world is, as it respects divine things’, Carey wrote to his sisters, ‘a vast uncultivated wilderness’. Proselytization was supposed to tame the *wilderness of the native mind* and the spread of scientific cultivation to dispel the *wilderness in nature*. The culture of the crops and the culture of Christianity were thought to be mutually complementary programs—both directed towards the creation of *values*. In Carey’s practices, therefore, one could identify signs of a convergence of the two missions—Christianity and western science—which was quite symptomatic of the time he lived in.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 290.

William Carey's Pioneering Contributions Towards Building a Modern and Free India

Dipankar Haldar*

Introduction

William Carey, the Father of Modern Mission, born to Edmund and Elizabeth Carey in the village of Paulerspury, Northamptonshire, England on 17th August, 1761, was a remarkable Serampore based Baptist Missionary who dared to take gargantuan risks to contribute more towards India's emancipatory mechanism and nation building than to linger merely as so-called "missionary for preaching the Gospel."¹ Such a champion missionary like Carey could not be shaped in any formal school or college, but his boyhood's shoe-making shop became for him the center of unparalleled learning and inspiration. John Clark Marshman recorded that Rev. Thomas Scott, the author of a very well-known commentary on the Bible, once, while passing by the old shoe shop where William Carey had been working to make shoes, made an appealing statement to his companions, with the words "that was Mr. Carey's college."² Indeed it was! Seldom has so humble a college trained so distinguished a graduate who ultimately turned and stood out to be the finest missionary in the history of the modern times!

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¹ Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *William Carey and Serampore*, 3rd Ed., (Serampore: Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, 2008), 7.

² John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, vol.1 (Serampore: Council of Serampore College, 2005), 3.

William Carey's Pioneering Contribution towards Nation Building

If only William Carey, who could boast of only a skimpy number of converts, could return to our Independent India that boasts a billion of free and emancipated citizens. Who could imagine such a simple man as Carey - having a fervent call and a passionate heart for God - could directly or indirectly transform India into the nation it is today in just over 200 years of time? It will be clear in the following that our modern India would not be able to reach the stage where it is today without the godly influence and courageous persuasion of such a meek cobbler. In a nutshell, the present writer is trying to put together some of Carey's pioneering measures and activities he took in those days, that momentously led to the emancipatory and transformational work that ultimately achieved a free India.

Carey the Advocate of Primary and Higher Education in India

William Carey and his colleagues did not delay implementing their system of mass education which was easily acceptable by the poorest of the poor more than 200 years ago. They formed a committee to execute his dream of education and started collecting donations for this novel and noble task. Schools were successfully established in the Serampore area and villages in the region. The most surprising success of Carey in school education pleased Lord Hastings so much that he ordered liberal grants to Serampore Missionaries to establish more schools in other parts of the country. They established about 126 schools for about 10,000 students in those dark times of credulous and gullible ways of spending life. When the missionaries established schools for the Indian poor villagers, they gave them free education; whereas when they established schools for more wealthy and foreign nationals, they took high fees, so that they could utilize those earnings to spread education among the poor and the needy for free.³ This attitude of Carey shows how much he loved India and her children.

These missionary schools were very attractive to the natives because of the following reasons: i) Their teaching method was simple and of good quality. ii) The schools were open for all students irrespective of caste, colour and creed. iii) The missionaries were bearing all the expenses and controlled the schools directly. iv) The medium of teaching was the mother

³ A. Christopher Smith, "William Carey, 1761-1834, Protestant Pioneer of the Modern Mission Era" in *Mission Legacies, Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson, et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 249.

tongue of the students. v) The local issues were included in their subjects. vi) There was an exchange of eastern and western cultures. vii) Moral teachings were such that they were agreeable to all. viii) Books, exercise books, charts, etc. were given free of cost at the schools. ix) Contemporary knowledge of science, history, mathematics etc. was imparted. x) Sincere efforts were made to eradicate illiteracy from among the poor and needy people of the country.⁴

The amazing success of the Serampore Missionaries in primary education encouraged them to make further bold steps to establish an esteemed College, a highly treasured dream of William Carey, whose college was a shoe-shop, in a gloomy era when College education was far from reality to the common masses. In 1817 time the wealthy people of Calcutta had established a College where the admission was restricted to high caste Hindus only. But Carey devised to open his College for everyone irrespective of caste, colour, creed and financial situation, because he foresaw a transformed and free nation of India where equality, unity and fraternity would be paramount, and without any division on the basis of caste, colour and creed. His dream College was inaugurated on 15th July, 1818 with the publication of a plan in the form of a Prospectus. Afterwards 37 students began their studies at Aldeen House. The construction of the Main Building of the College was completed in 1824 by spending about 1,50,000 rupees from their own savings and contributions. But when in 1827, authorized by a specially prepared Danish Royal Charter, the College received University powers, it became an icon of higher education not only for India but for the whole of Asia.

Carey the Advocate of Women's Rights and their Emancipation

William Carey on his own initiative fought one of the toughest political and religious-cultural battles for about 25 years for the emancipation of widows from the burning pyres of their deceased husbands. Shortly after his arrival at Serampore, Carey on commission of the Governor began an investigation into religious killings among the Hindu people in India. Carey personally and closely witnessed a heinous practice in Bengal society called *sati*⁵ which was indeed one of the most dreadful and evil practices that prevailed at that time, but no one ever said anything against

⁴ Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *Boro Sadh Baro Seba* ('Great Desire Great Service' in Bengali) (Serampore: Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, 1989), 117.

⁵ *Sati* was a ritual or practice in the Hindu society which allowed the wife of the dead husband to sacrifice her life on the same funeral pyre prepared for the dead.

it. Carey made special enquiries to collect data of sati and he reported that nearly 300 widows were burnt alive around Calcutta and about 10,000 in all of India within a short span of time. Carey started his tireless campaign against this gruesome practice. He and his colleagues published many articles against sati and worked with another great Bengali social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi said that the Indian leaders of Renaissance were inspired by William Carey. They wrote, “The early Indian leaders of the Hindu Renaissance, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, and others, drew their inspiration from William Carey and the missionaries associated with him.”⁶

As a Professor in the Fort William College, Carey could influence a whole cohort of civil servants who were his students so that they could resist societal evils. At last Carey could persuade William Bentinck who was considerate to pass a regulation on December 4, 1829, declaring *sati* as an illegal and criminal practice. While making such a brave attempt, William Carey studied extensively the history of such rituals and practices, and he also studied the Hindu Scriptures to see whether those customs were supported at all by those Scriptures. After a careful study, he persuaded the Government to prohibit *sati*, since he found that the Scriptures did not support those practices. Timothy George wrote, “Just as Carey had collected evidence of infanticides which led to their restriction, he also investigated the incidents of sati and publicized the details of its practice throughout both England and India. His studies of the Hindu sacred books also revealed that this cruel custom was by no means required by these writings, contrary to the common view.”⁷

When the legal proscription against sati was declared during the governance of the East India Company under the Governance of William Bentinck, Carey seemed to be the happiest person in the world. He immediately sat down, without wasting a single moment, to translate the text of the Sati Abolition Act in Bengali for distributing it to the public, so that everyone would know about it and as a result no more unfortunate widow would be burnt alive. Carey and the Serampore Missionaries were very keen to uplift the social status of women. Hannah Marshman with the inspiration from Carey, established the first Girls’ School at Serampore,

⁶ Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey, A Model for the Transformation of a Culture* (New Delhi: Nivedit Good Books Distributors, 1993), 25.

⁷ Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1991), 151-152.

which received much public approval and endorsement. The Serampore missionaries were pioneers in promoting education for girls. By the year 1826, Carey's Serampore mission had altogether 12 schools for girls through which 300 girls received education. By this noble act the status of women in India received public attention.⁸ Besides girls' education, Carey took interest in establishing a training school for teachers, both male and female. He established hostels for boys and girls separately.⁹ Carey's mission indeed pioneered the cause of emancipation of women through education.

Carey the Industrialist and the Media Pioneer

Carey was the first Englishman to introduce the steam engine in India. He was also the pioneer to produce paper in the Mission's own paper mill in order to utilize it for the local printing industry for publishing books, magazines and newspapers which bore the marks of nationalism till today. Carey can also be called the Father of Print Technology in India. The Serampore Mission Press was established in 1800. Sunil Chatterjee writes, "The nucleus of the strength and wealth of Serampore missionaries was their Serampore Mission Press."¹⁰ The missionaries printed not only Christian Scriptures in different languages, but secular and other religious books as well. In 1800, they started with one wooden press, and by the year 1805, they had four big printing machines. Many of the Bengali books printed from Serampore Mission Press were bought by the Fort William College for the British students.¹¹ They also printed more than a dozen types of weekly, monthly, and quarterly magazines, newsletters, books etc.¹²

Carey and his colleagues made their mark in the whole of Asia with their unique mission endeavours through printing technology. Christopher Smith wrote, "In financial, literary, educational, and technical terms, there can be no doubt that Carey and his colleagues made their mark in Asia at the beginning of Protestantism's modern missionary movement."¹³

⁸ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India, 1707-1858* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 208. cf. Henry Huizinga, *Missionary Education in India* (Orissa: Orissa Mission Press, 1909), ii.

⁹ J. B. Middlebrook, *William Carey* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 23.

¹⁰ Chatterjee, *Boro Sadh Baro Seba*, 74.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹² *Ibid.*, 136-139.

¹³ Smith, "William Carey," 245.

The year 1818 saw the birth of Indian Journalism at Serampore under the leadership of Carey. The Serampore Missionaries were the first to show the boldness of publishing a vernacular periodical *Digdarshan* in April 1818 and a newspaper *Samachar Darpan* in May 1818 which paved the pathway for Indian journals strengthening Indian nationalism and patriotism. The Persian newspaper *Akhbare* and the Hindi periodical *Digdarshan* were also published between 1818 & 1827. In 1823, William Ward, the master of printing and the most faithful friend and colleague of Carey, died of cholera. Ward can be acknowledged as the builder of the world's largest printing establishment in Oriental languages at Serampore.

Carey the Botanist and Pioneer Environmentalist

William Carey brought from England many rare species of trees, plants, and herbs that had nutritional value as well as medicinal value. Carey laid out an amazing botanical garden in Serampore which became the center of attraction for many tourists because innumerable and rare species of trees, plants and herbs were preserved in it. Because of his immense contribution to the botanical sphere of India, a type of wild guava found only in India is named after him as *Careya Herbacea*. Carey's botanical garden occupied five acres in Serampore beside the Mission House where the India Jute Mill exists today. He could established this marvelous garden by June 1800, only six months after his arrival in Serampore. This unique garden became very famous within a short time, and was known in Southern Asia for more than half a century. Carey wrote to William Roxburgh, his friend at Calcutta, that about 427 botanical species were preserved in his garden.¹⁴ Many visitors used to come to Serampore and were shown around Carey's garden. This Botanical Garden was also an important centre of research during his lifetime. To train the people in cultivation and preserving seeds Carey founded the Agri-horticultural Society of India in Calcutta in 1820 and rendered very useful service to improve India's agriculture. Carey was also a forest conservationist and he wrote many essays on forestry, while teaching conservation of natural resources.

Carey the Economist and Financial Guarantor for the Economically Backward

William Carey introduced the concept of savings bank to fight against the clutches of usury among the poor people of India. He promoted the idea of

¹⁴ Paul Thanasingh, *William Carey, Father of Modern Missions* (Nasik: Genesis Books, 1981), 25.

saving money in the banks just to support the poor. To protect the innocent and poor people from the hands of the greedy and cruel money lenders, Carey established a Savings Bank at Serampore in 1819.

Carey the Social and Moral Reformer

Carey whole heartedly fought for many social and moral reforms. He fought for the eradication of an evil practice of that society called *ghat murders*. This was a practice by which the sick and the dying were left by the riverbank to die. There was also another evil practice which allowed the rejection or burning of lepers by their families.¹⁵ Carey taught people to love the lepers. He provided medicines and was instrumental in establishing a hospital for Leprosy patients near Kolkata. Still another social evil which was prevalent in those days was the cult of thuggee which was a belief that their goddess granted sanction to certain people to strangle others and to take their valuables. Carey fought against this evil practice so much so that at last it led to the suppression of *thugs* by William Bentinck in 1830.¹⁶

Carey fought tooth and nail against another evil practice of that society known as infanticide. By his relentless efforts he could rouse general conscience and present reports so sincerely and bravely that at last Governor General Lord Wellesley had to pass the legislature in 1802 to abolish infanticide.¹⁷ Carey even fought against the caste system, which he understood as a social evil in this country. He preached for spreading love and goodwill among all people and encouraged inter-caste marriage. Together with his colleagues he established the Benevolent Institution for the poor and the neglected children in Calcutta. That is why some people called Carey the Father of the Indian Renaissance of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Carey the Educator, Linguist and Translator

William Carey not only translated the Christian Scriptures but also other Scriptures of our great country India. He translated Indian religious classics like *Ramayana* and philosophical treatises like *Samkhya* into English. He was a great scholar in various languages like Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi etc. and he translated Bible into many languages. As an educator, Carey

¹⁵ Chatterjee, *Boro Sadh Boro Seba*, 126.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

promoted the concept of libraries for spreading knowledge. He pioneered the idea of lending libraries in India.

Carey the Natural Historian and Astronomer

Besides his interest in Botany and Agriculture, Carey also showed remarkable interest in other branches of Natural History and established a museum of his own that included rich collection of shells, corals, minerals, etc. This museum was donated to the College in his last will. Carey's contributions in organizing Modern Science education in India are also very remarkable. As an Astronomer, Carey introduced and taught astronomy to mitigate the harmful effects of astrology in India.

Carey the Medical Pioneer and Humanitarian

As a medical humanitarian, Carey advocated humane treatment for leprosy patients. In 1821 he proposed to attach a medical department to Serampore College. The plan was approved by the British Government who offered some help. But due to non-availability of a suitable person to take the charge of the department, the plan could not be implemented. Carey and his Serampore colleagues extended helping hands near and far for the removal of the sufferings of the people of Serampore and other areas, especially during epidemics, natural calamities etc.

Conclusion

William Carey came to Serampore, India, to give his entire life for India, die for India and transform India for India's renaissance. He never went back to England, his motherland, not even once. But being in such a distant place and positioned in a different context, he made himself a catalyst. He was such a great Pioneer in Mission works to uplift the total lifestyle of the Indians that he became a Father-like figure and imitable social reformer for fellow missionaries and other people as well.¹⁸ He pointed out that the liberal education system should reach the grass root levels of the society. He emphasized that everyone should have equal right to education, so that the educated well-wishers of the society could stand up against the evil practices and support the cause of the poor. He showed that the Scriptures and the social customs should be properly studied, interpreted and applied for the welfare of the society. He encouraged the

¹⁸ Smith, "William Carey," 248-249.

rich elite as well as government employees to be sympathetic toward the poor people of the society.¹⁹

William Carey was indeed an outspoken person against any injustice and evil in the society. He never wanted to allow caste system or slavery among his own people or within the church, even for the advantages of his missionary efforts.²⁰ The missionaries believed in the total transformation of the society, not only the personal transformation of a believer. They took care of the person as well as the total socio-cultural context in which they lived and brought transformation wherever necessary. Hence, K. L. Richardson wrote, “William Carey and his team strongly believed that mission was concerned not only to a person but also to his environment. Therefore, we found a wholistic concept of mission in the ministries of Serampore Trio, i.e., mission to the total person in the whole society.”²¹

Thus, William Carey’s contributions to the society as a Missionary are far-reaching and inestimably significant, which will be remembered by the posterity forever and particularly by the Indian people. Therefore, William Carey was not only a missionary for the Christian community, but he was truly a nation builder for the entire country of India and for the transformation and emancipation of its people.

¹⁹ Ibid., 123-124.

²⁰ Thomas Schirmacher, *Be Keen to Get Going* (Hamburg: RVB International, 2008), 50-51.

²¹ K. L. Richardson, “The Mission of the Serampore Trio: An Ecumenical Perspective,” in *Indian Journal of Theology* 35 (1993):29.

Role of Serampore Mission and Hannah Marshman in the Advancement of Women Education in the Nineteenth Century (1800-1850)

Aparna Roy*

It was the beginning of the nineteenth century. Rassundari Devi has compared the life led by a woman with ‘a bird kept as a captive inside a cage’ and ‘an oilman’s bullock whose eyes are kept covered’ in ‘Aamar Jiban’ (My Life), the first autobiography by a Bengali woman. Charles Grant mentioned the relationship between a husband and a wife as a relationship between a master and a servant in his writing ‘Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects to Great Britain particularly with respect to Morals; and on the means of improving it’ (1792), he also mentioned the ruthless cruelty of Hindu Society while treating women.¹ In the writings of Acland² and Carey³, we can also find instances of patriarchal domination in the society and ill-treatment of husbands towards their wives. Child-marriage and polygamy were legal, and as a result, conjugal life was cursed under the anathema of lack of emotional bonding in the relationship and the society was suffering from its wounds inflicted by the scorching

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¹ *Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons* 10 (1812-13), 29.

² C. Acland, *A Popular Account of the Manners and Customs of India* (London: John Murray, 1847).

³ Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay, ed., *A Collection of Old Prose Texts*, ed. Mitra and Ghosh, vol. 1 (Kolkata, 1978), 167.

fire of the evil custom of ‘Suttee’ – ‘Women’s Education’ was condemned by everyone as it was considered to be the cause of widowhood and moral decline. At the beginning of this century, the social expansion of a Bengali woman was limited to two sentences – “The happiness of a family depends on the virtue of a woman” and “A Woman should be married only with the view to get a son.” Though there were few rich families who used to educate their women inside the ‘zenana’, the greater society of women in Bengal was naturally under the darkness of illiteracy and superstition. Daughters of decent households could not even think of coming to public schools to study. Craufurd observed that the trend of studying was not there particularly among other girls except the dancers (*Baijis*).⁴ ‘English Education’ was spreading gradually among the society of common people as the nexus between learning and earning was formed; in the Company’s Charter of 1813, it was stated that one lakh rupees was reserved for the sector of ‘education’ – but still the idea of ‘women education’ was not officially thought of anywhere. The education of a woman was ‘ominous’ and an ‘abominable social offense’. And with this social backdrop, the Baptist Mission started their work at Serampore led by Carey, Marshman, and Ward. The Serampore Mission was established. The first periodical magazine was published on the printing press – at first, the *Digdarshan* and later on *Samachar Darpan*. ‘The Bible’, as well as ‘The Ramayana composed by Krittibasā’ were translated. Many books written by the scholars of Fort William College were published from Serampore Mission Press with an objective of spreading education in the vernacular languages.

In 1792, the Baptist Missionary Society announced in its first circular that, “The object of the Society is to evangelize the poor, dark, idolatrous Heathen, by sending Missionaries.” So, Carey, Marshman and Ward decided when the proposal of establishing the Serampore Mission was presented “To carry on conversation with the natives almost every hour in the day; to go from village to village, from market to market, from one assembly to another, to talk to servants, laborers etc. as often as opportunity offers.”⁵ As the Missionaries of Serampore maintained close and direct contact with the common people sunk under the darkness of

⁴ Q. Craufurd, *Sketches Chiefly Relating to the History, Religion, Learning and Manner of the Hindoos*, vol.2 (London: T. Cadell, 1792), 47.

⁵ “The Serampore Compact in Glimpses,” *Journal of the Christian History Institute*, 109 (1805): para. IV.

illiteracy and superstitions, they felt the need of spreading literacy among the native people. They had certain motives. Firstly, to get rid of illiteracy and superstitions and offer a clear idea among people about the world and nature; secondly, to infuse moral values in daily life; and thirdly, to preach and spread Christianity. For this purpose, the schools were commissioned as a medium of circulating Christianity according to the original constitution of the Baptist Missionary Society. In this case, whereas the missionaries of London Missionary Society believed that “the influence of the Schools will hasten the fall of Hindooism;⁶ the missionaries of Serampore believed that “... the introduction of the Bible as a class book would overturn the system of idolatry.”⁷

The missionaries established many primary or ‘Elementary’ schools in Hooghly district. The schools directed by the Mission were of five types – (i) a type of boarding school for educating European boys and girls – the children were taught there to earn and the motive of teaching was to create future missionaries, these schools functioned as ‘a nursery’ for the church’; nearly fifty to sixty boys and girls studied here, (ii) Schools for lower class and common Christian boys and girls, (iii) a separate boarding school for Indian Christian boys and girls; the entry of the Hindoos were prohibited there, (iv) Schools for Roman Catholic boys and girls; the Hindoos, who were non-Christians, were allowed there to go and study, (v) Schools for religious education.

Though the schools were established, the missionaries of Serampore were unable to spread education widely till 1813, because of the dispute between the governmental principle of education and the missionary principle of education. Gradually, as they gained the approval of Parliament through a renewed Company’s Charter, the Serampore Mission played the role of a pioneer in spreading public education. The first factual educational scheme which was published in India was a famous writing by Joshua Marshman entitled *Hints Relative to Native Schools Together with the Outline of an Institution for Their Extension and Management* (1816). It is stated that “Instruction ... should be such as to render the inhabitants of a country happy in their own sphere, but never to take them out of it.”⁸

⁶ K. P. Sengupta, *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal (1793-1833)* (Firma KLM, 1971), 97.

⁷ Ibid., 98.

⁸ William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward, *Hints Relative to Native Schools, together with the Outline of an Institution for their Extension and Management* (Serampore: Mission Press, 1816).

It is said that the first purpose of teaching is ‘improving them in the knowledge of their own language.’ According to the plan published in *Hints*, the Mission established nearly one hundred and twenty-six schools across entire Bengal, even in various places of Hooghly district such as Singur, Konnagar, Rishra, Baidyabati, Serampore and in the surroundings in 1816. Almost ten thousand students had their primary education here and learned the instructions of Christianity. During 1816-1817, the number of schools in Hooghly district (along with Serampore) was 54, the number of students was 3,684.⁹

(2)

From the early days of the Serampore Mission, the issue of ‘women’s education’ got much importance in the programmes of Mission. It was stated in the Serampore Compact that,

We place the highest value and esteem upon the important role of the women in our mission calling. They have a vital role in ministering to the native women here just as women played an important part in the apostolic area. The Asiatic women are mostly shut up from the men, and especially from men of another caste. So we must give our European sisters all possible help in acquiring the language, that they may become instrumental in promoting the salvation of the millions of native women....¹⁰

The missionaries thought that, “... a native Christian mother must at least, be qualified to teach her children to read the Bible, and that female ignorance and Christianity could not exist together.”¹¹ The missionaries wanted to establish knowledge of values and tasteful refinement in the livelihood of superstitions of illiterate native common people. And for that purpose, they became attentive regarding the issue of ‘domestic education’-cum- women’s education.’ A new chapter of ‘women’s education’ began in India when John Clark Marshman took up the responsibility. Hannah Marshman stood at the forefront – ‘The first woman Missionary in India.’ She started her journey with much daring against the massive resistance of the native superstitious society.

⁹ Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *William Carey and his Attendants in the Renaissance of Bengal* (Serampore: Ratna Prakashan, 1974), 12.

¹⁰ “The Serampore Compact,” para. 7.

¹¹ J. C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* (Serampore: Council of Serampore College, 2005), 303.

From the very beginning, Hannah Marshman was involved with the various programmes of the Serampore Mission. According to her personal identity, Hannah was the wife of Joshua Marshman. Apart from that, she was an educationist; teaching was her profession for long. Hannah's previous experience as a teacher certainly played a great role to manage and operate the paid boarding-schools for European boys and girls at Serampore. Similarly, she was very much engaged with the honorary schools for native and lower-class children. When the charge of conversion became severe against the missionary schools, Hannah personally went from home to home of each student and convinced them that no one will be converted into Christianity without his or her wish. Though Carey, Marshman, and Ward had close contact with native common people; Hannah had an intimate acquaintance with the 'zenana' of ignorant Bengali household, from the very moment she came to Serampore, she started to make others realize the importance of learning of the ignorant mothers and daughters of the country. But her efforts were repeatedly interrupted because of social obstacles. We must remember that this was the time when a survey, conducted by the Mission led by William Carey, revealed the statistics of the cruel custom of 'Suttee' in Bengal. We can find that 275 women were immolated by the fire as 'Suttee' in 1803 in Kolkata and its adjacent areas; the number increased gradually up to 544 in 1818. We can trace the wretched, miserable condition of the upper-class and lower-class ladies, whose lives were as good as dead. In Bhawanicharan Bandyopadhyay's 'Nabababilas' (Luxury of the New Baboos), the painful sighs of the women were captured in the lyrics of 'Kavigan' (a folk-song, in the form of question and answer, sung to challenge or reply a competitor)

A woman is born only to bear the pain of childbirth. Hannah felt this helpless condition of the women of Bengal with her own heart. She also believed that, "... Knowledge may remove prejudices and originate a superior correctness both of ideas and of conduct, which may be of the highest advantage to the Society."¹² So, Hannah Marshman was the first woman who fought for the institutional education of Indian women. We come to know from *Samachar Darpan* that she had established a girls' school at 'Hannah House' (Serampore) with 84 girls. Though it is said in the magazine that the school was established in 1807, a plate in the school suggests that it was 1818. Again, we find a letter written by Joshua Marshman to Fuller which says that a mission school was opened in 1811

¹² Joshua Marshman, "Serampore Mission, 1st Report of Native Schools," (1817), 41.

for the Portuguese girls in India. This school was called the first girls' school in *Bamabodhini* magazine. Though there was much debate in this matter, still it can be certainly said that the missionaries arranged a space for the education of girls by separating a place with curtains in a boy's school in 1816-17. Rather, Adam Sahib offered the credit of establishing an open and autonomous school for girls to Rev. Robert May, the member of London Missionary Society, in his 'Education Report' (1835). Rev. May started a school at Chuchura with fourteen girls in 1818 during the very same time with Hannah – young girls and adult women, both were taught there. But it didn't run for long, the Company-Government closed the school after Rev. May's death in the very same year.

Hannah was in England during 1820 and 1822. At that time, there was much debate between Serampore Mission and Baptist Missionary Society at London regarding the activities of the Missionaries. Every missionary of Serampore was compelled to go back to England in various times to find a resolution during 1820-1829. By then, Serampore College was established in 1818 and Hindu College was established in Kolkata in 1817; Rammohan Roy appeared in Bengal as a social reformer; women of Christian associations came forward to spread literacy among women with their individual efforts, without waiting for governmental help – Female Juvenile Society was established in 1819 to spread education among women in their mother-tongue. It is necessary to say here that the devotion and initiative of Hannah Marshman served as inspiration certainly in the practice of women's education at Bengal in those days. In 1821, Ward was in England and he asked for the support of the English people for circulating education among Indian Women and said, "School must be commenced; knowledge must be communicated, and then the Hindu female will be behind none of her sex in mental elevation to which the highest rank of the British females have attended." This appeal was much rebuked and criticized in various countries on that day. Then Joshua Marshman himself supported Ward by giving descriptions of various direct experiences of the missionaries regarding the lives of the women of Bengal, in *Friend of India*. The terribly wretched condition of Indian women became evident in the eyes of the West. It created a massive stir in the educated English Society, especially in educated English women society. After that, Ward and Hannah came back to India with huge public support and promises of patronage. The organized plan for establishing educational institutions for women at Serampore and in its surroundings started. But Ward died suddenly in 1823. Then, Hannah Marshman took

up the huge responsibility for women's education on her own shoulders and carried this responsibility throughout her entire life.

What exactly did happen in those days? At least, twelve girls' schools were opened at Serampore and its surroundings within 1824. The Western naming of each native school certainly highlights their connection and secret support with various famous schools of England. For example – the name of the school of Ballabhpur was 'Chatham Union'; 'William School' at Dhulipara; 'Ross School' at Malopara; 'Chatham School' and 'Glasgow School' at Mahesh; 'Sterling School' and 'Dunfermline School' at Rishra; 'Edinburgh School' at Nabagram etc. Almost 250 girls studied in those schools. Apart from that, the missionaries of Serampore opened five schools only for the Muslim girls – 'Siuri School', 'Tilpara School', 'Tehra School', 'Annadapur School' and 'Hasnabad School'. 34 girls studied in those schools. The missionaries also established few girls' schools outside Hooghly and Birbhum, at Dhaka, Chittagong, Jessore, Benaras, and Allahabad. It was also seen that 'The Christian Female School' was established at Dhaka under the direction of Mrs. Charles Leonard. Accordingly, Leonard informed that the missionaries of Serampore ran 'Narandia School' with thirty girls and ran 'Mud Darbari School' at Chittagong with fifty girls. The girls learned there how to read books and how to spell. The messages of Jesus Christ were taught in class I, morals were taught in class II; spelling and handwriting were taught in class III and IV. Books, papers along with all necessary things for the study were provided by the school. The missionaries put much emphasis on Bengali and English language studies along with History, Geography and primary knowledge of Mathematics. Apart from that, they were also given real domestic and social knowledge on topics like 'conversation between a mother and a daughter.' The girls were also taught many handicrafts like sewing, embroidery. But the reading of Christian religious texts was regular and mandatory in this educational project. And this was the reason for an inevitable dispute and distance between these schools and the common educated Bengali families.

We come to know from a news published in *Samachar Darpan* on 10th April 1824 that almost 230 girl students from thirteen missionary-schools of Serampore and its surroundings were present at the house of Baboo Shri Gopal Mullick on 5th April, Monday, 1824 at 10 a.m., to appear in an examination. Many Sahibs and Ladies were present there. Fifty girls were able to read books along with proper spellings, thirty-five girls recited poems; the rest of all were able to write correct spellings of various

words. The examination continued for two hours. At the end, satisfied and delighted, Hannah Marshman gave away new clothes, pictures, and money as reward among the examinees to encourage them. Sweets were distributed among all of them. Not only that, many handicrafts made by the girls of the schools were exhibited on that day. The number of the examinees rose up to 300 in 1825 – the examination was scheduled at the hall of Serampore College.

But who were these students? In those days, women only from lower-class families and despised by everyone came out of their houses. We see that most of the schools operated by the missionaries were honorary. All the materials of the study were also provided from the school. It is not hard to understand that girls from poor families and backward classes joined the missionary schools with the hope of economic help. Because every girl, irrespective of caste and religion, had the scope of studying in those educational institutions. Probably, the temptation of money as a reward made these Bengali poor girls curious about learning.

From the middle of the third decade of the nineteenth century, the girls' schools operated by Serampore Mission began to close one after another. The death of Carey in 1834, the death of Joshua Marshman in 1837 made irreplaceable losses of the Mission. The tasks of operating those schools became problematic without regular governmental grants and unofficial sponsorship. Severe crisis of money, the dearth of efficient teachers on one hand; early marriages of the girls increased Hannah's helplessness and all these gradually made the lively initiative of Serampore Mission to spread literacy among women motionless. The normalcy of Mission's voluntary service was also spoilt because of the gradually increasing distance between Serampore Mission and Baptist Mission. The great educationist Hannah Marshman breathed her last in 1847 while fighting against various adverse situations.

Till then, there were huge changes in the backdrop of women's education in Bengal. Various projects were started for Bengali 'Gentlelady' under the patronage of many aristocrats, powerful and educated people like Radhakanta Deb, Gourmohan Vidyalkar, Jaykrishna Mukhopadhyay who raised their voice in the support of women's education and for changing the principles of education. Institutional education of the women became much important like the 'Zenana Education'. Bethune Sahib's Calcutta female school was established in 1849. It was written in their 'Prospectus' in 1856 – "only girls from civilized households are eligible to study here."

But, all the missionaries of Serampore, including Hannah Marshman, wanted to spread primary education among women irrespective of caste, colour, religion, and division. The scarcity of money was always the constant companion of Mission. Still, they were able to bring the girls of poor, backward class into the reach of education through honorary education and offering monetary help. With the help of language-study, the missionaries wanted to make the girls brave so that they could raise their voice to speak their mind; they wanted to inject values among the girls with the help of religious education; and they showed the path of self-dependence in the lives of the girls and also taught the taste for good sense in the poor Bengali domestic lives with the help of practicing handicrafts. Later, when women's education was being introduced, the Bramho girls' schools along with Bethune school acknowledged the significance of this curriculum and followed it as well.

Serampore Mission was the pioneer in teaching in mother-tongue. We see that women's education, after the period of Bethune School, gradually became urbanized, and limited in the civic atmosphere. 'Education' and 'Liberty' – these two words were considered as 'gifts', given by educated liberal men of the family, in the lives of modern Bengali women. But, at the beginning of the century, the members of a Bengali family celebrated the birth of a son by blowing conches whereas no such sounds of conches were heard when a daughter was born. At that time, Hannah Marshman and Serampore Mission showed much courage to introduce 'women's education' while fighting against odds and umpteen adverse situations. They wanted to introduce 'education' in the lives of undignified women in society as their 'rights', they didn't want to gift it as a mere present. The contribution of Hannah Marshman as well as the great missionaries of Serampore, in advancing towards the development of the Bengali women, is still waiting to be properly evaluated. The historical study of the modernization of Bengali women can never be completed neglecting this.

The Serampore Mission: Ushering Women Education

Pratap Chandra Gine*

Introduction:

“... Indian men have deliberately kept their women backward. Those who pose as reformers as also other well-to-do Indians, whether Hindu or Muslim, Parsi or Christian, either treat their women as if they were playthings or use them as they fancy for self-indulgence, with the result that they themselves become weak and help only to produce weaklings. And in this way they lead irreligious lives and still say, ‘It is God’s will that prevails’.” – Mahatma Gandhi¹

“Girls, there is much for you to learn. ... It is not enough that you learn to read and write. You have to cultivate your minds too. ... Just as you ought to develop your minds, so must you inform yourself of what is happening around you ... Just as there are schools for boys, there ought to be schools for girls also.” – M. Lavis²

From the above statements, it becomes clear that from time immemorial women have fallen victim to injustice particularly in the field of education

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¹ Pushpa Joshi, comp., *Gandhi on Women: Collection of Mahatma Gandhi’s Writings and Speeches on Women* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House; New Delhi: Center for Women’s Development Studies, 2011), 4.

² *Indian Opinion*, 19-01-1907, *CWMG*, vol. 6, 282-84, cited by Joshi, *Gandhi on Women*, 5.

in their own home, society, nation, and religious structure; and at times it has been self-inflicted because of their inner apathy. Indian societal structure was fashioned in such a way with an excuse of scriptural sanction that the existence of women became at stake. The lower stratum of the society practiced casting the girl-child into the river as part of female infanticide, believing that the birth of a girl-child was a bad omen for the family. The practice of sati was another blow to the existence of women, who were at times forced to marry at their very early age to old men, who could be older than their parents. The general trend of women education was deceptive in nature, enslaving in character, and deficient in quality.

Considering the condition of women condition in the socio-religious structure of Bengal during the late 18th and early 19th century CE Bengal, B.R. Purkait remarked, “A strong conservatism grasped the whole society. People lost their values. Women lost their liberties and status.”³ Similarly, J.P. Banerjee opined, “Educational and social freedom of women was largely sacrificed at the altar of conservatism”.⁴ In fact, the conditions of women during this period may be seen from three perspectives – cultural, social, and religious. Culturally, the birth of a baby-girl was considered a bad-omen. Therefore, if any family had a newly born baby-girl, they had two options before them – either practice infanticide or wait for four or five years to give her away for marriage. The early marriage would lead her either to perpetual widowhood if she survived from *sati* or impede her eternally from being enlightened through education. Socially, women were having a low profile. Women with a high background would hardly be seen publicly, but the middle class could go outdoor with head-coverings. There was a social stigma that if a woman ventured to read, this would surely mean to become a widow. This fear prevented many from schooling. From a religious point of view, they were considered unclean and therefore anything they would touch would become impure. They were debarred from religious rights along with any attempt of education.⁵ All these statements and even the conditions of that time, however, could not negate the abilities and qualities of women to educate themselves

³ B. R. Purkait, *Indian Renaissance and Education from Rammohan to Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1992), 39.

⁴ J.P. Banerjee, *Education in India – Past, Present, Future*, vol.1 (Calcutta: S. Choudhury, 1981), 137.

⁵ Pratap Chandra Gine, *The System of Education of the Serampore Mission* (Jorhat: D. R. Gine, 2001), 15-16.

and prove their worth. What these statements refer to is the conservative attitude of the society towards women on the one hand, while the women were deprived of education on the other. This provided the momentum to the Serampore Mission to undertake the challenge of spreading education among the girls. They began their work, however, with the boys respecting the socio-cultural ethos of the society.

The present paper will consider the situation of Bengal that existed during the time of arrival of the Serampore missionaries and takes into account their contributions, along with the contributions of the local people, for the spread of women education. The discussion would be strictly limited to Serampore and Kolkata only unless it is necessary to go beyond. This would help to get a better understanding of their mission. What is intended in this paper by “education”, and that too by “women education”, has very little to do with an educational degree or job-placement. It is rather an act of unfolding an area of education which was not explored and given importance because of socio-religious stigma and/or stagnation. The paper would investigate how the Serampore Mission was engaged in imparting education in general and female education in particular; and what made them to explore this area. This would also explore how the post-Serampore Mission period fared in the field of women education, particularly with local initiatives. The paper would apply to some extent the historical-critical method as a tool for investigation. It would make an appraisal of their educational activities. In the process of appraisal, it would retrospect and also envision the prospect of women education in the context of the Indian sub-continent. It would end with recommendations for generations to follow. The paper begins with the definition of the terms.

Definition of the Terms:

1. **Education:** Education is that which enlightens humans in their self-understanding and worth towards relating other humans, nature, and God in the process of their living; and thereby equipping themselves to face the challenges of life, experiencing fuller humanity that would illumine others whoever come in contact with them irrespective of diverse backgrounds across the human society.
2. **Serampore Mission:** It is the Mission which was established by the Serampore Triumvirate (viz. William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward) and their families (i.e., their wives and children) at Serampore on January 10, 1800 and continued until it came to an end with the demise of Hannah Marshman, its last survivor in 1847. At

the same time, the phrase “Serampore Mission” also includes the then Danish Governor, H.E. Col. Ole Bie, who had been instrumental to the establishment of this Mission and its success during his regime. The phrase “Serampore Mission” would also be used interchangeably for the phrase “Serampore missionaries”.

3. **Ushering:** The term indicates the period of its inception, initiation, application, appreciation, and acceptance of criticism. The term as a whole constitutes persistent perseverance towards achieving the goal. It expands one’s heart and soul for the great cause.
4. **Women education:** The term “women” refers to the other side of the male dominant section of the masses. This is an umbrella term, which includes all females from small and teen-aged girls to elderly ladies. This section of the community was deprived of certain basic privileges, like education, and exploited because of their ignorance. The Serampore Mission had a special concern for this section of the people, particularly to bring them to the light of education and knowledge.

The Origin – from Destruction to Reconstruction:

If the primary history of the settlement of the missionaries of the BMS in India is to be recorded in one particular word, it has to be coined with *wanderers*. The missionaries wandered from one end to the other end in the eastern part of India immediately after their arrival for their support, survival, and safety. Nothing seemed to have worked well for them in the beginning. And worse to happen was their penniless situation, a kind of bankruptcy. The *Sending Body* had access to the information of their pecuniary situation, and so they resolved on August 29, 1797, to “... pay them those arrears which, for a time, they have voluntarily declined, and that the mode of future subsistence be left to the discretion of Mr. Carey”. What the BMS failed to perceive was that being left without support did not abate Carey’s missionary zeal. He reciprocated their resolution with a new proposal and advised the Society “to set their faces earnestly towards India.”⁶ Carey proposed to the BMS to form a missionary settlement in the neighborhood of Malda in the northern part of Bengal in the Moravian

⁶ John Clark Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward, Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859. Reprinted by the Council of Serampore College, 2005), 78.

style, where seven or eight families would live together as a joint venture to reduce radically their family expenditure and to have a greater communion. Carey, who had come out with John Thomas, was joined by John Fountain at this time. The proposal was very specific and direct:

Our families should be considered nurseries for the Mission; and among us should be a person capable of teaching school, so as to educate our children. I recommend all living together in a number of little straw houses forming a line or square, and having nothing of our own, but all the general stock. One or two should be elected stewards to preside over the management, which should, with respect to eating, drinking, worship, working, learning, preaching excursions, be reduced to fixed rules.⁷

This proposal seemed to have impressed the BMS and therefore without any further delay they sent out missionaries, namely, William Grant, Daniel Brunsdon, William Ward, Joshua Marshman, to join this group to make an experiment of this Moravian settlement. Carey's dream of a missionary settlement after the model of the Moravians was realized only when he arrived with his family escorted by William Ward at Serampore on January 10, 1800. The simple formula of commonness could be felt when Carey expressed in a discreet way, "Let us give ourselves unreservedly to this glorious cause. Let us never think that our time, our gifts, our strength, our families, or even the clothes we wear are our own, let us sanctify them all to God and His cause. Oh! That He may sanctify us for His work."⁸

The Moravian principles declared different dimensions for the Serampore Mission:

- a. That they would live according to the simple teaching of Jesus Christ;
- b. That their lives would be molded in the pattern of the Gospel in the church, home, workplace, and even wherever they go;
- c. That all preach and pray in turn in the Chapel;
- d. That one would superintendent family affairs for a month;
- e. That income of all sources be credited to the common stock;
- f. That Carey would be assigned with the job of treasurer, along with the responsibility of monitoring medicines;
- g. That all would be considered equal, dine on a common table, give each family a trifling allowance for the personal expense;

⁷ Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey*, 1: 79.

⁸ *Form of Agreement*, 1805, cited by Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey*, 1: 229-30.

- h. That daily timetable would be maintained without any interruption, like morning 8 o'clock bell for devotion, followed by breakfast, then disperse for regular assignment, 12 o'clock luncheon, etc.
- i. That Carey would continue in translation, Ward with the printing press, Marshman along with his wife look after education, and Fountain would take care of books and library;
- j. That Saturday evening would be set aside for resolving differences of opinions and conflicts and pledging for mutual love.

These simple but steady principles of agreement of the Mission helped the Serampore missionaries to take strategic steps in working out their Mission. Establishing schools for the local children thus gradually took shape, beginning with the boys then for the girls.

Motivating Factors Behind the New Direction in Education:

The Serampore Mission had developed their motivating forces and sources for the new direction in education both from within and without. This talked about the Mission's mode, method, message, and medium of education in its length and breadth.

- i. First, the Mission declared the commitment mode as an effective means of imparting education. To the Serampore Mission, the concept of *commitment* was a hundred percent willingness to face the eventuality in the execution of their planning for the mission. To them, mission without commitment was nothing, and commitment without planning was chaos, and the chaotic situation was unfit to promote education effectively. Therefore, the Serampore Mission gave so much emphasis on their commitment.
- ii. Second, to the Serampore Mission, the method should be congenial to the receptors. The education for women in society should be imparted by women educators only. It, therefore, posed the challenge to the female members of the Team to approach the female members of the local body in imparting education. According to the Serampore Mission, their women members had a great and vital role to play in ministering to local women who would play a significant role in local families. The Mission, however, observed that despite their important role in the family, they were shut up by their men and society. Hence, the role of the Serampore Mission women was to be instrumental in imparting education to local women. So, the method they discovered regarding women education was, women education is for women, with women, and by women.

- iii. Third, the message of the women, however, remained constantly focused on *liberation/salvation* from the grip of ignorance and illiteracy. To some extent, this message was also to the women *atantahpur*,⁹ who were usually deprived of outside contact and general education. Hence, a message to these women was to have access to the outside world and widen their knowledge.
- iv. Fourth, the medium of instruction and imparting education was people's language, i.e. their mother tongue. The Serampore Mission was concerned that the content of the message is understood by the common women in and through their mother tongue. The issue of mother-tongue led the Serampore Mission towards greater achievement beginning from Bible translation and establishing schools in Bangla-medium, and writing books and other materials in Bangla language. The introduction of and the emphasis on Bangla as mother-tongue widened their circle of friends on one hand,¹⁰ while it created counter missionary jealousy in another circle.¹¹

Considering the forces and sources from without, it was the existing structure of the then prevalent Bengal society.

- i. **Social norm:** Education was considered as a *commodity* and/or *possession* of the elites which was procured by the fortunate. Being born as a male was counted as one belonging to such a fortunate community. In order to earn such education, one has to come before the possessor of knowledge and wisdom, namely the *Guru* or the Preceptor,¹² who would impart education to the disciples if they would

⁹ Literal translation of *antahpur* would mean an "inner house", consisted of a set of rooms, courtyard, terrace, roof and kitchen to which general entry was restricted. This was made only for women and the women worked for them. The children, servants and a few kinsmen had access to these areas.

¹⁰ Personalities like Raja Rammohan Roy, one of the great Bengal social Reformers, became one of the close friends of the Serampore missionaries, although his policy on the medium of instruction was English.

¹¹ In the later period when CMS (Church Missionary Society) and LMS (London Missionary Society) missionaries came and worked in the erstwhile Calcutta, their main focus was to impart education through English-medium. Therefore, when they established educational institutions, their main focus was to introduce western science and philosophy through English. The Serampore Mission did not shift their focus from mother-tongue to English ever.

¹² The *Gurus* were considered more than modern teachers. Apart from imparting general education, the Gurus would be teaching them the basic tenets of life and living. To come

come to him and learn from him at his feet. Learning was not the prerogatives of all; rather it was the prerogatives of a few having the certain socio-economic background.

- ii. **Educational system:** The concept of education and its transmission was vastly different. The educators were considered as the storehouse of knowledge and the educands were thought to be empty vessels. They would, therefore, come to their preceptors to fill their empty vessels from their preceptors, if they were pleased with their disciples. And the disciples in return would offer their preceptors their homegrown products or serve them in any way they could. In other words, knowledge was not imparted free of cost, or the disciples were under obligation to repay their preceptors in kinds or service.

Innovative Steps Taken by the Serampore Mission:

The Serampore missionaries formulated their own principles of action and followed them step by step towards their goal.

1. **Purchase of land:** The decision to purchase a piece of land along with a house at Serampore was made for a greater economical reason. During this time Serampore was the seat of active commerce. The town was occupied by the lenders and the river was enlivened by some merchants. The riverbanks were left only as a refuge for the debtors. To rent a house required for the mission could cost not under 120 rupees per month totaling 1440 per year, which was one half of the sum Rev. Andrew Fuller allotted for their support. Therefore, in order to resolve the issue once for all, the missionaries purchased land within a week after the arrival of William Carey for 6000 rupees. They did not have the required amount but could settle it with a loan with interest. The house could accommodate all missionary families. It also served the purpose of common dining and regular devotion, including Sunday worships. Side rooms were allotted for translation work and printing office. The open ground became Carey's botanical garden after a short period of time. The property was registered in the name of the BMS, and the missionaries constituted the Trustees. All these were done within a month of the arrival of Carey and his family from north Bengal.

in contact with the Gurus was, therefore, considered earning virtues. These Gurus were usually men, and thereby disciples were also usually boys/men, with some exceptions. For the disciples/students, these *gurus* would become more than their parents.

2. **Establishment of the printing press:** The printing machine, which Carey received as a gift from Mr. George Udny, the Indigo Planter in north Bengal, could not be used earlier because of Carey's sudden removal to Serampore. Now that there was a prospect of missionary stretch of work, he placed it at Serampore for mission purposes. William Ward, who was a trained printer, took its charge. Ward set the first types with his own hands and presented the first sheet of the Bangla New Testament to Carey on March 18, 1800, and the last sheet of the Bangla New Testament came from the press on February 7, 1801. The complete New Testament in Bangla was published by the Serampore Mission on March 5, 1800. And the first Bangla prose, besides Christian tracts and government laws, came off the press in July 1801. Ramram Basu compiled a *History of King Pratapaditya*, which was considered the first prose book printed on the Serampore Press in Bangla. As the demand for books increased, the Press was being used to its highest capacity.
3. **Marking Thanksgiving Day:** Once the missionaries settled in their residence at Serampore they appointed a day for Thanksgiving. The day was fixed for April 24, 1800, to mark the occasion of offering gratitude to God and ascertain their cooperation with each other. On that day they organized a Church of which William Carey was elected as the Pastor, and John Fountain and Joshua Marshman were selected as deacons. As the Serampore missionaries acknowledged the divine grace, so also they expressed their gratitude on the same day to the governor with an address to his Danish Majesty, Frederick the Sixth, for the generous protection they received through his servants at Serampore. In the following year, the response from His Majesty arrived with the assurance of protection of their institution under the Danish flag. At the same time, he instructed the local authorities to assist them at all times, as far as within their power.
4. **Writing, printing and publishing books in Bangla:** The Serampore Mission was determined to be well-equipped before they would launch their educational mission. They prepared the settlement agreement defining their respective roles and course of action. They selected the people to assist them. They purchased a house along with vacant land. They set up a printing press which was a gift from the Indigo Planter, George Udny. And now they undertook to prepare curriculum and writing books according to that curriculum. The determinative voice was that of Joshua Marshman, an educationist by passion

and profession, who proposed that books should not be confined to religious instruction alone, even though they were in India to preach the Gospel. His proposal was to include basic principles of education, and therefore their goal should be that their pupils earn the ability to read, write, and calculate. They should have basic knowledge of “geography, a well-designed epitome of history, exhibiting a brief view of events in ancient and modern time, and including salient points and the best-authenticated facts relative to the ancient history of India.”¹³ Hence, books should be written on these subjects in such a manner that would fit well to their comprehension, both for the boys and girls. Marshman’s contention was that there should be an inclusion of *Hindoo juvenile library*, which would include elementary works and compilation of the selection of passages from the Divine oracles on the events of Scripture history. This would prepare the pupils to be aware of their duties of life and teach the basic principles of life and living. Marshman wanted that there should be another volume which would include the subject on Christian ethics that would serve two purposes – provide the epitome of the prophecies relative to Christ and a history of the propagation and progress of Christianity.¹⁴ All these books must be written in Bangla for better comprehension of the students. In the course of writing books for the schools, Carey took initiative to engage local scholars to write short and impressive stories with morals. Carey himself wrote traditional folk stories for all. Apart from all these systematic inclusion of books, there was another material that was included by virtue of its nature, and those were the translated materials of the Scriptures.

5. **Opening schools, particularly for boys:** Initially the Serampore missionaries were looking for the opportunity of opening schools for European children in order to earn some income. They devised because of repayment of their loan which they incurred by purchasing the piece of land along with the house they lived in. Hence, on May 1, 1800, Joshua and Hannah Marshman began two boarding schools in support of their mission. At the end of the month, they earned 100 rupees, and towards the end of the year, it was increased to 300 rupees per month. This gave them a boost. They realized that able management, proper guidance, appropriate lessons, sincere commitment, earnest

¹³ Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey*, 83.

¹⁴ Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey*, 2: 82-84.

cooperation, and persistent effort could lead their school mission to a great height. Within a few months, their repute rose, and these boarding schools became most popular. This encouraged the Marshmans to take the next step in opening a school for a vernacular medium for the local youths. And this so happened on June 1, 1800. No doubt, this school was for boys only. The popularity of this school started growing gradually, and soon the number of pupils reached forty. The parents believed that the children would learn English alongside their mother-tongue because this school was run by the English-speaking missionaries.

6. **Opening schools for girls:** From the time of their arrival at Serampore, the Serampore missionaries became interested to open schools for local education. The opening of a boarding school for girls created an opportunity for Hannah Marshman to take care of the girls, particularly the orphans or deserted daughters by their European fathers. The European parents were much pleased with her bold step and motherly care. From the beginning, Hannah Marshman was encouraged to open schools for local women, be they, mothers or girls. She frequented her visits to local families encouraging them to educate their daughters instead of keeping them home in confinement. Her personal approach and dealing with the mothers directly helped prepare the ground for women education. While the Serampore missionaries were engaged in opening a Benevolent Institution in Calcutta for boys and girls separately, their purpose was to provide shelter to these orphans deserted by English soldiers and seamen. In 1809-10, the Serampore missionaries opened girls' schools in Calcutta for the benefit of local women. Hannah Marshman's academic wisdom and expertise were used for these schools. Hannah's desire to open a school for girls had gone through several testing periods. From the outright rejection of the idea of opening a girls' school by the Serampore missionaries, to finally getting space with a separate arrangement for boys and girls with a mat partition. Girls who wished to be part of this system were admitted and took part in the instruction. These girls were taught general subjects like history, science, geography, mathematics, along with the provision of learning other languages including English. Their special emphasis was on reading, writing, and arithmetic. From a practical point of view, they were also taught handicrafts, knitting, embroidery, etc.¹⁵ A report

¹⁵ Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *William Carey and Serampore*. Third Enlarged Edition. (Sheoraphuli: The Author, 2008), 119-124.

published in *Samachar Darpan*, the first ever Bangla newspaper, on the common examination system of the Serampore Mission on female education is quite amazing. Examination for 230 girls belonging to 13 schools of the Serampore Mission was conducted on April 5, 1824, in the house of Gopal Mullick in a very public place, opposite to the Serampore Court buildings. The examination was based on word spelt, reading out storybooks, and reading of words. Hannah Marshman distributed prizes.¹⁶

7. **Overall supervision of schools and their entire functioning:** The Serampore missionaries observed and realized that the success of any mission, particularly educational mission, and that too for the girls, must have proper and adequate supervision for their smooth functioning and future growth. They realized that the opening of schools, fitted with books, and appointing local teachers for better communication and teaching would be of no avail had there been no periodic supervision. Supervision would include seeing that the objects of the schools are fulfilled, exams are regularly conducted, students are benefitted and rewarded, while ensuring schools are becoming financially viable.
8. **Welcoming local resources and talents:** The Serampore missionaries had an open and positive attitude towards the cooperation of the locals for their work towards the expansion of education. They also discovered among them, particularly among the recent converts, some rare talents which could be productive and useful if given opportunities. Some wealthy persons in society helped continuing female education in two ways – providing education to their girls through private tuition and allowing their unused space/house for opening schools for girls. Some luminaries of the society donated money, like Raja Baidyanath Roy of Jorasanko, who donated Rs 20,000/-for the Central Female School run by the missionaries. Jaykrishna Mukherjee from Uttarpara came forward for such assistance. Some influential locals, like Zemindars or local landlords, even went to the extent of appealing to the government for a financial grant and approval of girl's education. It was more amazing than ever that some influential local with a good image in the society offered not only their own house but also their family temple for running the school. This set a great example. The Serampore

¹⁶ J. C. Bagal, *Women's Education in Eastern India, the first phase, mainly based on contemporary records* (Calcutta: World Press, 1956), 56.

missionaries, particularly William Ward, found talents in Krishna Pal, the first convert. According to Ward, even though Krishna was a carpenter by birth and trade, he possessed great natural talent, and considerably fluency of speech.¹⁷ The missionaries made use of his talents in mission work in the interior of the country.

Reciprocation and Repercussions:

The female education as ushered by the Serampore Mission was at times reciprocated in positive ways while at times it was criticized in extreme form. These may be viewed in the following manner:

1. After some initial shock and surprise, the Bangalee community gradually reciprocated the zeal of the Serampore missionaries and welcomed their policy on female education. They realized that Indian women had always been upheld for their wisdom and bravery. It was only a short period when Indian women had gone through suppression of illiteracy and superstition. There should be an end of this impasse, and a new beginning should take place. The Serampore missionaries heralded this new change.
2. Superstition, stigma, and stagnation that crippled the Bengal society and debarred the families from sending their children for education, was challenged by the Serampore missionaries. Their exegeses of the Scriptural texts and their argumentative approach against such traditional stigma on women challenged the conservatives to the extent that they had no other options than opening the floodgate of educational transformation initiated by the Serampore missionaries, particularly by Hannah Marshman.
3. The orphans and the destitute who were at the margin of the society for no fault of their own found rest and respect because of the educational policies of these Serampore missionaries. The introduction of Boarding Schools in particular housed those children who were left forlorn and deserted by their European fathers without even showing a minimum gesture of recognizing them in their later life. And to some extent, Benevolent Institutions helped them on rare occasions in admitting them. Thus, educational policies of the Serampore Mission served at times as a means of social service to the poor.

¹⁷ Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey*, 1: 152.

4. Developing a linkage between the existing native society and the alien government was another *mission work* of the Serampore Mission. In the process of arousing social and educational consciousness among the people and establishing schools for social transformation, the Serampore missionaries were keen on raising support from the government for the public interest. Some local elites even were encouraged in pursuing the government for a public education grant. The missionaries' endeavor and public's encouragement created a favorable condition for educational pursuits.
5. In the post-Serampore era, the emergence of women activists in social and educational fields prove the positive impacts the Serampore missionaries made on the lives and living of women of Bengal. The Societies of different Missions continued the educational policies of the Serampore Mission indifferent nature and form, but with the same purpose.

The Serampore missionaries were criticized by both outsiders and insiders for different reasons and from different perspectives. They may be summed up in the following manner:

1. There was strong resistance from the conservative Bangalee society against the educational policy of the Serampore Mission. They feared that they would lose their daughters. Their fear was that their daughters would be lured through the disguise of education to Christianity. The Serampore missionaries proved it wrong.
2. There was resistance from the British government against the Serampore missionaries apprehending that their missionary work would create a social uproar among the Indians, particularly among the Bangalee society, against whatever good they intend to do to them. One such among them would be their educational policy which would offend the traditional fabric of their society. The fear of the government was proved wrong.
3. There was a suspicion in the minds of the Government, particularly in Lord Wellesley when the Serampore Mission laid out their printing press at Serampore. Their purpose was to use it for books and Bibles which would be useful for imparting education. Their basic idea was to make this press handy in supply books required for running the schools. The Government, however, suffered from fear psychosis that the Serampore missionaries would conspire against the government from Serampore. Nevertheless, it took little time for Lord Wellesley to realize the noble purpose of the missionaries.

4. Death of important missionaries in succession both in England and in India impacted badly on the whole mission of Serampore. John Fountain, one of the deacons of Serampore Church and close associate of William Carey for four years, died on August 20, 1800. On the following year, Dr. John Thomas died under an attack of ague and fever at Dinajpur on October 13, 1801. In the England scenario, John Sutcliff died on June 22, 1814, at the age of 62 and Andrew Fuller, the General Secretary of BMS and a great supporter of the Serampore Mission, died on May 7, 1815. The first of the Serampore Trio to die was William Ward. He died on March 7, 1823. His death was a big blow to the educational ministry of the Serampore Mission.

Strengths of Female Education as the Serampore Mission Perceived:

The all-round success of women education of the Serampore Mission was its strength. As people during their time realized it, the people and the other missionary bodies experienced this same truth.

1. The Serampore missionaries were able to break the prejudice of the then society against female education and convince them the worth of girls in every house and the necessity of educating them. The people of Calcutta could see the first girls' school at Calcutta.¹⁸
2. The Baptist missionaries at Serampore played a pioneering role in the field of girls' education. Among many other missionary bodies, this was perhaps the first attempt to educate Indian girls in modern education. Between 1821 and 1828 they established a large number of girls' schools in different parts of Bengal.¹⁹
3. The Serampore Mission became an exemplary body for other missionary societies as it succeeded in all their programs for educating girls. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) was encouraged to work among the girls, and they started establishing schools for girls. A girls' department was added to the Free School and was renamed St. Thomas School. Again, St. Elizabeth's Middle English School was opened with the purpose of educating the poor Bangalee girls through Bangla medium. Here Bangla became the first language and English as a second language.²⁰

¹⁸ Pranati Prakash Mondal, "Kolkatar Pratham Nari Sikshayatan" [in Bangla: The first educational institution for girls in Calcutta], in *Nabayan*, vol. 9, No. 6, 1976, 188-189.

¹⁹ Purkait, *Indian Renaissance and Education*, 42.

²⁰ The Community of St. John Baptist, *Our Work in Bengal* (Calcutta: N.P., 1939) 6-12.

4. The curriculum of the Serampore girls' schools brought perspectival changes in contemporary education. They included apart from regular subjects, a Bangla Grammar which had four editions (1801, 1805, 1815, 1818), *Kathopakathan* (Dialogues, 1801), *Itihasamala* (A collection of stories, 1812), use of a dictionary, etc.
5. The Serampore missionaries introduced Lancaster and Bell principles in their schools, particularly schools for girls. According to this system, "the curriculum should be relevant to the needs and wants of the people".²¹ Thus, girls could acquire primary knowledge of the daily course of life, apart from the general trends of education. From this point of view, the Serampore missionaries proved that all girls belonged to the privileged class with respect to education.
6. Cooperation among the missionary Societies and their respective educational institutions was developed, even though in regard to their educational principles, medium of instruction, and area of operation they differed from one another.

Weaknesses of Serampore Education as Perceived by Some Modern Educationists:

The Serampore system of education for women, which was ushered during the 18th and 19th century, has been criticized by the modern educationists of the 21st century on various grounds.

1. The Serampore missionaries followed Lancaster and Bell system of education with a little change suited to the Indian context. Thus, they were trying to transplant English education in Indian soil.
2. The Serampore missionaries did not take into account the rich educational heritage of women education during the Vedic period. They formulated their educational principles on the basis of the post-famine period of 1770.
3. The inclusion of Scripture in the school curriculum as a compulsory subject was found not desirable. The parents often found discomfort in sending their daughters to the mission schools for the fear of conversion.
4. The Home Mission did not understand the philosophy of the Serampore Mission. There was a gap and even a misunderstanding

²¹ M. A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1783-1837* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 88.

which grew up on the misinformation that the Serampore missionaries were accumulating properties in their name. Although their suspicion was proved wrong in the later period, the wound in their trust was not healed. This affected the mission work.

5. There was a rift between the Serampore missionaries and the missionaries who came to Calcutta in the later period. This new batch of missionaries was young and had little knowledge about the Serampore missionaries. They perceived their work as *new* and behaved in contradiction to the Serampore missionaries. Even the contributions of the Serampore missionaries to Calcutta did not get a proper assessment.
6. The vigorous work on women education could not be continued for a long time because of the lack of support of the wealthy natives and the government. It became increasingly difficult to run the program.
7. The generation gap, change in the philosophy of mission, the untimely death of some of the key missionaries in England and at Serampore, and the like had a toll on the missionary endeavor at Serampore and its surroundings. The whole system of women education suffered greatly.
8. After the death of Hannah Marshman on March 5, 1847, the pioneer female missionary on education, the entire project of female education of the Serampore Mission came to a close.

Serampore Mission and Beyond – Some Recommendations:

The epitome of the Serampore Mission and culmination of the activities of the Serampore missionaries, particularly their educational mission, was the foundation of Serampore College on July 15, 1818. Hence, 2018 was the bicentenary year of Serampore College. After having glanced over the female education as it was ushered by the Serampore missionaries in the early 19th century, the following recommendations may be made for keeping the Serampore Mission alive for the successive generations. As fellow citizens of Serampore, a lover of Serampore Mission, and part of Serampore College fraternity, it is recommended:

1. That the Mission and Vision of the Serampore Mission be projected through tangible means;
2. That the principles of female education be followed in the admission, appointment, protection, and preservation of women identity and dignity;
3. That at least 10 general scholarships be organized for marginalized

- women who got admission in any department of Serampore College;
4. That two 25-bedded each Women Hostels be built with a provision of accommodating women students coming from outside Serampore zone (Police Station), with a preference to women coming from other districts and particularly from other states;
 5. That a yearly Academic Journal for Women be published for the promotion of women talents in writing in Bangla, Hindi, and English;
 6. That a separate Women Wing be constituted in the College to promote and protect women privileges and tackle all women issues during the college-hours;
 7. That a Hannah Marshman Award for women be installed for exemplary contribution to the College during their student life;
 8. That a Department of Women Studies be introduced in Serampore College for wider appraisal of women contributions to different fields in the nation and worldwide;
 9. That there shall be a 30-minutes slot allotted to the women students and faculties during the celebration of special days of Serampore College; and
 10. That these recommendations be ratified by the higher authority for their implementation as a mark of respect to the Serampore Mission for their untiring commitment for the promotion of women education and protection of women's dignity.

Conclusions:

It is worth taking a look at the nineteenth century scenario of women education while standing in the 21st century. It is amazing how the Serampore Mission could take a firm step to introduce education for women by going against the then conservative society of Bengal! They could win to the extent of getting the unstinted support of the local public, particularly the elites and the landlords at different phases. No doubt, with the passage of time their activities came to an end, but their impact is still continuing. It becomes the duty of successive generations to uphold the principles of the Serampore Mission and stand by the promotion of women education in their respective contexts, particularly at Serampore College.

Serampore Mission in Northeast India and Bangladesh (1813-1838)

O. L. Snaitang*

Introduction

I am delighted that the editorial team of the Carey Day publication 2022 has allowed me to contribute a brief write up on some aspects of the Serampore Mission.

Given the fact that the Serampore Mission had started its missionary work in Northeast India from 1813 to 1838 – a crucial period before the arrival of the well-organized American Baptist Mission in 1836 and more importantly the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission in 1841, it is important that this part of the history is placed on record for reference and study alike. Therefore, my concern may well suggest that recalling the past memories of the Serampore Mission in the region is not just important but very relevant. History is proof that William Carey’s Serampore Mission was the first Protestant Mission that had initiated missionary work in Northeast India and Bangladesh as early as the year 1813.¹ Its work in the

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¹ For more information on the history of the Serampore Mission in Northeast India, see F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India – The Mission Period 1836 – 1950* (Jorhat, Assam: Christian Literature Center, 1971), 11 – 13.

region though were marked with significant successes but following the death of the last Serampore trio in 1837 it could not continue its missionary labour in the region. Be that as it may, its historical happening should in no way be written off from any recorded human memory.²

The Historical Background of William Carey's Mission

William Carey³ deserves the credit and honour for stirring up missionary interests in the UK and elsewhere in the Western world. His pamphlet entitled *The Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of Heathens* (1792) was so influential that it resulted in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society on 2nd October 1792.⁴ The Society commissioned William Carey, his family, and Dr. John Thomas as missionaries to West Bengal, India. They landed in Calcutta on 11th November 1793.⁵ Difficulties loomed large for William Carey from different frontiers.

First, the opposition from the then British government to the BMS missionaries was so intense that it made William Carey and his team often despair. Secondly, poverty, sickness, and death that visited the missionaries were enormous that it reduced the once healthy Mrs. Dorothy Carey⁶ into a state of being mentally deranged. Later, William Carey had to accept appointment as Manager to the Indigo factory at Madnabati, Malda district, North Bengal.

His service with the factory had by contrast not quenched his missionary zeal and interests. His translation of the Bible into Bengali went on in full swing there and he started school education and initiated the establishment of a printing press as well.

² The Presbyterian Church in Bangladesh has commemorated the bicentenary in 2013.

³ Many outstanding authors have written on *William Carey* but one of the substantive and detailed studies may well be referred is, S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey, D. D.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923, 8th rev. ed., Carey Press, 1934). This book is available for reference at Carey Library, Serampore.

⁴ See A. Christopher Smith, *The Serampore Mission Enterprise* (Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2006), 4 – 6.

⁵ An account from a local Bengali experienced librarian and authority on William Carey's early years in Bengal, Read Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *William Carey and Serampore*. 2nd ed. (2004). Also see Hamlet Bareh Ngapkynta, *William Carey in a New Perspective* (Guwahati, Assam: Spectrum Publications, 2004).

⁶ For the life of Dorothy Carey, See James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey: The Tragic and Untold Story of Mrs. William Carey* (Ada, MI: Baker Publishers Group, 1992).

Establishment of Serampore Mission

It was October 1799 that witnessed the beginning of the Serampore Mission following the arrival of the new recruited BMS missionaries, viz., Joshua Marshman,⁷ William Ward, William Grant, and Daniel Brunsdon.⁸ The latter two missionaries, Grant and Brunsdon, did not survive long. They died barely two years into their missionary service at Serampore. Realizing obstacles and hostility in British India, the new recruits went straight to Serampore and placed themselves under the protection and care of Col. Bie, the Danish Governor in Serampore.

William Carey had tried hard to get these newly arrived missionaries join his service at Madnabati and to strengthen his missionary activities there was unsuccessful. Later he had to relinquish his service at the Madnabati Indigo factory, abandoned his mission works there and moved to Serampore. He reached there on 10th January 1800. That was the beginning of the Serampore Mission that witnessed the exemplary works of these three gifted missionaries, resulted in Serampore achieving the title of becoming “The Cradle of Modern Missions.”⁹

The missionary works of the Serampore Mission were noted for Bible translations, promotion of popular indigenous literature, educational activities, medical services, humanitarian works, Church planting, agri-horticultural society, botanical garden, printing and more importantly for the establishment of a theological university.¹⁰ The Serampore Trio believed in holistic mission and their integrative and comprehensive ministries were testimonies of their total holistic mission involvement.

Serampore Mission and Northeast India – Bangladesh

The Serampore Mission did not plan to expand its missionary operation to Northeastern India. Want of finance and manpower could have been the main reasons for not favouring expansion. Later, however, the Mission sent Rev. Krishna Chandra Pal, a Bengali convert, to start missionary work

⁷ Cf. S. K. Chatterjee, John Clark Marshman: *A Trustworthy Friend of India* (2001).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 21 – 81.

⁹ For more information, Read Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *William Carey and Serampore*. (2004).

¹⁰ For a summary reflection on the holistic ministry of Dr. William Carey and the Serampore Mission, cf. O. L. Snaitang “William Carey’s Vision and Its Relevance Today” in *Indian Church History Review* (June 1993): 50 – 63.

in the region. Rev. Pal came to Pandua in the then Khasi hills in 1813. Why did the Serampore Trio expand their missionary works to Northeast India and Bangladesh?

A. Christian Mission and Colonialism:¹¹ There is no denying the fact that there was a close connection between Serampore Mission and British colonialism in the region. It were British officers resident at Sylhet who invited the Serampore Mission to start missionary work in Northeast India. As the government found it difficult to curb the warring Khasi-Jaintia and Garo people from frequent raiding the people in the plains, they thought it proper to hand over the primal people to Christian Mission. At the same time, their vision was that the Christian missionaries could help in bringing about development and humanization.

I. W. N. Garrett and Matthew Smith: Given the fact that the British Government adopted the policy of non-interference in religion, it is surprising that the officers in the region, viz. W. N. Garrett and Matthew Smith did not see any problem in encouraging Christian work among the primal people. The nature of these officers also contributed to this development. W. N. Garrett and Matthew Smith who were British officers posted in Sylhet were Christian with deep evangelical conviction and commitment. Garrett served in the capacity of a judge and was a nephew of Robert Raikes, the pioneer of the Sunday School movement in Britain. It was he who invited William Carey and the Serampore Mission to start missionary work in the region. Matthew Smith, a colleague of W. N. Garrett, was a friend of William Carey who shared a common evangelical faith.

William Carey sent Krishna Chandra Pal to Pandua, a market centre in the foothills and reached there in May 1813. Through his labours, there were seven adult men who were convinced by the new faith and received baptism in accordance with the Baptist tradition. Two of the baptized persons were Khasis, U Duwan and U Anna. The officers who did not want to see that the missionary worked independently, took control of the baptismal proceedings like questioning the candidates' confession of faith and fixing the venue for the ceremony. Pal's duty was only to perform the baptismal rite.

¹¹ F. S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives* (1983), 49 – 85.

2. David Scott and Francis Jenkins: Besides Garrett and Smith, David Scott¹² and Francis Jenkins were also instrumental in supporting the Serampore Mission. Scott was the first Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier and Special Civil Commissioner of North East Rangpur. Later, he was elevated to the rank of Commissioner of Northeastern region. Before joining the civil service of the government, David Scott studied at Fort William College, Calcutta. There he came under the influence of William Carey especially his evangelical faith and missionary work. Like Garrett and Smith, David Scott's interest in evangelization was more personal and in no way did it reflect the official position of government.

The British government had made its policy of religious neutrality clear right from the beginning so that its rule in the country would remain uninterrupted without unrest, resistance or any agitation. But David Scott, who saw the primal religions of the hill people as 'real' religion, (i.e., in comparison to the established religions like Hinduism or Islam in the plains), did not see any political threat from involvement in religious affairs, but rather saw Christian mission as an effective agency for pacifying the warlike hill people and for human development.

Francis Jenkins too was an officer at the same level as David Scott. He too was a Protestant Christian of deep spiritual devotion and admired William Carey's missionary spirit. His service in the region was mainly concentrated in upper Assam and associated mostly with the American Baptist Mission in the area of providing education to the plain people of Assam.

B. Serampore Mission Activities in the Region: The main activities of the mission were evident in at least two areas, viz., Bible translation and education.

1. Bible Translations: True to the basic and primary objective of the founders of the Serampore Mission, the Serampore missionaries in Northeast India committed themselves to the task of translating the Bible. It is reported that the first effort in translating the Bible was done in the Assamese language for the people of Assam. The work started off in the year 1811, i.e. before the deputation of Krishna Chandra Pal and could have taken place at Serampore itself. Shri Atmaram Sarma from Kaliabor,

¹² For a detailed study on David Scott, See Nirode K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-East India: A Study in British Paternalism* (1970).

Nagoan, Assam, was appointed to carry out the translation work. The New Testament in Assamese was brought out in 1819. The whole translated Bible was completed by 1833. Though this was a great achievement for the translation of the Bible in a Northeastern Indian language, poor translation work did not make it easily understandable for the Assamese readers. However, it deserved appreciation for it being the first ever Northeast translation attempted.

The translation of the Bible into Khasi was another achievement. It was Krishna Chandra Pal who took up this initiative at Pandua in 1813 itself. Under his supervision, the translation of the New Testament was published in 1831.¹³ The mission adopted the Shella dialect in the translation and used the Bangla alphabet. Like the Assamese translated Bible, the Khasee New Testament was not useful to the community. Its imperfect translation made even those who speak the Shella dialect unintelligible. Rendering of Bangla alphabet in the translation was also incompatible with Shella phonological system of spelling and pronunciation.

Another translation was made into Manipuri language. Though the Serampore Mission did not send any persons to work in Manipur, the records indicated that the translation of the New Testament into the Manipuri language was completed by 1827. This translation too was so poor that it required translating it afresh.

In spite of these imperfections, the Serampore Mission had done its part to venture and invest into this unexplored daunting task. It got the credit of being the pioneer in doing the job. It was through these attempts that the Khasi language was included in the list of major Indian languages. Besides that, the translation was an indication of the promotion of indigenous languages and literature. These attempts carried far wider national integrative interests.

2. Educational Activities: Rev. Pal's missionary work at Pandua was successful and productive. Those who were baptized at Pandua formed the first nucleus of a basic Christian community. However, as Rev. Pal went

¹³ Editor's note: The Khasi translation of the New Testament was initiated by Krishna Pal in 1813, but carried out at Serampore by Carey, aided by the Assamese Pundit and a widowed princess who spoke the Khasi language. Cf. Peter de Vries, William Carey's Advocacy for the Tribal People," in *William Carey: The Multifaceted Genius, Carey Day 2018*, ed. Subhro Sekhar Sircar, and Sanjoy Mukherjee (Serampore: Council of Serampore College, 2018), 77.

back to Serampore and concentrated at the supervision of the publication of the Khasee New Testament, the sprouting Pandua Christian Church just disappeared in the absence of pastoral care and leadership. There is no evidence why Rev. Pal had left Pandua in haste. Perhaps he was not happy with excessive interference from the British officials in the church's activities. Ecclesiastical affairs that should have been dedicated to devotion and sacramental processes have instead been made a part of the government's extended department. The Pandua Church had just a historic beginning but did apparently not leave any trace of a continuing Christian community.

The work was started again under the supervision of Rev. Alexander B. Lish. Unlike Rev. Pal who preferred to work in the plain area, Rev. Lish chose Sohra, the hills proper to carry out his evangelistic mission and this took place almost two decades after Pal's departure. Sohra was then a British station for Khasi-Jaintia hills. Rev. Lish, who landed at Sohra in 1832, was devoted to his educational mission. Rev. Pal's objective was to translate the Bible into Khasi, distribute it to the people, allow them to read it and to make the decision themselves. He did not bother whether the people could read or write. He took it for granted that they could read. At the same time, he tried not just to follow the Serampore Trio's mission agenda in letter and spirit but to please them.

Rev. Lish's missionary vision was somewhat different from that of Rev. Pal. His missiological perception was that education should go to the indigenous people first so that they could read the Bible and other writings when placed before them. It is useless to give the translated Bible to an illiterate people but it becomes useful only when they have become literate. Rev. Lish was able to start elementary schools at Mawsmi, Mawmluh, and Sohra. These missionary ventures were indications of Rev. Lish's dynamic missiological vision.

Following Rev. Pal's initiative, Rev. Lish too taught the Bangla alphabet to the Khasi pupils. While Pal knew the Bangla language and alphabet and could work well with them, Lish had to struggle himself. That was the reason why before closing down the mission enterprise in Sohra he had contemplated of switching the less known Bangla alphabet over to the Roman or Latin alphabet. He found that the Khasi linguistic system could work well with the Roman script rather than with the sophisticated Bangla alphabet. However, one should not forget that British officers were in favour of introducing Bangla script and language for the Khasis so that they could administer well through their Bengali assistants

and the Khasis too could become successful in their business, trades, and economic transactions.

The Chief of Sohra Syiemship and his *durbar* were receptive to the British government. They had considered granting a portion of land at Saitsohpen area to the British for establishment of office buildings, quarters and health resorts. Rev. Lish selected Sohra because of the presence of the government who could offer him and his missionary operation greater protection, security, and help. Though the Sohra Chief and his council of ministers received the new colonial power with open hands, that receptive spirit was by no means positive acceptance of Christian missionaries. Realizing such danger, Rev. Lish stationed close to the ruling masters' office and residence.

Christian service in Sohra made good progress with a positive response from most of the local people. However, in spite of their phenomenal development, Rev. Lish had to leave the region and liquidated the already established schools in 1838 because the Serampore Mission could no longer look after the distant Khasi hills mission field. Another reason was that after the last Serampore Trio, Joshua Marshman died in 1837, the Mission headquarter could no longer get successors of the Trio's calibre. The Baptist Missionary Society that took over the Serampore Mission preferred the policy of limiting missionary operation and staved off extra missionary burdens in the Northeast and Bangladesh.

Another area that the Serampore Mission could start an educational mission was Guwahati. This activity was carried out at the initiative of David Scott. Starting in 1829, the Mission sent Rev. James Rae and Ram Chandra Nath to work in Guwahati. David Scott worked hard and could send 12 (twelve) students, 9 (nine) Garos and 3 (three) Khasis to the Guwahati school. He was able to build a church in Guwahati in 1837. The sending of William Robinson later had strengthened the Guwahati mission but the sudden change in Serampore Mission leadership, the Guwahati mission like that of Sohra mission came to an abrupt ending in 1838.

David Scott whose main interest was the advancement of the Garos and also of the Khasis, started a school at Singimari in Garo hills proper in 1827. The Singimari school was initially without any connection with a Christian mission. However, Scott's primary intention was to evangelize the illiterate Garo people. This school could not survive because of the Anglo Khasi War with U Tirot Sing of Nongkhlaw.

Conclusion

The story of the Serampore Mission in Northeast India and Bangladesh is a success story of venture and adventure, although its life had to be cut short because of the scarcity of manpower and finance in addition to the changed missionary policy following the taking over of the Serampore Mission by its parent Baptist Missionary Society in 1837. Its activities were, however, fundamental and comprehensive that had touched upon the cultural fabrics of the people. The missiological initiatives were foundation for the successive missions, like the Welsh Mission and even the Catholic Mission, which started most of their works among the Khasis and other tribes along similar lines as that of the Serampore missionaries before them.

Ramayana: Serampore Mission Press in History and Heritage

Jyotsna Chattopadhyay*

In my search for the origin of the Ramayana I realized that, long before the epic was composed, the story of Ramayana was in vogue in Indian society. So when this story took the shape of an epic, it deviated a lot from the familiar story. In fact, Valmiki collected various folklores about different dynasties, stories widely heard and familiar in the society, and with his extraordinary creative talent, composed the Ramayana. We find the story of such a dynasty 'Ikshaku' in Ramayana. The realm of the Ikshaku dynasty stretched across Koshol, Kasi, Videha, Vaishali, and Dandakaranya. This is the geographical range of the main storyline of the Ramayana. It can be said that the entire *Ramkatha* (Story of Ram) is the history of the migration of the Ikshaku dynasty. The migration history to the foothills of the Himalayas and Vaishali is supported by Buddhist literature. And the migration history up to Videha and Dandakaranya is supported by the Puranas and Ramayana.

An epic can be read and interpreted in many different ways – depending on the personal preferences of the reader, his societal connections, or his spiritual thoughts and devotion. Whatever it may be, there is certainly such an element in an epic that helps it to stand the test of time and attracts readers across generations. But it can surely be said that its religious or spiritual appeal alone cannot sufficiently explain the eternal connection with the larger community's cultural taste for an epic to maintain its

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charisma across the millenniums. During my cultivation of Ramayana, a question came to my mind time and again. This piece of literature is being studied for such a long period, as a story that flowed through time with a variety of traditions – is it only based on religious sentiment? Then what is the reason for its long-standing appeal? *Ramkatha* tells the story of eternal human feelings. The ideas of sacrifice and pain are the pillars of the epic. In the Ramayana, Ram is the best of humans, he is not an avatar or a God. People valued and cherished the Ramayana because of the story's connection with their lives. So we see that Indian art has welcomed Ramayana for its cultural and artistic relevance. For any piece of art to leave a long-standing foot print on the shores of the sea of art and culture, it has to go beyond a limited boundary and relate to the idea of eternal humanity.

The impression of the Krittivasi Ramayana, composed in the fifteenth century, is prominent in the lives of Bengal. Bengalis have welcomed Ramayana in personal, familial, and also in greater socio-cultural aspects of their lives.

As it so happens, Krittivas, in an effort to make it easily understandable for the common folk, translated the Ramayana from Sanskrit to Bengali. The Ram-Sita Temple, in Serampore, on Ram-Sita Lane, near Dey Street – on the west bank of the Ganges, still stands as a part of a renowned township. Serampore's contribution to the Bengali Renaissance is a feat to be proud of. In the search for the origin of the name Serampore, it is said that because of the Ram-Sita temple and as requested by the devotees, this place was named 'Shrirampur,' though there is no factual base to this.

The Raja of Sheoraphuli, Manohar Roy established a Ram-Sita idol in Akna village on 22nd May 1753. It is unknown whether it was because of the Raja's instructions or there were other factors, but the villages of Akna, Sripur, Gopinathpur, Mohanpur, Piyarapur, and Ballavpur were collectively named 'Shrirampur.' Going through the family history of Hooghly we find that, after the demise of Manohar Roy his son Rajchandra Roy established the Ram-Sita Temple.

The population of Chatra and Mahesh, two territories at opposite ends of Serampore is predominantly Vaishnavite. The inhabitants of these two villages had never been significantly influenced by the *Ram-Upasak* (Lord Ram's devotee) community, though it is hard to believe that such a long-standing lively presence of the Ram-Sita Temple did not have any effect on the people of these regions. Though the *Ram-Upasak* community can no longer be found today, their presence in this town during the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries is clearly suggested in the journal of the Serampore missionary, William Ward:

22 October 1799 ... we went along the road, enjoying the evening breeze and beautiful sites on both sides of the road. After crossing a certain distance, we found a gathering of many people on empty ground. They were worshipping their god, Ram. Ram's history is a long one and cannot be narrated here. In this evening's worship, one person was standing in the middle of the ground, surrounded by many others sitting on the grass. The person standing in the middle was a priest or the narrator.... He stopped after singing a few lines of the Ram-related song and the crowd then shouted 'Jay Sitaram' (Hail Sita & Ram). ... Many were there hearing the song and weaving nets.¹

The residents near the temple regularly provide financial support for the worship and maintenance procedures. Of late, Serampore Heritage Council and Serampore Municipality have jointly taken initiative for the renovation and maintenance of the temple.

Serampore is historically associated with Krittivasi Ramayana. Undoubtedly the intention behind the foundation of the Serampore Mission Press (1800 A.D.) was the printing and promotion of Christian religious texts. But the scriptures were to be printed in Bengali. It is only in the native language, the promotion of those texts could be widely spread. And herein was the special event. The arrival of William Carey and his associates in Serampore ushered in this new era. On 10th January 1800 along with other members of the Mission, Carey endeavoured to print and promote the Bible in the Bengali language.

The necessity of a printing press for the acceleration of the mission's objectives was realized. Carey devised a plan to import machinery from overseas for this purpose. But because of the financial aspect of the task, Carey, with the help of his son Felix and his associates William Ward, Joshua and his wife Hannah Marshman, took the initiative to establish a printing press here in Serampore. To materialize this, a large house was bought on the banks of the Ganges. We find its mention in Ward's Journal: "18th February 1800, we enter the Mission House. The Press is installed in a room of this house."²

¹ William Ward to a friend in Hull, October 22, 1799, *Periodical Accounts*, V (1801), 29-30. The English version is not Ward's original writing. This is translated from the Bengali version of the writer of this article.

² William Ward's Journal (MSS), 28th February 1800.

In this press, the missionaries appointed typemaker Panchanan Karmakar, who is often called the Bengali Caxton, the father of Bengali Typography. Later his son-in-law Manohar Karmakar and Manohar's son Krishnachandra Karmakar, continued the family tradition and reduced the types so the entire Bible could be printed in one volume.³ From 1800 to 1812, the accomplishments of Serampore Mission Press became era-defining. Its significance in the fields of education, Bengali printing, and culture is immeasurable. It was Carey's initiative which was initially only limited to printing and propagating a religious text, the Bible, that revolutionized vernacular printing.

However, other religious texts also received attention. In 1802, the first Bengali Mahabharata by Kasiram Das (first book), and in 1803, the first Bengali Ramayana by Krittivas Ojha were printed at the Mission Press.⁴ The second edition of the Bengali Ramayana was also published by this press. In this context, it is notable that in the texts of the Serampore Mission Press 'Krittivas' is spelled as 'Kirti-bas.

This Ramayana was the first printed (English) translated popular mythological book. The fonts for the purpose of printing this book were invented by Panchanan Karmakar. Fort William College bought a hundred copies of this work. Pundit Jaygopal Tarkalankar published the revised editions of these two epics in the year 1830. Later, the authors of the Bengali Ramayana and Mahabharata were inspired by these revised editions.

Apart from the Bengali, William Carey and Joshua Marshman edited and published the Sanskrit Ramayana at the Mission Press from 1806 to 1810 in three volumes (of a proposed set of nine). The fourth volume was lost in the Press during the devastating fire of 1812, and further printing of the remaining volumes was suspended. In fact, Serampore's Ramayana became very rare because the edition which was sent for sale in Britain was lost at sea. However, according to Carey's biographer George Smith,⁵ thirty years later, while clearing out old printing stock, imperfect proofs of

³ M. Siddiq Khan, "William Carey and the Serampore Books (1800-1834)," *Libri* 11/3 (n.d.): 250-51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 260. Refer the facsimile title pages of the volumes kept in the Dacca University library.

⁵ George Smith, *The Life of William Carey: Shoemaker and Missionary* (London: John Murray, 1885), 330.

the fourth volume were found, that were forwarded to J. Talboys Wheeler for his *History of India from the Earliest Ages*, where the text is printed.⁶ The speciality of the Sanskrit Ramayana is that in this book, along with the main Sanskrit text, there is an English translation of the epic in the form of prose. And also, there is a glossary added at the end of the book. The title is as follows: *Ramayana of Valmiki: In the original Sanskrit with a prose translation and explanatory notes, by William Carey and Joshua Marshman, 1806.*⁷

The Ramayana was subsequently printed in Sanskrit and Italian by Gaspare Gorresio in Paris (1843) and those copies are diligently preserved in the College Library. Oscar Botto edited and republished Gorresio's Ramayana in English in 1986. The Ramayana in the Italian language was printed and published in eight parts. The title for the first part is: *Ramayano Poema Indiano, Di Valmici, Vol. I, Gaspare Gorresio Parisi, 1843.*

We request that these unique treasures that are preserved in the Carey Library and Museum be carefully edited and published. Let this act be our way to show respect as we have entered into the third century of Serampore College.

⁶ J. Talboys Wheeler, *History of India from the Earliest Ages*, Vol. 2 (London: N. Trubner, 1869), lxxxiv.

⁷ Serampore: Mission Press, 1806-1810 in 3 vols.

Serampore and Origin and Development of Bengali Newspaper

Swapan Mukhopadhyay*

“A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself.”
Arthur Miller in *Observer*, 26 November 1961

The 200th anniversary of the publication of the first edition of Bengali newspaper is being observed in 2018, and on this occasion, the Serampore Mission were reverentially commemorated as the new horizon where the first Bengali periodical and newspaper dawned in the early nineteenth century.¹ In the month of April 1818, the first Bengali periodical, along with its English edition, “*Digdarshan*” was published and on the 23rd of May 1818 the first Bengali newspaper, *Samachar Darpan* was published from Serampore Mission Press.

The father of the first Bengali newspaper published by an Indian is definitely Gangakishore Bhattacharya who published “*Bangala Gejeti*” from Chora Bagan of Calcutta (present Amar Basu Sarani) on the 15th May 1818. We do not have the record of any copy of the “*Bangala Gejeti*” and so Gangakishore is deprived of the historic credit of publishing the first Bengali newspaper. But “*Sangbad Prabhakar*” of Iswar Gupta and Rev. James Long did not hesitate to give full credit to Gangakishore as the initiator of Bengali newspaper. A notice dated 12 May 1818 was published

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¹ In December 2018, the College organized a special exhibition on early printing of the Serampore Mission and displayed early journals as part of the celebration of Serampore College Bicentenary.

in the Government Gazette of 14 May 1818 that “—he intends to publish a weekly Bengali Gazette, to comprise the translation of Civil appointments, Government Notifications and such other local matter as may be deemed interesting to the reader, into a plain, concise and correct Bengali language.” Although we do not have a single copy of Gangakishore’s “*Bangala Gejeti*”, we get referential evidence that Raja Rammohan Roy published his articles in this newspaper along with other contemporary newspapers. Interestingly Gangakishore was born in Bahara village of Burdwan District near Kalna and he had started his career as a compositor at the Serampore Mission Press before he set up his own printing press with his partner Harachandra Roy in Calcutta. Perhaps Gangakishore came to know that Serampore Trio was trying to publish a vernacular newspaper and he published his own newspaper just 8 days before the publication of *Samachar Darpan*. But when we bestow credit upon Gangakishore we cannot but mention the name of Serampore and Serampore Mission Press that produced Gangakishore.²

Calcutta may rightly claim the credit and distinction of publishing the first newspaper of India and also of Asia, in the year 1780. On 29 January 1780, Hicky’s Bengal Gazette or the Original Calcutta General Advertiser, an English language weekly newspaper was published by an eccentric Irishman Mr. James Augustus Hicky who was a strong critic of the British administration run by the Governor General Warren Hastings. This anti-war and anti colonial newspaper popularly known as Hicky’s Bengal Gazette set an example of the principle of struggle for freedom of expression of a newspaper and adherence to unbiased and fearless journalism. No doubt 38 years after the first Bengali newspaper was published by the missionaries of Serampore, it had Hicky’s unflinching principles and ideals of a newspaper before it, but it dared not follow that principle of independence and failed to show courage to ignore the threat of the ruling class because they had a different purpose behind their publication, because they wanted to survive the wrath of the British administration. Instead of fighting against British administration they adopted the principle of support and cooperation to get their favour. Missionaries of Serampore wanted to spread Christianity indirectly throughout Bengal through the publication of a Bengali newspaper. They knew that their purpose would be defeated if they fought against the oppression and evils of the British

² “The Native Press,” *Friend of India* (Quarterly Series) I, (Serampore: Mission Press, 1820), 123.

administration but the characteristics of a good newspaper were quite conspicuous in the newspaper published by them. More importantly it helped in the development of Bengali language and prose literature and Bengal will always remain indebted to the missionaries of Serampore for the contributions to their growth and development. Even today the militant free press confronting the ruling political party and centre of power face severe challenges and sometimes cannot survive. By rendering full support to the British administration and adopting the principle of appeal and mild protest, the missionaries got financial and administrative help from the British Raj.

The birth of the Bengali newspaper is directly connected with the setting up of the Printing Press in Bengal. Mr. Augustus Hicky brought the printing machine from England but there was no Bengali typeface so Bengali printing was not possible. A new era ushered in the history of Bengali printing press when Sir Charles Wilkins created Bengali typeface with the help of Panchanan Karmakar in the year 1778. That year Bengali typeface was used to publish the first Bengali grammar book written by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. It was written in English for the Englishmen but Bengali typeface was used for the first time to print Bengali script. Obviously, the book was of no interest to the Bengali speaking people but Bengali typeface used in this book is an important event in the spread of Bengali language through printed books. Panchanan, who hailed from Tribeni village not far from Serampore, was an excellent artisan and a type-cutter working in the printing foundry factory at Calcutta. Panchanan created the wooden Bengali type designed by Sir Wilkins. Panchanan moved to Calcutta to work for Sir Wilkins' printing press and the combination of these two masters made excellent publications which became very famous in Europe.

During 1798, William Carey (1761-1834) was frantically trying to procure Bengali typeface for Serampore Mission Press and he came across Panchanan Karmakar in Calcutta. Panchanan joined Serampore Mission Press in 1800. Having been established by William Carey, William Ward and Joshua Marshman on 10 January 1800, the Serampore Mission Press started functioning effectively as Carey teamed up with Panchanan to publish Bengali books. Next year Panchanan developed Bengali typeface for printing Carey's Bengali translation of the New Testament. In 1803, he created the first font of Devnagari type in India at the Serampore Mission Press. According to Swapan Chakrabarty, former Director of National Library, Carey is best known for the compilation of Bengali and

Sanskrit dictionaries. In 30 years, the Serampore Mission Press printed over 200,000 copies of books in about 40 languages. Carey's printing of St. Matthew's Gospel was the first prose literature in Bengali. In 1818, from this Press, the first Bengali periodical and newspaper were published. Joshua Marshman highly praised Panchanan Karmakar and wrote: "He had so fully communicated his art to a number of others that they carry forward the work of typecasting and even of cutting the matrices with a degree of accuracy which would not disgrace European artists."³

How Serampore Came into the Limelight

Portuguese merchants were the first Europeans who were attracted by the wealth of India. They arrived here after direct naval contact with the western world was established in 1498 when Vasco da Gama sailed around the west coast of Africa and reached Calicut. During those days it was compulsory for all Portuguese ships to carry one Christian proselytizer. St Xavier came to India in 1536. The Danish East India Company settled at Fredericknagar, present-day Serampore, in 1755. About 15 miles away from Calcutta on the river Ganga, this was a quiet place where the Danish Company officials could do their work unhindered without any interference from the British. Gradually, when Portuguese influence faded out and Catholic missionaries lost their predominance, the British East India Company tightened its grip and Protestant Baptist Missionaries started to come to India to spread Christianity. But the British administration was afraid of possible rebellion against the spread of Christianity and proselytism and to them trade and business were more important than the spread of Christianity so they did not allow the Christian Missionaries to settle in and around Calcutta. English Protestant Baptist Missionaries sought shelter and support from the sympathetic Danish colony of Serampore.

The Danish Governor of Serampore Lieutenant Colonel Ole Bie invited the British Missionaries to come to Serampore to worship God in their settlement. William Carey was not only a missionary but also an exceptionally enterprising man of indomitable spirit and determination. He got a calling and felt an inner impulse to spread the Gospel and with this mission, he came to India but failed to get any shelter in Calcutta. A reliable friend of Carey took him to Mr. George Udny, an Indigo planter of Madnabati in Malda. Never flinching away from his mission in India,

³ George Smith, *The Life of William Carey* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1909; reprinted 1935),

Carey was working as manager of an indigo factory but continued his venture of translating the Bible into Bengali. Being quite fascinated by the sincerity and perseverance of Carey, Mr. Udney enquired about his hidden purpose behind the translation and came to know that Carey wanted to publish it for the natives of Bengal so that common people could read the Bible in their own language. Mr. Udney bought a wooden press from an auction house at a price of 40 Pounds and gifted it to William Carey. With an ecstatic joy and passion, Carey brought the press in a boat and he was so reverentially carrying it to his house that villagers thought it was an idol of the God of the Sahibs.

In 1799, the Serampore Trio was united at Serampore and in 1800, the Serampore Mission Press was established. William Carey was acquainted with William Ward before he left England for India. Ward was then the editor of *The Hull Advertiser* and he had vast experience in printing and editing. Carey at that time tried to impress upon him that for preaching the Bible it was essential to translate the Bible in the local language and if God bless him, he would need his assistance in printing the Bible in different native languages. Fortunately, Carey united with Ward at Serampore with the same purpose of serving India as a Baptist Missionary and Ward became his right hand. Now Carey started to learn different languages and it is to be noted that Carey understood about 35 languages. The first publication of a Bengali book by Carey from the Mission Press heralded a golden era in the development of Bengali language and literature.

Bengal will always remain indebted to William Carey for his sole effort to translate and publish the Bible into Bengali and to give a rallying call to his fellow missionaries, Ward and Marshman to help with publications in Bengali. Financial support was of primary need but initially, Carey failed to get it after the completion of the task of translation. Carey had high hopes that London Society would provide him financial help to procure Bengali type. Carey wrote to the London Mission Society for financial help but in the month of September they replied to Carey:

We anticipate the pleasure of hearing that the natives of Bengal can read the scriptures in their own tongue; but though we wish you to labour in translating, we would not advise you to be too hasty in printing. As you proceed you will perceive many errors in your early production.

End of Beginning

It was not an easy task for the English missionaries to publish a Bengali

newspaper nor was it possible for them to publish it in a day. There is a long history behind the success of the missionaries. During those days Bengali prose was used only in letters, deeds and Government orders, etc., but no creative literary Bengali prose had been written. Bengali was not the mother tongue of the missionaries who tried to make Bengali prose popular, and naturally it was a strenuous job for them to learn the local language and to write it even with the help of the Bengali Pundits. Without their help, it was impossible for the missionaries to compose Bengali prose and Pundits had to improvise a new technique to use colloquial Bengali words in prose which was not used in written documents. Particularly for vernacular newspapers, the language must be lucid and easily comprehensible to the common people. Being advised by the missionaries, the Pundits took up the challenge and they were successful. In this context, it is important to mention that sons of William Carey and Joshua Marshman could understand and speak better colloquial Bengali than their fathers. Felix Carey came to India at the age of 8 and John Clark Marshman at the age of 5 and they were brought up with the local boys of Serampore in the Baptist Mission Boarding House. We are proud to call Felix and John our Serampore boys and John became the editor of the *Samachar Darpan*.

Munshi Ramram Basu (1757-1813) died five years before the publication of the first Bengali newspaper, but his contributions in composing early Bengali prose was immense and it helped the missionaries to venture for the publication of the Bengali newspaper. He was the Bengali teacher of Justice William Chambers of *Pharshi* court and he helped John Thomas to translate the Bible. Later on, Munshi Ramram Basu was intimately associated with the Serampore Trio. It is important and interesting to know the initial Bengali prose as revealed through the Bengali translation of Ramram Basu.

ভগবান সৃষ্টি কষ্টিয়া প্রথমে মানুষটিকে স্থাপন কষ্টিয়া উদ্যানে (অর্থাৎ ইডেন গার্ডেন্স-এ) স্থান দিলেন। যে পুরুষ তাহার নাম আদম আর একজন স্ত্রী জন্মাইয়া আদমের স্ত্রী করিয়া দিলেন তাহার নাম হাওয়া। এই দুইজন যে উদ্যানে কর্তৃত্ব পাইল সয়তান অধপাতীয় দূত যাহার অধঃপতন হইল অহংকারার্থে তাহার ইচ্ছা ঈশ্বরের সৃষ্টি নষ্ট করে।⁴

It was written in 1802. Ramram Basu's "*Raja Pratapaditya Charita*" was published from Serampore Mission Press in 1801. Without the

⁴ [English Translation]: "God created the first man and placed him in Eden Gardens. His name is Adam. Then God created a female (Adam's wife) and her name is Haa. The two got the possession of Eden and Satan, the fallen Angel, out of pride, wished to destroy God's creation."

development of the early Bengali prose, it was not possible to publish the Bengali newspaper. We must mention the name of another learned Pundit of Bengal, Mrityunjay Vidyalankar of Fort William College, where William Carey was a teacher. Within no time Carey befriended with this Pundit Mrityunjay Vidyalankar who became his Guru in learning Bengali and Sanskrit. The excellent style of writing Bengali prose by Mrityunjay was learned assiduously by Carey who did the painstaking job of writing “*Itihasmala*”. If we quote from *Itihasmala* the touch of Pundit Mrityunjay will be conspicuous.

একজন ঘটক ব্রাহ্মণ অর্থাৎ বিবাহের যোজক এর বনের মধ্য দিয়া আসিতে ছিল। সে স্থানে এক ব্যাঘ্র ঐ ঘটক ব্রাহ্মণ কে মারিএত উদ্যত হইলে ব্রাহ্মণ ভীত হইয়া ক্রন্দন করিতে লাগল। ব্যাঘ্র ঘটকে ক্রন্দন দেখিয়া জিজ্ঞাসা করিলেন, তুমি কি কারণ কাঁদিতেছ? ব্রাহ্মণ কহিলেন, আমি ঘটক, বিবাহের যোজকতা করিয়া ধনোপার্জন করিয়া স্ত্রী-পুত্র প্রভৃতির ভরণপোষণ করি।⁵

Such lucid Bengali prose of 1822 was definitely the contribution of Pundit Mrityunjay Vidyalankar. No doubt such loving readable Bengali prose paved the way to publish Bengali newspapers from Serampore Mission Press.

Why Missionaries of Serampore Felt the Need to Publish a Bengali Newspaper?

In the year 1793 when William Carey came to India, William Wilberforce, an English politician proposed in British Parliament to allow the Christian missionaries to spread Christianity and education free in India for the benefit of the common people. But that proposal was rejected. In 1813, British missionaries were given special permission on both accounts.

In 1815, Raja Rammohan Roy moved to Calcutta and he led a reform movement against the bigoted, superstitious orthodox Hindus of Bengal. Christian missionaries fully supported Raja Rammohan Roy and in return, they also expected the support of Rammohan in their effort to spread Christianity. They needed a liberal, superstition-free, educated mind conducive to spreading Christianity. For this purpose, Christian missionaries required powerful publicity media. Raja Rammohan Roy had

⁵ [English Translation]: “One Brahmin, matchmaker by profession, was coming through a forest. There a tiger tried to kill him and the Brahmin began to weep out of fear. The tiger asked him, “Why are you weeping? Brahmin said, “I am a matchmaker. I earn money and maintain my family by arranging marriage.”

already circulated his pamphlet against the practice of *Sati*. William Carey had a good relationship with the Governor General, Lord Wellesley, and he utilised this good contact to help Raja Rammohan Roy's movement and campaign against the heinous practice of *Sati*. The government was also interested in spreading education in India. In 1816 the proposal for founding a Hindu School was adopted and "The Calcutta School Book Society" was set up. Carey was determined to undergo all tribulations to serve the downtrodden, oppressed and poor people of India and to preach Christianity. In response to Lord Wellesley's request, Carey took a survey on "murders committed under the pretence of religion". Following the report, Wellesley passed a regulation in 1802 prohibiting infanticide. Carey with Joshua and Hannah Marshman also started a school for the boys and girls. In and around Serampore, 8000 children belonging to low castes and outcastes attended Carey's school. Now Carey understood from his practical experience that a vernacular newspaper would be an effective weapon to run extensive publicity against all sorts of narrow superstitions by shining light of reason on the darkness of bigotry.

Success in Printing Brought about Success in Publishing

Excellent quality of printing at Serampore and its low cost made it so famous that Serampore Mission Press got orders from even abroad. Fort William College and Asiatic Society purchased a large number of books from the Mission Press. Now the press was financially sound and independent. Carey imported a huge steam engine for the Serampore Mission Paper Mill that supplied paper to the Serampore Mission Press. The financial stability and organisational strength inspired the Serampore Trio to venture on publishing a Bengali newspaper. That their decision was very appropriate is clear from an essay of Bankimchandra written about 50 years after the publication of *Samachar Darpan*. Bankimchandra started publishing *Bangadarshan*, a Bengali periodical in 1872 and in an essay, *A Popular Literature of Bengal* he argued why Bengali people should be addressed in their own language. Bankimchandra writes:

It is only through the Bengali that the people can be moved. We preach in English and harangue in English, and write in English, perfectly forgetful that the great masses, whom it is absolutely necessary to move in order to carry out any great project of social reform, remain stone-deaf to all our eloquence. To me it seems that a single great idea, communicated to the people of Bengal in their own language, circulated among them in the language that alone touches their hearts,

vivifying and permeating the conceptions of all ranks, will work out grander results than all our English speeches and preachings will ever be able to achieve.⁶

Carey understood the effectiveness of native language to carry out his mission successfully about 50 years before Bankimchandra.

John Clark Marshman (1794-1877) who came to India at the age of 5 with his parents and William Ward arrived at Serampore on 13 October 1799. John edited the Bengali monthly magazine *Digdarshan* that started appearing from Serampore in April 1818 and on 23 May 1818 the first issue of Bengali newspaper *Samachar Darpan* appeared and he edited that one too. The Serampore Mission also published the famous English newspaper *Friend of India* in 1818. This *Friend of India* amalgamated with *Englishman* and subsequently became *The Statesman*. Marshman was also a member of the staff of Serampore College newly founded by Carey, Marshman, and Ward with other missionaries of Serampore. In 1823, William Ward died suddenly but by this time the Serampore Mission was quite self-sufficient. Now the son of William Carey, Felix Carey (1785-1822) who came to India with his father at the age of 8 took up the responsibility of the printing press. Unfortunately, Felix had a premature death at the age of 37. The progeny of Marshman carried on the activities of Serampore Mission Press most efficiently. In 1834, William Carey passed away leaving behind his noble deeds performed during his illustrious career and astounding contributions to the Bengali literary and cultural world.

Carey could instill the spiritual fervour along with missionary zeal in the mind of all the missionaries of the Serampore Baptist Mission and they were inspired by his piety, prudence, courage, and forbearance and remembered his motto:

Expect Great things from God, attempt great things for God.

The Serampore Missionaries took up their job of the printing press as a part of their missionary activity to disseminate Christianity among native Indian and to serve humanity.

Samachar Darpan

⁶ Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, "A Popular Literature of Bengal," *Transactions of the Association*, vol. 4 (1870), cited in *Bankim Rachanavali* (1960), compilation of the author's English works, edited by Jogesh Chandra Bagal.

The 23rd June 1818 ushered in a new era in the publication of Bengali newspaper when the first issue of the Bengali weekly newspaper *Samachar Darpan* edited by John Clark Marshman was released from Serampore Baptist Mission Press. The price of each copy of *Samachar Darpan* was four Annas and about 400 copies were circulated on every Saturday. Initially, the *Samachar Darpan* was distributed free for the first three weeks. The number of copies circulated reveals the popularity of *Samachar Darpan* because no other Indian newspaper had such a huge circulation. *Samachar Darpan* became popular for its superb printing, excellent typography, impressive presentation, important articles and varied subjects for discussion. The four-page newspaper printed in three columns was so eye-feasting that educated Bengali people always tried to procure one copy of *Samachar Darpan*. Important personalities of Bengal, like Dwarkanath Tagore were regular subscribers of *Samachar Darpan*.

We should remember that the Serampore Missionaries had the hidden purpose of spreading Christianity in Bengal behind the publication of the Bengali newspaper but missionaries like William Carey and Rev. James Long were true lovers and well-wishers of Bengal. Their dedicated services for the welfare of the Bengali and social and intellectual development of Bengal will forever be remembered by the people of Bengal.

Samachar Darpan contributed to the intellectual development of the Bengali mind by influencing them in the right paths of education, culture, science, morality, and spirituality and at the same time focussing on western thoughts of sociology and liberal politics. *Samachar Darpan* put emphasis on women's education, women's dignity, women's emancipation and fought against the practice of *Sati*, child marriage, and polygamy. In the formative period of the *Samachar Darpan*, Raja Rammohan Roy cooperated with Baptist Missionaries in their effort to publish the newspaper but later on an essay on Hinduism published in *Samachar Darpan* aggrieved Raja Rammohan and he protested by contributing a counter write-up on the issue, but that was not published. Being insulted, he founded his own periodical and published his article. As a part of his anti-Sati movement, Raja Rammohan Roy published his first tract in 1818 and this was followed by another tract. Raja Rammohan Roy had great respect for Christianity and he helped his friend, William Carey in translating the Bible. He himself collected selected texts from the New Testament and wrote, "*Precepts of Jesus—Guide to Peace and Happiness*". Raja Rammohan commented: "Genuine Christianity if properly inculcated

is more conducive to the moral, social, and political progress of a people than any other known creed.” The friendly relationship between Carey and Raja Rammohan helped both to keep on pursuing their individual missions.

Samachar Darpan's coverage of local news was better than any other newspaper of that time and it published important news from other Bengali newspapers and periodicals without any hesitation. It also published good articles from English newspapers of European countries after translating them into easy Bengali. It published Government circulars, appointments of judges and collectors and employment news. It was also a good source of getting news from different corners of India. We know that in 1820 William Carey founded the Agri-Horticultural Society of India with the objectives of development and promotion of horticulture and agriculture in India and he had profound knowledge about the Indian plants and indigenous agricultural products. *Samachar Darpan* had a separate section to inform its readers about indigenous plants and development of agricultural products. At the Serampore Mission, Carey's large botanical garden, which was used for different agricultural experiments but it was destroyed in a cyclone. *Samachar* also published articles on Geography and history of different nations.

From July 1829, *Samachar Darpan* appeared as a bilingual newspaper and actually it was a translation of each other. Lord Hastings was very happy as the circulation of *Samachar Darpan* increased considerably and he helped the missionaries by allowing them to circulate the paper through postal mail at one-fourth of the normal charge. *Samachar Darpan* used to be published twice a week—on Wednesday and Saturday from January 1832 but it could not be published for a long time and from 8 November 1824, it reverted to a weekly newspaper again. *Samachar Darpan* was published uninterrupted till the end of 1841 and then its publication was discontinued. In spite of good relationships with the top officials of British administration, *Samachar Darpan* had to face the scissors of censorship during its long journey. Lord Wellesley imposed strict restrictions on the publication of newsprint on 13 May 1799 from Fort William and without being properly censored no newspaper could be published. Lord Hastings was more liberal and he almost withdrew the order of strict censorship in 1818 but still, there were some restrictions on newspapers. Sometimes J. C. Marshman had to publish a paper with blank space and an asterisk revealing the last-minute scissor of censor.

For 20 long years, Bengali prose had gone through many experiments to express the thoughts in intelligible, lucid and simple language. Bengali Pundits along with the missionaries relentlessly tried to improve the print language so that it could be attractive to the readers. They tried to use common colloquial words by avoiding difficult Sanskrit words and complex constructions, so that common neo-literates could also enjoy reading the newspaper. We can cite an example of the Bengali Language used during the early period of publication of the *Samachar Darpan*.

যে সকল বাঙ্গালিরা বিবেচনা করিয়া স্থির করিয়াছে। যে লাল বাজারের নূতন গীর্জা ঘরের ওপর মোরগ আছে। সেই কেবল ওলাউঠার কারণ। যেহেতু সে মোরগ যে দিকে আপন মুখ ফিরায়ে সেই দিকের লোক মরে।⁷

Gradually the language became more direct and simple. With the passage of time when “*Brahmman Sebodhi*”, a journal by Raja Rammohan Roy, *Sangbad Kaumudi*, *Samachar Chandrika*, *Sangbad Purnachandra* and *Sangbad Prabhakar* of Iswarchandra Gupta were being published, they all followed the language of *Samachar Darpan* as their ideal.

Role of Serampore Pundits in Developing Bengali Prose

We have already discussed the contributions of the Serampore Baptist Mission Press in developing Bengali prose by trying to free it from difficult Sanskrit words. But the contribution of the missionaries to creative literary writing was not worth mentioning. The actual credit should go to the assiduous endeavour of the Bengali Pundits of Serampore who were the kingpins behind the creation of simple, lucid, readable Bengali prose. They were the actual writers of *Samachar Darpan* though it was edited by John Clark Marshman. That the Serampore missionaries were fully dependent on the Bengali Pundits of Serampore regarding the writings in *Samachar Darpan* is revealed by the fact that the publication of the paper had to be suspended for a certain period every year during the days of Durga Puja and a prior notice was published that the Pundits would remain engaged in their household Durga Puja and no issue of *Samachar Darpan* would be published during the Puja season. The development of Bengali prose is no less indebted to these unsung Serampore Pundits like Jaygopal Tarkalankar and Tarinicharan Shiromani.

⁷ [English Translation]: “The Bengalees have decided after consideration that there is a cock on the top of the new church building at Lalbazar and this cock is the cause of cholera. People die in that direction to which the cock turns its face.”

After printing and publishing a book, a periodical or a newspaper what is most important is its marketing. Serampore was a pioneer in this job of marketing too. We can call Gangakishore as a Serampore-man since he hailed from Bahara of Burdwan district and learned the job of a compositor from Serampore Mission Press. After editing, printing and publishing his paper Gangakishore Bhattacharya appointed agents on a commission basis to sell his paper. Like today the agents cum hawkers of Gangakishore used to sell papers in marketplaces and public vehicles.

In those days only the name of the printer was on the book and there was no name of the publisher and this practice continued for a long period. We may recall that Rev. James Long in the year 1861, only printed the name of the printer on the title-page of the English translation of the drama, *Nil Durpan* (The Indigo Planting Mirror) and there was no name of the publisher. One had to go to the printer to purchase a copy of a book or periodical. The School Book Society opened a bookshop in front of Hindu School to sell books. In 1849, Vidyasagar and Madanmohan Tarkalankar started a business of books by opening the first Sanskrit Book Depository.

The rift with his partner Harachandra Roy compelled Gangakishore to shift his press from Calcutta to his village at Bahara in Burdwan District and until his death in 1831, he continued his work from his village. We do not know how long Gangakishore could continue to publish his newspaper. It is known that sometimes Gangakishore himself used to sell his newspaper like an ordinary hawker as he diligently tried to increase its circulation. Nowadays it is unfortunate that we do not remember people like Gangakishore Bhattacharya, but the history of the publication of Bengali newspaper can never forget them.

***Samachar Darpan* and the Standard of a Newspaper**

Other than news and views, advertising is an important part of a newspaper. From the first issue of *Samachar Darpan* the advertisements published in the paper had a special attraction and the quality of the advertisements, their nature and language were strictly controlled and edited by the editorial board. Any advertisement that could smack of bad taste was not published in *Samachar Darpan*. In this respect, it can be mentioned that advertisements published in many other newspapers and periodicals were not scrutinized properly. In Hicky's Gazette, we find an advertisement where a gentleman wanted to purchase two good-looking young girls of good health and fit to be enjoyed physically. This shows the deplorable

condition of women in the society who were treated as a commodity, but most shocking was the apathy of the elite society for which a newspaper could publish such advertisement of bad taste insulting women. In contrast, we find advertisements in *Samachar Darpan* regarding the publication of a Dictionary and how to procure it and the establishment of a new girls' school. It shows the social responsibility of this newspaper and a high moral standard that it always maintained. Rev. James Long highly lauded *Samachar Darpan* and wrote: "We must assign a very prominent position to the native newspapers and to the *Darpan* in particular, in having roused the adult mind from its long-continued state of apathy."⁸

Newspaper and Periodical

Today's newspaper and periodical never serve an identical purpose even if the periodical is based on news journalism. The importance of a printed newspaper is dwindling day by day as the electronic media is catering news so instantaneously that only to get news no one depends on newspapers. Even in 1818 if a newspaper could be published once, twice or thrice a week, it was marketed to the readers as a newspaper, although there was little difference in content between a newspaper and a periodical. Both of them published news, news review, news analysis and articles of academic importance. In those days another important aspect was the lifting of important news from another newspaper without any hesitation. On 18 May 1822, *Samachar Darpan* republished news lifted from *Samachar Chandrika* published by Bhawanicharan Bandyopadhyay on 5 May regarding the tyranny of the Indigo planters on the poor farmers of Bengal. This news item reveals that, although *Samachar Darpan* was an apolitical newspaper, it stood by the tyrannised poor farmers against the cruel English planters and like James Long, *Samachar* raised their voice against the horrible injustice meted out on the peasants of Bengal. It is important to note that much before Long, *Samachar Darpan* focused on the problem of Indigo planting in Bengal.

Why *Samachar Darpan* was Vocal against Indigo Planters

Samachar Darpan always tried to avoid any political controversy that could entail the wrath of the British administration but from the very inception of the paper it took up the cudgel for defending strongly the hapless peasants

⁸ *The Calcutta Review*, vol. 13 (January-June 1850), 145-46.

of Bengal. Carey had personal experience of the problems of the Indigo plantation. The inhuman atrocities on the farmers who were unwilling to cultivate Indigo Plants in their fields were detrimental to the preaching of Christianity by the Christian missionaries. James Long's statement before the Indigo Enquiry Commission in 1860 will corroborate this argument. Long said:

Missionary preachers even in Calcutta are sometimes met with a remark, 'why do not tell your countrymen, the Indigo planters to be less oppressive; go, preach to them first.' Even boys in missionary schools say, 'why are your Christian countrymen as bad as we are, and yet you say, your religion is better than ours?'"⁹

Precisely this is the reason why *Samachar Darpan* did not hesitate to support the suffering Indio farmers of Bengal. The Serampore missionaries were basically clergymen and they thought it their duty to fight against everything that would hinder the preaching of Christianity. The same argument was put forward by James Long before the trial court before he was imprisoned in 1861:

As a missionary I have a deep interest in seeing the faults of my countrymen corrected; for after a residence of my 20 years in India, I must bear this testimony—that, of all the obstacles to the spread of Christianity in India, one of the greatest is the irreligious conduct of many of my own countrymen. Thousands of natives have said to me, "We judge of the Christian religion by what your countrymen do, not by what they say; by the life, not by the doctrine."¹⁰

No doubt top British administrators were not always happy with the conduct of the European Indigo planters and they did not censure *Samachar Darpan* for publishing news criticizing the Indigo Planters. *Samachar Darpan* rather got support and appreciation of indigenous newspapers for highlighting the sufferings and miseries of the hapless poor farmers of Bengal.

Serampore was at that time famous all over India for publication of newspapers. British Government realised the importance of a friendly newspaper and requested the missionaries of Serampore in 1826 to publish an Urdu version of *Samachar Darpan* for the North Indian people who

⁹ *Report of the Indigo Commission*, vol. 1 (1860), para 1625: 153.

¹⁰ "The Calcutta Christian Observer on the *Nil Darpan* Controversy," in James Long, *Strike but Hear! Evidence Explanatory of the Indigo System in Lower Bengal* (Calcutta: Lepage and Co., 1861), 93.

had no indigenous newspaper during that time. *Akhbar-I-Serampore* was published as the first Persian newspaper of India on 6 May 1826 with the financial support and patronage from the government. The publication could not be continued for more than two years but it is noteworthy that an all India newspaper bore the name of Serampore, a small suburban township famous mainly for the missionary activities. Bengali, Persian, Urdu and Hindi newspapers owe their birth to Serampore and Oriya type was also created in Serampore.

In 1829, *Samachar Darpan* started publishing as a bilingual newspaper both in English and Bengali and from 11 January 1832 to 5 November 1834 it was published twice in a week and after that from 8 November 1834 to 25 December 1841 it was published again as a weekly newspaper; after that, it stopped publishing. William Carey retired from Fort William College in 1832 and Serampore Mission Press was financially in trouble. Carey a true missionary, an ideal humanist, philanthropist and a friend of India passed away on 9 June 1834. John Clark Marshman continued the publication of *Samachar Darpan* and then with the excuse that he was preoccupied stopped the publication forever. In reality, the very purpose of the publication to disseminate Christianity was not realised and the Mission was no longer interested in publishing the *Samachar Darpan*.

Serampore Mission Press, the Serampore Trio, and *Samachar Darpan* played an important role as the harbinger of the early nineteenth-century renaissance of Bengal. The first Bengali daily newspaper, *Sambad Pravakar* of Iswarchandra Gupta started publishing in 1839 and it was followed by *Tattobodhini* of Akhya Kumar Dutta in 1843. They never denied their indebtedness to *Samachar Darpan* and contributions of the Serampore Mission Press.

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Unpublished Manuscript of Sanskrit Dictionary by Reverend William Carey

Urmi Ganguly*

On the occasion of 2022 Carey Day, I take the opportunity for presenting to the literary world a rare voluminous unpublished dictionary of Rev. Dr. William Carey.

This is the manuscript of the Sanskrit dictionary compiled by Dr. Carey which is kept in the Carey Library and Research Centre at Serampore College. It is a known fact that William Carey was extremely fond of this particular language. Sanskrit Grammar, Philosophical books of Sanskrit language such as Vedanta Sara, Mahabharata, etc. were published by Serampore Mission Press. Carey was so proficient in the Sanskrit language that he delivered a speech fluently in this language in Public Disputation at Fort William College in 1804, but, the manuscript of the huge Sanskrit dictionary was left unpublished. Renowned historians of Bengali literature were unaware of this massive work. That is why there is no reference of the existence of such a dictionary in the list of the contributions of Dr. Carey. It is of our immense pride and joy that we were able to recover the original works in our own College-library, courtesy Late Mr. Sunil Chatterjee.

A linguist is a person who is well-versed in the study of languages and has a holistic knowledge of multiple languages – both syntactic and semantic. William Carey is one such linguist who was deft in the art of linguistics. It was in 1796 that he, as a polyglot, started his journey in collecting information around the Bengali and Sanskrit language among

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many others. During the period of 1794 and 1810, he had been able to collect synonyms for more than forty thousand Sanskrit words along with words for 12 other Indian languages.¹ Carey believed that Indian languages have their root in Sanskrit. Thus, began his journey into the study of Sanskrit and its grammar.

Carey first wrote to his friend Sutcliff in 1798 – “I am learning the Sanskrit language, which, ... is perhaps the hardest language in the world. To accomplish this, I have nearly translated the Sanskrit grammar and dictionary into English, and have made considerable progress in compiling a dictionary, Sanskrit, including Bengali and English.”² His attempt to build a dictionary for Sanskrit words is clear from this letter. In the year 1792 on 2nd October, an organisation was formed to spread Christianity called Baptist Missionary Society. Carey’s renowned biographer S.P. Carey had written – “The chosen executive members were five: Fuller, Ryland, Carey, Sutcliff and Hogg.”³ Carey’s ideas are mostly revealed through the letters that he exchanged with these friends. In his letter to Ryland in 1801 (dated 28th June), it was clear that his opportunity to hone his linguistic skills presented itself due to the lack of enough students in Fort William College. The first step to this was to understand the grammar of Sanskrit language and a way to translate the same. The next step was to build a dictionary – whose journey had already begun a couple of years back. This is evident in his letter written to Sutcliff in 1802, dated 17th March, “... Perhaps a dictionary which I began some years ago”.

The Serampore Mission started its work in establishing a college in the year 1800. It was then that a library dedicated to languages was begun at the Serampore Mission. This library’s collection comprised of books pertaining to Grammars, dictionaries, polyglot etc. Carey’s own works were mainly:

Grammar Collection – Bengali, Marathi, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Telegu, Bhutanese, and Kannada languages.

Dictionary Collection – Bengali, Marathi, Bhutanese, and Sanskrit – in a total of 6 volumes

¹ See Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, “Carey and the Linguistic Renaissance in India,” in *Carey’s Obligation and India’s Renaissance*, ed. J. T. K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund (Serampore: The Council of Serampore College, 1993).

² George Smith, *The Life of William Carey* (London: John Murray, 1885), 101.

³ S.Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1923; repr., The Wakeman Trust, 1993), 87.

Multilingual dictionary or Polyglot – Manuscript of words from 13 Indian languages

The manuscript that Carey wrote for the Sanskrit dictionary is preserved in Serampore’s Library (Carey Library Research Centre) till today. Librarian and Carey-specialist Mr. Sunil Kumar Chatterjee found this manuscript in a box containing the manuscript pages in the college. These were hardbound and preserved by the College authorities then. It was written in six volumes and it measures to 18”x10”. The Sanskrit manuscript was written in Bengali scripture and the handmade pages are yellow in colour. It is estimated that it was written around 1798 – 1805/1807. The manuscript is written alphabetically and in prose format. Typically, Sanskrit dictionaries were written according to subjects in poetic form and had a benedictory verse as an introduction requiring special skills and training to read them. On the other hand, Carey’s manuscript followed the westernised style of alphabetical ordering written in Bengali script bereft of benedictory verse, easily accessible and could be understood by anyone. His main motive was to make Sanskrit as a language acceptable and easy to all. In spite of being written in a westernised style, he took the help of older established dictionaries to convey the meaning of the words and their synonyms. Besides, he also referred to the revered Vedas, Puranas, and Epics as an inspiration. But he used the easiest way to understand words as synonyms (see Plate-1) while explaining them – indicating the originality of thought and the document. In some places, he has also used regional terms to explain the meaning (see Plate-2). Hence, the dictionary is written in Sanskrit–Sanskrit, and Sanskrit–Bengali style. Carey revered the Sanskrit language so much that he even translated spoken language to Sanskrit. The expertise and technique shown in the manuscript are illustrative of the fact that William Carey had help from eminent personalities while writing it. But the absence of an introduction and conclusion in the dictionary does not make the names of those personalities known, and we remain unclear whether Carey acknowledged their help. There has been no acknowledgement in his other pieces of work pertaining to Bengali Grammar. But he has mentioned and acknowledged names of some eminent personalities who were close to him in his *Periodical Accounts*. It is still unclear as to the reason why this manuscript was never published. It can be conjectured that possibly Carey lost hope when the Serampore Mission Press burnt down in the fire of 1812.⁴

⁴ Editor’s note: After Carey’s death, Bishop Wilson said, “It is well known that he

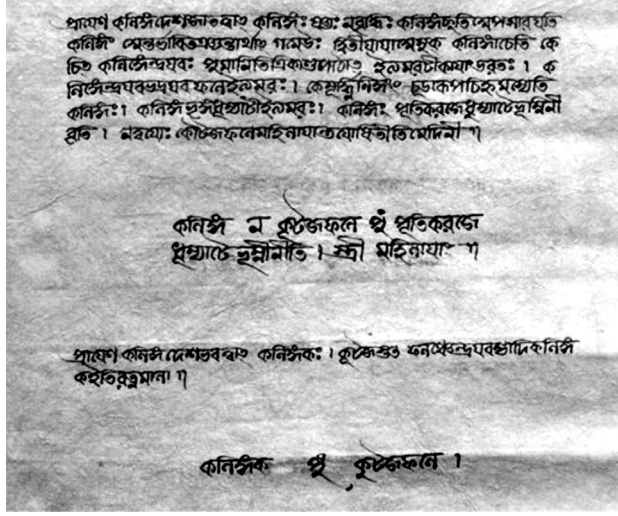
The 6 volume-long dictionary manuscript that was discovered shows that one volume was dedicated entirely to indexing. The word listing was divided into two columns in each page and an average of twenty-eight words make up one column. Due to its alphabetical nature, the dictionary starts with the Bengali letter ‘Aa’. The papers that were used were local handmade ones. The index section puts light on some errors on the part of the writer through minor written errors and words being struck out. There are some words which are not present in the main volume of the manuscript. But it is evident that the more he progressed through the index, the writing becomes lucid and error-free. In the handmade hard bound manuscript, an approximate of 17000 words were compiled. The yellow paper used was produced by the Serampore Mission. It is evident that it was written by multiple writers from the difference in handwriting. Transition in time is also noticed from the shift to modern Bengali letters from the traditional ones. Many a time, a Sanskrit word has been written with its Bengali meaning (see Plate-3). If this illustrative piece of work would have been published, there is no doubt it would have proved to be one of the most important pieces of work in William Carey’s linguistic career. But the lack of it has not dimmed the brilliance of the same.

William Carey came to India to spread Christianity as a Baptist missionary but, he fell in love with the common people of rural Bengal and his attitude was seen being manifested through his letters to Ryland, Fuller as well. He also praised the communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims, though he condemned the casteism among the Indians. He observed the low cast people who were down below the poverty line used only a single piece of clothing as their daily wear. He was also acquainted with the simple utensils they used for the domestic purpose and he quoted the names of those vessels in the said dictionary such as “Bodna”, “Lota”, “Kolshi”, “Hookha”, “Gur-guri” or “Guruk”, etc. The dictionary is so vivid and exhaustive that it would be a rare collection in the linguistic world if published.

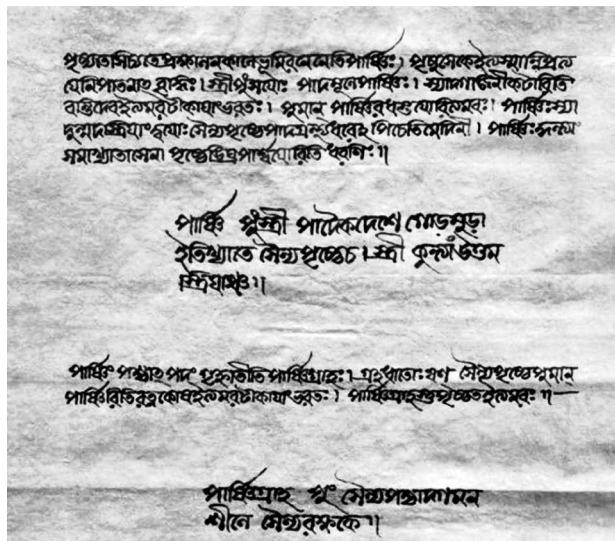
Some rectifications and improvements were required for the upliftment of the dictionary yet, but the tedious and voluminous work had remained hidden from the literary world for almost two hundred years.

prepared some time ago an elaborate dictionary of the Sanskrit language, ... a considerable portion of the work already printed off, ... was destroyed by the fire which burnt down the Serampore premises.” Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 231.

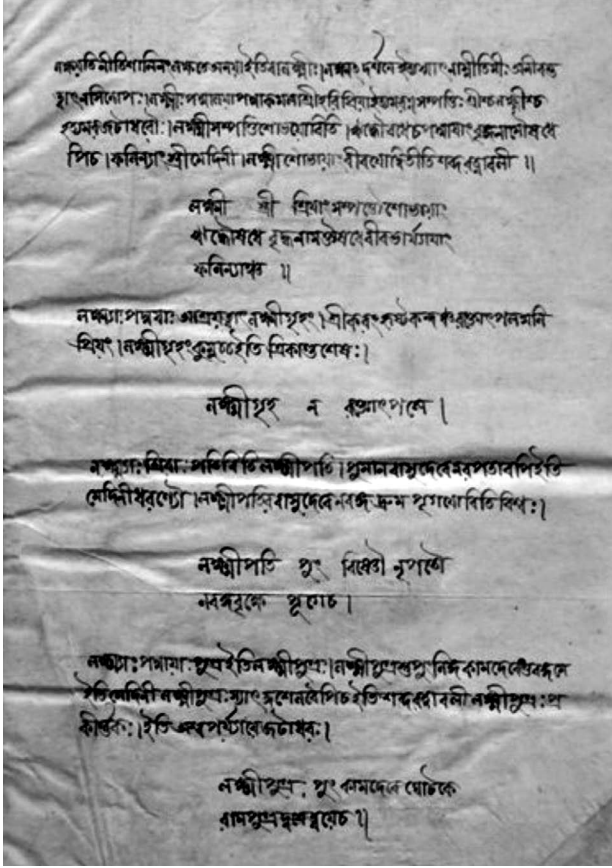
The reference quoted from the other established Sanskrit Dictionaries
 Amarakosha, Trikandashesha, Medini.
 The meaning of “Kalinga” as explained
 (Plate-1)



The meaning of the Sanskrit word “Parshni” explained in simple Bengali
 (Plate-2)



Sanskrit word has been written
with its Bengali meaning
(see Plate-3)



The Serampore College Crest

Peter de Vries*

Introduction

The College website, entry-sign, and letterheads proudly display the College's logo. Together with its foundation year (1818) and the names of its founders, the crest marks the College's unique origin and forms part of its branding. It consists of a shield with an open Bible, flanked by open crosses over a red-on-white cross, with a pelican on top, and a Latin phrase below. Most students know the motto of their high schools but may not know the background of the College's crest. Have you ever wondered why Serampore College (University) bears a Coat of Arms, but Calcutta, Presidency, and Jadavpur Universities have a seal? For the history of the College emblem, we need to go back to the College's beginning in 1818.

Foundation

The College founders—Carey, Marshman, and Ward—envisioned a higher, more complete education for India's youth, that they themselves did not enjoy. The emerging Christian community required leaders who were trained to make effective schoolmasters and preachers, and India as a whole was in want of spiritual and intellectual improvement. With Lord Hastings liberally promoting it, education was being discussed among

* Peter and his wife Leonora are from New Zealand. They lived and worked for many years as social entrepreneurs in Kolkata. Since 2014 based in Serampore, they work as tour guides for the region, and are friends of Serampore College. Peter has a special interest in colonial and mission history, and volunteers at the Carey Library and Research Center to catalogue its holdings. Peter has degrees in engineering and missiology, and has recently completed his Master of Theology degree.

the emerging Calcutta elite. In 1817, with Government sanction, twenty young men of high-caste background began their studies at Hindu College in Calcutta.¹ Even before that, at the request of some Muslim gentlemen, Warren Hastings had established the Calcutta Madrasah (1780), and the visionary Company Resident Jonathan Duncan founded Sanskrit College at Benares (1792).

The time was clearly ripe, and on 15th July 1818 the missionaries presented a Prospectus for a “College for the instruction of Asiatic [,] Christian and other youth in Eastern literature and European science.”² Written by Joshua Marshman, the proposed institution was primarily meant as a “divinity school” for Christian youths to become trained evangelists with a clear Christian foundation.³ However, the vernaculars and sciences were taught too, and the managing committee even had plans to teach medicine. But unlike other institutions, Serampore College did not exclusively serve the Christian community. Marshman emphasized “while this College secures to Christian youth instruction and support; it extends to Native youths of all religions.”⁴ It is because of this broad vision that Serampore College continues to welcome students regardless of “caste, creed and colour” today. And despite the challenges of diversity, Serampore College still boasts a role of students from all over the subcontinent - which makes it so unique.

Most Colleges have humble beginnings. Serampore College began with thirty-seven students of which nineteen were Christian, fourteen Hindu, one Sikh, one Burman, and two Khasi. Eleven of the youngest students – some orphaned – studied at Preparatory School attached to

¹ From 1855 known as Presidency College. Though Prof. Amartya Sen recently stated Hindoo College “had no religious connection and no denominational feature,” and developed under the influence of the radical thinkers like Henry L. V. Derozio, the founders had in mind an institution, “meant for the sons of the Hindu community alone.” *Times of India*, January 6, 1817; www.presiuniv.ac.in/web/presidency_history.php

² Serampore Missionaries, *College for the Instruction of Asiatic Christian and Other Youth, in Eastern Literature and European Science* (Serampore: n.s., 1818). The comma between “Asiatic” and “Christian,” which omission caused confusion in Britain, was added later by John C. Marshman, son of the founders and historian of the Mission.

³ John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*, vol. I (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859), 170.

⁴ Serampore Missionaries, *Prospectus*, 23.

the College.⁵ Classes were held in “the old House” from 1819, on-site or perhaps in the spacious bungalow of nearby Aldeen, which was abandoned after the demise of the East India Company Chaplain Rev. David Brown in 1813; we cannot be fully sure.

Prime land along the river, adjacent to the mission compound was procured from twenty-three neighbours, two of whom were European; the total amounting to about ten acres. A document in our archives shows they were all paid a fair sum.⁶ Upon receiving the Governor’s consent, the town’s builder Major Wickedie constructed the main building with its majestic neo-classical edifice and professors suite from 1820 to 1823.⁷ Students were provided thatched accommodation along the crescent of the southern boundary - where the domestic staff lives today. By 1822, classes could be held on the ground floor, but because the Birmingham cast-iron stairs (as well as railings and gate - all gifted by the Danish King) did not arrive until 1824, the main building was not completed until February 1825.

The challenges were huge. Sanskrit and Bengali were taught by pandits, while they were awaiting the arrival of the first European professor, Rev. John Mack, in September 1821. Mack taught the sciences and is known for his translation of a chemistry book into Bengali (a first). Though Carey was appointed President (or Master), he was mostly occupied teaching Company cadre at the College of Fort William, but after his illness in 1823 took a course of lectures in botany. Joshua Marshman taught divinity and mathematical classes, and his son managed the day-to-day affairs. For the English classes, Mr. Williamson was engaged.⁸ In 1824, Mr. Albrecht of Basle came to assist, but he died after a year, just when he became proficient in Bengali. A Divinity professor was found in the person of Rev. Swan of Bristol, who arrived in October 1825, but he resigned two years later. By 1830, Carey regularly taught theology until his health gave way. Marshman became principal in 1832 until his death in 1837 after which Mack took over. During those early years, the number of students fluctuated between 40-50, but funds, resources, and support were dwindling.

⁵ College Committee, *First Report of the College, for Asiatic Christian and Other Youth, Instituted at Serampore, August, 1818, under Patronage of the Most Noble the Marquis of Hastings, K.G. & C.* (Serampore: n.s., 1819), 7–9.

⁶ J.C. Marshman, “Statement of the Value of College Premises, 1826,” mss, CLRC, Serampore College.

⁷ Marshman, *Life and Times*, II:200–201; 235–38.

⁸ *Fourth Report Relative to Serampore College* (Serampore: n.p., 1823), 15.

For Serampore College to secure “stability and efficiency,” Joshua Marshman visited Denmark to request the King to grant additional powers to the College to raise it to the level of a university. After much discussion, King Frederick VI was pleased to grant Serampore College a Royal Charter in 1827. This Charter gave the College power to act as a university under an independent Council and confer degrees in any science. These powers were expressly recognized in a “Treaty of Purchase” when Serampore was transferred to the British in 1845. The Charter gave the College Council the power to “confer such degrees of rank and honour as shall encourage learning.”⁹ The Arts and Science departments were affiliated with Calcutta University since 1857, which provided students with recognized diplomas and degrees. However, by 1900 it was found that the powers Council had been given had never been utilized for theology students because the College had been unable to raise the standard of learning in theology high enough to issue degrees. Many Christians saw this as a missed opportunity, for no other Indian institution for theological learning had been conferred with university powers.

Principal George Howells

Fondly remembered as “the second Dr. Carey”, Rev. Dr. Howells became the Principal accredited with the expansion of the College, and “reorganization of the College on the lines laid down” by the College founders.¹⁰ The remarkable story of how Howells convinced the College Council (then based in London) to radically reorganize itself, raised funds for expansion, and persuaded the West Bengal State Government to secure its status in a special Act, has been told elsewhere and needs no further comment here.¹¹

The outcome was that Howells with his right-hand men, John Drake and J.N. Rawson, transformed the College from a Baptist institution into an interdenominational College. In 1909 new student accommodation was constructed in the form of a double storied quadrangle, that contained rooms for singles and families overlooking a courtyard to foster community life, known as the “College Hostel.” The eastern portion provided additional staff accommodation and was named “Leechman House” after John

⁹ *Statutes and Regulations of Serampore College*, Schedule II. Art. 6.

¹⁰ George Howells and A.C. Underwood, *The Story of Serampore College* (Serampore: n.p., 1918), 35.

¹¹ Howells, *The Story of Serampore College*, 35-38.

Leechman, an early professor at the College. His son John Barclay, a retired entrepreneur from Ceylon, served as a Council member and was one of the College's benefactors.¹² From 1910 onwards, new teachers were recruited to teach an expanded syllabus suitable for the Diploma of Licentiate (L.Th) and Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.) degrees. Apart from Biblical Hebrew and New Testament Greek, Syriac was offered to aid South Indian students. Among the new teachers were P.T. Geevergese (1882-1953) who had studied at CMS College, Kottayam, and Madras Christian College where he earned his M.A. (1907). He taught Theology and Syriac to a group of South Indian students at Serampore from 1913-1918 and was secretary of the Higher Theological Department. When during one night he received a special revelation, he left to found the Bethany Ashram in Kerala - a mission to reach out to the poor. He later became Archbishop Mar Ivanios of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and continued his involvement as a member of the College Council.¹³ The strong relationships with the Keralite and Tamil churches fostered by Howells continue till today.

The first time the College Crest was mentioned is in 1915, on the occasion of the first convocation of the College, December 4th, 1915. During that memorable function, I.W. Johory, D.M. Devasahayam, and N.G. Kuriakose were conferred the Bachelor of Divinity degree.¹⁴ On that occasion, a postcard was issued with portraits of the three graduates wearing a robe and hood, in a style customary in Britain. George Howells noted in his report,

Reference may be made here to the Serampore B.D. Costume and the College Coat of Arms. The gown was plaited at the shoulders with Sarum red silk cord and button. The hood is black with a broad band of Sarum red silk. A notable feature of the diploma is the College Coat of Arms, the main features of which are the St. George's Cross, suggesting both the Government of India and the East India Company, the Cross of the Danish Order Dannebrog, and Carey's Bible. There is also the "Pelican in her piety" feeding with drops of her own blood three hungry ones sitting on the edge of her nest, while the motto on her crest is "Gloriam Sapientes Possidebunt."¹⁵

¹² Howells, *The Story of Serampore College*, 37.

¹³ Geevarghese Chediath, *Mar Ivanios and the Background of the Reunion Movement*, www.malankaralibrary.com

¹⁴ Howells, *The Story of Serampore College*, 38.

¹⁵ *Principal's Report, Serampore College (1915-16)*, 2.

From that time onwards the College Crest was printed on all official College publications, letterheads, and reports, first in black and white, and from the 1960s in colour. Because the College had received Danish Royal consent in 1827, it was eligible to have such a coat of arms and did not have to carry a round seal. Though this writer has not (yet) found any proof, Howells likely wrote to Denmark for their permission to utilize a Coat of Arms that bore Danish symbols.¹⁶

The Meaning of the College Crest

The Serampore College emblem is unique, but as Howells explained, it is made up of different parts, each having its own symbolic meaning. The need for distinction was apparent even among the twelve Hebrew tribes in the wilderness, who were summoned by Moses to meet under their respective standards and banners.¹⁷ Greek and Roman armies bore distinct armorial insignia. Colors, like gold, silver, red, white, blue, and purple all had symbolic meanings. Such heraldry found high usage during Medieval times, first among Vikings, and then among the Crusaders, after which it was adopted among all European monarchs.¹⁸ The right to bear a heraldic coat of arms became an honor bestowed by a reigning monarch on individuals or institutions. These traditions were also followed for insignia bestowed on religious (Roman Catholic and Anglican) institutions, and individuals belonging to special orders, or associations.

The College crest, therefore, combines the cross of the Danish Royal “Order of Dannebrog”¹⁹ to make the Danish connection, with St George’s cross as found on the English flag and the East India Company crest at the time of the missionaries. The use of the *pelican* as a Christian symbol goes back to the *Physiologus*, a Greek didactic work of animal tales from Alexandria in the 2nd Century AD, which was highly allegorical in meaning.²⁰ In this text the bird was described in this way:

¹⁶ Howells’ correspondence with Danish authorities on the Royal Charter, is partially preserved in the College Archives.

¹⁷ Numbers 1:2, 18, 52; 2:2, 34. William S. Sloane-Evans, *A Grammar of British Heraldry* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1847), ix.

¹⁸ Sloane-Evans, *A Grammar*, xvii-xviii.

¹⁹ The order of Dannebrog (or Red Flag) was founded by King Christian V in 1671. The legend of Dannebrog found its final form in the Chronicle of Arild Huitfeldt in 1599, that narrated the battle of Valdemar (Estonia) in 1219, when the Danes were on a defensive and a red flag with a white cross fell from heaven, as a sign that God had granted unexpected victory. Janus Møller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades: 1400-1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 328.

²⁰ Britannica.com/art/bestiary-medieval-literary-genre#ref254811

If the pelican brings forth young and little ones to grow, they take to striking their parents in the face. The parents, however, hitting back kill their young ones and then, moved by compassion, weep over them for three days, lamenting over those whom they killed. On the third day, their mother strikes her side and spills her own blood over their dead bodies... and the blood itself awakens them from death.²¹

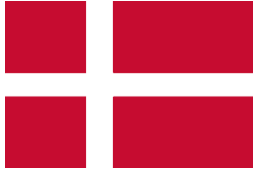
The pelican legend became a teaching aid to explain Christ's atonement, and the bird a symbol of Christian iconography of the Middle Ages. This (pseudo) ornithological observation theologizes how human beings struck God in the face by scorning Jesus and murdering him on the cross, which caused their spiritual death. The side of Christ's side was indeed pierced, and water and blood flowed out that broke the curse of sin and death, resulting in Christ's resurrection after three days, and life eternal for those who believe. Over time, the more disturbing part of the legend was de-mythologized, and nowadays it is said that the "pelican in her piety" pecks her breast to feed her young. But the original legend had much deeper levels of meaning.

The pelican was adopted as a symbol of heraldry by the Scottish Leechman family, whose crest portrayed three pelicans.²² It is therefore most likely that George Barclay Leechman suggested the use of the pelican for the College crest during the time he served at the College (1910-1917). The pelican wounding itself is a powerful analogy of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and standing on top of the shield, it displayed the centrality of the atonement as the central tenet of the Bible, shown open right underneath.

Finally, that Colleges carry their mottos in Latin is also a long European tradition. The Latin text *Gloriam Sapientes Possidebunt* was taken from Proverbs 3:35 in the Vulgate Bible, which translates as: "The wise shall inherit (or possess) glory," a self-explanatory phrase. The illustration shows a straight banner underneath, but should be curved around the shield, as was customary - and as the College website correctly displays. What makes the Serampore College crest so special is that it gives glory to whom it is due - and no doubt Carey, Marshman, and Ward would have been impressed by it. On this Carey Day 2022, as we remember William Carey and his associates, may we also be reminded of the College's unique crest, to always look up to Him and his Word, so that we may receive wisdom for the days ahead.

²¹ *Physiologus*, VI, 9-10. Quoted in Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 2001), 24-25.

²² Sloane-Evans, *Grammar*, 130; <https://www.houseofnames.com/leechman-family-crest>



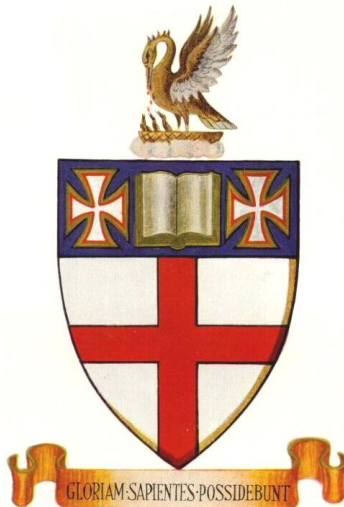
Danish Flag: Dannebrog



English Flag: St George's Cross



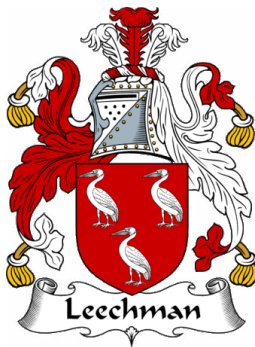
Order of Dannebrog with Silver Cross, Frederick VI, 1808



Serampore College Crest with straight banner (1915) Now curved



Crest of the East India Company
White shield and St George's Cross



Leechman Family Crest
with three Pelicans



"Pelican in Her Piety"
from *A Complete Guide of Heraldry* (1909), Fig. 462



Crest of Regent's Park College,
(Oxford University)
Similarities are St George's Cross,
Azur Blue top and open Bible (1958)

The Codex: Publication for Enrichment of Community Life of Past and Present Theology Students

Subhro Sekhar Sircar*

Introduction

The CODEX is the magazine of the Faculty of Theology of Serampore College. The magazine is completing the 104th milestone in its journey on the 9th of September 2022. It is exactly 100 years after the founding of the College in 1818 that the Codex was born in 1918. In the same year, the Senate and the Faculty of Serampore College also began their journey, as stipulated in the Serampore College Act, 1918. Historically, therefore, the Codex is one of the important entities of the College that exists today. The magazine, however, did not continue for some years after the sixties. It renewed its journey from the beginning of the nineties. Until then the magazine was enriching the community life of the current students and teachers on campus and continued its relationships with past students as well as teachers. In the following, this short article will provide a brief historical sketch; narrate its objectives and contributions to enriching the theological community of the entire Serampore family. It will conclude with an evaluation of the present role it plays and the future role it should play to bring back the original purpose and glorious attraction of the magazine.

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Historical Background and Its Origin and Objectives

It was acknowledged that when *The Codex* was first launched, there ‘was a period of great literary activity in the Hostel.’ In “Retrospect,” after twenty-five years of its existence, Dr. G. H. C. Angus, the then Principal, said, “This outbreak of literary fervour on the part of the theological block at once aroused the Hostel quadrangle and magazines became the fashion of the day.”¹ There were two other magazines called “The Sketch” and “The Cosmopolitan” that began their journey at the same time, but unfortunately, they could not survive long. But “the radiant light of the *Codex* provided a ray of hope for the future in the midst of prevailing gloom.”² Hence, the point to be noted is that when the *Codex* was first launched, it was the context of the “great literary activity in the Hostel”³ that stimulated interest among the students of the Higher Theological Department⁴ and motivated them to launch *the Codex* magazine.

The Codex owes its origin to the private enterprise of two or three members of the HTD that produced this interesting magazine. They wanted to make it a permanent institution. It was on 9th September 1918 in “Kings House”, 5 Strand Road, Serampore⁵ that the first meeting of the “Codex” Editorial Board of the Serampore College was held. The Editorial Board consisted of four members: the Chairperson (one of the Professors), Honorary Secretary (one of the students), Honorary Treasurer & Business Manager (one of the students), and a member (one of the students). As a result of the first meeting of the Editorial Board, the first number (which is preserved and well-bound with other issues as Vol No. 1 and kept at the CLRC Library) appeared in the same month.

Two objectives were kept in view: first, it was desired that the “Codex” would be a means by which students in College may be encouraged to

¹ G. H. C. Angus, “A Retrospect,” *The Codex: The Silver Jubilee Number*, 26/2 (March 1944): 2.

² Ibid.

³ A. B. Masilamani, “Twenty-Five years of the Codex,” *The Codex: The Silver Jubilee Number*, 26/2 (March 1944): 19.

⁴ The Theology Department was known at that time by this nomenclature that included two other affiliated colleges, namely Bishop’s College, Calcutta, and United Theological College, Bangalore. Henceforth, it will be mentioned as HTD.

⁵ This house was gifted by the Danish King to the Serampore Mission in 1821. It was sold to the Jute Company in 1932, and now no longer exists.

express themselves and their views; and secondly, it was desired to spread such information or such ideas which will prove of value or interest to theological students.⁶ It was then a manuscript paper, typed on foolscap sheets. Lamenting this, A.B. Masilamani writes, “It may seem paradoxical that a Theological college where the first printing press in India was founded had to be content with having its first Theological magazine typewritten.”⁷ It reminds us that in the course of history all great things have humble beginnings, and such was the case with the *Codex*. They used to make three or four copies so that one could circulate among the sister theological colleges and one among the eight old students who used to pay Rs 1.80 a year for a brief glimpse of the magazine before passing it on to the next person on the list. This shows that it generated strong interest among the teachers and students of that time.

From the very beginning, the *Codex* Editorial Board clearly expressed its high aims. They decided that the magazine would deal mainly with materials pertaining to “social, biographical, philosophical and devotional subjects; college news, review of books, illustrations, poetry, and stray notes, particularly about past students, found a place from time to time.”⁸ Looking through the past issues of that time, the *Codex* can claim that it had been faithful to its objectives. They even brighten the pages of the magazine with illustrations, sometimes by photographs and sometimes by drawings, or on another occasion by a map of India locating the position of other theological colleges affiliated to Serampore College and where the old students of Serampore College were at work. These perhaps fulfilled in larger measure the expectations of its founders. In fact, they had a common interest among the students of the HTD and a common goal in the work in which they all were engaged. They desired to help one another by keeping in touch and by interchanging ideas and experiences. What an innovative way the students of the HTD were engaged in the fulfillment of the objectives of the magazine. One needs to study the various contents and their nature to gain knowledge of their skill and academic and literary excellence of that time and how it nurtures their life as a theological community and community at large.

⁶ See “Editorial Notes”, *Codex* 1/6 (March 1919): 103.

⁷ Masilamani, “Twenty-Five years of the *Codex*,” 19.

⁸ The minutes of the first meeting of the Editorial Board, *The Codex* 1/2 (1918): 36. See also Angus, “A Retrospect,” 2; idem, “Ourselves,” *The Codex* 7/1 (1924): 5.

Development and Contributions

For six years the Codex in typewritten form served the HTD, each year encouraging the members to go forward. Consequently, a new chapter began in the life of the Codex when the first printed issue of the magazine appeared in September 1924. Since then, it was normally published three times a year. In fact, twenty-five years later, the then Editors, S. M. Leister and P. M. John in their 'Editorial' wrote, "the founders of the magazine should hope and expect that, long before reaching its Silver Jubilee, it would become the monthly mouthpiece of the students of the College. These hopes have not yet been fulfilled, but we continue to hope!"⁹ However, this hope still remains a distant dream. The *Codex* has now become an annual magazine of the Faculty of Theology published during the Valedictory service every year since its revival in 1990.

While there were only two affiliated colleges in 1918, it had grown to five in 1924, and from only eight past students of the HTD, this number had increased to 59 in 1924. For several decades since its birth, it served as a connecting link between different generations of past and present students of Serampore College. Of its manifold objectives, perhaps, this was the most important one. In the language of Dr. George Howells, the Chairperson of the first Editorial Board and the former Principal, the magazine contributed "to form a real bond between the ever-increasing number of HTD members, past and present and (as far as possible) our companions in theological studies elsewhere." After the revival of the Codex, we have entirely moved away from this objective.

As for its future goal, the founders of the magazine wished that "the Codex should eventually develop into a real theological magazine for India," as Dr. Howells reminded the readers during the Silver Jubilee Year of the Codex in 1944. While another sought God's guidance in making the *Codex* "The All-India Theological Observer", and one of the editors named it "The Expository Times of India". However, at the moment we have completely moved away from that direction. It would be more difficult to fulfill this hope in the present time when we have our own theological journal, namely *Indian Journal of Theology*.

⁹ S. M. Leister, and P. M. John, eds., "Editorial," *The Codex: The Silver Jubilee Number*, 26/2 (March 1944): 1

A notable feature of the *Codex* during the early years was ‘its publication of College and Hostel diaries and tentative programmes.’ It continued for several years keeping its identity with the first copy in design, form, and style, and remained loyal to the ideals and objectives of the founders. Throughout its history, there have been articles of real value and weight and the *Codex* remained remarkably true to its purpose in accordance with the emphasis of the 1924 declaration (not 1918). During the early years of the *Codex*, special issues were devoted to themes. Thus in 1924, special issues were published based on themes like “Church Union” and “Mission Policy” to which leaders from many parts of India contributed. The present and past students used to contribute interesting articles on the history and work of the Church in their own area. Sometimes themes of a more theological or philosophical nature, contributed by the professors, were chosen, while devotional articles were often found a place. It remains, therefore true to the most valuable function of the magazine which is, “to form a bond between members of the College and between succeeding generations of students.”¹⁰

Past volumes of the *Codex* used to contain more news about the activities of the alumni of the College. Each year a lengthy, descriptive, and informative newsletter about the past students appeared in the *Codex*, in addition to its task of linking the past with the present students. This, in fact, brought about a sense of unity among the alumni and between the old and new students. This aspect of the magazine is totally lost in our present context with our own past students and teachers. Also, to keep track of the past students the last few pages were devoted to publishing the ‘Directory of the Higher Theological Department’, of Serampore College since the beginning of 1910. Thus, we have the records in the form of a ‘Directory’ of the past students until 1967. This also does not find a place in our present *Codex*. It is also recorded that friends in other countries used to derive more real information about what the College had achieved through the pages of the *Codex* than through many an official report or pamphlet. However, since 1940, compared with the earlier issues of the *Codex*, the newsletters about the past members began to get less attention. And now this item of the magazine has been completely abandoned.

¹⁰ Angus, “A Retrospect,” 3

On important occasions, special issues used to be published. For example, in December 1927 a special number was issued in connection with the Centenary of the Royal Charter and another in December 1934 to commemorate the Centenary of the death of William Carey. Both issues were fully illustrated and contained messages from staff members and students full of information and inspiration. In order to pay a glorious tribute to the loyal supporters of the *Codex*, a special issue was published in 1942 in connection with the Ter-Jubilee celebrations of the BMS. In the recent history of the *Codex* one such issue was published in November 1992 in connection with the 200th Year of Carey's arrival in India and the 175th Year of the College,¹¹ perhaps it might not have had as much charm and detailed information as before.

The Revival of the Codex

Since we do not have all the issues or documents after the sixties relating to the *Codex*, we are ignorant of various stages of its development during those years. Until the sixties, it was a students' magazine and they were responsible not only for the editorial work but also for the finances. Since its birth, it used to be financed by the subscription of the students to find necessary resources, which stopped its publication for several years. It was after a gap of several years that the *Codex* was revived in 1990 with the initiative of our former Principal Rev. Dr. J.T.K. Daniel under the leadership of the former Vice-Principal and Prof. of New Testament, late Dr. M.P. John as its Staff Editor.¹² We acknowledge their efforts with deep appreciation and thanks. Since then, it has been functioning as the magazine of the Faculty of Theology and is published annually without interruption.

Over the last 20 years, however, the *Codex* has grown in size with an increased number of pages and an attractive cover design and colorful pictures that have given the magazine a different look altogether. Although it has retained its basic objectives, it totally lacks information about the past students and teachers, their contribution to articles, news about their

¹¹ See *Codex: The 200th Year of Carey's Arrival in India and the 175th Year of the College 1992-1993*, An Occasional Publication of the Theology Department of Serampore College (Serampore: Serampore College, Theology Department, 1992).

¹² See *The Codex*, An Occasional Publication of the Theology Department of Serampore College (Serampore: Serampore College, Theology Department, 1990).

present ministry, placement and position, etc. Since 1968, no directory found a place in the *Codex* and after several years of discontinuation of publication, we do not have proper information about our past students. Now it remains to be seen whether we could re-christen some of its earlier items and events to remain true to its purposes. Let us rededicate ourselves to the task of this useful publication and continue to widen our thinking by articulating our expressions and ideas and making it a tool for connecting with our friends and well-wishers.

Unfulfilled Objectives and Future Challenges

The present Editorial Board and the Theology Society, under the direction of the Faculty of Theology, must retrospect the high aims and objectives of the founders of the magazine. Many of the aims remained unfulfilled or discontinued as expressed above. One of the most challenging features is linking the past with the present students as well as teachers. Since the *Codex* has already in its 104th year, an effort must be taken to connect with the past students. The ‘Directory’ of the past students can be revived as one of the items in the *Codex*. Since the Alumni Association of the Faculty of Theology has been revived after many decades, it will be easier to connect with them. Further, it used to be published three times a year since its printed publications in September 1924. Can the Editorial Board rethink publishing at least twice a year with the help of the alumni? It will help to reconnect with past students and teachers. It should also be noted that the magazine started in the context of the ‘literary activity’ of the Higher Theological Department. Hence, theology students need to cultivate this noble idea to enhance their theological thinking and expressions in the present pluralistic contexts of our time.

This is a call to re-christen some of the earlier items and events of the magazine to remain true to its purposes. More than a hundred years of its existence, let us rededicate ourselves to the aims and objectives of this useful publication and continue to enlarge our thinking by articulating our expressions and ideas and making it an instrument for connecting our friends and well-wishers of the College.

In closing, I would like to request all the past and present students, and the teachers to send information about your present and permanent addresses, your placement, position, ministry, important events like marriage, birth, and death of any friend, etc. to the Alumni Secretary, Faculty of Theology of Serampore College. I also request the *Codex*

Editorial Board to add some of those items and events in all the issues from this year. This will help to bridge the gap between the old and the new and bring about a sense of unity among us. It will also help us to pray for one another in times of need. I would also urge the past students to contribute towards the printing cost and postal charges so that we can send you a copy. Your voluntary donations towards the development of the Faculty of Theology will be highly appreciated and you can send any contributions/donations in favor of “The Principal, Serampore College”. Let us strengthen our mother College and fulfill the vision of our founders William Carey, Joshua, and Hannah Marshman, and William Ward, “the Serampore Quartet,”¹³ through our prayers and support.

¹³ See Subhro Sekhar Sircar, “Important Documents of the Serampore College and Their Significance to Higher Education in India,” in *Serampore Mission: Perspectives in Contexts*, ed. Johnson Thomaskutty (New Delhi: ISPCK; Pune: Union Biblical Seminary, 2019), 1, n. 1.

Serampore College

Programme Schedule for
the 261st Carey Day Celebration
on 17th August 2022

- 1) 7:00 a.m. : Procession to Carey Cemetery for Garlanding and Carey Day Memorial Service.
Speaker Rev. Dr. Subhro Sircar, Faculty of Theology.
- 2) 8:30 a.m. : Community Breakfast in the Theology Hostel Dining Hall.
- 3) 9:00 a.m. : Tree Plantation
- 4) 10:30 a.m. : Carey Day Lecture
- 5) 11:45 a.m. : Distribution Programme:
 - i) Serampore College Scholarship (Funded by the Government of Denmark)
 - ii) College Prize Distribution
- 6) 1:45 p.m. : Refreshment Break
- 7) 2:30 p.m. : Cultural Programme