



CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTEN MISSIONARY'S IN PROMOTING  
FEMALE EDUCATION IN BIHAR



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**ABSTRACT**

*Woman, who attained a very reputed position in the ancient Indian society, had been reduced to a very low status S C Base, writing in about 1881, stated that from infancy to old age her existence presented a uniform picture of gloom, uncertainty, despondency and neglect In her case, bitterness far cut balanced the sweets of life. Thus women throughout India were in a deplorable condition In the case of Bihar, her condition was worse. As a matter of fact, it was a backward province The minds and hearts of the people of Bihar were ruled by conservative ideas The hold of these conservative ideas was so strong that it was very difficult for the leaders of the reform movements to propagate their new ideals because they had to face strong opposition from the orthodox people. Fortunately, the reform movements which were sweeping all over India from the first half of the nineteenth century, penetrated Bihar and fought with orthodox quarter to rescue women from the clutches of evil social customs. Thus, this paper focuses on the contributions of Christen Missionaries in promoting female education in Bihar.*



**KEYWORDS:** Christen Missionaries, Female Education, Reform Movements, Social Customs.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Among various inhuman social customs, 'Sati' was the most condemned one. The belief in sati was so strong that in 1822 a widow named Dayal Kaur insisted on becoming sati before a magistrate who tried to stop her and she expressed the view that self-cremation was not at all terrible and that she had performed the rite in two earlier lives at Banaras and Kanauj.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of Brahma Samaj, crusaded against sati. The custom was so deep-rooted in the society that it was regarded as a social prestige. However, it had become a curse during the eighteenth century. Sometimes unwilling widows were also forced to commit this rite. As early as 1789, M H Brooke, Collector of Shahabad wrote in the course of a letter to Lord Cornwallis that in spite of its policy of non-interference in religious matters, the Government should prohibit a practice 'at which humanity shuddered. But the authorities were afraid of taking any action against Sati, because it would evoke strong opposition from the orthodox quarter. But as the reformists were gaining strength, the government was compelled to take action against Sati. The government by an executive order prohibited such widows to commit Sati who had children between four to seven years of age. But even this order could not put a check on this evil custom.

## CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTEN MISSIONARY'S TO FEMALE EDUCATION

The Christian Missionary's made remarkable contribution towards the spread of education in Bihar. In fact, they pioneered the work of female education in Bihar and elsewhere.

At first the Company government had prohibited missionary activities in India. In 1814 the Government lifted the ban and various missions from Europe poured in and started the work of female education in India. The Roman Catholic Mission was the first mission to come to Bihar. As early as 1845 Bishop Anastasias Hartmann who was in charge of Patna Bettiah sector of Christian Mission, thought of imparting education to his people. In 1853 he established the St. Joseph's Convent School, which is at present a leading girl's school of the province. For this purpose he sought the help of Sisters who came from the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Munich to Calcutta and Bombay. It served both the Christian and non-Christian communities as a school and orphanage, for many years and continues to serve as a girls' school up to the senior Cambridge Standard .

In 1874, the Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who had established a girls' school at Bankipore, were asked to set up a school for girls at Bettiah. So, the present St. Theresa's High School was founded in 1872. Though the school was hit hard by the famine and plague, but revived its reputation shortly. Two years after their arrival at Bettiah, the town was nagged by famine and plague and the number of the orphan children dependent upon the Bettiah Mission became great that more land was purchased at Pakirana, where the same sisters began a home for the orphan girls. In the early 20th century these sisters also opened school for the Santhal girls in Bhagalpur. At Barh the sisters of the Sacred Heart Founded a girls' school. The sisters of the Sacred Heart also founded a girls' middle school in Buxar with the help of Father Henry Westrop, S.J.

By the fourth decade of the present century, the province had witnessed a considerable growth in the sphere of female education. This was mainly the result of the joint effort by Christian Missionary, Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj. These various socio-religious organizations mainly opened primary and middle schools for girls. The schools flourished and more and more girls joined these institutions to be educated. Once convinced by the advantage of the education, girls wanted to study further so a want of girls' college in Patna was felt by the then Bishop of Patna, Rt Rev Bernard J Sullivan. On his request sister of the Apostolic Cannel of Mangalore arrived to start such a college, the first Women's College in Patna To provide buildings for the college the Bishop of Patna surrendered his own residence and grounds in Bankipore in 1940, and a newly erected guesthouse served as the college hostel.

At Jamalpur and Monghyr the sisters of Notre Dame, from Develand, Chio, U S A , established a Cambridge school in 1950 The Holy Cross sisters of Bettiah came to Muzaffarpur on the invitation of Father J.O. Brien, S.J. to conduct a middle school for girls. At Deoghar St. Mary's Girls' High School was started with only 40 students. This school right from the day of its establishment flourished. The joining of Miss Orme, was a fortunate incident Under her auspicious guidance junior training class was started. In the beginning it had only three students of this one student came first in Bihar as well as Orissa. Miss Orme rendered fifty years of outstanding service. For her outstanding service to the cause of education Miss Orme was awarded both the Coronation Medal and the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal Soon after its establishment the school received government grant owing to a good report from the School Inspectors. Finally in 1934 the School attained High school status and was recognised by the Patna University. The school was fortunate enough to avail government grant again in 1935 and got constructed its own building of two classrooms. In 1941 a remarkable step taken when a Senior Teachers Training Class was started by the school management.

The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society established the Christ Church Girls' School in Bhagalpur in 1936. This school ran successfully for several years. So the authorities realizing the need of high school extended the school to the high school level prior to 1959.

### St. Thomas Girls' Middle School Barharwa

In the last quarter of the 19th century, Mrs. Cole founded this school in Taljhari, which was replaced to Barharwa in 1879. The school was raised 10 upper primary level in 1890. In 1906 it attained status of middle vernacular. Shortly the medium of the upper classes of the school was changed from Bengali to Hindi. Miss E.B. Adams took charge of the school in 1920. She was interested in promoting the girls not only academically but in all round development of the girls. She opened guide and singing classes for girls.

In 1948 Miss Adams had to vacate the place of Principal of the Barharwa Girls' School because she had to take up the work of Mother's Union. Miss D.H. Bayland became the Principal and laid more stress on basic education.

As the value of education in the conservative society of Bihar penetrated more and more parents wanted to educate their daughters. But lack of girls' school came in their way. The same condition prevailed in the Godda district. Mrs. Lenman in 1915 established a girls' school with 20 pupils. The school had two teachers and the classes were conducted on the verandah of the local church. The school had to face financial problem. The authorities of the school took all the aids and funds from whatever source it could avail. Then the Church Missionary Society started giving the school grants. Building grants and regular monthly grants were received from the government. The school grew and by 1920 it was raised to upper primary standard. Hostels and sick-rooms were built there were 60 boarders and 20 day scholars. As the school expanded Mrs. Lenman was replaced and Miss L.M. Cole and Miss P.R. Wooley held the charge of Principal.

### The Baptist Missionary Society in Bihar

Mrs. Broadway wife of Rev. D.P. Broadway, who had preached the Gospel in almost every part of the Patna district, contributed a lot to the cause of female education. She established two girls' day schools at Banking and Khagaul. Besides these, she also encouraged zenana education. In this way girls of school-going age could receive education in school, while elder girls or women eager to be educated would receive education in zenana schools.

**Table-1**

Year	No. of pupils	Girls
1895	2320	395
1912	3229	462
1914	8223	1772
1921	6246	1623
1939	5473	1623
1940	3898	1024
1954	9295	3253

The above table shows the increasing number of girl students in the Mission schools. In the year 1895 the Mission had one high school, four Middle English schools and forty primary schools. No separate schools for girls' are mentioned. But the number of the girls' students is 395. So there must be co-education in this educational institution. Gradually by the year 1912 the number of primary schools run by the Gossner Mission reached to 187, obviously the number of the female students also increased to 462. The year 1914 saw a considerable rise in the number of Primary School as well as the number of female students also raised. The number of school and girls were 295 and 1772 respectively in the year 1914. Here again the Gossner Mission had to face a crisis, which was brought by the First World War. In the wake of this war the Germans had to depart from Chotanagpur. Rt Rev. Toes West Cott (Bishop) was requested to take over the management of the schools.

Tough Bishop tried his best to manage the schools with limited funds, but some primary schools had to be closed down for lack of funds. When the war was over the schools, which were closed down were reopened in 1917.

Again in 1919 the Anglican Mission withdrew its support from the Gossner Mission because the German Mission was not ready for an amalgamation with the former Mission. Under the stress of this new crisis again many schools were closed. The appointment of Rev (Dr.) I Cammaday as the secretary of the Advisory Board in 1921 proved to be a saviour of these institutions. During the years of his Secretary-ship the schools were reopened, strengthened and upgraded. Unfortunately, the Advisory Board was broken up in

1928 and now the whole burden came on the Church authorities once again. They had to face financial hardship. However, they did not loose heart and faced the crisis with patience. In 1932 the charge of 96 primary schools were given to the Ranchi District Board. Prior to 1942 higher classes were attached to the Bethesda Girls' Middle School. Earlier the Bethesada Girls' Upper Primary School at Ranchi was raised in 1921 to the middle standard. This school achieved government recognition in 1946. In 1948 Junior Training School for girls was attached to this school.

### **The Anglican or S.P.G. Mission in Chotanagpur**

The Anglican Mission originated after its split from the Gossner Mission in 1868. It also alike other Christian Missions laid stress on education. The Mission opened schools for all standards that are primary, middle and high. Some middle schools were upgraded to high schools. The Mission also introduced boarding facilities for both boys and girls. Separate arrangement was done for girls' boarding. At Chutiya a girls' school was established by the mission in 1901. This school improved under the able administration of Miss Whipham. Later in 1909 a Training School for Women was opened at Ranchi by Miss Beatty. Miss Knott opened two schools for girls n 1911 and 1922, at Murhu and Kamdara respectively. Both the institutions had boarding facilities. In 1913 two other schools for non-Christian girls were opened. There were both Hindi and Bengali speaking children. In 1914 the girls' upper primary school, which was situated at Ranchi was raised to Middle English School. By 1915 the Anglican Mission had established 23 schools for girls. In these schools girls belonging to other communities also studied.

### **The Santhal Mission of the Northern Churches**

The Santhal Mission of the Northern Church gave emphasis on education from the very first day of its foundation. The Mission laid stress on education for the people who were wholly illiterate. This Mission was fortunate enough to receive the devotion of Mrs. Boerre Sen in the sphere of female education. She, as early as in 1870, opened a girls' school at Benagaria. But girls were reluctant to join the school out of fear and ran away from the school. Mrs. Boerre Sen in 1870 got three or four orphan Santhal. Christian girls from the Baptist Mission in Midnapur in Orissa to have them as a nucleus. Thus began the girls' school at Benagaria, as time passed on the school expanded. Mrs. Boerre Sen managed school as well as its hostel till 1910. Mrs. Pederson was the next to take charge of the school. Later, the Mission opened another girls' school at Maharo, which was upgraded to middle school.

### **The Santhal Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland in Bihar**

This Mission established its first school in the last quarter of the 19th century. The school was situated at Pachamba, as time passed on the Mission opened various girls' schools. In 1889 there were 7 girls' schools with 143 students. In 1905 the number of girls' schools was reduced to 6 but the number of girl students increased to 26. In 1915, this number rose to 414. In 1927 the girls' school at Pachamba was upgraded to middle vernacular standard. These schools were financed by District Board. But in due course of time the District Board reduced its grant. As a result of this, many schools closed. The girls' primary schools were amalgamated with the boys' primary schools. But from the year 1933 the financial condition of the school improved. This Mission had the credit for the development of the Santhali language and literature.

### **CONCLUSION**

So with these objectives in mind the Christians proceeded successfully in imparting education to the females facing vigorous opposition. In a short span of time they became popular for the quality of education they conferred upon the Indians. Moreover the kind of discipline they maintained and the dedicative attitude of their staff also made them popular. The initial fears entertained by Hindu parents that their children would be converted to Christianity by attending Christian schools and colleges rapidly disappeared or were guarded against by careful instruction to the youngster to have as little contact as possible with their Christian teachers.

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