

**A CRITICAL STUDY OF CONTEXTUAL  
THEOLOGIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
GONDS  
THESIS**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of  
the Degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**IN**

**CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

**BY**

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2018**



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This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**A Critical Study of Contextual Theologies With Special Reference to Gonds**" Submitted to the Faculty of Theology, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology And Sciences, Allahabad Uttar Pradesh for the award of Degree of **DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHY** in Theology is a bonafide research work carried out by him under my supervision. The thesis in my opinion is worth of consideration for the award of degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** in accordance with the regulation of the University.

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#### CERTIFICATE OF RECOMMENDATION BY STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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### Declaration

I Vimal Kant Singh declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled "**A Critical Study of Contextual Theologies With Special Reference to Gonds**" Submitted to the Faculty of Theology, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences, Naini-Allahabad for the award of the Doctoral of Philosophy in Theology is an original work. I have neither plagiarized nor submitted the same work for award of any degree. In case undertaking is found incorrect, my degree may be drawn by University unconditionally.

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*(Vimal Kant Singh)*

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## ABSTRACT

The word '*Contextualization*' is termed as "incarnation," "indigenization," "inculturation", and "local". The very act of creation depicts the engagement of God in the world and above all the incarnation is the supreme act of God becoming human being as '*Jesus of Nazareth*'. He sent His disciples to all over the world to accomplish mission of His saving act for the salvation of the whole creation; but major challenge lies that how to imply the Gospel to a cultural context without diluting its true meaning effectively. The missionaries commonly ignored Asian or Indian spirituality, aspiration and frustration. The local folk story, music, songs, culture and traditions were generally considered as heathen. More over, the contributions to Indian Christian theology in the past came from the high caste converts perpetuated to Brahmanic theology. However, Asian and Indian contextual theologies emphasized on social, political and economical issues of oppressed, exploited and raised voice for their liberation. This research focuses on Gondwana contextual theology it is an evolving theology emerging from *Adivasi* Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, commonly known as *mool* – *Adivasi* original inhabitant of India, speak Gondi and live fairly enough in isolation from the caste dominant system of Indian history. Gondi folk stories carry valuable characteristics of Lingo, a liberator of Gond community. He was killed by his Gond brothers but God revived Lingo with His nectar. Lingo after founding Gond society went back to His gods. The Gonds of Dori and surrounding villages still live in poverty; they are under privileged, surrounded by caste system, injustice and exploitation. An action oriented theology like Gospel and Plow' can be one of the tools for their transformation as Gonds who are proud to be called as *Koiture* means people of the earth, they sing a song "*Deval ka danda, Dharti, Mutva Dev, Kond ro Deval ko danda, Dharti Matal Ki Sewa Dev Sewa*". Gonds believe Earth belongs to God and He revolves it with his stick according to His wish. Gonds greet each other by saying *Sewa* means service; let us serve the earth as we are made of earth and the Service to earth is a real service to God therefore Gospel and Plough or any other method can be helpful for transformation of Gonds.



## INTRODUCTION

The contextual theologies are attempts with theological insights and orientations by experiencing and exploring the uncharted terrains to understand God's intervention in the world. In the last decades of twentieth century, a variety of contextual theologies have emerged. It has tried to provide a logical account of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily upon Scripture, placed within the context of culture and related to local life issues. The contextual theology is a process by which a person interacts with God's revelation within a given context; rediscovers the meaning of scripture and makes application to the context, expressed in the language and idioms of the culture.

The present research is an attempt to deal with definition and models of contextual theologies. It is a critical study of Asian contextual theologies with special reference to socio- religious- cultural and ritualistic context of Gonds, who carry with them their traditional folk stories, songs, music, dance worship patterns and certain practices of the Gond's society in which Church finds itself, and attempting to see how Christ is presently speaking through that situation. Thus, contextual theology flows from the dynamic interaction of gospel, church, and culture.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise the Christian statement will never become true for contextualization of the gospel in matrix of the context that Christ died for our sins, and resurrected from the dead for the wholistic transformation of one and all.

### 1. Statement of the Problem

Contextual theologies have been critical of theologies in terms of systems. Context may be described in terms of a specific culture, tradition and language. But context also characterized by the dominant issues and concerns of a particular people or society. Context is not simply the background against which the gospel is to be interpreted, but rather the culture and socio-political situation become new sources of theology. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh made attempts of 'doing theology' by putting faith into action through different development programmes in the context but

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Richardson, (Book Review of Robert J. Schrieter), *Constructing Local Theologies*, Melanesian: Journal of Theology 1-2 , 1985, 213.

generally it remained isolated from the Gond community. The issue is of access and interpretation of available resources for constructing a Gondwana theology.

## **2. Methodology**

The library books, primary and secondary sources, Journals are taken as source material for an overview of contextual theologies of Asia. The tribal Gond's culture, tradition, folk stories, music and dance are rich resources but were considered as heathen and rarely used as source for 'doing theology'. Thus an attempt has been made to reconsider Gonds socio religious, agricultural concepts, thoughts, traditions, cultural identity and their life style for theologizing the gospel from Christian perspective. The challenge lies to interpret Gond's folk stories and traditions from theological, christological and biblical perspective to seek if there is any relevance in doing theology today.

## **3. Justification**

The contextual theologies deal with the hopes and aspirations of people at grass root level. The Gonds have a concept that they are created by God, and they are the children of God. According to Gonds folk story, Lingo is the founder and liberator of their society. They are proud to be called '*Koitur*' which means the people of the earth. While greeting each other they pronounce a word '*Sewa*' means Service. It means they greet with promise to serve each other through farming and this is a real service they do to God and to the community. Therefore, Gonds folk stories, festivals, dance, music and its socio - religious cultural and agricultural traditions of local context could be helpful for meaningful theological discourse.

## **4. Scope and Limitation**

The scope of the study is limited in general to the Asian contextual theologies but in particular, focusing on the brief history of Gondwana context with special reference to Dori village, in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh.

## **5. Objectives**

- To make a survey in general of contextual theological models.
- To critically assess the Asian contextual theologies.
- To construct a Gondwana theology.

## **Chapter I: Review of Literature**

### **Chapter II: An Overview of Development of Contextual Theologies**

#### Section A: Survey of Contextual Theologies

- i Definitions.
- ii Models of contextual theologies.

#### Section B: Asian Contextual Theologies.

#### Section C: Indian Contextual Theologies.

#### Section D: Evaluation

### **Chapter III: Towards a Gondwana Theology:**

The aim of this Chapter is to look at the history of Gonds of Dori in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh where Evangelical Lutheran Church is working since 1877. An attempt is made to investigate the socio religious cultural and agricultural concepts, folk stories and songs of Gonds from biblical and theological perspectives in context of Gonds with special reference to Dori of Betul in Madhya Pradesh.

## **CONCLUSION**

## Chapter I

### Review of Literature

#### 1. Asian Contextual Theologies

The Asian Contextual theologies are the thoughts of theologians who brought a turning point by concentrating on local issues. Their contention was that western theology had ignored Asian spirituality, aspiration, folk story, music, songs, culture and traditions thinking that all local issues were unchristian. It created a vacuum in avoiding local folk stories and faith practices. Gospel was not contextualized as per the need of the local context. Indian Churches imitated western style of worship; liturgy and songs. Theological seminaries too debated like western theologians on dogma and doctrines. However, later on Asian contextual theologies focused on the liberation of farmers, laborers, women and marginalized from the captivity of poverty, oppression and exploitation.

**1.1.** Kazoh Kitamori is a Japanese theologian wrote a book *Theology of the pain of God* he began with historical consciousness of the need for an 'exodus' from 'German Captivity'. Kitamori's concept of redemptive voluntary pain initiated by love termed as *tsurasa* that God participates in their pain and sufferings. Kitamori rejects the ontological divine being that does not suffer pain, and he criticized the God of liberal theology whose love is immediacy without pain. Human pain and divine pain are analogically understood, as they share something in common and in pain it is a unity of the divine and human.<sup>2</sup>

**1.2. Korean Minjung Theology:** A document was published in 1973 entitled *The Theological declaration of Korean Christians* was widely circulated in Korea that demanded revolution and social justice. The *Minjung* is a political term for the people who are exploited and oppressed in their cultural, historical, political and economic conditions of Korea. The labour movement was supported by the Urban Industrial Mission; as thousands of young workers lived in miserable conditions of

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<sup>2</sup>Kitamori, Kazoh, *Theology of the Pain of God*, Virginia: John Knox Press 1965, 45.

late working hours and low wages. The *Minjung* movement of 1970 - 1980s provided a significant context of learning process for the ordinary workers and people for the transformation of the society. *Minjung* theologian Suh Nam Dong reinterpreted the Bible in the context of the common people's struggle to survive and their fight for political liberation and economic justice. David Suh believed that Korean Christianity has been incorporating the deep rooted spirituality of the poor, oppressed, and socially marginalized these minjung people cried out and longs for liberation and transformation,<sup>3</sup> of the people.

**1.3. Kosuke Koyama** wrote on Thai theology, his books published are namely *Water Buffaloes Theology*, *No Handle on the Cross*. He was a Japanese theologian lived in Thailand. He initiated Thai theology as basically cultural in orientation. The village context reminded him of village environment that how to preach the Gospel to the farmers in simple sentences. Koyama articulated a 'rice- root' theology from below of everyday experience of the farmers. *Water Buffaloes Theology* – depicts Koyam's theological journey by relating common experience in the daily life of humanity in its specific socio - political and cultural environment. Therefore buffaloes rolling in muddy water became his subject matter for preaching the Gospel. Koyama is fond of Biblical imaginaries and themes, especially those of Old Testament, and has the literally as well as theological skills to bring them home to the cultural soil of Asia.<sup>4</sup>

**1.4. Choan- Seng Song** is a Chinese theologian, his books are *Third Eye Theology*, and *Tell Us Our Names*", Stories are written from Chinese Perspective. Song in his book *Tell Us Our Names* asked why the original name should be changed at baptism. Song 'wrote another folk story *Mirror* that reflects various images of God as social, political and cultural conditions of China.<sup>5</sup> Song stated in *Third Eye Theology* that: Third Eye is a term derived from Buddhism, when the clouds of ignorance disappears, the infinity of heavens is manifested where we see for the first time into

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<sup>3</sup>Samson Prabhakar & Jinkwan Kwon, *Dalit and Minjung Theologies: A dialogue*, Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2006, 149-152, 156-161.

<sup>4</sup> Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974, 1 -7,11-12,36.

<sup>5</sup>C. S. Song, *Tell Us*, ix-x.

the nature of our own being.”<sup>6</sup> In *Folk Story of Tears of Lady Meng*: Meng’s husband Wan was seized by the heartless soldiers, leaving his bride Lady Meng in tears. Finally she jumped into the river. The king ordered his soldiers to cut up her body into little pieces. When they did the little pieces changed into little silver fish, in which the soul of the faithful Meng Chiang lives for ever. This reminds to the story of Hebrews laboured and toiled and liberation from slavery.<sup>7</sup> The Christians are called to bear witness to very love of God, the Christ like love which runs the universe. In Christ - God reconciles the world as the greatest lover.

**1.5. Robert J. Schreiter** in his book *Constructing Local Theologies* says that constructing local theologies is a challenging job as many men and women in the ministry found that theology they had learned is inadequate to the questions they face in their working context. Schreiter defined that local theology is a complex process, which brings awareness of the contexts, of histories, experience, the need to encounter the traditions of faith in other believing communities.<sup>8</sup> There are three principles that roots beneath the growth of local theology are *gospel*, *church*, and *culture*. The *Gospel* means the Good News of Jesus Christ and the salvation that God has brought through him. It refers to the living presence of the saving Lord, the spirit of the risen Lord guiding that community. *The Church* is a complex of those cultural patterns in which the Gospel has taken on flesh, at once enmeshed in the local situation, extending through communities in our own time and in the past, and reaching out to the eschatological realization of the fullness of God’s reign. *The Culture* represents a way of life for a given time and place, replete with values, symbols, and meanings, often struggling for a better world. Therefore, Local Theology is defined as the dynamic interaction among gospel, church, and culture. Since local theologies come out of particular local contexts, so Local Theology can be called “Contextual Theology.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Song, *Third Eye Theology*, 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen T. Chan, *Narrative, Story and Storytelling: A Study of C.S. Song’s Theology of Story*, Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 12, No.1, April 1998, 36-38.

<sup>8</sup> Robert J.Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, New York: Orbis Books, 2002, 20-21.

<sup>9</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, London: SCM Press, 198584.

## 2. Indian Contextual Theologies

The Indian theologians have theologized Indian Christian Theologies from different perspectives. Brahamabandhab Upadhya, J.N. Farquhar, A.J. Appawamy, Vengal Chakkarai, Abhishiktananda, Swami Dayananda, Raimon Panikkar, M.M. Thomas, Stanley J. Samartha and others have developed theological insights and orientations by experiencing the mystery of God, coping with challenging situations calling forth fresh responses. Brahamabandhab Upadhya and missionaries like P. Johann tried to bring Hinduism and Christianity more close through a series of writings to know 'Christ through Vedanta'. A more thorough going approach was initiated by the protestant thinkers: 'Rethinking Christianity in India' group was consisting of Vedanta of Chakkarai, Chenchiah and A.J. Appawamy and others. In more recent times, thinkers like Raimon Panikkar and Stanley J. Samartha have carried forward the ideal dialogue with Hinduism with greater theological penetration. The contextual theologians critically examined the Western Theologies of Christian doctrines and responded to current Asian issues at grass root level. Theologians like J.N. Farquhar and others followed the theory of fulfillment recognizing the values of other religions however showing the Christianity as crown and fulfillment of other religions. Raimon Pannikkar, M.M. Thomas and others derived their inspiration by responding to the struggles of the people by reading of the scriptures. M.M. Thomas motivated Christians to involve in political ethics from a Christian perspective. He had life long concern with social and political issues.<sup>10</sup> The Dalit writers wrote on the pathos and sufferings of Dalits like Arvind P., Nirmal, Sathianathan Clarke and others.

**2.1. Arvind P. Nirmal** wrote some important books and articles on Dalit theology such as, *Towards a Christian Dalit Theology*, A.P. Nirmal was a pioneer of Dalit theology he wrote on what is Dalit theology? meaning of Dalit theology, Pathos, sufferings and liberation of Dalits, quoting Bible from (Deuteronomy 26: 5-12). 'A wondering Armenian was my father' Nirmal recalls the nomadic consciousness

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<sup>10</sup> R.H.S. Boyd, *An introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, C.L.S., Madras, 1979, 58-82-184, 311-328

with Dalit's identity.<sup>11</sup> The people who were counted as no people or untouchable are now called the people of God.

**2.2. Sathianathan Clarke**, in his book *Dalits and Christianity* compares Christ with Drum. Clark says Dakit Paraiyar of South India is called drummer. Paraiyars are not priests but they are masters of the drums who know the beats for different occasions. They play the drums during religious ceremonies for communication between the divine and human beings. He compares drum with Christ who was beaten up like a drum, suffered, died and resurrected for the liberation of the people.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Gonds

The Tribal stories are written by different writers such as Eyre Chatterton, Stephen Fuches, S. Hislop, C.G. Chenevix Trench, Shamrao Hival, Ram Bharos Agrawal, Per Julission, Nirmal Minj and others.

**3.1. Eyre Chatterton** was Bishop of Nagpur. He wrote *The Story of Gondwana*, He mentions the Creation story of Gonds: that *Mahadev* performed an act of penance for twelve months by which a boil appeared in his hand from which sixteen daughters are born, He threw them into the water but water dried up from which sixteen kinds of earth with different color of soils was produced.<sup>13</sup> Eyre narrated the Birth, Life and Death of Lingo is spoken of as a sinless being. Lingo was a perfect man; water may have stained, but he had no stain whatever, but he was blamed and killed.<sup>14</sup> Lingo the beloved of gods was dead, God sent a crow which reached and dropped nectar to Lingo's flesh that became warm and he came back to life.<sup>15</sup>

**3.2. Stephen Fuches** in his book, *The Gond and Bhuma of Eastern Mandla*, mentioed the folk story of Creation that God fasted for twelve years, he never took a bath nor once did he drink water. In consequences he became very dirty. In the

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<sup>11</sup> Arvind P. Nirmal, *Towards A Christian Dalit Theology*, A Reader in Dalit Theology, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai,n.d., 59-60. *Heuristic Explorations*", Chennai: CLS, 1990

<sup>12</sup> Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*, Delhi: OUP, 1998

<sup>13</sup> Eyre Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, Sir Issac Pitman & Sons, New York and Melbourne, 1916,151-156.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*,161- 193.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 194-222.



beginning of thirteen year God rubbed his armpits and his chest and much dirt came off. He began to rub it between thumb and forefinger. In this manner, he formed the figures of two human beings, God breathed in male and then male breathed into female face and said get up, and nudged her in the side and she became one soul and one body.<sup>16</sup>

**3.3. S. Hislop** wrote *Papers relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of Central Provinces*, Edited by R. Temple, Nagpur, 1886, according to this version of folk story Lingo was born from Pahindi, a world tree known for its red flowers. A fig tree grew up by God's grace and honey dropped into his mouth and he grew. This very Lingo is the founder of Gond society.<sup>17</sup>

**3.4. C.G. Chenevix Trench** wrote *Grammer of Gondi as spoken in the Betul District*, Trench was a Deputy Collector of Betul district; according to his version Lingo is called Raj Linga who lived in heaven; one day Lingo saw Talko queen at bathing place, Raj Linga took abode in her, she was pregnant Linga born not naturally but out of her crown.<sup>18</sup> Later Linga was asked to marry a girl but he refused and answered that "I am a Holy Man",<sup>19</sup> According to story of Linga the Gonds were captured by Mahadev who had imprisoned Gonds at Jamuna River at a sacrificial place. Linga rode on the wings of Bindo bird he rolled away the stone from grotto and Gonds were liberated.<sup>20</sup>

**3.5. Shamrao Hival** wrote *The Pradhans of Upper Narmada Valley*, He narrated the folk story that a Gond had a son who is called Lingo, he was born in the paddy field. Lingo's six elder brothers said we are born in the house we have the name of our own family but this boy who was born outside should take his name from outside. They gave him name *Perdhan* – other's field of rice. In folk story the six brothers decided that brother who is born in rice field should neither live nor eat with them in

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma of Eastern Mandla*, Published by New Literature Publishing Company, 12 Bake House Lane, Fort, Bombay, 114-115.

<sup>17</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 91-92.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-95.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

their house. They gave him only half of his share,<sup>21</sup> and gave him name *perdhan* means belonging to other's .

**3.6. Agrawal, Ram Bharos** in his book *Gond Raja of Garha Mandla* says that Gond kings ruled since 400 to 1564 and a long list of 63 kings that is authenticated by writers like Mathal Shri Rupnath, Sleeman and Pundit Ganeshdatt Pathak that Gondwana kingdom sustained for fourteen hundred years.<sup>22</sup> According to Ram Bharos Agrawal there was a Gond king Hirdya Sahi; at his time Gondwana state had a golden period of agricultural land development.<sup>23</sup> After Two Hundred years of Hirdya Sahi, a British Captain Ward appreciated his Agricultural productivity which still exists with a mango garden famous until today in Mandla Madhya Pradesh.<sup>24</sup> Even today it is a challenging job that Indian Agricultural production is to be carried out as stewards of God for taking care of earth.

**3.7. Per Julission** lived in Madhya Pradesh for about forty years, his book *The Gonds and their Religion*, he said the Origin of Gonds is by *Mahadev* who swimming in the water. When *Mahadev's* penance was over, the one, Kali Adao the Divine Ancestor of the Gonds was born.<sup>25</sup>

**3.8. Clement F. Moss** lived at Padhar in Betul District Madhaya Pradesh for about forty years. He wrote a book *An Introduction to the Grammer of Gondi Language, As Spoken in Betul and Adjoining Districts in Madhya Pradesh, India*. Moss says Gonds did not have a term *Kuaa* for well, it indicates that they must have been wandering from river to river, stream to stream, shifting agricultural fields until they settled down in their present localities.<sup>26</sup> Moss has given interesting information and wrote Gondi grammer.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> Ram Bharos Agrawal, *Gond Raja of Garha Mandla*, Allahabad, 1961.7, 111- 112.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 84-85, 87-88.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 84-85, 88-89.

<sup>25</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 85, 210.

<sup>26</sup> Moss, *Grammer of Gondi* 8,12.

**3.9. Nirmal Minz** wrote on, *Dalit-Tribal: a Search for Common Ideology. A theological interpretation of the tribal reality in India*. Nirmal Minz wrote on identity of tribal that is related to land, language and labor.<sup>27</sup>

**3.10. Longchar Wati** wrote *Tribal Identity and Theology* Wati says that tribal theology is an 'earth centred' discussion it leads to contemporary ecological crisis, misuse of resources, market culture, war and survival crisis are the issues of study for which land justice is essential. He said sacred power is present in every iota of creation and the whole creation becomes the manifestation of the creator, thus the land and creator are inseparably related with human beings.<sup>28</sup>

Most of the contextual theologians have focused on the issue of the marginalized people such theologies have a deeper understanding of context not only of background against which the gospel is to be interpreted rather the culture and socio-political situations become new sources of theology. The contextual theologies aim at liberation of a person to restore self identity and dignity by creatively engaging in the Gospel and culture for social, economic, religious, cultural, political and ecological justice. The *land, language and labour* are common characteristics of tribal identity. Theology of any context carries specific socio – cultural characteristics of the society, the way of living, animistic faith, belief in invisible God, different deities protecting their tribe, division of clans, relationships, eating habits, dress, music, dance and folk stories are the important features of contextual theology.

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<sup>27</sup> Nirmal Minz, *Dalit-Tribal: A Search for Common Ideology*, Arvind P. Nirmal (ed.), Towards a Common Dalit Ideology, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Madras, 1991. 106.

<sup>28</sup> Wati Longchar, *Tribal Identity and Theology* is rethinking theology in India, James Massey, T.K. John SJ (ed.) New Delhi: Manohar Publishers. Longchar Wati (Compiled), *Contextual Theologies*, SCEPTRE, Shrachi centre, Kolkata, 2013.

## Chapter II

### A Survey of Contextual Theologies

#### Introduction

It is appropriate to understand the meaning and the definitions of contextual theology before making survey of models of contextual theologies and at this juncture to envisage how contextual theology began in a context. For example St. Thomas Aquinas begins his great handbook on what is Christian theology the *Summa Theologiae* with the attempt to characterize this branch of learning as a genuine “human science”; because a contextual theology is always rooted in the living tradition of the Church; as Biblical witness is received and interpreted throughout the centuries by the community of faith. However, contextual theology is not only a science but an *art* of using words persuasively and beautifully but in this process of contextualization the most important part is application of gospel for the transformation in the life of people in a particular context therefore:

- a) Contextual theology is not only a theological discourse but primarily to do something in the context for the people.
- b) Doing contextual theology means connecting what the Scriptures say about God and how God has worked and continues to work in history and today’s world, and what are the suggestions for the present local context.
- c) Contextual theology can deal with all aspects of human experience and human actions, but it is to be looked from the perspective of how God has expressed himself and how God is working in and through the context.
- d) Contextual theology is done by thinking, discussing, arguing about God and the world, engaging people in conversation about God, commenting on Biblical texts and Church traditions, and by living lives that authentically mirror convictions about the reality of God.
- e) Contextual theology is different from (good) preaching in literary form or powerful message coming from the Apostles or from the tradition of Israel as it must link between that tradition and the audience's who hear the Gospel in context with their experiences.

- f) Contextual theology—in its oral or written form—makes use of its own art of language capturing the content of faith in artful convincing words for application of the Gospel.
- g) Contextual theology differs from religious studies, then, above all in fact it is rooted in the faith of a worshipping community and is an attempt to express that faith through reasoning. It means one may not seek to understand in order to believe, rather one must believe what he understands.<sup>29</sup>
- h) The Contextualization must bring the gospel message of God's love meaningfully into the life context of people. As God loves the strangers- the alien, the orphan and the widow.
- i) The Contextualization contains a sharp criticism to culture; the gospel refuses to be contextualized into a racial culture. It will challenge or even try to abolish a culture of oppression. It is openly 'biased' to the weak and oppressed members of the community.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore it is to be asked that what is God's intention to communicate and how the message can make sense to the people by connecting them to the solutions in context of today's global world. The world is influenced with migrants, disease in one place impacts every place, and personal issues become the business of multitude. But transformation is not a case of one-size-fits-all for everyone in a context; as transformation takes place only when the community reaches a decision that what they have held to be true needs adjustment based on some standard to which they collectively agree but redemption has no meaning until it speaks in the language of conscious life of the people for transformation of the society.<sup>31</sup> The ethnic diversity in Indian context is no longer the special domain of Hindi, English and regional languages spoken in a single area. But for understanding the context one does require to leave the Church office. The attentive pastor is always alert for

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<sup>29</sup> Brian E. Daley, SJ, *Doers of the Word, Research and Teaching in Theology*, Theological Education, Volume 46, Number 1, 2010, 18-19, 20, 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> Kosuke Koyama, *New Heaven and New Earth, Theological Education for the New Millennium*, Asia Journal of Theology, volume 12, Number 1, April 1998, 6-7, 12.

<sup>31</sup> R. Daniel Shaw, *Beyond Contextualization: Toward a Twenty-first-Century Model for Enabling Mission*, International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol. 34, No. 4, October 2010, 212.

distinctiveness of context which he can reflect, or to which he can respond, in his teachings. If a Pastor lives in a particular area of Muslim; use Muslim terms in approaching Muslims (for example Isaal- Masih representing the term for Jesus Christ, the term *injil* for Gospel, and *Miriam* for Mary); because when two audiences come from different cultures the term may be used carefully otherwise audience can miss the point. Therefore the message is to be translated into the lives as it relates to the people of a cultural context in which the gospel of Jesus Christ is conveyed.<sup>32</sup> Contextualization took a paradigm shift it was like Aristotle's belief to 'Copernican Revolution'. This brought a turn from Western doctrinal debates to theology of contextualization; because Contextual theology focuses to the real life situations so that Gospel brings transformation in the lives of the people. Therefore, contextualization is an effort of formulating, presenting and practicing the Christian faith in such a way that it is relevant to the cultural context. It has been rightly defined by Enoch Wan a Chinese theologian that:

*"Contextual Theology is to be driven from the dynamic relationship between gospel and culture, 'cultural relevancy' and 'theological coherence.'"*<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, Contextualization requires acceptance of a Universal Biblical Truth in a Particular Context for which one may accept the importance and universality of the ultimate truth; one can check the acceptability of the value in one's context. Identify other cultural values that prevent the practice of the universal value, to recognize the complexities of the culture, to clarify priorities of traditional practices in the light of universal values, to design new patterns of behaviour that demonstrate the universal value, to recognize and identify cultural values for equality,<sup>34</sup> and this is how contextual theology looks forward for the welfare of all with equality and justice.

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<sup>32</sup> Loum, John, *Diversity and contextualization*, Source: Missio apostolica 20 no 2 N 2012, 172-73.

<sup>33</sup> Olagunju, Olugbenga. *An evaluation of Bevens' models of contextual theology and its contributions to doing theology in the 21st century church*. Ogbomoso Journal of Theology 17, no. 2 (2012 2012): ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCO host (accessed September 21, 2015), 40.

<sup>34</sup> Frances S. Adeney, *Contextualizing universal values: a method for Christian mission*, International Bulletin of Missionary Research 31 no 1 January 2007, 33-36.

*The History of Contextual Theology* may be seen as a beginning point of the supreme act of contextualization when God became human being; identified Himself with humanity as 'Jesus of Nazareth'. This Jesus of Nazareth sent his disciples to all over the world to make disciples in different contexts as part and parcel the challenging task of doing theology is to take the Gospel to another culture where the truth of the Gospel is not diluted but communicated effectively. Contextual theology is an ongoing process that must take in to consideration the development of new trends. Contextualization began by God in action of creating the world; above all the incarnation of his mission as saving act of his sacrifice for the salvation of the whole creation. In early days of Christianity, the gospel message was carried out from Jewish context to the Gentile context. With this mandate, St. Thomas who was a Jew and a disciple of Jesus came to Southern Coast of India. The missionaries later on came from Europe, Rome and America towards end of fifteenth century to Asian countries and were linked to the colonial enterprise in eighteenth and nineteenth century in which renaissance was at its climax. The formulation of Nicene Creed is a good example of contextualization. The method adopted by the early Church fathers at Nicaea was to defend the faith to combat prevailing heresies. Later Chalcedon responded to the issues of divinity and humanity of Jesus in one person. Martin Luther in his context clearly understood, recognized, responded, developed and re-discovered' the meaning of justification by faith alone during reformation period. The early Christianity went through a process of internalization of its own identity until Constantine made Christianity as an official religion of Rome. Christianity settled in Europe for about 1200 years. Then Roman Catholic missionary activities started and further 'Contextualization of gospel' took place in Spain and Portugal. Then 'Gospel' reached to France, Spain and Italy, later on to China and to other countries.<sup>35</sup> One crucial attempt was of 1910 Edinburgh Conference. The Christians who followed the "Evangelization" of the world in this generation accused people like Sam Higginbottom for practicing "Social Gospel", of agriculture and social developments. At each of these conferences major questions such as on race,

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<sup>35</sup> Ukpong, Justin S. *Contextualisation: a historical survey*. Afer 29, no. 5 (October 1987): ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCO host (accessed September 21, 2015), 279.

relations to other religions, rural and industrialization were discussed; these issues were related to contextualization.<sup>36</sup> The voice for contextual theology became more powerful in last few decades because it was felt that the classical theology was male domination oriented.<sup>37</sup> However, whatever process is carried out in every period has been the contextual theology therefore Richard F. Wilson puts succinctly that:

*“All theology is contextual beginning from the world of the Old Testament to the New and through the second to the twentieth century, Christian theology has always been articulated through a particular tradition.”*<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, every theology can be said as contextual because Christian faith is not limited to a particular place but it moves on to every cultural context and there is no such thing as theology; there is only contextual theology. The attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context is really a theological imperative and cannot be something on the fringes of the theological enterprise. Thus, contextual theological interpretation exists at the very center of theology in today's world.

**Contextualization'** has become part of theological vocabulary. This is also called as “incarnation,” “indigenization,” “inculturation”, “constructing local theology,” or “doing theology” It is a process which has recently come to full self-consciousness among theologians.

### **Definitions:**

**Chris Ridgeway** defined “*Contextualization as adapting theology is to be relevant to a particular context.*”<sup>39</sup>

**Enoch Wana** “*contextualization is a ‘cultural relevancy’ to ‘theological coherence.’*”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>*ibid*,281.

<sup>37</sup> Bevens, Stephen B. *Models of contextual theology*. Missiology 13, no. 2 (April 1985): 185-202. ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost (accessed September 21, 2015), 185.

<sup>38</sup> Olagunju, Olugbenga, An Evaluation of Bevens' Models,37.

<sup>39</sup> Olagunju, Olugbenga, *An Evaluation of Bevens' Models*, 40- 41.



**Tite Tiénou:** *“Contextualization is capturing the meaning of the gospel in such a way that a given society communicates with God.”*<sup>41</sup>

**J. S. Ukpong and C.U. Manus** *“the gospel or the Bible is relevant to a social context and location.”*<sup>42</sup>

**Stephen Bevans** it is *“an attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context.”*<sup>43</sup>

**Kosuke Koyama** *“Theology is a talk that takes one’s neighbour seriously.”*<sup>44</sup>

**Sunand Sumithra & F. Hranghkuma** contextualization is an *“Expression of Christian ministry, life which is adapted and rooted in a community of different cultural localities.”*<sup>45</sup>

**K.C. Abraham:** *“The primary objective of theological reflection...is to help people in their struggle for justice and freedom...in accordance with the vision of the gospel.”*<sup>46</sup>

**Carlos H. Abesamis S.J.:** Contextual theology involves *“the activity of reflecting on the contemporary human life situation in the light of one’s faith.”*<sup>47</sup>

**Robert J. Schreiter:** *“Local Theology is defined as the dynamic interaction among gospel, church, and culture...local theologies come out of particular local contexts, so Local Theology can be called “Contextual Theology...Contextual theology is to speak not of universal, permanent and unchanging theologies, but“local theology changes according to the given context.”*<sup>48</sup>

**Stephen Bevan:** is a catholic theologian he defined that :

*“There is no such thing as “theology”; there is only contextual theology...an attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context is really a theological imperative” and cannot be “something on the fringes of*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid,*

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

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid,*

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

<sup>44</sup> S. Batumalai, *An Introduction to Asian Theology*, ISPCK, New Delhi, 1991, 372.

<sup>45</sup> Sunand Sumithra & F. Hranghkuma (ed.), *Doing Mission in Context*, Published by Theological book Trust, Bangalore, 1995, 17.

<sup>46</sup> K.C. Abraham, *Third World Theology: Paradigm Shift and Emerging Concerns*, M.P. Joseph, (ed.) *Confronting Life; Theology out of Context*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 1995, 207-8.

<sup>47</sup> Ken Gnanakan,(ed.), *Biblical Theology in Asia*, Published by Theological Book Trust, Bangalore, 1995,110.

<sup>48</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing a Local Theology*, Orbis, New York, 2000,

*the theological enterprise. It is at the very center of what it means to do theology in today's world.*"<sup>49</sup>

In the opinion of researcher, it is obvious through the above definitions that Christian faith has a responsibility to be relevant in a particular context. The nature of contextual theology changes according to the need of local context in which gospel and culture interact to each other, it is to be applied in according to the need and situations for every new generation for the transformation of the people but the true meaning of the gospel may not be diluted or lost in the context. The need for contextualization may not arise from theoretical imperatives, but from practical experiences. It is a way of doing theology that takes into account four things: (1) the true Gospel message may not be diluted in a context; (2) the Biblical interpretation must be expressed in local language so that people may understand the word of God (3) the culture of a particular nation or region or context is to be understood properly for application of the gospel (4) social change be applied in that culture with technological advances on the one hand and struggles for justice and liberation on the other.<sup>50</sup>

## **SECTION A: MODELS FOR CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY:**

### **1. Stephen Bevan's Models of contextual theology**

- a) *Translation Model*: is not a word for word translation. Rather it is more concerned for fitting the proper meaning of Gospel into another cultural context but Biblical message of salvation should not be lost or change in a context.
- b) *The Anthropological (Identity & experience) Model*: The term "anthropology" refers to the social science for cultural identity of a person. One can speak of finding Christ as a person hidden in a culture; it means the Christian message is to be discovered within a culture, this model faces the problem of syncretism.<sup>51</sup> However,

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 2, April 1985, 186.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 186-187.

<sup>51</sup> Bevans, Stephen B. *Models of contextual theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002. ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCO host (accessed September 11, 2015), 42-44.

- this model believes that God's revelation is not limited to a holy place but open to daily life in ordinary words, among ordinary people, in their experiences with original identity. Therefore; God's self-disclosure is not limited to a particular holy place or to the people; because revelation comes in daily life situations; in simple ordinary local identity of the people in ordinary words. Thus; Christ is to be discovered in any culture of any context in ordinary experiences of the people.
- c) *The Praxis (Social change) Model:* This model does not believe that prayer is the final solution to everything; yes, prayer is essential but at the same time concrete action must be taken against any oppression such as political, social or economic for a social change. It is concerned for liberation of the people from oppressed situations. This model does not believe that God will come to intervene in the affair of the people.
  - d) *The Synthetic (dialectical) Model:* This model seeks a dialogue or conversation for the ultimate truth. The strength of this model is that communities have enough in common to communicate with one another. It affirms the uniqueness of the gospel that is rooted in scripture, culture and traditions for transformation of the society through synthesis of dialogue but this model faces danger of one source that might become dominant. However; this model does not ignore the complexities of social and cultural change it affirms the uniqueness of the gospel rooted in scripture, culture and traditions. Therefore, this model strives for the theological maturity to find out the ways mutually with gospel and culture for freedom and wholeness in the society through dialogue with the people of all faiths for common goals.
  - e) *The Transcendental (Personal experience) Model:* The contextualization begins with one's own religious experience that is cultivated through long years of discipline and prayer. The problem of this model is various individuals claim to represent an authentic expression of theology. It's starting point is one's own personal experience who has cultivated a relationship with the Holy Spirit through long years of discipline and prayer but the problem arises when other members of the culture are left in confusion that how to trust and verify personal vision, and questioning to each other; is that a reality or falls imaginary dreaming experience?
  - f) *The Semiotic (Symbol) Model:* "listens to culture" by means of semiological analysis to understand a symbol in which God's Revelation is discovered in the context but

not brought from outside. Christ can be found in the values, symbols and behaviour patterns of a culture. It uses the methods of semiotic or symbolic anthropology, to which many anthropologists agree is the best way to analyze culture.<sup>52</sup>

A great theologian Paul Tillich made a statement for use of symbols that: If a symbol points to an ultimate concern it can legally be termed as religious symbol.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, while using a symbol in a particular context Martin Luther emphasized to use it carefully as follows that:

*“If the art form serves the gospel can be accepted... but a symbol should not become an idol for worship but it must be judged on the basis of faith and scripture.”*<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, icons, images and symbolic paintings could be used as examples of faith but not as objects of idol worship.<sup>55</sup> The role of the Church is to highlight the symbols in the light of the gospel. For instance; Jesus said “you are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-14). The symbol of light relates in day to day living for a person on matters of spirituality. But it must be noted that India refuses to accept Christianity in its claim of superiority.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Christians must avoid the arrogant nature of superiority towards the people of other faiths. Only then one can move forward for better relationships, not only on the religious issues but to move forward for the synthesis of local and global issues which are related to human life that can make theology more authentic.

**2. Joseph J. Spae models of contextual theology:** he has mentioned three models with respect to the recent socio-cultural developments. The models were developed after studying the impact of theology in cross-cultural experience in Africa, Melanesia, Japan and Black America. The work developed with contacts in between theology and culture. Joseph has proposed three models that draw our attention:

- a) *Translation model*- This model is somewhat the same as proposed by Bevan. In Joseph’s understanding this model tries to adapt the Christian message to local contexts and situations. This is adaptive, indigenizing approach; it is also

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<sup>52</sup>Olagunju, Olugbenga, *An Evaluation of Bevans' Models*, 41-49.

<sup>53</sup> Solomon Rajah Tan, *A Study of the Symbolism in Visual Arts and its Relevance to the Church in Malaysia*, Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 15, No.1, April 2001,46.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 47-48.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>56</sup> Chris Sugden, *Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 1997, 86, 91.

advantageous because it supports easy dialogue between the older and the younger churches.

- b) *Liberation model*- answers to the kind of oppression which exists in societies such as: racism, poverty and powerlessness. It demands action and draws its inspiration from the Scriptures. Their problems come in trying to carry out their objective of liberating both oppressors *and* oppressed.
- c) *Contextualization model*- This model insists for cultural identity. The purpose of this model is to continue to maintain the original identity of a particular culture when the Gospel is applied in the context. These models call for a strong sense of praxis, services to the community and sensitivity to the emergence of a genuine local theology.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, different models suggest various strategies of contextualization of the gospel in different contexts; however, Christians are called to build bridges and work together with others in areas of common concerns, liberating both oppressed and oppressor and to work for the welfare of the community.

### 3. Other Contextual models

- a) *The countercultural model*: it tends toward point of meeting of two cultures in a context. This model proposes that culture is to be read in the light of the gospel. Its orientation tends towards the Bible and at the same time to remain relevant to the context. The slogan of this model is that all culture should submit itself to the authority of the scripture and where culture crosses the scripture; the scripture should take precedence over the culture.<sup>58</sup> However, this model has to be cautious about what needs to be revisited to anti-cultural stance but the danger of sectarianism is always present.
- b) *The Dialogue model*: means a communication between two persons, two communities, two caste groups, two religions or people from two nations. In the process of dialogue Christians may tell story to others and be prepared equally to hear their story. It does not mean compromising my story (gospel) with theirs, but

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<sup>57</sup> Joseph J. Spae, *Missiology as Local Theology and Interreligious Encounter* 'Missiology: An International Review, Vol. VII, No. 4, October, 1979, 481-82

<sup>58</sup> Author(s):O.S. Olagunju, Olugbenga, *An evaluation of Bevans' models of contextual theology and its contributions to doing theology in the 21st century church*, Ogbomosho Journal of Theology 17 no 2 2012,

just listening to develop a good relationship to accommodate gospel in Indian context. Therefore, it is a very valid point here to constantly listen to others and to first of all understand their beliefs, tradition, culture, symbols and folk stories and songs. It recognizes the importance of dialogue in cultural contexts to find out common ground in matters of faith. It prompts religious groups to live in harmony. There are two terminologies used in Indian context for dialogue as follows:

- c) *Serve Dharm Sammalan* – is a multi-religious gathering which leads people to recognize common human values such as justice, human dignity and liberation. This unity is not ‘uniformity’ rather ‘oneness’; but oneness is not sameness, rather an acceptance of multiple perspectives existing in one personhood. However, today, there is a need for a paradigm shift from inter-faith dialogue to inter-Personal relations.
- d) *Satsang*- is a gathering of truth seekers for dialogue, in which praise and worship transcend religious borders. *Satsang* is generally practiced in the *Ashrams* for inter-religious openness. There could be Common grounds for dialogue. The best method in a pluralistic context is to aim for ‘Dialogue’ to develop *inter-personal relationship* to come together for social welfare, participating in each other’s festivals, to identify the commonalities of religious practices and faith, to promote unity within the country with nationalism, and to remove misunderstandings with each other for Common Socio-economic and Political issues; many Christians may not be interested for it but *Satsang* could be the basis for human welfare.

Therefore today most of the contextual models look towards for the welfare of the maximum number of the people who are socially, economically oppressed and politically marginalized. Christians must actively have dialogue and reflection in national politics and social activities of the country.<sup>59</sup> Christians are called to build bridges and work together with those of different faiths in areas of common concerns. This is the way of God’s ‘shalom’ or peace and wholeness of life which is to be experienced by the individual and community. The common humanity is the starting point but the goal is peace and reconciliation in God, and with each other. Therefore unity in working together is important for the development of the

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<sup>59</sup> V.S.Lal,(ed.), *Building Communities of Interfaith Relations*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002, 77-78.

society. This is possible through dialogue as Indians live together in a multi-cultural, multi- linguistic and multi- religious continent.

- e) *Cultural Identity model*: is a way of dialogue but unfortunately Indian Christians some times miss their cultural identity and tend towards Western or European culture it is rightly stated by Wilfred as follows that:

*“National Christian’s lack a cultural identity...as Christians tend to divorce themselves from their own culture, and mission has made us a type of ‘evangelical robot’.”*<sup>60</sup>

It is an impression that after converting to Christianity the behaviour and culture of an Indian changes. For instance; a Christian eats pork, beef and drinks wine, lives in western clothes as advertised in the films, giving the impression of a bad character person. Therefore it is required to remove such confusions from the mind of the people through conversation, mass media, literature, teaching and preaching. This is also a notable point that most of the Indian theologians were from Hindu background, who interpreted that Jesus was an Indian. This was true of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Muzumdar and many others. For example Keshub Chandra Sen related Christ to the people and customs of India as follows:

*“The Person and life of Jesus through the perspective of Hindu belief is in the ultimate divine character of humanity.”*<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, theologians interpret that Jesus Christ is very close to the people as saviour of Indians. Jesus brought relevant good news to the humanity and poor of his time. Jesus is powerfully appropriate to the situations of India today. He is a care taker of the poor, as God he is peace maker, teacher, healer, and life giver and a liberator who struggles for the justice, peace, harmony and liberation of oppressed, victimized and exploited people of India.<sup>62</sup> Jesus had symbolic identity of a Jew’s but had dialogue with every one of the community. The dialogue model is to be appreciated as it carefully ‘listens to culture’ and symbols to understand Christ but the danger of sectarianism is always present there. However; it recognizes the importance of dialogue in cultural contexts to find common ground in matters of

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<sup>60</sup> Gnanakan,(ed.), *Biblical Theology* ,7.

<sup>61</sup> Wilfred, *Asian Theologies*,196.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*,210.

faith. It prompts religious groups to live in harmony at peace but it fails to challenge the existing social-economic inequalities and issues of beliefs.

f) *Gospel and Plough model*: theologians and missionaries had applied different methods for communicating the Gospel in Indian context but one among them is the legacy of Sam Higginbottom who theologized mission as outlined in a book '*The Gospel and the Plow*' it was almost forgotten by thinkers, especially by the theologians. The Gospel and Plough was published by the MacMillan Company in 1921, and in 1926, and now it has been re-printed by Nivedit Good books, Missori, Utarakhand, in 2014, it brings clarity to the subject entitled: *The Old Gospel and Modern Farming in Ancient India*: '*The Gospel and the Plow*' was a theological tool for Higginbottom for communicating the gospel in his context, in fact one needs to apply the gospel method according to the circumstances of the socio- religious and cultural context to which Lesslie Newbigin stated that:

*"True contextualisation accords to the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both No and Yes, both judgement and grace. And that happens when the word is not a disembodied word but comes from a community which embodies the true story, God's story, in a style of life".<sup>63</sup>*

Theological life style of Sam Higginbottom began with rich experiences in India of 'White Revolution' when Mrs. Ethel Cody Higginbottom decided to buy a cow to provide unadulterated milk to her two little children. Her husband Sam Higginbottom began to theologize the gospel by milking a cow. Soon, their neighborhood friends wanted good milk for their children too. So a second cow had to be bought. The sight of sick children and India's need for clean milk made, Higginbottom exclaimed his first hand theological experience. Oh, India needs agriculture and dairy education.<sup>64</sup> Sam Higginbottom was a foreigner but he came to understand that many Indians are poor and hungry thus he tasted the theology of soil in his experience through cultivation and plentiful harvesting. He felt that it is essential in Indian context to promote theology of action through Agriculture and

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<sup>63</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, SPCK, London 1989, 152.

<sup>64</sup> Sam Higginbottom, *The Gospel and the Plow*, Missoorie, Uttarakhand: Nivedit Good books, 2014, xi.



Diary Technology to feed the hungry and serve the nation. In Allahabad district there were sixty two village schools, in - charge of middle aged or elderly gentleman who had never done a day's manual agricultural work in his life, for them the agricultural institute Allahabad provided practical theological training through a special summer school teaching them new techniques of agriculture for ten days, and the government teachers were taking a special two years course in practical agricultural suitable for school garden work, and with what enthusiasm they went back to their village that brought change among the students for India's need of better farming.<sup>65</sup> The model of gospel and plough takes both hand in hand the spirituality and technology for the welfare of the entire society.

### **Conclusion**

Contextual theologians have practically based the Gospel message for transformation of the people in Indian context to progress in all spheres of life; this theological method is relevant to construct a contextual theology. Also, one must appreciate the identity and dialogical biblical method of Saint Paul who respected people of Athens; he understood the people's religious faith and did not try to denounce them in Acts 17: 23 for the inscription at the altar 'for unknown God.' He used it as a proof of their sincere devotedness in worshipping God. However, symbol could be relevant to one of the contexts but it may not be appropriate for another context. It depends on action-reflection, rejection or acceptance.

Therefore, there could be greater use of architecture and cultural symbols in expressing the Christian faith within the culture of Indian context. For example, a Church can be constructed over a mountain shape, which could be surrounded by water. However; this is only to affirm their contextual identity, but the interpretation of the gospel must be conveyed in true and meaningful way.<sup>66</sup> Therefore for Beavens, contextualization insists on active approach which recognizes the need for cultural identity in the midst of cultural change. The purpose is to maintain the original identity of a particular culture without diluting the meaning of Gospel whenever it is applied to a context. The contextualization gives a call for a strong

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<sup>65</sup>*Ibid*, 60.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid*, 129 -130.

sense of praxis, service to the community and sensitivity to the emergence of a genuine local theology.<sup>67</sup> It answers to a kind of oppression which exists in societies such as: racism, poverty and powerlessness. It demands action and draws its inspiration from the Scriptures. Joseph J. Spae after evaluating Robert Schrieter's work on Contextual theology has mentioned three models with respect to the recent socio-cultural developments. He suggested various strategies of contextualization of the gospel in different contexts. However, Christians are called to build bridges and work together with others in areas of common concerns, liberating both oppressed and oppressor and to work for the welfare of the community.

The Gospel bearers must have passions to be open listeners, not judges and critics of other cultural forms and to people rather to know the meanings and the importance of certain practices in a particular context. St. Paul adopted similar methodological approach at Athens (Acts 17). St. Paul never used the Pulpit for criticism rather he commended the People and Context. Further, in method of contextualization of the Gospel it is to be remembered that Cultures are never static, they change constantly. The power of the Gospel can change cultures, shift values, reorganize structures, and modify traditional practices; this is an evident since the Church began. The Holy Spirit continues to work in a context for transformation in the lives of individuals and society in today's Global world.

## **SECTION B: ASIAN CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGIES**

### **Introduction**

The Asian contextual theologies in different countries retain a long experience of Christian faith in western form & style of worship but the majority of theologians found mistrust, conflict and hostile encounter in between the local and western way of Christian worship and of doctrinal interpretations. Therefore, R. H. S. Boyd critically summarized as follows:

*"The tradition which the English speaking Churches of the West have inherited is inevitably Graeco- Roman...especially Latin...and it is difficult for a Christian to look at his faith and practices except through Latin spectacles...also the Indian*

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<sup>67</sup> Joseph J. Spae, 'Missiology as Local Theology and Interreligious Encounter' Missiology: An International Review, Vol. VII, No. 4, October, 1979, 481-82

*Churches have been influenced by same tradition...West is to discover....and break out...Greek...Latin...and Roman structure.”*<sup>68</sup>

Boyd made it clear that even western Churches imitated the Greek, Latin and Roman structure for their worship patterns that is not suitable for every cultural context, then why should not the strategy of Gospel application be changed according to the need of context because Gospel must be meaningful and easy to understand in a local context. The contextual theology also has a common goal to convey God's eternal message to a particular local community without changing the core essence of Gospel it must be conveyed to the people. Therefore, various strategies are applied in different localities by the missionaries a few are viewed here as follows:

## **1. Thailand**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Thailand is a Buddhist country having 240000 monks throughout country follow the ethics of ten virtues such as charity, love, moral living, honesty, compassion, freedom from wrongful ambition and revenge, Love for People, care for people, welfare and happiness. The Buddhists are in majority, second are Muslims, and Christian population is about 1%. Thailand was not colonized like other countries but it was influenced by Western powers and neo-colonialism.<sup>69</sup> The rural people are busy in paddy fields producing not only rice but also mosquitoes. Rural Thailand is famous for banana, mangoes and hospitality. The urban context is famous for modern agencies, institutions, political system, education, employment, hospitalization, communication, transportation, agriculture production, distribution, housing and so on. Urban Thailand is sometimes called 'Americanized' or busy business Thailand, it is Thailand in which coffee and pizza taste delicious, and one can even speak English! However, the rural traditional and modernized Thailand co-exists as 'banana-mango' and 'coffee-pizza,' which stay together in Thai context.<sup>70</sup> The new culture of fast food, cake, biscuits and speaking English is the influence of

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 7, 10.

<sup>69</sup> S. Batumalai, *An Introduction to Asian Theology*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 1991, 302-205.

<sup>70</sup> Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974, 5-6.

colonial powers which co-existed in both rural and urban contexts together in Thailand.

**1.2. Meaningful Gospel:** As a Japanese missionary Kosuke Koyama was in Thailand, he wrote his experiences in *Water Buffalo Theology*. He began to write that on my way to Church, I never failed to see a herd of water buffaloes grazing and rolling in the muddy paddy field. It reminds me that villagers are farmers; the difficulty was how to preach the Gospel to these farmers in simple sentences. On his way he watched sticky rice, banana, pepper, dog, cat, bicycle, rainy season, leaking houses, fishing, cock fighting, lottery and stomach ache; these all are meaningful words for the people. Koyama thought how to relate gospel of Christ to the terms such as cock fighting! The gospel must begin with the need of the farmers and not with the great *summa Theologiae* and *Church Dogmatic*, as he works in northern Thailand, not in Italy and Switzerland; this decision was the beginning of his theology in Thailand.<sup>71</sup> Koyama articulated a ‘rice- root’ theology ‘from below’ that comes out from the everyday experience of the farmers of the northern Thailand that differs from Western theology.<sup>72</sup> Therefore Koyama started his contextual theology with a simple thinking that how to preach the gospel on Sunday morning in an ordinary language related to the daily life situations of the people in which they live and will understand easily. Koyama spent almost ten years in the United States but his tone was Japanese. Why was his English pronunciation miserable? He sees a reason that he was born in Japanese speaking country. Koyama asked then why should he leave all his Japanese culture and language, after becoming a Christian but he must continue to retain his own culture and language the truth and what is just as theologian cannot live outside a particular history or locality.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, in a cultural context it is necessary that one must accept and respect each other for a meaningful Gospel preaching. Koyama preached the Gospel to the native crowd in a natural context while people are drinking tea in earthen tea pots, men seated around smoke pipes, women and children walking or sitting on the ground. However, they listen the word of God and believe in Christ.

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<sup>71</sup>*Ibid*, viii-ix.

<sup>72</sup> Deane William Frem, *Third World Liberation Theologies*, New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1988, 78-79.

<sup>73</sup>Koyama, *Water Buffalo*, 43-45.

**1.3. Faith in Practice:** Buddhist faith has a great impact of *nirvana* liberation received through *Dharma*. Salvation is received through the blood of Jesus Christ is not understood easily by Thai people because Buddhists believe in *Ahimsa* or non-killing, at hearing Christian faith a Thai is completely lost that how salvation can be received through the sacrifice of a person who was killed on the Cross. Therefore, at a dinner table of Thai; Buddhist salt and Aristotelians pepper be added into understanding of Christianity as it would be more fruitful.<sup>74</sup> Aristotelian thought has a flavour of *Dharma* which helps a person to understand the existence and mystery of God. This means that one must not simply reject the ‘pepper and salt’ but try to present Christ by using the local pepper and salt for preaching the gospel which is more interesting and applicable in their local contextual faith context.

Koyama explains an incident of conversation of a missionary with a woman who was suffering from cancer: The minister goes to a woman suffering from cancer; asked her, may I talk to you a few minutes about the Christian religion? Woman replies, yes; Minister tells her the Gospel. Woman interrupts; just a minute! I am a northern Thai woman, can you speak my Thai dialect. I am tired of hearing your poor Thai. Minister replied I am sorry I can speak only the Bangkok Thai. Woman; I don’t like you missionaries always trying to teach people, while you really do not understand the people. I will call a monk; he will understand and comfort me with his *Dharma*, he can speak my own language. You are wasting your time, go home! Missionary realized that he was caught up in linguistic problem to convey the Gospel in audience local tongue and Philosophy.<sup>75</sup> Therefore language is not just a matter of sound or grammar but it is the matter of proper understanding in between the preacher and audience. The central issue is a communication has to be heart to heart conversation with people of other faiths,<sup>76</sup> therefore according to Koyama if the gospel message is conveyed in local dialect it will be more effective.

**1.4. Religious Doctrines:** For contextualization of the gospel understanding a person is more important than religious doctrines for example Buddhism does not

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<sup>74</sup>*Ibid*, 79-82, 86-88.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid*, 89-92.

<sup>76</sup>Song, *Third Eye Theology*, 23.

suffer from flood and drought but a Buddhist has many needs: emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual. The Bible also gives importance to human relationships because a human being is more important than the law in sight of Jesus Christ who healed the people on the day of *Sabbath*. He said that man is not made for Sabbath but Sabbath has been made for man.<sup>77</sup> Kosuke Koyama gave lectures on the book of Exodus to a group of Christian farmers in northern Thailand. An elderly person stood up and asked him what theology is? Koyama drew up a picture on the blackboard of a chicken. He asked him, do you know chicken? It eats, lays eggs, exercises, and gets sick. As understanding a chicken is called 'chicken-ology'. So also theology means the 'Theo' (God) and 'logy' understanding about God. It is a 'logy' that develops within heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:37) when one obeys it as 'logy' of obedience, repentance, hope, judgment, love, faith, worship and eternal life. Therefore, theology must be engaged not only in the heart but also in reasoning for a person to bear the marks of Jesus;<sup>78</sup> as theology is not done for God but for the people. Koyama shares his own experience that he was not taught by the seminaries what to do in a context, but he discovered that it is more important to know a Hindu than Hinduism, a missionary than missiology, wife than marriage, Jesus Christ than Christological doctrines. Therefore, library Buddhism of seminary studies is paralyzed but Street Buddhist is unemployed, without income, walking in the street, sun beats him with empty stomach in search of little food.

**1.5 Attitude of the Church:** The Christian Church must have the Mind of Christ; not of crusade. Zacchaeus' mind was changed when he said to Christ, listen sir! If, I have cheated anyone, I pay back him four times (Luke 19: 8). Therefore, the mind of Christ leads a person to repentance, transformation and eternal life. The Bible narrates an example of transformed life that Paul was a persecutor but when received the mind of Christ. As a communicator he said; 'I bear the marks of Jesus on my body' (Galatians 6:17). Koyama explained God can call any one even without theological degrees. If a believer has the mind of Christ, he will work for the transformation of the whole society. Therefore, Church should not have the crusading mind only for increasing the membership of the church but the crucified

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<sup>77</sup>Koyama, *Water Buffalo*, 160, 164, 165.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid*, 182-184.

mind which can respond like a father of the lost son, reclaiming his lost son to 'dance with music, and feast' in the event of dead - alive – lost –found? To 'live for others' without a crusading mind; presenting the true nature of gospel. Western Churches provided handled Cross with financial help boiled eggs, cheese, lamb's meat, hot coffee, and high – protein lunch box that is called crusading mind with aim of conversion of the people into Christianity but the resources become dangerous if it does not have the local crucified mind of love and sacrifice for others. Thus it is important that cross 'without a handle' is called crucified mind not receiving foreign funds from abroad but to carry rough and heavy cross of own resources as it was carried by Jesus over his shoulder 'without a handle'. Further to understand what is Risen mind? A woman who was caught in adultery was brought by Scribes and Pharisees to Jesus for judgement, Jesus asked the woman where are they? Has no one condemned you? Jesus said neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again. Jesus taught "Bent down theology." His words created a 'risen mind' within the woman. This is the Cross 'without the handle' which transforms the life of a person;<sup>79</sup> and society. The cultic images of Buddha play an important role in personal and communal life of Thailand but a scholarly Buddhist understands that human beings cannot make an image of God and use it for their own good. This could be the starting point with Thai Buddhists to talk about God who has created everything.<sup>80</sup> The Bible also forbids in second commandment for worshipping the man-made image of God.

## 2. China

**2.1. Introduction:** In China Mings were the last native rulers (1368–1644),<sup>81</sup> today, 'People's Republic of China' is a socialist republic country ruled by a single Communist Party of China. Over past 25 years. China had the fastest-growing major economy in the world, with annual growth of more than 10 per cent, under the communist system. Religion is officially discouraged in China but 50 per cent Chinese are nominally Buddhist, overlapping 30 per cent are Taoist. 40 percent are

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<sup>79</sup>*Ibid*, 1-3, 6-7, 11-12, 36.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid*, 28-34.

<sup>81</sup><http://asianhistory.about.com/od/china/p/ChinaProfile.htm> , accessed on 28/01/ 2014.

atheists, 4 percent are Christians, 1.5 per cent Moslems, and tiny percent are Hindu.<sup>82</sup>

**2.2. Arrival and rejection of Gospel:** The most widely accepted record of the earliest existence of Christianity in China is a stone stele dated 781 A.D. describes a Syrian missionary monk, Olopun had arrived to the capital of China during the Tang Dynasty in 635 A.D., the Gospel was translated in the imperial library and presented to the Emperor Taizong (599 – 649). The king proclaimed Christian religion is purely excellent, natural and beneficial to mankind let it be published throughout the empire, and build a Syrian Church in the capital which shall be governed by twenty-one priests. The Tang dynasty was in decline during the later half of the ninth century. Then there was an anti Emperor Wuzong (814 – 846) he was a Taoist, he decreed in 845 A.D. that all foreign religions be banned. Thereafter no record points to any notable Christian presence until four hundred years. However, a Franciscan missionary arrived in the capital, Da Du (today's Beijing) in 1294 A.D. Later on a Mongolian emperor was tolerant to all forms of religions including Christianity. As a result, it was possible to build Churches around the capital and convert at least six thousand Chinese and Mongols to Christianity. The short-lived Mongolian Empire was struggling with internal power; in this phase Christianity was largely perceived as a foreign religion and became a target of opposition. Therefore, one year after the establishment of the Ming kingdom in 1368 A.D., all Christians — both the Catholics and Nestorians — were expelled from China.

**2.3. Contextualization of the Gospel:** Christianity returned to China by a talented missionary, an Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci in 1582 devoted himself for learning the Chinese language and culture; translated Chinese classics and created the first Portuguese-Chinese dictionary. He adopted a more accommodating approach to Chinese traditions, trying to integrate Christianity into existing Chinese philosophy. Ricci's mission was a huge success culturally; he was commemorated as a cultural ambassador. Ricci claimed there were more than one thousand Chinese converts' in 1605. There was expulsion of foreign missionaries after 1949 that opened a new

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<sup>82</sup><http://www.infoplease.com/country/china.html>, accessed on 28/ 01/ 2014.



chapter of Christianity in China where Christianity played a great role in education, medicine and science. In 1949, Chinese Christians numbered approximately reached to three million Catholics and one lakh Protestants. Today, China's Christian population is over one hundred million.<sup>83</sup> In 1949, missionary expansion was closed in China; many Christians thought that it was an end of God's mission, but the mission work did not cease in China. However, Christians were called 'Rice Christians' who were fed by foreigners and it was obvious that shortage of rice brings death. On the contrary, sufficient rice means sufficient life. Rice Christians are hungry in physical need of "*Rice Sermons*," but in fact it meant that Church should be involved in the social and political struggles of the people. The participation in Eucharist encounters the shame, pain and death on the cross but at the same time one can experience the glory, joy and life abundant in Christ.<sup>84</sup>

**2.4. Contextualization of folk stories:** In a context, culture expresses the way of living of the people their food habits, clothes, language, faith, religious practices, rituals and so on but historically it was mostly passed on from one generation to the next orally in form of practices and folk stories, it occurred in China too in narrating the stories that is explained by Choan - Seng Song in his book *Tell us another story*, a child has an appetite for stories of no limits. Jesus himself frequently taught His listeners narrating stories. Jesus would have heard the moving stories in the family, for example about the father's love for his lost son (Luke 15:11-32). Therefore, in the mouth of Jesus these stories became parables of God's kingdom for the human lifea disclosure of divine secrets as these stories have a life and meaning in a local context.<sup>85</sup>

Song narrated Chinese Folk story of *Mirror*: This story became popular during the Tang dynasty (A.D.618-906), according to story Wang the third man was a stupid. His wife asked him to buy a wooden comb, pointing to the narrow moon so

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<sup>83</sup><http://www.christiansinchina.com/2010/05/31/history-of-christianity-in-china-2010/05/31/history>, accessed on 30/12/2013

<sup>84</sup>C. S. Song, *Tell Us Our Names*, Indore: Sat prakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1985, 3-26.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, *Tell Us*, ix-x.

that he may not forget. At the time of buying comb man forgot what it was like but he saw full roundmoon. So, instead of comb he bought a round 'Mirror'. It was the first time wife saw her face in the mirror; she was shocked that husband has brought a new concubine. When mother-in-law looked into the mirror she also commented that why this son-in-law has brought an old woman. Later on; it was brought to judge when he saw in the mirror, he commented how ordinary people can dare to wear the dress of the judge. This Story is interpreted by Song as follows for application of gospel in Chinese context. The Mirror is given to reflect various images of God as social, political and cultural conditions of China. One may feel that mirror is the adulteration of the true image of God but it challenges to recognize the true image of God that must reflect from my life. Theological reflection of Christ's Humanity is something like water to fish; the fish dies when taken out of water and theology dies when divorced from human life and history. Therefore, God in Christ participates in human pain, in endless wars, poverty, cruel suppression because human life is the subject matter of theology. Therefore, Christian theology takes seriously a humanistic approach to the problems of life and the world.

Another story is *Tell Us Our Names* in Chinese culture newly married wife is introduced to all the family members by names; expected to remember them by names. According to the story a young man had four brothers; his wife cooked gruel for them but brothers did not eat for three days as she forgot their names, outside the house a bird sang the names of brothers in-law but wife was irritated and she stoned the bird to fly away. Next day the bird came, and sang the names of brothers in-law, finally she understood; and memorized the names, took the gruel and told brothers in-law their names. Her brother in-laws laughed; accepted the gruel and ate it. This story tells that God gave power to human beings to give 'Name' - thus man gave names to all cattle, to the birds of heaven, and to every wild animal (Genesis 2:19-20), but - why Christians change the name at Baptism? Why to uproot names as it has certain meaning related to their family and clan. Song's father's name was *Mangombe*, meaning 'one who owns a large herd of cattle,' but he was baptized as Charles; Mangombe was somebody, but Charles was nobody. Therefore one should not remain outsider but must become an insider to know the meaning of Jesus' name for future eternal life. In reality the names which are given at baptism to converted

Christians as Charles, Hellen, Robert, Mary, Thomas, John and Peter are strange for them. Therefore, they must retain their family names but ought to know the name of their Saviour Jesus Christ.

## **2.5. Theological Issues**

**2.5.1. Understanding of God:** It is true that God cannot die but He experienced sufferings and pain in crucifixion of bleeding Christ. Today, how does one can participate in sufferings of Christ a theologian must hear the songs sung by the victimized, humanity crying out to be freed from the politico- religious bondage. The Eucharist does not mean only to remember Christ's body but it includes all aspects of freedom in life such as social, religious, political, and economic, including all the basic needs of people of the context.<sup>86</sup> Therefore in doing contextual theology one cannot deal only with heaven as heaven is God's business; he can take care of it perfectly well. The earth is on fire, not heaven the earth is threatened by nuclear and chemical wars, and these are the local issues which may be addressed in talk of God for doing theology.

**2.5. 2. God's Revelation:** It can be interpreted as a private imagination in silence but it takes place as well as in odd noisy places at odd times as Jesus himself fed the crowd, healed, confronted people in cities, in market places it became a public event. The neighbours chant Buddhistsutras; sing Vedic hymns in Hindu temples but drumming and singing seems prohibited in Christian Church and homes, especially at night. This tension can be removed when one understands the valuable meaning of noisy songs, their names, story, culture, tradition, national history.<sup>87</sup> The book of Acts chapter two draws one's attention to the revelation of God in noisy environment, people spoke different tongues but revelation of God is understood by all of them without any discrimination.

**2.5.3. Contextualization of Gospel at Festival:** at New Year festival Chinese honor their ancestors at New Year family members actively participate in celebration for them it is the time of happiness and reconciliation in the family this provides an

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<sup>86</sup>Song, *Tell Us*, 32-34, 40-51.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, *Tell Us*, 99-100, 102-106, 108-113

opportunity for Christians to invite Chinese families to the Church to make a bridge to introduce Christianity to Chinese families. The Bible can be interpreted for *honoring the ancestor* that it is better to love the living parents than to offer a pig's head after death. As fifth commandment says to "Honor your father and mother; and you will live long on earth." Chinese believe that if the pictures of goddess are pasted at the entrance the evils will not enter into their houses. The Christians can give them printed scriptures, posters such as 'the Lord will watch over your coming and going now and forevermore' (Psalm 121:8). "Grace and peace to you from God our Father" (Galatians 1:3). Chinese visit each other to exchange two oranges to each for prosperity. The Christian meaning could be replaced with 'Grace and Peace be with you,' 'May God grant you success in all that you do,' or 'new has come, old is gone' (2 Cor. 5:17). One could encourage the Chinese instead of honoring kitchen god to honor the God of heaven and earth through his son Jesus Christ who is the mediator between God and humans (I Timothy 2:5).<sup>88</sup> The Chinese Theologians focus on social and economic issues for contextualization of the gospel. *Ting Kuang* – *Hsunwas* had a concern to discern the action of God in the historical process of building a new humanity. Similarly, *Raymond Fung* focused on industries for social injustice in Hong Kong, suggested that the Christian message must be given to the oppressors from a Christian perspective of compassion,<sup>89</sup> theologians look for transformation of individual and the whole society in context of China.

### 3. Korea

**3.1. Introduction:** Korea was under Yi dynasty since 15<sup>th</sup> century until the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century under the domination of Japan and China. The Russians dominated North Korea, America supported South Korea. This resulted in division of the country into North and South Korea in 1945 by America with the consent of Russia, to facilitate the surrender of Japanese troops. It was believed to be temporary arrangement but became permanent in terms of Communist and Capitalist Korea.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Betty O.S. Tan, *The Contextualization of the Chinese New Year Festival*, Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 15, No.1, April 2001, 115-128.

<sup>89</sup>Frem, *Liberation Theologies*, 81.

<sup>90</sup>Frem, *Liberation Theologies*, 95-100.

The division of Korea reflected in the life of the Church as denominationalism with internal dispute and theological differences.

**3.2. Contextualization of Gospel in Persecution:** The Korean Church faced persecution that brought them to solidarity where the use of Bible that became more contextual for liberation of the people. The Korean Pastors and Christians took part in independence movement of Korea they opposed military dictatorship of 1970's and 80's in which ordinary people /*Minjungs* were suppressed, exploited and murdered.<sup>91</sup>The *minjung* is a political term for the people who are exploited and oppressed in their cultural, historical, political and economic conditions,<sup>92</sup>the people who are alienated socially, exploited economically, and oppressed politically are called *Minjung*,this persecution of the people is compared to the sufferings of Christ on the cross who is capable to participate in the sufferings of the people, he has the power to liberate both the oppressor and the oppressed, therefore Bible is interpreted from *Minjung* perspective,<sup>93</sup> for the liberation of the people.

**3.3. Theology of *Minjung* Movements:** A document in 1973 entitled *The Theological declaration of Korean Christians* was widely circulated in Korea that revolution demanded social justice; affirming the victory of oppressed; people wanted to get liberated from Japan, China and Russian colonial powers. The Korean peasants participated in revolution movements to changefeudalistic system through which *Minjung* became the subjects of the history. The labour movement was supported by the Urban Industrial Mission; thousands of young workers were in miserable conditions of late working hours and low wages, the mission engaged young people in learning labour laws, singing, and worship and Bible studies. Participants became critical of their conditions and struggled for justice and democracy. The *Minjung* movement of 1970s - 1980s provided a significant context of learning process for the ordinary workers and people. The voices of protest were

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<sup>91</sup>Taesoo, *Minjung..Second Reformation*, 86.

<sup>92</sup>Samson Prabhakar & Jinkwan Kwon, *Dalit and Minjung Theologies: A dialogue*, Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2006,149-152.

<sup>93</sup>YIM Taesoo, *Minjung Theology: Interpretation of the Old Testament from the perspective of Minjung Theology* Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 14 No.1 , April 2000. 43-54

heard by the government for the betterment of individuals and for the transformation of the society.<sup>94</sup>

**3.4. Church became *Minjung*:** The Church had no choice but to be revolutionary when faced humiliation and persecution under Japanese attack during 1950-1953. The Church suffered further under the Communists, dead and wounded number increased to six million,<sup>95</sup> The 'Young Men Christian Association' became a powerful force in relating the Christian faith to the struggle for democracy and social justice.<sup>96</sup> The Korean theological methods proved to be very effective as stories of the people were re-told.<sup>97</sup> Korean theology believed that the *Minjung* are the bearer of the progress of society and history. *Minjung* theology sought to retain and politicize the consciousness of lower working classes as active participants in history and society for a futuristic way in which messiah son of God liberates the people from the sufferings. *Minjung*: is the theology of the people, ordinary people in the crowd who are left alone in the society without any support but they became the people of God by the support of the Church, young men and urban mission liberated these labourers and farmers from all kinds of persecution and exploitation, to which theologians have supported through their writings as follows. For example, Theologian *Kim Chung- Choon* believed that Christians must look into the rich *shamanistic* power of spirits of Koreans faith; it is to be contextualized to the power of the holy spirit of Christianity. This could be interpreted as *shaman* of Christ, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had helped *Minjung*, through the Urban Industrial Mission for their basic human rights and it was successful. Theologian *Kim Yong-Bok* said that *Minjung* is an ethnic group politically dominated by another group of military power. *Minjung* are the responsible citizens with consciousness who can motivate the people with their experiences to create a new community of liberated human beings. *Suh Nam – Dong* was a Professor of systematic theology insisted on reinterpretation of the Bible in the context of the common people's struggle to survive and for their fight for political liberation and economic justice. Jesus is the very cry of the people. Jesus is personification of the *minjung* and has become their

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<sup>94</sup>Prabhakar, *Dalit and Minjung*, 156- 161.

<sup>95</sup>Taesoo, *Minjung..Second Reformation*, 24, 26-29.

<sup>96</sup>Frem, *Liberation Theologies*, 95-96.

<sup>97</sup>Batmalai, *Asian Theology*, 22, 29, 31-32.

symbol. A theologian Dong criticized Church interpreting Exodus event as only a religious event and ignored the reality of it as historical political liberation event as Yahweh enabled them to come out from the slavery for new social order.<sup>98</sup>

#### 4. Malaysia

**4.1. Introduction:** Malaysia follows a constitutional monarchy. Its Capital is Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia's official language is Bahasa Melayu, but English is also widely spoken. Malaysians experience a warm tropical climate with considerable amount of rainfall. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch drove out all other Europeans from this area; for the rest of the 17<sup>th</sup> century they were friends with Johor. In 1944, when the Japanese faced defeat, the British government decided to join all the Malayan states. In 1946 Malay organizations joined together to form the United Malays National Organization. Malaya became independent on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1957. The first prime minister of Malaya was Tunku Abdul Rahman (1903-1976). He held office from 1957 to 1970. The Malaysian government adopted a new economic policy. It was remarkably successful. During the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's Malaysia changed from being a poor, agricultural country to a rich, industrial one. The standard of living of the Malaysian people rose dramatically. In 1991 the new economic policy was replaced by a new development policy and today Malaysia is a prosperous country. The population of Malaysia is 29 million.<sup>99</sup> Politically Malaysia is a stable country. It is a multi- racial, multi-religious and multi- cultural country. The Islam is the state religion; Christians are only 7% of the population of Malaysia. Christianity is understood as a Western product and the result of colonialism. It is also believed that Christianity is found among the migrant races.<sup>100</sup>

**4.2. Contextualization of Malaysian Symbols:** The term Symbol is something that stands for, represents, or denotes something,<sup>101</sup> but has other meanings for the people. Some times symbols become the very life breath of any religion, as they communicate the ideas. The Malaysian Tamil Christians retain with them the

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<sup>98</sup>David F. Ford & Rachel Muers (Ed.), *The Modern Theologians*, Blackwell Publisher, U.S.A, 2005, P. 523.

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.localhistories.org/malaysia.html> , accessed on 29/01/2014.

<sup>100</sup>Batumalai, *Asian Theology*, 373, 410-411.

<sup>101</sup>Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, 9.

symbols of purity which are associated with food utensils and washing of the hands before eating. The right hand of male is important in many ceremonial ways. For example when a Tamil couple is married in the Church, the groom has to stand on the right hand side of bride, when they come back from the altar the bride has to walk at left hand side of the groom. But “At first night” the bridegroom has to sleep at right hand side on their wedding bed because left hand is considered as unclean, weak and polluted. This is the value of male symbol. Another example is in the inauguration of a new house when a Tamil Christian family boils milk as a symbol of purifying the new house. When entering into a house they remove footwear, which is the symbol of purity and sanctity. In the same manner, receiving the elements of Eucharist is a symbol of reverence and submission to God.<sup>102</sup>

**4.2.1. Theologizing Symbolic terms:** The symbolic word *Muhibbah* means goodwill, love, friendship and affection. The *Muhibbah* is an Arabic word. It expresses the friendship and the wellbeing in the fields of social economic and political life of the people. According to the Bible this is the main theme of preaching “love your neighbors” (Leviticus 19:18). It motivates Christians to practice *Muhibbah* or love with neighbors, Christ has called us to have joy, hope, peace and love with others. In 1969 the word *Kesetiaan* was used for racial riot in Malaysia which gripped the communities with fear. Thus, there was a search to establish national unity among all Malaysians. The word *Kesetiaan* means also loyalty to the king and nation. Every Malaysian is required to show loyalty to the king and to the state. It is counted as duty. *Kesetiaan* has other meanings too such as kindness, faithfulness and obedience. Biblically it is correct to be faithful or loyal to God and to the king. The word ‘faithfulness’ to God can be understood in terms of Christian’s obligation to God and the state (Romans 13: 1 - 14). It is the duty of Malaysian Christians to remain faithful to the nation. Therefore the Malaysian Church has to interpret that we are not only faithful to God but also to the nation. Thus Christians in Malaysia are challenged to live in solidarity with other Malaysians. The symbol of a *kesetiaan* is a faithfulness that must remain as the

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<sup>102</sup> Solomon Rajah, *A Study of Symbolism in Visual Arts and its Relevance to the Church in Malaysia*, Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 15, No.1, April 2001, 31- 32.



light, salt and leaven in the day to day living of the people. The Malaysian remember the day of *Harmoni* the riot's day 13<sup>th</sup> May 1969, the Christians are reminded to exercise harmonious attitude towards all other religious communities in Malaysia. Harmony means good will, love, loyalty, peace and unity which addresses to the inter-religious unity and dialogue with harmony as the light, salt and leaven in the day to day living of the people. (Colossians 3: 14). The word *kesejahteraan* means peace. Malaysia is one of the most peaceful countries in the world, although it is an Islamic country, it is directly or indirectly involved in violence. However, the government has been capable of tackling its internal problem related to violence and the economy. Therefore Church is challenged to provide leadership and support to preserve peace and stability of the country. The might of violence is not right, but love compassion and the sanctity of God are important in the country. Therefore people are called to be witness of *kesejahteraan* or peace on earth and goodwill among all people because Jesus Christ is the Lord, "the prince of peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever (Hebrew 13:8), who proclaims the peace of God in the life of the people, (Ephesians 2:14-17, 2 Corinthians 5:18). The symbol of *perpaduan* means unity, the racial collaboration with one another emphasizing racial unity. It emphasizes eating together. The Malaysian flag is hosted in the premises of Churches as a symbol of respect for the state. It signifies justice, peace, unity, harmony, loyalty and goodwill.<sup>103</sup> As they seek to avoid differences, disunity and disharmony, the Churches in Malaysia are called to strive towards cooperation, common understanding and mutual recognition.

**4.2.2. Interpretation of Symbols by the Church:** In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century most of the Indian Lutherans from Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church came to Malaysia and brought with them the inherited traditions and symbols of Tamil culture in Malaysia. Evangelical Church Lutheran Mission has now taken into consideration means to indigenize and contextualize the forms of gospel within the pluralistic Malaysian society which involve language art, architecture, music and literature. A few are mentioned below: Traditional musical instrument are taken as *Symbols in worship*, it is recommended to Evangelical Lutheran Church to consider the use of

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<sup>103</sup> Rajah, *A Study of Symbolism*, 49-58.

traditional musical instruments in order to add Malaysian or Indian flavor to music, by using *tbala*, Tamil lyrics, with *veena* and *sitar* which could replace the electric guitars. Some of the Malaysian folk traditional songs are translated into Tamil language with Christian meaning. The traditional dance form of Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church is originated by German Church, therefore Tamil dance like *Kolattam* can be replaced in context of worship. The words used in liturgy contain the music and melody for chanting; therefore it must go on to be Malaysianized in identity. *Symbol in Vestment*: are taken as the decorative art form in Malaysia includes colorful batik clothes and wood carvings. The batik design has become official, for example Malaysian airline has chosen batik as the national representation of Malaysian culture and custom. It is found also on dress and shirts. The Pastors' muffler-stoles, cassock and on the Holy Communion chalice (cup), designs can appear as Malaysian symbols which may glorify God; they can symbolize loyalty and goodwill to God. *Symbol of architecture*: is reflected in the Church buildings of national styles of Malaysian cultural features. The internal decoration of Churches includes scriptural verses. The baptism font can be built of banana tree, leaf and fruits according to the Malaysian context. The Church door is decorated with a pair of banana plants bearing fruits which is identical to a fruit bearing Church in Malaysia. It is familiar to Tamil Christians in Malaysia as they use it for the welcome of guests. *Symbol of the emblem and seal*: is adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church Mission; the emblem and seal are from the Swedish Church; it is proposed that Lutheran mission must rework its emblem and seal to symbolize its own cultural context within Malaysian context. *The symbol of the Christmas tree*: It is useless to decorate pine Christmas tree with white cotton wool as it is the sign of snow of Western cold countries. Therefore, it should be replaced by banana or palm trees. As the pine tree is not grown in Malaysia, it is found only on hill stations therefore people buy plastic pine trees which are sold in the market. But instead of it they must have banana plants or palm trees which is easily available in most of Church member gardens and it will represent more contextual environment. *The symbol of Malaysian art*: it is proposed that the Lutheran mission should challenge its members through art combination, display of exhibition and other means to encourage members to create truly Malaysian forms of art by using

colorful shapes and symbols in the Church. *The symbol of the blood and the cross:* the early Tamil Hindu migrants in Malaysia brought with them their worship and their practices of slaughtering of animals to the deities. The practice of blood sacrifice involves the ritual slaughter of goats, cocks and pigs. The ritual of blood sacrifice is not confined to rural areas only but it is practice inmost of the towns and at some centers of Malaysia;<sup>104</sup> which can be related to the blood sacrifice of Christ on the Cross for the salvation of the human kind.

## **5. Myanmar (Burma)**

**5.1. Introduction:** Myanmar is called “Golden Land” that is most precious metal loved by Myanmarese, used everywhere: in pagodas, monasteries, accessories of the nobles and most religious buildings which are engraved with gold leaves.<sup>105</sup> Myanmar was formerly known as Burma which is taken from *Bah-ma* the major group of the country. It is important to note that Myanmar is composed of seven ethnic minority ‘states’ (provinces) and the seven Burmese ‘divisions’ (also called provinces). However, the military Junta changed the official name of the country from “Burma” to “Myanmar”.<sup>106</sup> Since independence in 1948, there are problems among the state, religions and ethnic groups on different issues. Myanmar had been under military rule. People went through the dark cloud of ethnic conflicts, oppressive dictatorships, religious minorities’ abuses, economic hardships, fundamental human rights violations, severe political oppressions, destruction of democratic institutions, and food starvation. Such situations produced innumerable flow of refugees, separated from their beloved families and country.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, Myanmar experienced oppression by military power, terrorism and an unwilling mass entry of refugees particularly since 1988 when many people died for freedom and democracy. According to the census of 1983, the great majority of the people (89.4%) are Buddhists, with Christians (4.9%), Muslims (3.9%), “Animists” (1.2%), and Hindus (0.5%), and other religions (0.1%) as religious minorities.<sup>108</sup> However, due to violations of fundamental human rights, religious and political and military

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<sup>104</sup>*Ibid*,49-58.

<sup>105</sup><http://www.myanmars.net/myanmar/golden-land.htm>, accessed on 30/12/ 2013

<sup>106</sup>*Encyclopedia of World Poverty*, London: SAGE Publications, 2006, 735-736: 735.

<sup>107</sup><http://www.etrademyanmar.com/STATS/2.htm#>Accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>108</sup>David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopaedia*,vol.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 517-518

oppressions, ethnic minorities' rights abuses compelled people to move to Malaysia and India. In 1992 alone, 270,000 Muslim fled to Bangladesh and another 70,000 Myanmarese fled to Thailand due to political persecution followed by economic crisis which is a major cause of emigration of refugees.<sup>109</sup> In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, although the country is potentially rich in natural mineral resources, Myanmar still remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The military junta has maintained its hold on power and this situation is responsible for oppression and Myanmar's poverty. The significant reason for the country's poverty is that it was managed by unskilled and corrupt military rulers, and also because of the severe economic crisis of Third World in 1980s caused by falling raw material prices, decreasing proceeds from exports and increasing debts.<sup>110</sup>

**5.2. Theology of sufferings:** In a contemporary sense, a theology of exodus of Israelites can be recognized as "theology of sufferings" in Myanmar; the theology of the suffering, less-privileged violated the unjust-treated and the powerless in social, economic and political life. 'Violence is not just a question for the oppressed but primarily it is a theological concern for the oppressors that they may change in order to bring a transformation in the society.' Therefore, Christians are called to be ambassadors to such government in the light of the Gospel, for promoting non-violence approaches in the society. The history of the country and its experience is a major source for doing theology of pain. To use such experiences of the past it is appropriate to discuss sufferings of the people as a living theology. The Biblical history and experiences of the Israelite's suffering and today's history and experiences of Myanmar sufferings have similar grounds.<sup>111</sup> Christ declared Nazareth manifesto which was originally proclaimed by the Prophet Isaiah (61:1, 2); "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18, 19). The story of exodus is the story of the entire humanity, and therefore the story of

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<sup>109</sup>Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 319.

<sup>110</sup>Ruth Erken, *Myanmar*, Mehmet Odekon (Gen.ed.), Encyclopaedia of World Poverty, London: SAGE Publications, 2006, 735-736.

<sup>111</sup> Kanbawza Win, *Should Christians be Religious Fanatics? A Burmese Perspective*, Asia Journal of Theology, Vol.21, Number 1, April 2007, 1-5.

Myanmar refugees is our story too. Nevertheless, a theology of refugees today needs to be a contemporary theology – a theology that is a living theology through which God's favour, compassion and call to preach the good news to the poor, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the freedom, and to let the blind recover, and so that Myanmarese may have the peace of God, unity and liberty in their country.

**5.3. Issue of Terrorism:** is another crucial issue of Myanmar. It needs to be recognized that the life of refugees is painful, and at the highest degree unpleasant to innumerable types of violence in the country that forcibly make the people weak, dehumanized, displaced with harassment, deprivation and abuses of power. Therefore, all Myanmareses have a burning desire for renewal, reconciliation, restoration, reformation, renovation, rehabilitation, and re-establishment of political, cultural, religious and social institutions within a civil society which will guarantee human rights. It can only be hoped that by and large, a theology of pain will contribute to the acknowledgement of the situation of people living outside their countries of origin and promote love, justice and peace. Most of the evangelical Churches offer support only to Israel but according to the Bible, God has created everything and everybody including Muslims, Hezbollah, Osama Bin Laden, Afzal, Kasim, Keshab and others; all these people are the creation of God. They are involved in terrorism, but we also need to understand that they are the freedom fighters depending on their own perspective. Further if we look back to the book of Genesis, Arab and Israel are brothers, having the same brotherhood as descendents of Abraham. Sarah gave birth to Isaac who became Israel while Hager produced Ishmael who became Arab. Now we have to take initiative to reconcile both as the bible teaches us "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Hezbollah is counted as a terrorist group; they have the culture of death hero worship and martyrdom. Hezbolla actions are punished by Israel against the people of Gaza; and as recorded according to the Bible, many a times they went against the will of God. "Indeed the sons of Israel and sons of Judah have been doing evil in my side from their youth, for the sons of Israel have been only provoking me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the Lord" (II Kings 21:5). It was Israel that sold arms to the Burmese; Israel was not earnestly seeking peace in the world. However everybody has to admit that Hezbollah is wrong. Israel

is the land of the Jews who are still waiting for Messiah to come, therefore for them Christians are non-believers or non-Jews or out-caste. Hence Christianity does not necessarily identify itself with the Jewish state.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, Christians should encourage Israel and terrorists to live at peace; in fact they are the brothers of each other and the children of God, therefore reconciliation is awaited in their life and in Asia Minor.

## 6. Fiji

**6.1. Introduction:** Fiji is officially called the Republic of Fiji Islands, located in Oceania between Hawai and New Zealand; it is made up of 332 islands. Fiji is one of the most developed Pacific Islands and has a strong economy based on mineral and Agriculture.<sup>113</sup> The European discoveries of the Fiji was accidental; the first of these discoveries was made in 1643 by the Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman and English navigators, including Captain James Cook who sailed to Fiji in 1774, and made further explorations in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Major credit for this discovery and recording of the islands go back to Captain William Bligh who sailed to Fiji after the rebellion in 1789. The first Europeans to land and live among the Fijians were shipwrecked sailors and runaway convicts from the Australian penal settlements. British colonial rule was established in Fiji in 1874. Sandalwood traders and missionaries came to Fiji by the mid of 19th century. The tribal welfare started when Ratu Seru Cakobau accepted Christianity in 1854, Fiji is a multi-racial, multi-cultural nation. It represents all the major religions of the world. This is quickly obvious to the visitors who see Christian Churches, Mosques, Sikh and Hindu temples in towns and the countryside. More than half of Fiji's population are Christians (52.9%), Hindus (38.1%), Muslim (7.8%), Sikhs (0.7%), and others (0.5%).<sup>114</sup>

**6.2. Coconut Theology:** The Coconut is found throughout Fiji, it is known for its great utility of each part of daily diets of many people. Coconuts are different from any other fruits because they contain a large quantity of "water," when immature, it

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<sup>112</sup>*Ibid*, 1-5.

<sup>113</sup>Learn Geographic *Facts About the South Pacific Country of Fiji*, accessed on 02/01/ 2014.

<sup>114</sup>[www.fijihighcommission.org.uk/about1.html](http://www.fijihighcommission.org.uk/about1.html), accessed on 02/01/2014.

is known as tender-nut or jelly-nut and can be harvested for drinking. When mature it still contains some water and can be used as seed nuts or processed to give oil from the kernel, charcoal from the hard shell and coir from the fibrous husk; when dried, the coconut flesh is called copra. The oil and milk derived from it is commonly used in cooking and frying; coconut oil is also widely used in soaps and cosmetics. The clear liquid coconut water within is a refreshing drink; the husks and leaves can be used as material to make a variety of products for furnishing and decorating; it also has cultural and religious significance.<sup>115</sup> The coconut tree grows near the sea and river side; mature coconuts fall into water and float from one place to another place like a traveller missionary who carries the word of God for others.

In context of Fiji, coconut is a visible treasure which falls on the ground or floats into the water. It is the most life giving plant. It provides shelter, nourishment and shades. Fijian saying is *vinaka*, *vakaniu* means 'be perfect and usable like a coconut,' as it floats in the river but remains perfect. A coconut is transported and taken from one location to another with a message of life and hope. The symbol of the coconut has survived the political unrest and militarism in the country. *The Methodist church*: with its mission floated or entered Fiji in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The missionaries sailed from England to Fiji Island, approached the people for conversion or propagation of gospel but unfortunately they did work for human developments and social transformation. The Methodist church gave a written language, religious and primary education to the people of Fiji. The Church gained a lot of respect from the *vanuan* (Fijian community), therefore 80% of all its entire population belongs to some Christian denominations, upholding Christian values as the norms of life which brought the people to a transformed life. The term *vanuan* literally means land and people; the people of community. It is related to river, mountain, fishing, belief and the practices of tribes in the country. They are all *vanua*, means spiritually connected to the land and to its surroundings. Herewith some of the ritual practices are taken as relevant for contextualization of the gospel of Christ in Fiji. For example first is, *Birth of a child*: when born the cord of a child

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<sup>115</sup>[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coconut\\_crab](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coconut_crab), accessed on 02/01/2014

falls off after a few days, it has to be buried in a selective place and marked with a coconut fruit. The family prepares a place for the burial of cord in the *vanua* land. They do it as earth is the source of the sustenance to the child for food, water, security and wealth. The second is *Kava* ceremony it is a traditional festival: the kava ceremony is called drink of the land. *Kava* is a kind of plant that grows Islands. The *Kava* is mixed with tea in a large wooden bowl called *tanoa*, it is served in a coconut shell. This ceremony restores the broken relationship. By drinking this tea people are connected to every life visible or invisible, and to God. Through this ceremony the Fijians come closure for mutual respect and better understanding. Third is *floating coconut*: it is a clear example of mission and Church, which has always to move. In first letter to Corinthian 1:9 Paul used to define the Church as the temple and a garden. The floating coconut symbolizes many things connected to the Fiji context that includes ocean. The water indicates inter-connectedness of life within the Fijian people and the protection of ecological environment as a whole. The Church is like a floating coconut, a moving organism that travels from one place to another place like a coconut in the water.<sup>116</sup> As in Paul's missionary journey, the mission of the Church never stopped but it continued as God permitted. Therefore, until today Church has maintained its existence. Jesus also breaks the barriers of poor and rich, thus he brought salvation and peace to the Samaritan community. He did not stay at one place and he sent his disciples to different places. The solid example of moving Church is Saint Thomas, who came to India in 52 A.D. and established many churches. Thereafter other missionaries followed him in establishing the churches. Therefore church is a floating community, and like a coconut, it goes from one place to another place.

*Construction of a coconut*: different layers are neatly arranged of a coconut, with an outer husk shelf and the inner kernel that is filled with flesh and water as womb of life. Fiber coating on the outside enables coconut to slide smoothly on the surface of water. Fiber protects the coconut shell from hitting any hard objects from outside, as coconut shell is solid, it can protect the inner fleshy stuff. A young coconut is green and heavy in the same way Church is also in the process of maturing. The Church is

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<sup>116</sup> K.P. Aleaz, *The Floating Coconut: A Contextual Approach to Methodist Mission in Fiji*, Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 18, No.1, April 2004, 183 -193.



grown up it is like matured coconut; fully matured, mission minded and transforming the life of the people who are starving without hope. *Floating coconut moves by wind and current*: the directions of a floating coconut are determined by the flow of water, by its current and wind. Its journey is not fixed but it moves on from one place to another. Every coconut that grows on a shoreline will bear fruit. Some will ride into the sea and will reach to a new mission journey. In the same way the gospel of Christ was shipped from Britain to Fiji travelling 1000 miles in early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it is still active and growing.<sup>117</sup>

***Theologizing Coconut***: it is the ultimate standard of growth in the faith journey of Fiji Christians as they daily encounter watching or using coconut, therefore we are expected to be matured like coconut in faith so that we can face the odd situations in life. Inner virtues of *fluidity*: is the inner morality. It is the central point of Christian life where regeneration and transformation begins like a coconut. Therefore living a Christ centred life is important. *Wind and current* symbolize the Holy Spirit who is capable of bringing social changes in its coconut context. The Church should totally surrender to the miraculous power of God to be driven as His agents. *Moving truth* - Church is an active community that moves with the truth of the gospel through its mission with the congregation of the people. Therefore, Church should keep sharing the truth of the Bible through words and action to bring transformation in the life of the people. *Dynamic community*: the Christian Church is not a fixed organization but vibrant moving and reflective community of faith. It has to be well prepared at all times in all areas. Faith in Christ has power to transform and challenge the existing culture because the role of Christian gospel is to transform human culture and bring forth meaning and wholeness of life to the people. *Fellowship in faith*: the Christian Church is a fellowship of people in a community. Everyone is part and parcel of the community as a community of believers. The Churches' responsibility is to send missionaries and respond to mission opportunities that arise in our context. *Worshipping community*: the Christian Church is a community that believes in the mission of God. The church gets energy through the power of the Holy Spirit. The creation of God is unique; creation is a meeting point with the invisible God.

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*,

Jesus always mentioned in his parables the mystery of God's kingdom that is revealed in the beauty of nature. The *vanua* (land or people) and the Church are meeting place for God.<sup>118</sup> Therefore mission of the Church has always to be active, floating, moving, a vibrant community of faith to bring transformation in the life of the people and society.

## 7. Philippines

**7.1. Introduction:** The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands. The land includes hills, plains, valleys, and mountains. These islands are divided into provinces. In 1521 Ferdinand Magellan reached to the island and claimed the entire archipelago for Spain. Forty-four years later when Philip II became king of Spain, there colonial rule was established that lasted about three centuries. Following the Spanish American War the Philippines became a colony in the Treaty of Paris in 1898. By the End of World War II, the Philippines became independent. There are more than 65 cultural minorities, similar to the Indian tribes. Roman Catholic 71%, Evangelical 12%, Muslim 6%, Cults and Sects 8%, Indigenous Tribal 1.8%, Chinese Buddhist 0.5%, Non-religious are 0.7%.<sup>119</sup>

**7.2. Theology of Experience:** Theology of Philippines is not born in the library, but in Manila streets, slums and in prison cells. Philippines experienced political instability, economic decline, armed conflict, territorial water problem, indiscipline, corruption, unemployment, 'women export' for prostitution and serving as house maids in other countries. The baby adoption was converted into a commercial business. In the midst of all these social experiences, democracy has given a chance to form a new constitution, to enrich the people's power in aspects of their national,<sup>120</sup> domestic and individual life. The image of suffering Christ is more popular among Filipinos as there are historical and political factors of experience of colonial oppression under Spain and Japan for 333 years. It was the experience of no hope, sweat and blood struggle against their oppressors which gave rise to a sentimental value of suffering. It leads them to deeper religious experience, not only participating in religious procession but even actual crucifixion. It creates among

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>119</sup> <https://missionariestoasia.org/philippines-2/filipino-history-culture/> accessed 04/06/2007.

<sup>120</sup> Batumalai, *Asian Theology*, 135.

them mystical oneness with Christ and his sufferings with a faith that sins are forgiven. This religious culture biblically and theologically may not be valid but this is how Filipinos have believed in Christ.<sup>121</sup>

**7.3. The Role of Church as Liberator:** The Philippines faced colonial and neo-colonial oppression under Spain, United States, and Japan. The first encounter between Christianity and people of Philippines took place in 1521 with the arrival of Ferdinand. The evangelical zeal of the Spanish helped to make the Philippines a Christian nation.<sup>122</sup> Filipino theology helped the nation to achieve political independence after Second World War. The struggle of Church has continued through National and Civil Liberation against the social and economic injustice. The primary task of the Church is to oppose human injustice. The Church is grounded in the daily experiences of grass root theology in creating local liturgy, drama and songs, in their writings, poems and in story telling of the community for their liberation.<sup>123</sup> The Church is an agent for social change and development of a new humanity because Filipinos are seeking deliverance from past exploitation and oppression. If the gospel can change the critical conditions of the people it would be 'good news' for the Filipino.

**7.4. Theologizing Filipino Images:** The Filipino's have theologized the gospel of Christ for the context of Philippines, for example according to *Alan J. Delotao* the images of Christ exist in Filipino culture; some of these images can be interpreted for contextualization of the Gospel. When a child is born the relatives and friends come and congratulate the parents, touch and kiss the child. The family members and friends bring gifts toys and candies to please the child. The celebration of holy child is closely related to Jesus Christ. Filipinos celebrate the day of Holy Child. It breaks the socio-economic and even racial barriers of rich and poor, many tourists get together in the streets to participate in the function. This is a time of social reconciliation, restoration of friendly relations and of social atonement. Filipino

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<sup>121</sup> Alan J. Delotavo, *Images of Christ in Filipino Culture and Atonement Experiences, A case Study of the Contextualization of the Gospel Message*, Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 15, Number 1, April 2001, 140-145.

<sup>122</sup> Batumalai, *Asian Theology*, 116-118.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*,

Catholics celebrate the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem; bringing branches of palm leaf blessed with holy water by priests. After the Church service bring leaves at the door posts of house as symbol for the protection from the evil spirits and misfortune and to attract blessings.<sup>124</sup> Thus; their main purpose is that People believe in the salvation through Jesus Christ, the mystical power of Christ's victory over Satan is achieved for the atonement of human kind. The true God is not a religious god, but true God Jesus Christ participates in the struggle of poor and oppressed for their liberation.

## 8. Japan

**8.1. Introduction:** Japan was not 'colonised' like many other Asian countries. However, the defeat of Japan by United Nations in World War II imposed a great impact of national life but Japan again conquered in economic expansion. They are wealthy with their strong yen currency which is the third largest economic power ranking after USA and Soviet Union in global world. Japanese follow both the religions Shintoism and Buddhism, the Christian is a minority community. Japan's attitude by 1636 was that foreign religion became a threat to Japan therefore in 1884 Buddhism was declared as state religion but Confucianism or today's Shintoism was viewed as a 'Political religion.' Japanese government kept foreigners out of the country for the next two centuries. The government made anti-Christian policies during first half of 17<sup>th</sup> Century, and there after Christianity was prohibited. Therefore Christians faced severe persecution and martyrdom in Japan.<sup>125</sup>

**8.2. Christianity brought Changes:** The protestant missionaries came to Japan in 1859, learnt Japanese language and translated Bible, published Christian literature, taught Western science in schools and established medical work. The evangelistic work was started only after 1873, when the ban was removed; however Christianity contributed a lot towards education, literature and nationalism but always fought against the national policy of worshipping the Shinto shrine,<sup>126</sup> however as a result

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<sup>124</sup>Frem, *Liberation Theologies*, 87.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid*, 77.

<sup>126</sup>Batumalai, *Asian Theology*, 89-92.

of Christian mission work Japanese looked at Jesus as the transformer of the society and many accepted Jesus as their savior.

**8.3. Intuitive approach:** Japanese concentrate on rationalistic approach in their thinking and work, in realities the Japanese use intuitive approach. Today Japan ranks high in science and technology, and among the developed nations, their technology is valued as best in qualities, the Japanese are intuitively oriented as stated by Hajime Nakamura that in the history of technology also the Japanese people have valued and still value intuitive perception more than scientific inferences based on thinking, they were to rely on the skill of artisans rather than on exact calculation by machine.<sup>127</sup> This statement shows that there is no wonder that religion comes more in association with intuition than reason. This is true in the Biblical account of the burning bush, which was a strange phenomenon to Moses. He had never seen anything like it; soon he understood it was divine commission that entrusted him with the task of leading Israelites out of Egypt. St. Paul received revelation in a most unexpected way on the road to Damascus; intuition convinced him that he was persecuting Jesus and thereafter he became the messenger of gospel of Jesus Christ.

**8.4. Advent of Christianity:** the original and ancient religion of Japan was ‘Shinto.’ It was mixture of nature and ancestor worship but Japanese do not adore idol but worship sun and moon. Francis Xavier came to Japan in 1549 for his ministry in Japan. Xavier met Japanese Anjiro who was baptized at Goa. Xavier learned Japanese language from him. First of all Xavier’s interaction was with selected Buddhist and Shinto clergy for conveying Gospel message. Anjiro became an evangelist telling Ten Commandments, giving Christian teachings to family members, relatives and friends, some of whom were converted to Christianity. Paul Anjiro accompanied him in taking a picture of mother Mary to the duke and his mother on seeing it they knelt down before the image. Xavier prepared Japanese and Chinese boys who could help in the ministry as interpreters and leaders, he sent them to Malacca or to Goa for training with a future plan so that they may train others. This method was valuable as they opened their hearts to learn more about

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<sup>127</sup> Song, *Third Eye*, 46.

Christianity in depth for leading the people in Christian faith. There was another person a *Musician Lourenco* a twenty five year old converted to Christianity by Xavier in 1551, Lourenco played a significant role in spreading the gospel throughout Japan with his proficiency in music,<sup>128</sup> and also converted many people in Japan. Therefore, Xavier's method of training the people in Japan was successful.

**8.5. The History of Persecution:** Japanese Emperor began to persecute Christians in 1587 that about 26 people including Catholic priests were burnt and many were slaughtered; and persecution continued until 1614.<sup>129</sup> Japanese spirit was driven to great nationalism but wrongly it suppressed the freedom of speech. There was a non Church movement that was against the military policies of Japan in 1930s. The constitution of Japan gave supreme position to the Emperor. There was person Yanaihara in the Church he refused to worship the Emperor, and in 1937 he was forced to resign from his post as professor at school of Economics from Tokyo Imperial University; his writings were banned. Thereafter Yanaihara was no longer a critic of national policies but encouraged the Japanese for better future. He spent the following eight years; teaching Bible, publishing his monthly magazine "Good News," and again he became a professor, Dean and president of the University in 1951.<sup>130</sup> There was also a world traveller and author Toyohiko Kagawa he played an influential role, not only as Christian ecumenist, poet, but also as a social reformer in 20<sup>th</sup> century. He insisted that Japanese theology must be detached from Western Theology as it does not fit in to the context of Japanese culture.<sup>131</sup>

**8.6. Theology of the Pain of God:** Japanese word; *tsurasa* means to experience the pain of others. Kitamori read the gospel in the midst of chaos and destruction of Japan that God bore the pain of the people and even his own wrath in Christ for sins on the cross. This was easier for Japanese to understand pain and love of God than any other theology as Japanese understand the word *tsurasa* means pain of others;

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<sup>128</sup>Shumalwai, "An Analysis of Francis Xavier's Letters from Kagoshima, Japan (1549): His Approaches and Views of Ministry", Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol.21, Number 1, April 2007, 6-14.

<sup>129</sup> Jae Hyun Chung, "Freedom will make you True", Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 21, No.1, April 2007, 147.

<sup>130</sup>Takaak Haraguchi, "A Historical Assessment of Tadao Yanaihara's View of the Nation", Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 21, No.1, April 2007, 112-115, 117-118

<sup>131</sup>Frem, Liberation Theologies, 77-78.

this theological expression is relevant to their cultural life to experience Pain of others' in context of Japan.<sup>132</sup> The pain of God is hidden in Love of God that is revealed in Historical Jesus Christ to redeem humanity from all kinds of Physical, Spiritual and Psychological Pains. Kazoh Kitamori's book *Theology of the Pain of God* (1946; 1958 and 1965) was hailed that the best way to understand theology is to know what had happened when God allowed his only Son to suffer and to die on the cross. It is the action of God 'swallowing' his wrath over human sinfulness that causes this pain. It is God going outside of himself in Jesus Christ, letting him to die on the cross, and thus conquering his wrath for the benefit of those unworthy of his love. This is how Kitamori interpreted Philippians Chapter 2 God's self-emptying in Christ,<sup>133</sup> for liberating the sinners, who are oppressed and exploited. The Pain of God is part of His Essence correspondence to His eternity and Pain of God belongs to His Eternal Being and Cross was the Reflection.<sup>134</sup>

The living God participates in the sufferings of human kind; Christians are expected to participate in pain of others, for Kitamori God's love is rooted in *pain of God*, the constant love of God saved humanity through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Kitamori was deeply influenced by the Theology of Martin Luther especially of 'God is fighting with God.' Jesus the son of God suffered and died for the sake of love. When Japanese hear the gospel of Christ they cry in tears speechlessly.<sup>135</sup> Therefore Christians are challenged to participate in the sufferings of others as commanded by God. This is not the pain of me and my family but to take care of others while they are sick, naked, hungry, thirsty, and in prison, serving the least is serving the Lord.

## 9. Sri Lanka

**9.1. Introduction:** Sri Lanka was formerly called Ceylon. It holds a long religious tradition of Buddhism and Tamil Hinduism. In Sri Lanka there was colonial control of Dutch and Portuguese. Since 18<sup>th</sup> century it was under the control of England until it got its freedom in 1948. The rising of Buddhism and Hinduism forced

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<sup>132</sup>Koyama, *Water Buffalo*, 119,121.s

<sup>133</sup>John Parratt, (ed.), *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004. 90-91.

<sup>134</sup>Kitamori, *Pain of God*, 45.

<sup>135</sup>Koyama, *Water Buffalo*, 115-116.

Christian Churches to get rid of Western pattern of Christianity and to create Christian theology for its own context.

**9.2 Theology of Action:** The ecumenical institute was established in 1963, for study and dialogue in Sri Lanka for indigenization of Christianity, the Christians were called for action oriented liberation theology of food, clothing, shelter, health, family, justice and religious life. The Eucharist was interpreted for build up a new world order based on equality, service and justice. Christians could recall Marxism for the classless society for equality and freedom. So that 'Christ of religions' must be liberated from oppression: political, social, economic, racial, sexual abuses in order to build up a new society.<sup>136</sup>

## 10. Singapore

**10.1 Introduction:** Singaporean suffers 85° F – 85% humidity and 16 hours of hard work a day. The whole island is disciplined like 'worker Ants.' They have air conditioned, attractive shopping complexes, and Cosmetic counters as the predominant culture is materialistic and superficial of Singapore.

**10. 2.Contextualization of the Gospel:** The question is asked of how Christian gospel could be relevant in Singapore? What slow Christ can do for the fast Singaporeans? Is not the biblical God 'inefficient' and 'slow'? Because covenant relationship of God is motivated by love walked for forty years in the wilderness with His people. Also, the image of the Crucified Christ is immobile, and inefficient. How can God speak to the mobile, efficient Singaporean? Constantly moving at greater speed? The whole of Singapore is after money. Many people live in high stories buildings that distance them from the ground, causing deep psychological problems with them. In this situation how slow Gospel can be preached to the fast track Singaporeans? Christianity has to look for appropriate central message of Christ which can be conveyed in short time in the form of written booklets or oral material through modern technologies to the fast track Singaporeans.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Frem, *Liberation Theologies*, 84-87.

<sup>137</sup>Koyama, *Water Buffalo*, 3-5.



### **Evaluation, Critique and Analysis**

The contextual Theology of Thailand preferred Christ centred gospel instead of Christian doctrines. As subject matter of Gospel application cannot be based on theological arguments but 'the broken Christ healing the broken world.' a preacher is to immitiate Lord Jesus Christ gave example of light and salt of daily use and prables of local encounters in daily life therefore thai theology looks at buffaloes grazing, rolling in the muddy paddy field, sticky rice, banana, pepper, dog, cat, bicycle, rainy season, leaking houses, fishing, and cock fight gospel interpretation and application. However it is a struggle to relate all these events in sermon for Gospel preaching in simple sentences to the farmers in their own tongue for which thai theology articulated a 'rice- root' theology 'from below' that comes out from the everyday experience of the farmers in their local culture, traditions, clothing, eating habits, dancing, singing folk songs; and the gospel is to be preached even while people are drinking, walking or sitting on the ground and hearing. Theology of Thailand made it clear that Christianity should not aim at crusading mind for conversion of the people but should have the crucified mind of God's love and sacrifice for the transformation of the society. The gospel application of Thailand is considerable but every event cannot fit into preaching however it is valuable for doing theology to an extent. The real life events are considered by Thai but Chinese theology enters into traditional story telling style which seems sometimes as more imaginative but on other hand stories are valuable too for example the story of mirror reflects the image of God towards various images of God for social, economic, political and cultural conditions of life in which it gives a hope of future to the people of Asia.

The contextual theology of Korea is a history of persecution for survival, where Bible was contextualized in difficult situations. Korean Pastors and Christians spoke against military dictatorship in which people were suppressed, exploited and murdered. The Korean *Minjung* theology believed that messiah liberates them from all kinds of sufferings for future resurrection and transformation of the society. However, prayer alone cannot bring transformation but it requires action oriented theology of equality, peace and justice in context of *Korea* for which the idea of unity was worked out successfully. Theology of Phlippines paid attention to

organize peasants' union, it was stressed that land ownership of farmers must be supported by the Church fathers. The Church must seek liberation of land in support of justice to the humanity and reject idolatry of property. The Christian gospel gives preference to the poor; no one is owner of land but stewards of God who has given natural resources. Theology of Japan is based on Pain of God as Japanese understand the word *tsurasa* that means pain of others; this theological expression is relevant to their cultural life to experience Pain of others' in context of Japan. The pain of God is expressed in sufferings of Christ on the cross. It is a call to Christians to participate in sufferings of others for liberation of everyone. The pain of God is not confined into the four walls of the Church but it is open to all who are outside the gate of the Church. As God's love on the Cross is not confined to a particular group of people for their spirituality but it covers all socio- political, religious and cultural aspects of life and the pain of God serves the society in healing their wound, pain and sufferings through the Church. Theology of Shri Lanka motivated the people for action oriented liberation theology of food, clothing, shelter, health, family and justice. It made a point that 'Christ of religions' must be liberated from all forms of oppression: political, social, economic, racial, sexual abuses in order to build up a new society this is applicable in Christianity as Jurgen Moltmaan also stated 'life for others' to live for the welfare of the society. Theology of Singapore tries to find out a way out for the application of gospel to the speedy Singaporean who moves very fast for earning money, in this fast growing country no one has time to listen. However, Gospel can be conveyed not only through one particular method but there are several other means of internet, mobile, video clips, short messages, short tracts and other means which could be helpful in fast track Singaporeans for Gospel application.

One can see that Hassan Nasrollah is not fighting for Islam Jihad or Omar but fighting for marginalized and struggling for sympathy and moral support. Hezbollah was founded by Syria and Iran but Israel was supported by America. However; it has to be admitted that Hezbollah is a grass root social group regardless of religion, race, colour, sex. They feel that they can contribute effectively to the development of the nation. Therefore, as Christians one should believe in creation of God, that God has created not only believers but also non-believers such as Nazism,

Fascism and communism. Myanmar has experienced an unwilling mass entry of refugees particularly since 1988. India has faced the similar situations but the refugees must be treated as human beings. Therefore, in such situations the judgement has to be considered sympathetically but on other hand such people must follow the law and order of their country and with this thought Christians must encourage one another to live at peace in the country so they may also be saved by the Grace of God.

The term *vanuan* literally means people of the land; the people of Fijian community. It is related to river, mountain, fishing and beliefs. The kava ceremony is called drink of the land. *Kava* is a kind of plant mixed with tea drinking together in a large wooden bowl called *tanoa*, served in a coconut shell this ceremony restores the broken relationship with people and to God. Researcher is of opinion that people live in a global village; face the challenges of globalization and capitalism in contemporary age as responsible people of God. The people are in bondage of lust, materialism and worldly culture. The kernel of coconut gives a message that pure gospel must be served and shared with the people. Like coconut; God's message of love is arriving and transforming from outer side to inner side, it leads us to the purity and truth and to living water. The Holy Spirit can quench the thirst of all human beings. Therefore the coconut teaches that mission of the Church is never to sit and stay in laziness, but like coconuts move freely by the power of the Holy Spirit which is symbolized as wind and current, through which God leads the people to transform the human society, in a never ending journey that finally leads to eternal life.

Researcher feels that symbols are best expression of faith but the meaning of true Gospel must not be diluted by the wrong interpretation of the symbol. The Christianity adopts chief symbol of salvation that is Cross on which the blood of Christ is shed for the whole humanity. The Symbol of Cross of Christian faith through blood can symbolize a cultural symbolic reference. It can provide a bridge for communicating the gospel of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. But the blood sacrifice of Christ is not shed to the dead deities but Christ's sacrifice is appeasing to living God for the salvation of the whole human kind. Therefore, it should not mix

up with the Tamil Hindu migrants in Malaysia who brought the practices of slaughtering of animals to the deities. Christianity must teach the Malaysians that blood sacrifice of Christ redeems us from all our sins and now there is no need of any other sacrifice of animals and birds to any deities; as Christ's sacrifice is once for all, for all the time and for all the generations on the earth.

Asian theologies were written from the perspective of Evangelism during colonial period when Edenberg conference took a resolution to evangelize the world in this generation. The missionaries carried out gospel preaching as well as transformation of the society but priority was given to Evangelism. The majority of missionaries had the mandate of converting the people to Christianity but there were some missionaries who believed in salvation of the whole person for example Sam Higginbottom gave importance to the theology of work he theologized the Agricultural gospel for the transformation of the society Asian context was in need to develop the critical conditions of farmers and laborers. Sam Higginbottom at Allahabad was neither a theologian nor a Priest of the Church but an Agriculturalist who emphasized that "Feeding hungry is not less than pulpit preaching". Therefore, he gave a slogan '*Feed the Hungry and Serve the Nation,*' with '*Gospel and Plough.*' Therefore, Asian contextual theologies are eventually to take place according to life conditions of the people, it could be working hours, type of employment, situations, cultural, economical, political situations of family and society, folk songs, dance, drama and poetry.

The focus of Asian contextual theology is different from traditional theology in its epistemological break through as it is a study of interdisciplinary subjects of social sciences, scripture, tradition, and culture. Its focal point is poor, and culturally marginalized people. Therefore, Asian theologies took seriously all experiences in a cultural context, and critically examined and re-interpreted "live-in-experience" to reflect and articulate humanistic aspects to serve the marginalized whether poor, laborers or farmers. Today in Asia different contextual theologies are developed such as: Inculturation theology, Theology of Development, Theology of work, Political theology, Liberation, Feminist; Dalit and Tribal. These contextual

theologies relate Gospel to people's life experience for transformation in their concrete life situations that target to transform every person in the society.

## SECTION C: INDIAN CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGIES

**Introduction:** *The Indian contextual theologies* use the local issues for theological, epistemological and biblical interpretations. The Indian Christian theologies pay an attention to the context therefore it is necessary to know cultural Identity of the people, arrival of gospel to India and influence of the bible in the context. The different models and theological interpretations were taken into consideration that might fit into Indian context. Therefore it is essential to know the Indian context and different theological interpretations mentioned in this section. India is a democratic secular country; it has multi-racial and multi-religious society, the lower castes are in the majority but ruled by a few Brahmin upper caste people.<sup>138</sup> India is a multi cultural society in terms of geography, language, food, clothes, dance, music, religions and so on, but Indian culture should not be identified only as Hindu culture as it has the contribution of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, and later on of Islam and Christianity.<sup>139</sup> India is called the land of agriculture as seventy percent of its people live in village area and mostly they are engaged in farming. India has been rich in terms of people, culture, historical heritage, spiritual insights and partnership with the West in the fields of science and technology.<sup>140</sup> It is a country of contrast in terms of landscape, climate and people. There are river-fed as well as drought stricken states in India; Hindi is an official language but English is widely preferred by most of the states in day to day working.

India is a multi religious country and people are committed to discover a fresh meaning of ultimate truth, and the way of life. The bible fits very well in Indian context as Jesus himself said that I am the truth and life. Christian theologians interpret relevant socio – religious realities around them. This section deals to

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<sup>138</sup> Batumalai, *Asian Theology*, 242- 243.

<sup>139</sup> S. J. Samrtha (Review of K.P. Alez's Book), *The Gospel and Indian Culture*, Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 9, No.1, April 1995, 202.

<sup>140</sup> S. Batumalai, *An Introduction to Asian Theology*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 1991, 233-234.

understand Indian theologies, and how far it is relevant to local context. The Contextual theology is a form of postcolonial period that takes seriously the historical memories and experiences of the people. It is grounded in the socio-economic and political realities of the context; it emerges out of the people's struggles against the forces of marginalization and oppression.<sup>141</sup> The relevant contextual or little theologies start with particular occasions by responding to simple questions. These personal questions are asked by farmers, laborers, poor, oppressed and exploited for liberation. The obligation of Christians is to understand a person; his contextual life situations and problems, rituals, traditions, folk stories, music, dances, sufferings, and faith of the neighbours with whom one lives for contextualization of the gospel for theological discourse.

Cultural Identity of a person is important as one is known by local identity but unfortunately Christians lose their local identity at the time of baptism, and live a life of stranger in their own context as Christians tend to divorce themselves from their own culture. It is a general impression among Indians that after converting to Christianity, the person's behaviour and culture changes to western way of living, eating pork, beef and drinking wine, wearing western clothes this confusion is to omit from the mind of Indians through conversation, mass media, literature, teaching and preaching. The Indian theologians say that Jesus Christ belongs to India, for example Sadhu Sundar Singh theologized the gospel as "*Water of life in an Indian cup*."<sup>142</sup> This is true of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, Muzumdar and many others. For example Keshub Chandra Sen related Christ to the people and customs of India.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, according to them Jesus Christ is very close to the people as saviour of India because Jesus is powerfully appropriate to the situations of India today. He is a care taker of the poor, peace maker, teacher, healer, life giver and a liberator who struggles for the justice, peace, harmony and liberation

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<sup>141</sup> Deane William Frem, *Third World Liberation Theologies*, New York: Orbis Books, 1988, 77.

<sup>142</sup> Ken Gnanakan,(ed.), *Biblical Theology in Asia*, Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1995,34.

<sup>143</sup> Wilfred, *Asian Theologies*,196.

of oppressed, victimized and exploited of India,<sup>144</sup> therefore one is to retain cultural identity even after accepting Jesus Christ. The gospel reached to India before it came to many of the Western and European Christian countries of today. According to Syrian tradition, the apostle Thomas came to the Indian Malabar coast in 52 A.D.<sup>145</sup> The Nestorians came in 4<sup>th</sup> century. Later on, Portuguese, French and Catholic missionaries' came to India. They brought Bible that speaks and inspires the life of people as an authentic source of God's word transforms every person who encounters the living word. William Carey was aware of powerful word of God as a British Baptist missionary. He landed at Kolkota in 1793, started working in Danish territory of Serampore at the banks of Hooghly River. He is credited with the complete translation of the Bible (1801-1809) into Sanskrit and Marathi. His linguistic ability gave him the position of Professor of Bengali and Sanskrit at Fort William College for 30 years.<sup>146</sup> William Carey translated the Bible in more than 40 languages, William Carey promoted printing technology in India; most of the fonts were sold from his press at Serampore. William Carey was the founder of the Agricultural Society in 1820's, he did a systematic study of Agriculture in India. He was Professor of Bengali, Sanskrit and Marathi; started dozens of school for the children of all castes. Therefore, there is a great contribution of William Carey to Indian Contextual Theology for the transformation of the Indian Society,<sup>147</sup> as a man of God he practiced bible through out of his life, his great contribution for biblical knowledge was establishment of a department of Theology in Serampore College.

There was a great impact of bible and missionaries in the life of Indian Christian theologians and reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who had established *Atmiya Sabha* in 1815; he rejected Hindu polytheism and Brahminical religion. He was attracted by Christian ethics not by dogmas. Ram Mohan Roy and Serampore missionaries' debated thorough publications *The Precepts of Jesus, the Friend of India*

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>145</sup> Boyd, *Indian Christian Theology*, 1.

<sup>146</sup> H.S. Wilson, *Mission and Cultures: Some Paradigms of Encounter*, Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 18, No.1, April 2004, 19-21.

<sup>147</sup> Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Quest for Freedom & Dignity*, Mumbai: GLS Udyog Bhavan, 2001, 153- 159.

and a series *Appeals to the Christian Public*.<sup>148</sup> It was an eye opening to Indian reformers, thinkers and theologians practicing bible at large in the society yet today Christians remain in a minority among the dominant Hindu culture.

One of the earliest missionary was Robert de Nobili came to Madurai, Pope Gregory XV in 1923 approved his ascetic practices of Brahminic Hinduism,<sup>149</sup> he studied Indian Philosophy and language as a vehicle for conveying the gospel message, conducted liturgy in Sanskrit, wrote Christian doctrines in form of a hundred *slokas*, used Hindu terminologies for the expression of Christian doctrines. His model was highly indigenous in Sanskrit and Tamil tongues.<sup>150</sup> He was a man of culture and he could appreciate another culture. In spite of criticisms he wanted to present Christianity in Indian way.<sup>151</sup> Though, his model was not fully appropriate to the context as it was relevant only for the minority group of Brahmins but he did not bother with the majority of Society. The Unitarian mission came into existence in 1821 it was established by William Adam for English services. Later on Keshab Chandra Sen took over Brahma Samaj in 1857, developed a system of asceticism, rituals and sacraments that included baptism and in holy communion rice and water,<sup>152</sup> were used as elements. *Christo Samaj* was established in 1887 at Kolkota by the initiative of K.C. Bannerji for the propagation of Christianity and welfare of Indians. Its aim was to establish indigenous Church,<sup>153</sup> to reflect upon the experiences of Indian people,<sup>154</sup> and to communicate the message of the crucified and risen Christ in India.<sup>155</sup> Indian scholars and theologians who have responded to the Gospel of Christ in Indian context but most of them developed *Brahminical-Theology* by using Hindu terminologies to establish that Christ is present in their religion therefore the current Indian theology lie in the experience of mostly upper caste theologians such as Brahmabandhav Upadhaya who comes from a Bengali

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<sup>148</sup> Boyd, *Indian Christian Theology*, 20-21.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 11- 13.

<sup>150</sup> Frem, *Third World*, 90-93.

<sup>151</sup> Sunand Sumithra & F. Hranghkuma (ed.), *Doing Mission in Context*, Bangalore: Theological book Trust, 1995, 19.

<sup>152</sup> R.H.S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Madras: CLS, 1979, 19-21, 26-27.

<sup>153</sup> Sunand Sumithra (ed.), *Doing Mission*, 23.

<sup>154</sup> Gnanakan, (ed.), *Biblical Theology*, 84.

<sup>155</sup> Batumalai, *Asian Theology*, 237.



Brahmin family and Sadhu Sunder Singh from a high caste wealthy Punjabi Sikh family. Other theologians like Nehemiah Goreh, A.J. Appasamy, P. Chenchiah were from upper caste families, thoughts of Indian scholars are mentioned here in brief:

*Pandita Ramabai*: (1858 - 1922) was a Hindu Brahmin widow; she was a Sanskrit scholar, accepted Christian faith but rebelled against a pre-programmed Christianity; became critical of both Hindus and Christians for controlling the spiritual quest. Therefore she said in her letter to Sr. Geraldine on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1885: I am, it is true, a member of the Church of Christ, but am not bound to accept every word that falls down from the lips of priests or Bishop I am not lawless but obedient to the word of God. I have just freed myself from the yoke of Indian priestly tribe.<sup>156</sup> The above expresses what Ramabai had in mind in response to the immediate experience of Christianity in everyday life. She opposed Church authorities because of the Church's system of oppressing women.

*Sadhu Sundar Singh*: his theology was Christo-centric. He neither used Sanskrit terms nor Western theology and pluralism, but he introduced new dimensions of religious experience of his life in Indian Theology. *N.V. Tilak*: was a great Maharashtra poet and hymnologist; expressed his faith in Christ in the language and concepts of Hindu religious heritage. He used Indian lyrics to assist believers for devotion to Christ.<sup>157</sup>

*Sastri Nahemiah Goreh*: was a Brahmin pundit of Hindu *Sastras* Scriptures at Varanasi came from Maharashtra; his concern was partnership in religious dialogue. *Pondippedi Chenchiah* challenged the Church to come out from traditional theology and to find out new ways to express Christian faith. He was a judge, established *Verandah Club* to encourage interaction of theological thinking among Christians and Hindu friends. He said that he who lives according to yoga follows Christ likeness, a new creation in Jesus Christ, which is the essence of the Gospel. *R. Pannikkar's: Unknown Christ of Hinduism* emphasized that Christ is present in Hinduism.<sup>158</sup> Pannikar did not synthesis the doctrines of Hinduism and Christianity.

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<sup>156</sup> Wilfred, *Asian Theologies*, 142-147.

<sup>157</sup> Lal, (ed.) *Building Communities*, 87.

<sup>158</sup> Taylor, Richard W. (Richard Warren). *The legacy of E Stanley Jones*. International Bulletin Of Missionary Research 6, no. 3 (July 1982):USA: ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCO host (accessed September 11, 2015),103

*Vengal Chakkarai*: after his baptism helped *Christo Samaj* to work for indigenous Church and for theology and emphasized that Christian experience (*anubhava*) of Christ is at work within us as *Antaryamin*, inner controller, or Holy Spirit. A.J. Appasamy (1891-1975) was converted from a Hindu family and was consecrated as Bishop of Church of South India. He followed the *Bhakti* tradition and discussed incarnation (*Avatara*) in a new way, in terms of *Antaryamin* the Holy Spirit as inner controller of the believer. P.D. Devanandan: He stated that Christ is the transforming power of the Society.<sup>159</sup>

M.M. Thomas believed in 'theology from below' that Christians must be involved in social and political action. Christ empowers for justice, forgiveness and transformation. His theological anthropology is grounded in a struggle for humanization with the vision of the cross for the transformation of the world. Stanley J. Samartha's concern was to recover Indian Christology within Hindu tradition. He underlined Christ's social, historical and religious insights of the Christian faith that helps in understanding social structure of Hindu spirituality; he preferred inter-religious dialogue with the people of other faiths. E. Stanley Jones was in India in 1907, served as a Methodist missionary and related the Gospel to the Soci-Political and cultural realities of India. Jones was involved in contextualization of Christian spirituality through the Ashrams and political involvement. He wrote *The Christ of Indian road*. The first few Christian ashrams were founded in 1920s. He spent several months at Tagore's Shanti-neketan Ashram in 1923, where he wrote his poem, "*I Took My Lamp*". He used ashram model to teach Christianity. Ashrams at Sat Tal and Lucknow are an effective source of evangelism.<sup>160</sup>

J.N Farquhar arrived in India under London missionary society. He published *Heritage of India* series. A.G.Hogg was in Madras Christian College, where S. Radhakrishnan was one of his students. Joshua Marshman was a pioneer missionary in Serampore with William Carey and W. Ward. He joined in a serious dialogue with Raja Ram Mohan Roy that led him to publish *A defence of deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ*. In theological writings there was great contribution of Robin Boyd at Ahmadabad united school of theology. His aim was to provide a

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*,

working introduction to Indian Christian theology from a historical and cultural Indian context. An Indian named *Brahmabandhav Upadhaya* used *Vedantic Philosophy* as a basis for Christian theology, expressed God in terms of *Sat, Chit and Ananda*. Truth, Intelligence and Joy (Holy Spirit), he also interpreted *Avatara* concept in Indian Christology.<sup>161</sup>

The high caste *brahamins* aimed to interpret their faith experience based on *Brahaminic* religion and culture; these Indian Christian theologians ignored the voice of the majority of dalits and tribal who were oppressed and marginalized in the country for centuries.<sup>162</sup> Therefore, Arvind P. Nirmal stated:

*“Most of the contributions to Indian Christian theology in the past came from the high caste converts to Christianity. The result has been that Indian Christian theology has perpetuated within itself what I prefer to call Brahmanic tradition.”*<sup>163</sup>

The above statement draws attention to the fact that dalits and tribal could not formulate Indian Christian theology, hoping that Brahmanic Christianity would liberate them. However, caste based Brahmanic theology served the purpose of *sanskritization* for several years. The subaltern, tribal and dalits started responding in terms of Indian Christian theology for example an article ‘*Towards a Shudra Theology*’ was written by Arvind P. Nirmal in 1981, at United Theological College, Bangalore.<sup>164</sup> The intention was to give a proper direction to dalit and tribal theologies for equality, justice and transformation in Indian society.

## 1. Dalit Theology

**1.1. Introduction:** When the foreign invaders attacked on India they made slaves to some of the people and called them untouchables but others fled to forest and hilly

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>162</sup> Batumalai, *Asian Theology*, 255- 258,268,272-276,283.

<sup>163</sup> Arvind P. Nirmal, *Heuristic Explorations*, Chennai: CLS, 1990, 27.

<sup>164</sup> Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, 40- 41.

areas.<sup>165</sup> The dalits were forced to clean streets and toilets, and to scavenge, to slaughter animals, to take out skin of dead animals and to make shoes. The *Shudras* were separated from the rest of society to such an extent that they were denied even the basic human rights, such as the right to drinking water from any well; and walking on the road.<sup>166</sup> Dalits were even prevented from earning and accumulating wealth. Even according to religious scripture of Rigveda God originated caste system and Manu described them as untouchables.<sup>167</sup>

*The meaning of the Term dalit* in Greek is '*potokos*' means one who is dependent on others in anxiety and feelings of insecurity, a down trodden or broken person. The Hebrew root word is *dal* means broken, cursed, who does not have even a piece of land.<sup>168</sup> Dalits are called by different names in India such as *satan*, *rakshees*, *das*, *chandala*, *avarana* (no class), *shudra*, *panchama* (fifth category), *malacha*, *achuta*, *bhangi*, *mehtar* and *lal begi*.<sup>169</sup> Yesu Das Tiwari had used the term dalit in Hindi New Testament that was published by the Bible Society of India in 1967. The term dalit covers all kinds of oppression— religious, social, economic and political— faced in day to day life by dalits.<sup>170</sup>

**1.2. Experience of Sufferings:** Dalit experienced religious, social, economic and political oppression by the upper caste Indians. *Munshi Premchand* wrote dalit's experience in a novel *Karmbhumi* that a group of people sat for hearing religious exhortation at veranda of a temple but they were beaten and accused for making unclean the temple by their presence.<sup>171</sup> There is another example of a 19 year old Laxmi of Gunjbasoda village Pairvasa in Madaya Pradesh who was thrown into the well by upper caste as she was accused for doing pooja in the temple.<sup>172</sup> Dalits faced mass killing in 1985 and 1991 in Andhra Pradesh. Fr. Christudas was compelled to

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<sup>165</sup> Vimal Kant Singh, *Bible Aur Dalit Sahitya*, Allahabad: Shiats, 2009, 2.

<sup>166</sup> B.L.Munekar, *The Socio Economic Conditions of Dalits*, India Missiological Review, Vol.17, No. 1, March 1995, 14.

<sup>167</sup> Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*, 60- 61, 65.

<sup>168</sup> Singh, *Bible Aur Dalit*, 98- 99.

<sup>169</sup> V. Devashayam, *Pollution, poverty and powerlessness: A Dalit Perspective*, Arvind P. Nirmal (ed.), A Reader in Dalit Theology, Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1991, 1.

<sup>170</sup> M.S. Ansari, *Teacher in the Emerging Indian Society*, Merrut: International Publishing House, 2005. 310-315.

<sup>171</sup> Singh, *Bible Aur Dalit*, 98- 99.

<sup>172</sup> Singh, *Bible Aur Dalit*, 151.

walk naked for 13 kilometres on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1997 in Dumka Bihar. Fr. A.T. Thomas was tortured and killed on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1997. These incidents denote that dalits are deprived of even the fundamental human rights,<sup>173</sup> and from education for more than 3500 years.<sup>174</sup> *Bhim Ray Ambedkar* made reservation policies in constitution for dalits and tribals to uplift their communities, however it was noticed that lower percentage of dalits are employed in the higher grades.<sup>175</sup> The Indian dalits who are converted to Christianity are not eligible for reservation in education or cannot get government employment according to Indian constitution.

**1.3. Response of the Church:** The Christian Dalits are not only exploited by Society but also by the Church. For example, in a Catholic Church situated in Haraboli in the State of Karnataka, dalits were not allowed to go to the altar to receive Holy Communion.<sup>176</sup> Another example is found of a missionary Mr. Meed, a widower wanted to marry a dalit pariah lady but other missionaries opposed his proposal,<sup>177</sup> even some Churches discriminated dalits for a grant of scholarship or for equally participating in the Holy Communion service.

**1.4. Emergence of Dalit Theology:** It emerged during 1980's, when A. P. Nirmal one of the pioneers of dalit theology, delivered an address in 1981, entitled *Towards a Shudra Theology*, at the Carey Society of the United Theological College, Bangalore. The workshops on dalit issues were held at Guntur and Chennai in 1986, and 1988-1990 in which questions were raised 'why dalit theology' is essential and 'what is dalit theology?'<sup>178</sup> Nirmal stated:

*"Pathos is the epistemological starting point for Dalits, prior to any theory or praxis related to the struggle for liberation."*<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Longchar, A Wati. *An emerging tribal/indigenous theology: prospect for doing Asian theology*, The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia 1, (February 2002): ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCO host (accessed September 11, 2015). 6, 9-13.

<sup>174</sup> Prabhakar, *Dalit and Minjung*, 74.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

<sup>176</sup> Singh, *Bible Aur Dalit*, 143.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 142.

<sup>178</sup> Prabhakar, *Dalit and Minjung*, 4.

<sup>179</sup> Arvind P. Nirmal, *Doing Theology from a Dalit Perspective*, Arvind P. Nirmal (ed.), A Reader in Dalit Theology, Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, 1991, 141.

Dalits still struggle to seek their identity in the society, dalit theology is inseparably linked to identity of pathos and sufferings of dalits, and for example when dalit ancestors walked through dusty roads of the village. *Sa Varna* used to tie an earthen pot around their necks to serve as spiton. They were not allowed to learn Sanskrit; if they attempted, molten lead was poured down in their ears.<sup>180</sup> Dalits experienced an inhuman behaviour in the society for example Dalit Shambhuka was killed by Rama because he had undertaken meditation.<sup>181</sup>

**1.5. Biblical Reflection:** God participates in the sufferings and death of broken people through sufferings on the cross in Christ. God weeps when the people weep, he laughs when his people laugh. Dalits were ‘no people’ became the very people of God. The Israelites were liberated from the captivity of Egypt by God’s mighty hand with sign and wonders and they were given possession of the land of milk and honey. Today, Dalit Christians are teased as ‘*Rice Christins*’ or ‘bulgur (wheat or grain) Christians.’ They are discriminated, deprived of economic and political rights, denied privileges and reservations; but inspite of all difficulties, they follow Jesus Christ. Although dalits are not fully liberated yet they are confident that Jesus is present in their struggle, and He will liberate them. Because, God of Christianity is a servant God. He is a waiter; he is a *dhobi*, a *bhangi*. Jesus is identified as dalit, a servant God in Isaiah 53 “He was rejected by men, he was oppressed, led him to slaughter, and did not open his mouth.”<sup>182</sup> Jesus encountered rejection, mockery, contempt, suffering, crucifixion and finally death but his resurrection is a hope not to a particular caste but to all. Indian dalits faced a serious problem in the struggle for temple entry right. Dalits know how painful it is to be denied for entering into the temple for worship. This denial is seen in Jesus on the cross broken, cursed, split, and torn – ‘My God, my God why have you forsaken me?’ symbolizes the cry of *dalitness on the cross*, of the humanity of Jesus<sup>183</sup>

*Dakit Paraiyar* of South India is a dalit community; they are called the sons and daughters of the soil. Paraiyars are not priests but they are masters of drums who play the drums for communication between the divine and human beings. Therefore

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<sup>180</sup>*Ibid*, 61.

<sup>181</sup>*Ibid*, 63.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid*, 64.

<sup>183</sup>*Ibid*, 66- 67, 69.

in this sense they are called the 'Priests of the drum',<sup>184</sup> but a dalit cannot go to his agricultural field if he is called for drumming.<sup>185</sup> The drumming is therefore not a choice, but a demanded service, even when it causes hardship to the drummer. The Drum is a symbol of corporate suffering of the Paraiyar as they are associated with cow hides and funerals, which are a major source of pollution. The drums are made of dead animal's skin and are a symbol of dalit experience of suffering, pathos and discrimination, the drum is an identity of emancipation. The Pariahars are called polluted, but their drumming is complementary to sacred words for the presence of God on different occasions.<sup>186</sup> The Pariahars are counted as untouchables but on other hand without their drum beat there seems to be no communication between divine and human beings that leads them for liberation. Jesus Christ is the symbol of drum he was beaten up as a drum, suffered, therefore, Paraiyar theology does not begin with ontology from above but starts from blow in Christ the drum; goes back to God for resurrection, liberation and salvation,<sup>187</sup> as drumming is the way of life for Paraiyar, they see power of liberation in Jesus Christ.

## 2. Adivasi - Tribal Theology

**2.1.Introduction:** Tribal theology is an 'earth centred' discussion it leads to contemporary ecological crisis, misuse of resources, market culture, war and survival crisis are the issues of study for which land justice to the tribal is essential. The term tribal is widely used in social science literature and in government documents that enlists several tribal communities in India. Doing justice to land is the starting point of the tribal theology and doing justice to totality of creation is the primary departure of the tribal theology from other contextual theologies.<sup>188</sup> According to Indian history when Aryans invaded Indus valley Adivasis escaped to remote jungles maintaining their language, culture, socio- political and economic organizations, and later they spread out in different parts of India as separate

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<sup>184</sup> Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*, 68,193.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 87,192.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 12-13.

<sup>187</sup> K.P.Aleaz, "Some Features of a Dalit Theology", Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 18, No.1, April 2004.156.

<sup>188</sup> Wati Longchar, "*Tribal Identity and Theology*" Rethinking Theology in India, James Massey, T.K. John SJ (ed.) New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2013, 114.

communities but never accepted the *Jati Pratha* caste system of the dominant upper caste in India.<sup>189</sup>

**2.2. Culture:** The Adivasi tribal culture depends on land, language and labour, their festivals and religious activities centered on the soil and season cycle. Therefore; rocks, boulders, trees and rivers are not just empty objects but these are voices, songs of birds and animals speak a religious language. The tribal dance and sing along with the cycle of the land, the whole religious system, ceremonies, rituals, festivals and dances are centered and deeply rooted on the land itself. The introduction of money by Westerns forced them to opt to work as labourers; the soil production was replaced by factory made goods. The colonial power and missions considered them as primitive, uncultured, uncivilized and savages, of inferior in culture, life styles and ways of life. Their religion was understood as demonic, superstitious and evil; hence conversion to Christianity was justified as modern culture.<sup>190</sup>

**2.3. Identity:** Adivasi Tribal give priority to clan identity, family kinship relations, their unity and solidarity is based on the land. A person who is not deeply rooted in the land he is like a stranger without an identity.<sup>191</sup> For example *Adi* Gond people of Betul Madhya Pradesh were a wondering people; from place to place and river to river but they identified themselves as *Koitur* the people of the soil or dust. Tribal always respect mother earth and never looked upon it as an object of exploitation. The Language is another important vehicle in the life of tribal community if language is lost, a community can loose its identity.

**2.4. Theology of Creation:** Tribals believe that Supreme Being has created the earth. He enters into the soil with the seed and rises again along with the crops, blooming and bearing fruits; for example the growing of rice signifies the presence of the creator. Therefore, sacred power is present in every iota of creation and the whole creation becomes the manifestation of the creator, thus the land and creator

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<sup>189</sup>*Ibid*, 121-122, 125.

<sup>190</sup>Longchar, "*Tribal Identity and Theology*", 106- 108, 110-111.

<sup>191</sup>*Ibid*, 106.



are inseparably related. It is believed that creator not only dwells in human persons, but also dwells in the soil. The land is the symbol of unity of all living creatures, Spirits and the Creator.<sup>192</sup>

**2.5. Encounter of Tribal with Christianity** the Primal faith of tribal was confined to a single clan or at the level of a village and sub – ethnic groups. Religious festivals, sacrifices and other rituals were localized and did not have anything to do with the whole community. The Adi people of primal religion believed in existence of Spirits and Supreme God and never believed in idolatry.<sup>193</sup> The Christianity brought liberation of tribals in India but it separated them from earth and natural resources which were valuable; it was insisted that earth is useful as long as it serves the purpose of development through science and technology. The colonial power and Christian missions considered themselves ‘superior’ in terms of religion, race, economy and culture, they maintained negative attitude towards the traditional religion and cultures therefore the conversion brought following changes among the tribals: First of all the converts were separated from their home community; for instance the first sign of conversion was cutting of man’s hair like the white man, and change of clothes for both the genders. Secondly, converted Adivasi Tribal was located in the mission compound in new village with mission disciplines.<sup>194</sup> The main task of converts was to support mission work under the agenda of Evangelical Gospel to convert the people for expansion of the Church membership but generally missions forgot that Christ fed the hungry crowd then he applied the Gospel, and preached them about the kingdom of God.

### 3. Feminist Theology

**3.1. Introduction:** The scholars from Athens city had developed an idea that women are in all ways inferior to men. A scholar Zeno taught that, ‘Women tempt men away from a holy life’. Tertullian a famous influential preacher said ‘Women are the

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<sup>192</sup>Longchar, *Tribal Identity and Theology*, 106.

<sup>193</sup>O.L.Snaitang, *In Search of a Tribal History*, 401-402.

<sup>194</sup>Wati Longchar, *Tribal Identity and Theology*, 110-111.

devil's gateway. St. Augustine said, 'Marriage is a covenant with death'. He declared that a woman is not created in God's image but she bears God's image only through her husband, and is merely to be under male's domination. Such biased definitions distorted Christian theology that passed on for ages. Yahweh was interpreted as a God of males such as of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Eve is regarded as originator of sin and regarded as inferior and subordinate to men. Therefore the teachings of the Church made women victims of social, cultural, political, economic and religious systems.<sup>195</sup>

Pope John Paul said, "Women cannot be priests because they do not bear 'Physical resemblance' to Christ."<sup>196</sup> Feminist Theological hermeneutic had its origin in the United States towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century in socio-cultural context of the struggle for rights of women. For the first time in the history, the Christian Conference of Asia set up an official desk for women's concerns in 1981 that published first book: "*We Dare to Dream: Doing Feminist Theology As Asian Women*" in 1990.<sup>197</sup> There has been cruelty for Asian women that they were beaten up by their fathers or sold into child marriage or prostitution. Asian women husbands batter their wives. The Asian brothers are ignoring the reality that their sisters are selling their bodies to pay for tuition.<sup>198</sup>

Women in Asia are accorded a marginalized and inferior status both in society and in the churches. The dowry system makes them objects of bargaining and leads to tragic and inhuman consequences such as wife burning in India. The women get low wages; they are economically and sexually exploited in recent consumerism, and tourism. They face inhuman conditions and late working hours.<sup>199</sup> In short, Asian society has largely failed to recognize the economic, social and political value represented by women. The position of women varies in Asian

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<sup>195</sup> R.L. Huni, *Contextualizing Asian Theologies : Women's Perspective*, Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 18, No.1, April 2004, 139-144.

<sup>196</sup> Barkeley & Alvera Mickelsen. *Abuse and Remedy*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1990, 30-31.

<sup>197</sup> Namsoon Kang, *Re-constructing Asian Feminist Theology: toward a glocal feminist theology in an era of neo- Empire(s)*, Sebastian C. H. Kim, (ed.) *Christian Theology in Asia*, Cambridge: University Press, 2008, 206.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 208

<sup>199</sup> Franklyn J. Balasundaram, *Feminist Concerns in Asia: An Ecumenical Christian Perspective*, *Contemporary Asian Christian Theology*, Bangalore: ISPCK, 1995, 177.

countries. They are poorest among the poor, most oppressed among the oppressed or 'minjung' among minjung; Korean woman theologian Chung Hyun Kyung calls them, the dalit among the dalits.<sup>200</sup>

**3.2.Indian Contextual realities of women:** According to thinkers ancient Indian women enjoyed equal status to men but it was declined after *manusmriti* a religious Hindu scripture and due to other cultural influences, such as *sati*, widow jumping into her husband's funeral pyre, child marriages, and ban on widow remarriages became part of social life, *purdah* curtain used for women. The female temple servants were called *Devadasis* these women were exploited in illegitimate sexual activity.<sup>201</sup> The British rule fought against evil practices with reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Jyotirao Phule who fought for the liberation of women from evil customs.<sup>202</sup> Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, politics, media, art, culture, service sectors, science and technology,<sup>203</sup> but still there is sexual harassment at the workplace, problems of dowry, child marriage, sex selective abortions, family planning, divorce, rape, honour killing and so on. Women are treated as sex objects, looked down at the time of menstruation as unclean; it excludes them from religious and social activities; making them dependant on the support of fathers, husbands and sons,<sup>204</sup> taught by the society to believe in their inferiority and to be dependent on men. It is a belief that educating daughters is a waste of money as they will leave the home after marriage, and bring no benefit to their families.<sup>205</sup>

Women are not only exploited and oppressed but even killed or burned for rape, dowry or in communal riots. One of the communal killings is narrated of *Kausar Bano*, stated by her husband: On February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002, a mob of 3000 men surrounded our chali. They were shouting slogans 'Jai Shri Ram.' People started running for saving their lives. My wife was pregnant; she could not run so I carried her in my arms. The mob was setting houses on fire and killing people. About 20-25

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<sup>200</sup> Rajni Rebera, *Challenging Patriarchy*, Ursula King (ed.), *Feminist Theology from the Third World*, London: SPCK/ Orbis Books, 1994, 113-114.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*. 69-70.

<sup>203</sup> Ramesh Bhardari(ed.), *Role and Status of women in Religion and society*, 8-13.

<sup>204</sup> Singh, *Feminist*, 71.

<sup>205</sup> D.Immaculate Mary, *Another Dimension of violence forms of Discrimination*, Madras: Stree Vol. No. 3, Nov. 1998. 9.

people caught us; they pulled out my wife from my arms, slit her stomach with a sword and paraded the baby on the tip of the sword. They poured petrol on both of them and lit them. I hid behind five feet wall and witnessed what happened to my wife and child. Then I ran away for the fear of my life.<sup>206</sup>

The public brutal violence on the body of Kausar Bano has to be seen as a war against the whole Muslim community, using the body of women as battle field. It was followed by events like Babri Masjid, Rath Yatra, demolition of Babri Masjid and anti-Muslim programmes in Mumbai, Surat, Bhopal and many other places.<sup>207</sup> This is how communal forces play riots against each other that cease to reach higher status of women in the society.

**3.3.Feminist Theologians:** *Rajini Reberain* stated that a certain number of women prostitutes come from Christian families in Asia, especially from Philippines and Thailand and that there some of the poor families sell their daughters for prostitution in order to raise money to cover expenses in ordaining their sons as Buddhist monks.<sup>208</sup> *Sun Ai Park* explained that United States military based Subic Bay Navel, and Philippines O-San Air force in Korea is used for mobilization of women for prostitution. The militarism has effects, from the use of chemical weapons during the American war in Vietnam and due to dumping of nuclear waste in South Pacific zone mothers give birth to deformed babies.<sup>209</sup>

*Aruna Ghandason* wrote an article on “*Women and Spirituality in Asia*”, from feminist Indian perspective. She wrote that *Shakti* or power is known as *Devi* and that this female deity is a symbol of life giving power of the universe considered as mother earth and cosmic life.<sup>210</sup> *Shakti* does not mean mere economic, political, social and cultural power but *Shakti* is a spiritual famine force, source of all human beings (*purusha*) and of nature (*prakriti*). *Shakti* female is highly honoured and

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<sup>206</sup> E. A. Rajkumar, *Politicising the Body: A Feminist Christology*, Bangalore: Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 18, No.1, April 2004, 83.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, 84,86.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>209</sup> Balasundaram, *Feminist Concerns in Asia*, 186-87.

<sup>210</sup> Aruna Ghandason, *Women and Spirituality in Asia*, Ursula King(ed.) *Feminist Theology from the Third World*, London: SPCK: Orbis Books, 1994, 351.

worshipped yet Asian women live a life of total powerlessness, in poverty, denied social, political, religious and economic rights; women are oppressed, sell their labour and sexuality, advertise her body to sell goods.<sup>211</sup> Aruna Gnanadason cites several examples to show how women are discriminated in Indian Churches. He says that in one of the denominations women do not have voting rights, in another baby boys are taken up to the altar for baptism not the girls, in numerous Churches women are not allowed to preach or read the Gospel in the Church; qualified women are not appointed for positions in the Church or institutions, they are excluded from the total life of the Church.<sup>212</sup> They walk long distance to collect fire wood and drinking water, cook food, clean utensils, tend the cattle, bear and care for the children; in exchange they are treated as slaves at home by their husbands. They are divorced for no reason, for example, not producing a male child, they are denied opportunities and prevented from reaching desirable goals.<sup>213</sup>

*Stella Faria* stated that women on one hand experience a sense of achievement, new opportunities open in socio-economic and political spheres but on other hand they feel gender discrimination, face violence in the form of female foeticides, infanticide, dowry deaths, bride burnings and other forms of physical and sexual abuses. An example is Meera a victim of martial rape, mother of four children, suffered from abnormal sexual behavior by her husband. Non compliance resulted in broken ribs, black eyes, and loss of teeth. She consulted a Christian doctor and reported to Bishop. They replied that she had married him for better or worse and asked her to go in peace. Another example is of Laaly, mother of five daughters who was forced by her husband to see his sexual abuse with daughters; when she refused to watch, he wanted to kill her. The Pastor refused to help her, completely broken she left her husband, with the help of social workers, admitted her children in an orphanage home.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup>Gnanadason, *Women and Spirituality*, Ursula King(ed.), Feminist Theology, 352.

<sup>212</sup>Franklyn J. Balasundaram, *Feminist Concerns in Asia*, Bangalore: ISPCK, 1995,189.

<sup>213</sup>Balasundaram, *Feminist Concerns in Asia*, 179, 181.

<sup>214</sup> Stella Faria, *Key note address on Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics*, Lalrinawni Ralte & Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar,(ed.) *Feminist Hermeneutics*, Bangalore: IWIT/ ISPCK, 2002, 17-20.

*Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar* stated that women went through painful experiences in the past for example a dalit woman Yerramma was paraded naked because she had supported a boy and girl of different caste for marriage but none of the villagers came out to rescue her they stood as mute spectators. According to a report over 95% unnatural deaths of women take place in Bangalore due to stove bursts, kitchen accidents in most of the cases because of dowry or not bearing male child, an average of two million women are raped every year in India. The women are denied equal wages, they are expected not to spread legs while sitting, not to speak or laugh loudly, a girl is expected to create a separate space even in the crowd, remain silent with downcast eyes.<sup>215</sup>

*Lalrinawmi Ralte* stated in her article on “*Cultural Hermeneutics*” that there is gender discrimination as she was not allowed to express her feelings about the injustice done to her in the Church. Mizo women are regular Church goers, yet the Church does not allow women for positions authority and recognition but there is misinterpretation of the Bible. For example for adultery a women had to sit facing walls in the Church of Samsuih village in Mizoram, in Lungkawlh village bamboos were used to divide men and women in worship singing.<sup>216</sup> Therefore re-reading of the Bible is required from cultural hermeneutical perspective for a transformation, equality and justice in the society.

*Nirmala Vasanthakumar* wrote on “*Role and Identity of women in the Church*” that Indian patriarchal system controls the behaviour. A woman cannot participate directly in religious ceremonies but she keeps fast for the male members of the family. The women has more responsibilities at home while male members are more involved in power and administration, in short family controls life of a woman.<sup>217</sup>

*Anna V. Alexander* the children honour mother by touching her feet but she has to be submissive and self sacrificing house wife as under male’s protection, it restricts her mobility and makes her dependent. Women are treated as men’s property, the

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<sup>215</sup> Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar, *Significance of the Body in Feminist Theological Discourse*, Bangalore Theological Forum, Vol. XXXII, No.2, Bangalore: National Printing Press, 2011, 82-83, 85.

<sup>216</sup> Lalrinawmi Ralte, *Cultural Hermeneutics*, Lalrinawmi Ralte & Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar (ed.) *Feminist Hermeneutics*, Bangalore: IWIT/ ISPCK, 2002, 91-95.

<sup>217</sup> Nirmala Vasanthakumar, *Role and Identity of Women in the Church*, Lalrinawmi Ralte & Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar, (ed.) *Feminist Hermeneutics*, Bangalore: IWIT/ ISPCK, 2002, 49, 50-51.

ownership is transferred at the time of marriage but she is not entitled for inheritance of father's property. There is also a poor view of women that they are the object of sex, as they are treated and created for men's pleasure. The women are also unclean every month therefore they are excluded from religious and social activities.<sup>218</sup> This led women to feel that they are worthless, unclean, and not capable of making any decisions. Therefore Indian society has involved in other evil practices such as child marriage, sati, denial of property and education.

**3.4. Feminist concept of the Church:** The Church fathers interpreted the Bible from different angles such as Thomas Aquinas said that women are “misbegotten males.” Aquinas took this definition of women from Aristotle's “biology” which identifies the male sperm with the genetic form of the embryo. Women are regarded as contributing only the Matter or Blood that fleshes out the form of the embryo. Hence the very existence of women must be explained as a biological accident that comes about through a deformation of the male seed by the female matter, producing a defective human, which is defined as lacking normative human standing. Because of this defective nature women cannot represent normative (standard) humanity. Aquinas also emphasized that the maleness of Christ is not merely a historical accident but a necessity. To represent humanity, Christ must be incarnated into normative humanity, which is only the Male. As perfect male, Christ represents the priesthood in the Church. This Thomistic view of women is still reflected in Roman Catholic canon law, where it is decreed that women are “unfit matter” for ordination.<sup>219</sup>

However, later on Church helped women to receive education but women were interpreted as loving, caring, self sacrificing wife and mother, hard working like Martha, submissive like Mary who anointed the feet of Jesus, nameless as mentioned in Biblical genealogy. This again led women to be good mothers, obedient and faithful wives but Church positions remained under the control of male Pastors and Bishops. Women were appointed only in secretarial, social, children

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>219</sup> Rose Mary Radford Ruether, *The feminist critique in religious studies*, 91.

work but on matters of financial, legal and management of property they were excluded from the administration. The majority of the Churches did not offer active participation of women in the Church as ordained ministers but they had to be involved in a passive role in the Church.

However in mid 1970s the ordination of women was accepted by world council of churches, National council of Churches, theological associations and joint women's programmes. The Church of North India in Jaffna Srilanka first ordained women; other Churches came out for re- reading of the Bible, offering women more responsibility in the Church by granting space and participation of women in the Church.<sup>220</sup>

**3.5. Feminist Biblical Reflection:** Term 'Man' or *Adam* in Genesis 2:7, 19, expresses Humanity therefore; male and female both are equal in God's creation. The Sadducees asked a very critical question to Jesus about a woman who married one by one seven husbands. Whose wife would she be in Heaven? They had asked - Jesus replied, "When the dead rise, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; they will be like angels in Heaven" (Mark 12: 18-25). God wants equality on earth and in heaven. Thus, the goal of feminist theology is to promote the true human worth, dignity, and to acknowledge equal image of God in humanity.

The missionaries provided education to women which helped them to receive a certain amount of freedom. The Bible was used to affirm the images of women. The Church said women must be loving, caring, self-sacrificing wives and mothers. They should be hardworking-house wives- for example like Martha; and as mentioned in Proverbs Chapter 31, a hard working woman. They should be submissive women, like Mary who anointed Jesus with oil. They are also temptress like Eve. Men were allowed to keep concubines but they are to be treated as property. Women are unclean, according to Leviticus laws. Women are nameless, as in genealogies.<sup>221</sup> But they produce the children for husband's family. So also, women in the Church were encouraged to be good, obedient and faithful wives.

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<sup>220</sup> Nirmala Vasanthakumar, "Role and Identity of Women in the Church", Lalrinawmi Ralte & Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar, (ed.) *Feminist Hermeneutics*, Bangalore: IWIT/ ISPCK, 2002, 49, 50-51, 52-53.

<sup>221</sup> Lalrinawmi Ralte, E.A. Rajkumar, (ed.), *Feminist Hermeneutics*, 50-53.



Even today in the women's fellowship, leadership and positions in the Church are controlled by men. Women are involved in secretarial, social, congregational work among children, but on the matters of financial, legal and in management of property most women are excluded from administration. Therefore questions of ordination of women and equal participation in the Church are a primary concern of Biblical hermeneutics to search for women's leadership and to give them more opportunity for equal participation in the Church and society.

However, Asian Christian women do not view Mary, the mother of Jesus as weak, meek, passive and dutiful but she is seen as a strong woman who identifies herself with today's grieving mothers, wives, daughters and sisters in their bitter struggle for freedom and humanity. Jesus affirmed Mary's zeal for learning (Luke 10:38-42), He had conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, contrary to social norms (John 4:27). Jesus relaxed in the house of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-48). He healed the mother in law of Simon Peter in whose house he stayed. Women cared for him, were part of his group followers (Mark 15:40-41, Luke 8: 1-3), Jesus had compassion and understanding for prostitutes and the woman who was detected in adultery, Jesus affirmed fundamental equality for both men and women.<sup>222</sup>

*Great women:* Among the Israelites Deborah was a judge, famous for her skill in settling disputes (Judges Chapter 4); Esther, Ruth and Judith are remembered for their courage and talents. The Hebrew word "*Elohim*" for God contains both masculine and feminine elements. Isaiah 49:14-16 portrays God as a loving, caring mother. It is also emphasized in Deuteronomy 32:18; "you forgot the God who gave you birth." The story of Genesis speaks that male and female are made in the image of God. In Hosea 11:1-4, God says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son... and bent down to feed them." Therefore Hebrew term is interpreted only as a Father but also a mother who takes care of her children and bends down for breast feeding to the child. Also, in the New Testament Jesus' attitude towards women is entirely different. He treated them as whole persons and equal to men. Moreover, women were witnesses to the resurrection and were asked

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<sup>222</sup> Balasundaram, *Feminist Concerns in Asia*, Bangalore: ISPCK, 1995, 179, 197-198.

to tell the news to others (John 20:1-18, Matthew 28:5-10, Luke 24: 11-12). Jesus had motherly concern for the people. He fed five thousand when they were hungry.

The Indian Churches and Indian society may consider women impure because of menstruation, but feminist theologians are bold enough to explain a shocking idea that Church may not be ready to accept but menstrual blood is connected to the power of life. This is a new life-giving and redemptive image of the blood of Jesus Christ, through which we enter into the new eternal life. It points to the analogy between Jesus' bleeding body and women's capacity to procreate.<sup>223</sup> For "Birthing of new life" Jesus' blood is powerful symbol of creativity. Therefore; Christians sing a song that "there is power in the blood" of Jesus, so also feminist theologians interpret that women are powerful in the blood of Jesus Christ.

#### **4. Theology of Gospel and Plough**

**4.1. Introduction:** Sam Higginbottom (1874-1958) emphasized on 'Gospel and Plow' for biblical interpretations. He was born in Greenheyes, Manchester, England. He was an American Presbyterian missionary in India from 1903 to 1945. In the month of February 1903, during a 'Young Men's Christian Association' meeting Sam Higginbottom was introduced to a missionary Henry Forman he suggested: "If you think to go as missionary to China or South America – Why do you not think of India?" He advised Higginbottom to go to Etah. The Mission Board would allow him to go to India without theological training. Higginbottom wrote a letter to mission requesting to go to India, and he was allowed to go un-ordained.<sup>224</sup> This is how Higginbottom was motivated, had an opening to become a missionary and finally reached to Allahabad, India.

**4.2. Contextualization of the Gospel:** Sam Higginbottom's mother Jenny Baines Higginbottom had a deep interest in the Bible. She used to sit with the children for

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<sup>223</sup> M.O. Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women*, 31, 72.

<sup>224</sup> Sam Higginbottom, *The Gospel and the Plough*, New York: Macmillan Company 1921, 3-9.

family devotion every day.<sup>225</sup> Higginbottom with family experience took keen interest in biblical religious life. Higginbottom at Allahabad used to deliver lectures from the Bible, and on other subjects, he was very much involved in counseling to an individual, Class and to the Public, no one opposed his strategy of preaching. He used to exhort Christianity not for conversion of the people but through lectures he impressed students and public for essentials of Christian Ethics. Many non-Christian students at Allahabad regularly attended the weekly Church Services and some even sang in the choir. One of the most popular events of the Institute was the assembly program held on Wednesday afternoon. The attendance was not compulsory but the programs were always fully attended.<sup>226</sup> Higginbottom was an agriculturalist but he always attended church services and religious meetings as well as he were completely invoved in preaching and sharing the word of God in different churches and Places at Allahabad.

**4.3 The mode of Practical Theology:** Higginbottom was well aware that scientific and technical education was insufficient to transform India because of its caste system, social and religious superstitions. He submitted his report on Indian cattle's to Royal Commission. It was published in *Young India*: Cow worship was responsible for the poor quality of Indian cattle and humas alike suffered from shortage of fodder.<sup>227</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi was a strict vegetarian, promoter of non-violence and protector of cow sentiments. So in reverse Gandhi commented for his Indian readers: not to pay attention to Professor Higginbottom when he wrote about Hinduism because he did not know much about Hinduism, but urged them not to pay attention when he talked about 'Cow' because he was then talking about what he did know.<sup>228</sup> However, Higginbottom was quite right in his observation as it is still challenging in today's Indian context that Vishal Mangalwadi wrote in the forward in revised version of 2014, '*Gospel and Plow*' that:

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<sup>225</sup>*Ibid*, 1- 2,9, 16-17.

<sup>226</sup>Hess, *Higginbottom of Allahabad*, 80-81.

<sup>227</sup>Sam Higginbottom, *An Autobiography* ,182.

<sup>228</sup>*Ibid*,182.

*“We worship cows, but in most of our cities, the cows that are not yielding milk, are let loose to fill their empty bellies with garbage. Recently, a news paper reported that a surgeon removed 70 kilograms of plastics and injection syringes from a hurting cow’s stomach. Another removed 1,200 plastic bags from a dead cow.”*<sup>229</sup>

The cows and animals die because of starvation or disease, but cow’s slaughtering is neither allowed for food, nor dead animals bones for better fertilizer. Sam Higginbottom with his experiences wrote in *Gospel and Plow*’s third chapter entitled, *the cattle problem of India*, that we still face in present day context that the finest Gir cow of Gujrat is taken to Brazil is healthier and useful in Brazil than in India. Gir, from Gujrat was exported until 1960s. Religiously agitation led to ban on cow export. And yet, on a simple on line India has only 3000 Gir cows, while Brazil has five million Girs. In Brazil each Gir’s DNA is given the POI certificate – Pure Origin India. How did this happen. At the dawn of the new millennium, Brazilian breeders invested Rupees Two Carors to establish a laboratory in Bhavnagar, Gujrat. It collected and exported Gir’s semen and embryo. A typical Gir in India yields 10-12 liters of milk per day. In Brazil the same Gir yields 40 liters –the highest recorded average is 48 liters a day.<sup>230</sup> The above reality of India is not a new phenomina, the superstition, caste system, bribe, injustice, exploitation, duplicate seed and manure, insecure management of the field, domestic animals, farming and marketing, unequal wages, dependency on rainy season, old methods of agriculture and the laziness of people leads the agricultural work of India to downward status of poverty, therefore he proposed the practical mode of theology of gospel and plough so that people may move out from impractical to practical theology for the welfare of the community.

**4.4. Indian Cultural Life Style:** culture is a lived experience handed down from generation to generation on the basis of experiences which is developed by way of living, habits, customs, rituals, symbols, language, social behavior, ethical moral values, human rights, traditions and so on. Higginbottom started living in India at

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<sup>229</sup>Vishal Magalwadi, “Forword” *The Gospel and the Plow*, 2014, xiii.

<sup>230</sup>Mangalwadi, ‘Forword’, 2014, xii.

the age of twenty nine. He came to understand that 'cultural relevancy' is important for developing a Theological and Biblical coherence in lived cultural experiences of the people. He discovered that Christian message is to be conveyed to 80% population who is involved in Agricultural work therefore transformation is to begin with the training and development of agricultural work in India.<sup>231</sup>

Sam Higginbottom observed very closely the traditions, rituals, folk stories, dance, songs and everyday *life style* for doing theology. He came to understand that Agriculture is the life line of India; therefore he took up Plough next to the Cross as most powerful symbol of Indian culture for presentation of the Gospel, and for the development of Indian society at all levels of life, a theological method that could penetrate into all aspects of human life such as anthropological, cultural, economic, and socio political context of the people. So, totality of culture becomes the stage for God's saving activity, for profound theological reasons, as one ought to attend the cultural context for transformation of the total personality of the people therefore culture is an important factor that plays a vital role in the life of a person.

**4.5. Traditional to Modern 'Plow':** In Indian Agricultural context the farmers used traditional variety of tools and weapons, the field was ploughing, farming activities and house hold purpose were solved by the help of animals in everyday life and the wooden tools were made from different timbers plants. Most of the agricultural instruments were made from stone, wood, bone, shell, teeth, plant fiber or animal. Later on new tools and equipments were developed with the discovery of the metals starting with copper, brass and bronze and finally iron; some of which have been developed in combination of hard cutting tool with wooden and bamboo handle for ease and lightness. Higginbottom acknowledged that the indigenous knowledge is worth and can be utilized as a base for modern farming.<sup>232</sup> Sam Higginbottom paid attention to old Indian agricultural tools and methods, he presented a comparative

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<sup>231</sup> Schreiter, Robert J. "Culture, society and contextual theologies." *Missiology* 12, no. 3 (July 1984): 261-273. ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCO host (accessed September 21, 2015), 261-262.

<sup>232</sup> [nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream /123456789/.../IJTK%208\(2\)%20212-21](http://nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream/123456789/.../IJTK%208(2)%20212-21), accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

study of old and new farming in terms of production growth to which farmers could understand easily. Mason Vaugh; an Agricultural Engineer founded the Department of Agricultural Engineering, invented mould Board Ploughs (*Wah Wah Plough* U.P. No. 2, Shabash Plough) introduced iron ploughs, hoes, cultivators and wheat thresher. The next phase of the Institute was taken up in the year 1948-49, for construction of the College of Agriculture, new hostels and residences. The most famous agriculture Extension Project “*Jamuna Par Punar Yojna*”, in which the “*Gaon Saathi*”, (recruitment of village level worker) was introduced into the extension system for the first time in India. The first planners of our country took the idea of the ‘Village Level Worker’ as a community development model on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1950, the Allahabad Agricultural Institute was registered to function as a Christian Educational Institute of a National stature.<sup>233</sup> Higginbottom broke the missionary tradition of gospel alone but included with it Theology of plough that deals with day to day problems, not only of spiritual, but also social, political and economic life situations of the people including local folk stories, songs, drama, traditions, rituals, culture, customs, symbols and Philosophies which could be appropriate in presenting the gospel of Christ today in Indian context.

**4.6. Theology of Co-operative Faith Identity:** Sam Higginbottom did not have any theological degree but he was called as *padre sahib* because of his pastoral ministry. Later on, Presbyterian Church in America acknowledged his ministry and he was consecrated as *moderator* of the Church. He was faithful to his duties as teacher and in-charge of hostel, he continued to keep his ministerial *Identity of Lepers servant* at Naini, when Mahatma Gandhi came to visit the Agriculture School and Leper Home on November 15, 1929,<sup>234</sup> also many people visited the leper centre and agricultural work at Naini, Allahabad and witnessed how God’s servant is transforming the life of people.

Higginbottom was a man of faith who practiced the Gospel with Plough for which mission board accused him. Higginbottom argued to retain co-operative faith of

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<sup>233</sup> S.B. Lal, *A Brief Sketch of Dr. Sam Higginbottom’s Vision on Gospel & Plough: Then and Now* National Conference on Science and Religion, Allahabad: Gospel and Plough School, of Theology, Shiats, 2009, 60.

<sup>234</sup> Hess, *Higginbottom of Allahabad*, 64.

Lords Prayer taught by Jesus to His disciple ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ ‘Give Us’, not me alone, but Us, the great wide family of mankind of every colour, tongue and of everywhere.<sup>235</sup> He was of opinion that doing Theology does not mean simply preaching the Bible, but to practice it and to translate the Gospel into the lives of the people, through model of Gospel and Plough one must practice to look at different dimensions of life such as Spiritual, Physical, Social, Political, and Economic growth by focusing agricultural development of India therefore he said:

*“Feeding the hungry was no less ...than healing the sick. Agricultural Institute was doing the work of the Church just as much as the preaching in the Pulpit.”*<sup>236</sup>

Higginbottom was criticized for his theological method by his own missionary friends for theologizing the gospel through agricultural plough and other practical courses. Therefore North India Presbyterian Mission arrived at a decision that agricultural Institute must be closed down, Higginbottom be dismissed from his position and Mission called for his resignation.<sup>237</sup> Thereafter Higginbottom did not get any support from the mission board nevertheless he continued to emphasize that introduction of better farming in India is the most natural and efficient theological method of giving training to Indians to maintain a self-supporting, self-propagating, self-governing Church.

Higginbottom proposed to theologize the gospel in terms of training the farmers, also to train School Teachers, as they are the educators of villages, also the trained farmers of the Church to be equipped with technological knowledge to work in the villages, the future Church ministers be equipped with training not only in Evangelistic work but of specific need such as blacksmiths, carpenters, tailoring, and prevention of erosion of the soil, business and marketing skills to become self-reliant through modern farming, machinery, dairying, drying of vegetables and fruits, rope

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<sup>235</sup>*Ibid*, 142-146.

<sup>236</sup>*Ibid*, 167.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid*, 167.

making and so on,<sup>238</sup> living among their own people for transformation of the community to which he called the real gospel of Christ to feed the hungry and serve the nation.

**4.7. Acceptance of ‘Gospel and Plow’ theology:** After five years, the Presbyterian Mission Board voted in favour of the valuable work of Agricultural Institute at Allahabad back into full membership. The Institute was separated from Ewing Christian College in 1926 but was allowed to continue the work under the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.<sup>239</sup>

*Resolutions:* The National Missionary Council was held in 1917-1918 resolved as follows that why Agricultural Institute is an effective instrument for transformation of India:

XX -1/ 9-13 November/ 1917: The Council endorses the view of Agricultural and Industrial Missions are the integral part of the presentation of Gospel to India.

XII -1/ 14-19 November/ 1918: Missions should aim at the establishment of central institutions for training of teachers in Agriculture and allied Industries...such as silk, poultry...also Council urges the Home Boards to supply trained men and suitable equipment to carry on Agricultural and allied training.<sup>240</sup>

Higginbottom expressed his feelings that those who had criticized his theology of Gospel and Plough in the past openly supported him in 1939. It is a history that North Indian Mission had excluded Higginbottom’s Agricultural Institute for fourteen years but his election as Moderator of the Church symbolized the acceptance of Higginbottom’s Agricultural Institute, as the correct method of Agricultural Mission Movement.<sup>241</sup> Sam Higginbottom as Moderator of the United States Presbyterian Church had exceptional fund raising ability therefore in between 1909 – 1940 he managed to raise over \$ 900, 000/- He promoted missionary work in general, visited Allahabad in September 1940. Later on ‘Higginbottom’s Recognition Fund’ was announced on his seventieth birthday to raise \$ 155,000/-,

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<sup>238</sup> Higginbottom, *Gospel and Plow*, 36-40,48.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid*, 167-168, 224.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, 125-126.

<sup>241</sup> Hess, *Sam Higginbottom of Allahabad*, 100.



His message was recorded to broadcast in America on a network Radio Program; its goal became a reality in early 1947.<sup>242</sup> He had heart attack and died on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1958, at the New York home of his body was taken to Florida and buried at Cody Villa on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1958.<sup>243</sup> The Institute at Allahabad was the first Asian Agricultural Institute many came to visit and appreciated Agricultural School. Among them were learned persons like Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sir Sunder Lal of the High Court in Allahabad, and Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru's family.<sup>244</sup> Many Indians, Americans and Europeans during their tour stopped at Allahabad to see the work of Agricultural Institute.<sup>245</sup> The Indian king and Princes visited the Agricultural Institute they were encouraged by seeing the effect of the Agricultural work.<sup>246</sup> Even today people come to visit Sam Higginbottom State University with appreciation for observation, studies and research.

## 5: Paradoxical Context

**5.1. Introduction:** The paradoxical conflict existed in India in its long history between 'Gospel and Plow', as people of India easily accept Plough the Modern Technology of the Western- European world but hesitate to accept the Gospel of Christ treating it as foreign religion, though Saint Thomas came to India in first century, preaching the Gospel before it reached to the western countries but unfortunately a lot of confusions existed in minds of the people. There is high level of hatred towards foreign religion, mainly for converting Indians to Christianity. It was unfortunate that Gospel was confined to South India and later on it was not presented in indigenous form rather it was taught in a western form of worship, liturgy and culture. Therefore, it created a serious agitation against Gospel as a foreign religion but on other hand highly there was acceptance of Plough / modern technology witnessing more crops in the field. This is the reason that 'Gospel and Plow' ought to go together, the Gospel may run into paradox of criticism,

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<sup>242</sup> Higginbottom, *Gospel and Plow*, 100, 105-106, 113, 119.

<sup>243</sup> Hess, *Higginbottom of Allahabad*, 129.

<sup>244</sup> Higginbottom, *An Autobiography*, 136, 157.

<sup>245</sup> Hess, Sam, *Higginbottom of Allahabad*, 81.

<sup>246</sup> Higginbottom, *An Autobiography*, 157- 159.

appreciation, blame, acceptance and rejection as a foreign religion but it is to move together as 'Gospel and Plow' for welfare of all.

**5.2. The History of Paradoxical Context:** Christ lived in Paradoxical context of favor and opposition of the people for example when Jesus asked for water to a Samaritan woman, talking to an untouchable, or staying with untouchable community. The Jews, Priests, government officials and his opponents blamed him. Nevertheless, he taught that: You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (Matthew 5: 43). Sam Higginbottom lived in paradoxical context that still continuous in appreciation and criticism of Christianity in Indian context. The Bible was quoted in legislatures, press, conversations, in government meetings and elsewhere,<sup>247</sup> after the World War II, in San Francisco International Conference a *Hindu* from India quoted that you cannot destroy the Sermon on the Mount by an atom bomb.<sup>248</sup> Mahatma Gandhi used to quote effectively Bible in his papers,<sup>249</sup> but still the Christianity was criticised for example Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin was against the missionary work. He was powerful, held a seat on the Central Legislature at New Delhi and was also on the Municipal Board of Allahabad, in which he advocated a boycott of all American goods by India, such as motorcars, sewing machine, institutions including schools, colleges, hospitals and dispensaries. Jawaharlal then rose up and told of having visited the home for lepers where nearly five hundred of these children were protected from leprosy and given an education. He also told of the Institute- he had seen that the aim was to remove the poverty of Indian villagers. He went on, that these American missionaries are helping our country and especially under privileged of our land, let us not interfere with those Americans who have proved themselves to be such friends of India.<sup>250</sup>

There was also opposition against Christianity by Politicians, for example a Member of Parliament business man brought an *Anti Conversion Bill* in the

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<sup>247</sup>Higginbottom, *An Autobiography*, 59.

<sup>248</sup>*Ibid*, 60.

<sup>249</sup>*Ibid*, 60, 175.

<sup>250</sup>*Ibid*, 188-189

Parliament. It was published in daily News Paper *Nav Bharat*, Jabalpur on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1960. Under the heading *Seth Govind Das, disclosed: The Conspiracy of Missionary Societies*’ stated after the Independence of India, a conference of the *Fellowship of International Missionary Society* was held in June, 1948 in which *Alexander Mackly* said: Our Indian Christian leaders have made a plan that in coming next ten years we shall convert Six Lac Indian villagers to Christianity.<sup>251</sup> On the next day on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1960, another daily News Paper *Nai Dunia*, Jabalpur reported that an advocate *Mohan Singh Maravi* of Dindori Jabalpur said: during my visit to Bhanpur that has total population of Poor Gonds, Christians are taking the advantages of their Poverty, giving them Gold medals, necklace and valuable things and converting them to Christianity.<sup>252</sup>

The above statement was wrong as missionaries never ever distributed gold medals for conversion. After a week, Prakash Veer Shastri brought another Anti-Christian Bill that advocated that strong actions must be taken against Christian Evangelists. This type of agitation was promoted by fundamentalists who did not understand that Christianity is based on love your neighbor as you love yourself. Of course, practically missionaries fed the hungry, clothed and treated medically to the Indians according to the Biblical teachings that was accepted but at same time Christianity was opposed and rejected by some The Anti Conversion Bill was brought before the house of Parliament on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1960. However, intellectual *Home Minister of India B.N. Datar* responded to the bill that It is against the Indian constitution to cease Religious freedom. It is a big lie to state that a large numbers of people are converted to Christianity, one or two are the exception. The missionaries go to deep interior places serve the people and it is wrong to condemn them collectively. The Government has right to take action if anyone is involved in anti-country activities.

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<sup>251</sup>*Ibid*, 204.

<sup>252</sup>*Ibid*, 205.

<sup>253</sup>*Ibid*, 206.

The fundamentalists tried to prove that Tribal are Hindus,<sup>254</sup> but when *Maha-kumbha* Social Conference was organized at Mandla in Madhya Pradesh on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011, there *Pari Kumar Lingo* leader of Gonds came forward and declared that we are Gonds, the children of oval shape dharti; we have nothing to do with other religions.<sup>255</sup> The daily Newspaper *Prabhat Kiran* quoted the decision of *Justice S.P. Sen* who stated in one of his judgments of 1971 that *Gonds are not Hindu*.<sup>256</sup> This is apparently true that indigenous Tribal people are the primitive *Adiwasi* or *Vanwasi* of Indian origin.

## 6. Biblical Hermenutics

Sam Higginbottom played a vital role for the transformation of Indian society on one hand he was critical of socio religious evil practices but on other hand he was very practical in his theological journey of hard work for the development of Indian agricultural methods, dairy technology and valuable standard of moral life. There was acceptance and love for his work therefore many dignitaries and public came to see his work and participated in his work shops, seminar and conferences through out India. However, he lived in a paradoxical context at his time of rejection and acceptance as follows for his method of gospel and plough:

**6.1. Theology of Work:** The ‘Gospel and Plough’ was in paradoxical context of India where Christianity was opposed for evangelism but accepted for science, technology, and education for development of the country and that still continues. Sam Higginbottom never refused any task he was assigned for; he accepted every work as a challenge and was successful. The mission board asked him to teach Economics, to look after hostel, Blind and Lepers asylums at Allahabad.<sup>257</sup> He obeyed the resolutions as per his agreement with the mission board. Nevertheless, when he saw the critical conditions of the people he decided along with other responsibilities to promote agricultural work of farmers by establishing an

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<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

<sup>255</sup> *Prakashji Sojatiya, Prabhat Kiran*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011, Indore: Year 20, No. 265, (e-mail: dainikprabhat@yahoo.com).

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>257</sup> Sam Higginbottom, *What Does Jesus Expect of His Church*, published by Fleming H. Revell Company London and Edinburgh, dated Nil, 94-95.

agricultural institute for training the farmers, across the Jamuna River. This small institute later on became Sam Higginbottom State University in December, 2016, because it has the foundation of biblical teachings that if you do not earn has no right to eat therefore one who earns makes eligible to others.

**6.2. Theological Skill:** Gospel and Plough is a theological discourse for the open minded willing to examine how Christian mission can transform India. Higginbottom's theological skill connects the Gospel to agricultural and technology. Higginbottom insisted that baptism is not the end of Christian theology rather it is a starting point to teach how the people can earn their own living, not only to eat but decently clothed and educating their children.<sup>258</sup> At that time, some of the missionaries were afraid of doing humanitarian work because most of them had training for evangelistic work and did not have any other training to skill others as blacksmith, carpenter, or shoe – maker or farmers for their day to day living and earning.<sup>259</sup> It means there are verities of skills but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone (I Corinthians 12:6). Therefore the aim of the Church is to equip and train every human skill for the fullness of life.

### 6.3. Prctical Theology of Christ

Jesus Christ was not a theortical but a practical person in his context therefore his disciples needs to follow Him in their own context not only in matters of Biblical interpretations but also in practical contextualizing the gospel in the lives of the people for which Higginbottom proposes the method of gospel and plough by interpreting the word of God as follows:

**6.3.1. Miracles:** Higginbottom related his gospel and plough theology to thirty-six miracles of Christ that are recorded in four Gospels. He said twenty eight of them point to diseases, raising to life, giving sight to the blind, feeding the hungry, and most of the miracles have to do for meeting immediate human need. For example; at Cana wedding Jesus turned water in to wine. He actually gave colour to that which

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<sup>258</sup> Sam, Higginbottom, *The Gospel and the Plow*, Missoorie Uttarakhand: Nivedit Good books, 2014, xiv, 25.

<sup>259</sup> Sam Higginbottom, *What Does Jesus Expect of His Church*, 29-30.

had no colour, taste to the tasteless, sweetness in bitterness. Jesus comes to the colourless lives, brings a great changes in our lives, gives us a 'new birth' and it is not less than any other Christian ministry. The object of the Gospel is to save mankind and help a person who is in need. Jesus said; tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. (Luke 7:21-22).<sup>260</sup>

**6.3.2. Feed the Hungry:** Sam Higginbottom pleaded; why did Jesus feed the hungry? The five thousand were far from home, out in the desert, hungry, tired, night coming down. Thus, Jesus commanded His disciples to feed the multitude. They showed how impossible His command was, He insisted, Give ye them to eat. (Matthew 14:16). Jesus said; I am the living bread...if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever (John 6:51). Before Jesus preached the sermon he fed the crowd. Would not the Church be wise to copy her Lord in the same way whenever necessary, then Jesus will say you saw me hungry and ye gave Me to eat, in famine you took care of Me, in dried land gave Me water for drinking and irrigation and so on, inherit the kingdom prepared for you (Matthew 25:34). The first command God gave to man, 'replenish the earth, and subdue it' (Genesis 1:28). It means to master the earth and serve mankind therefore this is the duty of the Church to set the apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, wonderworkers, mission hospitals, leper asylums, schools and colleges. These all belong to the Church, these are the part of God's appointed equipment to carry out the greatest task in the world. Jesus taught highest ethical prayer to His disciples 'Give us this day our daily bread' (Matthew 6:11). 'Give us', not me alone – feed the great family of mankind, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, people of every colour and tongue. God alone is the giver of all good things for instance; agricultural soil, life in the seed, the temperature, rain, sunshine, preparing ground, growing of seed, harvesting and storing for man's every day need. This is why man subdues the earth with its fire, chemical, physical, biological, economical and spiritual ventures. And we are co-workers together with God to subdue the earth.<sup>261</sup> Sam Higginbottom in his book *What Does Jesus Expect of His*

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<sup>260</sup> Sam, Higginbottom, *The Gospel and the Plow*, 113-114, 116-117.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*, 118-119, 123, 125.

*Church?* Mentioned a theologian's book, *Teaching the Preacher How to Preach*. Higginbottom appreciated; it has excellent material but today Church is in great need of a book for the ordinary church members *Teaching the Layman How to Lay*, so that they would be able to take up the responsibility to carry out the work of Lord Jesus Christ to feed the hungry. If the Church today is not meeting every human need then the Church has incomplete Gospel.<sup>262</sup> St. John's Gospel tells: *If ye love me, feed my sheep*, the people were racially, linguistically, historically, socially, educationally, economically discriminated; in every single way feed them, carrying out the ministry of Jesus Christ.

**6.4. Theology of Action Oriented Church:** Sam Higginbottom said Church is the only organization whose action program covers the whole of human life. Its objective is to meet every human need. It embraces every race, tongue, tribe and people. No group is excluded from the Church. The Church is, therefore, the most important single factor in the world today to bring in the Kingdom of God on earth. The lay is concerned for the program of Jesus Christ for example a lady from Cleveland brought a beautiful ring, twin diamonds set in platinum. She gave it to Higginbottom and said I cannot wear it when I think of God's work in India. Another example is of Higginbottom's stay in Huntington Hotel at Pasadena that was arranged by the Church but Hotel authorities did not allow Church to pay it. Moreover; the hotel's maid servant did not accept the tip and said spend it for me to the Lord's work in India. These are a few examples how the lay people are doing greater things for the Lord's ministry. Sam Higginbottom wrote that a small Church even can do greater things: as for the first twenty years of his missionary service in India he was supported by a mission Church in Cleveland that was founded by street preaching of his father in law Lindus Cody the membership consisted of ordinary working people in restaurants, factories but every member paid tithe to Lord's work, as it is more blessed to give than to receive.<sup>263</sup>

Therefore, according to the teachings of Jesus the action oriented theology was to take care of serving the poor, it is an imperative to the Church that is built on

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<sup>262</sup> Sam Higginbottom, *What Does Jesus Expect of His Church*, 64-65,123.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 34-35, 47-49.

Christ. Jesus took unto himself the words of the prophet Isaiah in St. Luke 4: 16-21: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set them at liberty who are bruised.' Is this, was Jesus ideal and standard for His work, can ours be less? If we are not doing it, the Christianity has certainly lost its saltiness.

The study of the Gospels reveals that Jesus hated poverty; the prodigal son disappeared due to his final choice and goodness of his father. The Church is to work for broken hearted, Prisoners, sight to the blind, and to set them at liberty. John was satisfied that Jesus program only can bring peace on earth and good among men for the true humanity in present disordered world. Thus, one must understand that theology does not fall from the sky but its theological expression is firmly rooted in Biblical witness that is shaped by language and concepts both of which have a strong culture-specific component through that Bible speaks to every cultural context and to every new generation. The action oriented theology of "Gospel and Plow" of Sam Higginbottom brings a person to the status of equality in all the spheres of life. It is essential as it motivates to theologize the Gospel into Action, to move hand in hand together of agricultural development which is relevant even today that can fulfill the urgent need of the day to day to day living through action oriented theology of 'Gospel and Plow' without any discrimination of caste, color, gender and religion. It is appropriate and valuable for transformation of Gonds and other communities who are involved in agricultural work.

## **7. Theology of New Movements**

### **7.1. Yeshu Darbar –Allahabad**

**7.1.1. Introduction:** Yeshu Darbar is a movement based on the concept of 'Church without walls' open for all without any discrimination of caste, color and creed. Yeshu Darbar was initially started with a small prayer group in 1994, as number of prayer warriors and Bible study group increased, it moved to Chapel of Brotherly Love, where the people started coming from Uttar Pradesh and different states of various faiths for worship, many came with a hope to get healed by prayers, soon



the crowd increased more and could not be accommodated in and out side the Chapel therefore Yesu Darbar was moved to other side of the Agricultural play ground, slowly a shade was fabricated. Since 1998 worship of Yesu Darbar is taking place on every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the regular prayer meetings are conducting three times a day, every night prayer group meets at 9 p.m., and night prayer takes place on Friday at 9 p.m. onwards. The prayer warriors pray on telephone for the sick for 24 hours that is recorded in the prayer house register. There are a number of Christian literatures and songs are published, the word of God is broadcasted on different television channels. The Yesu Darbar Pastors and Evangelists are serving the Lord at different centres in various places. Yesu Darbar is a registered body of Trustees for the welfare of the society through education, hospital, agriculture, dairy, animal husbandary, and non formal education and so on. It is an indigenous independent Church attended by a huge gathering of people at Allahabad. The majority of the people come from different villages and religious background. Some of them are converted to Christianity.<sup>264</sup>

**7.1.2. Universality of God:** Researcher has observed that Yesu Darbar believes in universal True God; the father, son and Holy Spirit. God is a just God, He does not discriminate the people on the basis of caste, color and creed. He provides sun light and rain to both Pakistan and India, to every nook and corner of the world. God did not send His begotten son to establish a Christian religion on earth but God heals the people of every religion and grants them eternal life, here and now who ever believes in Him and in precious blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ His son who was crucified on the cross for the salvation of human beings.

**7.1.3. Cultural Identity:** Researcher has observed that Yesu Darbar honors Indian cultural practices, some are cited here of socio-religious on the basis of Christian faith.

- i. *Dress:* The bishop, pastors and evangelists are encouraged to wear Indian dresses like Pajama - Kurta in Yesu Darbar. The ladies wear sari and salwar suit.
- ii. *The Names:* God gave authority to Adam to name every thing on earth living or non living. In any context name carries certain meanings of family, clan or tribe

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<sup>264</sup> *Yesu Darbar Ke Bajan*, New Delhi: Mashi Sahitya Sanstha, 2010, iii-x.

therefore one should continue to retain surname that shows the identity of a person. Yesu Darbar considers it carefully as at the time of dedication of a child the biblical name is given with original surname for example Peter Yadav is a combination of contextual surname fitting with Biblical name, so that true Christian message passes to the local context with the meaning of names and contextual surname Yadav remind that child is from shepherds family and by faith Peter is follower of Jesus Christ.

*iii. The Shaving of head:* Yesu Darbar follows a common Indian cultural practice shaving of head. In Indian context after the birth of a child the first hair is removed with a belief that that hair is unlucky and polluted, so let the new hair grow for good health and prosperity. Also, after the death of a person, family members shave their heads to convey the sad demise of the grieved family member.<sup>265</sup> The Bible approves shaving of the head for instance “Nazirite will shave his consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting” (Numbers 6: 18). “Paul... had cut his hair, for he was under a vow” (Acts 18:18). Therefore it is obvious that during Old to New Testaments the practice of shaving of head was common for certain reasons; such as for Nazirite who was anointed and separated from the public for a specific religious task. Therefore taking into consideration shaving of the head is adopted in Yesu Darbar for the village children as a symbol of purification.

**7.1.4. Tradition:** The traditional indigenous ceremonial marriages take place at Yesu Darbar Allahabad based on biblical teachings for believers to feel at home in wedding service. The marriage ceremony is published in *Yesu Darbar Ke Bhajan* songs that bride can wear red sari with full makeup; bridegroom can wear Pajama Kurta or Suit, with a turban on his head, *gamcha* long towel at his shoulder that is tightened in knot with red *chunri* veil of the bride. The Christian song is sung during seven clock rounds of the cross under a decorated tent of mango leaves; at each round traditional Christian vow is taken by bride and bridegroom.<sup>266</sup> After the vows

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<sup>265</sup> Nahehelal, s/o Jaghladhu, Village - Dhanecha, Post- Ranipur, District-Sultanpur, U.P, interview, dated 14-12-2013.

<sup>266</sup> *The marriage vows:* 1.I accept you my wife / husband in the name of Jesus Christ. 2. From this day onwards I will take care of you for better - for worse, for richer - for poorer; in sickness and in health.3.I pledge, 'I will love you; till death departs us. 4. Today, I pledge

the rings are blessed, exchanged and ceremony ends with benediction and closing hymn. This indigenous marriage is a combination of Christianity and local culture where the Bible is contextualized in a way that the message of true gospel is not lost. *Situational Theology*: the marriage of a dalit girl was conducted by the researcher on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2010 in village Pipri, (Police station - Sangramgarh, Tehseel- Kunda, and district – Pratapgarh, in Uttar Pradesh). The name of the girl was Prachi d/o Choudhari, and the groom was Rajkumar, a baptized believer working in Ludhiana. It was noticed during the conversation that bride's mother, Shanti, used to come to Yeshe darbar was baptized but her daughter Prachi was not baptized, though daughter had participated in Yeshe Darbar services a few times but was never baptized. It was reported that there was no river for her *baptism* thus, in this contextual situation a bucket of water was arranged for baptized. Further, there was question that she must participate in the *Lord's Table*, but Holy Communion elements were not available. Therefore there was a search for Eucharistic elements, due to wedding occasion coca-cola cold drink and *puri* fried bread were available, and these were distributed as holy supper elements to bride and to all the present baptized members during the service. This is an example of studying global Christian doctrines localizing carefully in to context according to situation, because faith is more important than the elements of holy communion and the way of baptism may change but the true gospel is applied that transforms the life of a person.

**7.1.5. Encountering Christian Faith:** The New converted Christians encounter with the old belief background to faith in Christ. They are taught to live according to Christian faith but due to past religious background they raise certain questions. For example a lady came to the researcher on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014, after Sunday yeshe darbar service for a prayer asking to blow mantra (religious chanting) in her empty glass; she came with her background as she would have seen that other religious priests blow mantras in certain objects. The prayer was not offered of mantras nevertheless it was advised to her that she can bring water or oil in a bottle that can

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that I shall love your body as I love my body; till death departs us. 5. I shall follow the Ten Commandments faithfully with all my heart and strength. 6. I honour you with my body whatever I have; I shall not hide anything from you. 7. I shall love my Lord God with all my heart, mind and soul. Noted from *Yeshe Darbar Ke Bajan, Viveh Sanskar* (Marriage Ceremony), New Delhi: Mashi Sahitya Sanstha, 2010, 377-379.

be blessed so that she may use it for healing. There was another lady who came for an advice on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2014 asking if she can lit at least a candle in front of her house and have eatable things to celebrate Deepawali? The researcher advised her that she could eat whatever she liked, and also light up a candle but hang a poster in front of your house with a Biblical verse that 'Christ is the light of the world', exhort people that you belong to Christ who enlightens every one, but do not go for idol worship. Therefore one has to deal carefully how to contextualize the gospel, especially among the majority of the people of other faiths, to hold on cultural Indian identity but in faith expression be a true believer of Jesus Christ.

**7.1.5.1 Healing:** there is a living witness written in a booklet "*Nishpap Niskalk Bali se Changai*", "Healed by spotless sacrifice", it is a testimony of Bholanath Tandon's healing from cancer. He had a small pimple on the chest that developed into the round shape of big cyst in 1982. He went to several doctors at Allahabad, and a team of eighteen doctors in 'All India Medical Institute' in New Delhi refused to operate him otherwise disease may spread in rest of his body. The pus smelt badly that no one could stand close to him. However, his wife Mann Tandon came to know about the healing ministry of Yesu Darbar; through the ladies' talking at vegetables rully: "Look at this grocer man was lame but now he can walk; healed in Yesu Darbar, Allahabad" Manna communicated this to her husband. On 04/12/ 2004 the Tandon couple visited Yesu Darbar, came forward for prayer and told Babaji - Bishop Rajendra B.Lal about cancer. Babaji asked him what you want. Tandon wept and said "Life or Death!" Babaji prayed for his complete healing. Today; he is a living witness and regular attendee of Yesu Darbar at Allahabad.<sup>267</sup> The healing from sickness is a local need of the people for which they come with strong faith, it is contextualized in faith. However, it is strongly preached in Yesu Darbar that human person is only the mediator for healing but for sure Jesus heals them forever.

**7.1.5.2. A Powerful Witness:** There are many people who are possessed by evil spirits come to Yesu Darbar for healing. They cry, shout and roll on the floor, give

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<sup>267</sup> Vimal Kant Singh, *Nishpap Niskalk Bali se*, Allahabad: Yesu Darbar 2009, 10-14.

witness after healing. There was a new believer Neelu Pandit came from Naini to Yesu Darbar on 15-09-2013. She gave her powerful testimony. She was married to Manoj Pandit (Brahmin), of Naini, Allahabad from a well to do family, husband works in Navy at Ambala. Neelu Pandit was possessed by an evil spirit from second day of marriage, wanted to divorce her husband, was depressed; wanted to commit suicide. Meanwhile, she gave birth to a son but tried to kill him by hand locking his neck. Manoj Pandit took her to religious *gurus* paid a lot of money to them. They performed rituals beat her by chappals but she was not released from evil spirits. Manoj took her to a *Molwi* who started all kinds of prayer, beating, pulling her hair, blowing smoke of *agarbatties* in her nose, kept lemons under her teeth to crush; the number of lemons one by one went up to fifty. She was bleeding, suffered from several diseases; was thrown on stony ground. However; son was grown to the age of one and half years but her husband and son were prevented to meet her. The neighbours used to shut the door seeing Neelu, as if she was not a human being but a Satan. Finally, her husband said, we are tired of this life; let us commit suicide with our son on a railway track; husband took leave. Neelu was very happy for committing suicide, but around 11 o'clock a phone call was received from an army officer. He called Manoj Pandit immediately to come to office. The officer said, "I know the problem that Neelu is suffering from evil spirits; asked Manoj; "Do you believe in God?" Manoj said, "Definitely! That's why we went to Pandits and Molwis, but nobody could cure her. We simply lost time and a lot of money." The officer told Manoj Pandit that Jesus Christ healed many people possessed of evil spirits, asked him to go to the church for prayer with his wife.

Manoj and Neelu decided to take a last chance went to the Church. *Padri Saheb* (Pastor) did not ask them for money or jewellery. He just held Neelu's shoulder and said: "Do not worry sister! I shall pray for you and Jesus Christ will touch and heal you." The Pastor prayed for Neelu, and she had a great peace of mind. She was released from evil spirits completely, wished to live a long life. Now she is living a happy married; Christian spiritual life. Finally, Neelu said that she is not propagating any religion, (*Isaiyat*), but God has done in her life. She is living witness of Jesus Christ completely healed. Jesus has saved her family; may God save

our family members who are still Hindus.<sup>268</sup> This witness was recorded in video by Yeshu Darbar media on 15-09- 2013, during the Sunday Church service. Jesus healed and gave authority to his disciples to cast out evil spirits and to heal sick. There is no magic or in Christianity but prayer is offered in the name of Jesus, people are healed physically, spiritually and mentally. The people witness their healing on every Sunday. The healing ministry is truly the part of Jesus ministry for localizing the Gospel in a context.

## **7.2 Matridham Ashram– Varanasi**

**7.2. 1.Introduction:** Matridham is a Roman Catholic centre for new believers of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This centre has developed with a concept that people of other faiths should not be compelled to follow Christian doctrines but they may continue accepting Lord Jesus as their savior as well as to carry on their cultural social background. The Matridham was established by Indian Missionary Society in late 80's and early 90's. It was named as *Matridham Ashram* a centre of inculturation at Varanasi. The significance of this centre is that devotees believe in Jesus Christ without being baptized. The number of *Christubhaktas* is about 15,000, located in 72 villages around Varanasi. *Christu bhaktas* follow the teachings of Jesus without dropping their culture, and naming their children at Matridham. The experience of *Christubhaktas* could be characterized as religious cosmopolitanism that means humanity belongs to a single moral community;<sup>269</sup> there is no discrimination of the people on the basis of caste, color and creed at Matridham.

**7.2.2 Attitude of the Church:** Matridham was started in 1993 with a prayer group, and in 1994 September a *Satsang* was started with the gathering of 100 people, then in 1995 tin shade was constructed for Satsang where about 250 people used to gather. The matridham worship takes place on every Sunday but on Second Saturday there is a big gathering of “*Satsung* and Healing” that starts from morning 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the afternoon. Generally the number of Christubhakta is about 4000, they

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<sup>268</sup> Witness, *Yeshu Darbar Sunday Church service*, Allahabad: Shiiats, Media recorded video, dated 15-09- 2013.

<sup>269</sup> <http://christmyguru.blogspot.fr/2013/08/who-are-yeshu-bhaktas-hindus.html>, accessed on 08/02/2013.

sit in an open tin shade. Father Swami Anil Dev is the main priest of Matridham, the worship starts with opening prayer, singing and sermon.<sup>270</sup> The *Satsung* comes to an end with prayer and benediction. The *Satsung* is an appropriate word that denotes contextualization of the gospel through fellowship.

**7.2.3. Cultural Identity:** Indian dress code is appreciated for women but fathers wear *bhagva* saffron and white color cassocks. The Indians do visit the pilgrim places; this culture is maintained by Matridham. There was an announcement on 13/08/2013 that a group of people *Tirth Yatri* will go to holy land tour on the basis of payment. Researcher was informed that marriage takes place in Indian normal cultural clothes: the bride wears red sari and the bride groom wears Pajama kurta or suit. The *Psrasada* (bun) is distributed to the believers on second Saturday of every month. Shaving of the head takes place close to the statue of mother Mary and Jesus at Matridham, in a small open shade with concrete roof, in front of statue people lit their candles, close to it under a tree shaving the head of small babies is carried out.<sup>271</sup> These cultural practices very well fit into Indian context without diluting the true meaning of the gospel.

**7.2.4. Biblical Training:** the bible courses are conducted at Matridham, the believers stay in Matridham for one month for 'Bible certificate' course. It is known as 'Yeshu Milan Bible Crash Course – 2016.' The main focus of course is Christ's teachings, his birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension. The main emphasis is given on Christ is alive and present in our midst. Jesus is a living Lord and He heals every one today. The spiritual gathering of five days takes place in every July called "*Adhyatmik Atma Abhishek*" Anointing of the Holy Spirit.<sup>272</sup> These seminars, conference and bible studies help the participants to grow in the knowledge of word of God.

**7.2.5. Interpretation of the Gospel:** Father Stephen from Allahabad applied his reasoning for interpretations and explaining the certain characteristics of Matridham

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<sup>270</sup> Interview at Matridham with Anil Dev, dated 13/08/2016.

<sup>271</sup> Matridham Interview with Skuhwanti and Chunni. dated 13/08/2016.

<sup>272</sup> Interview at Matridham with a group from Odisha dated 13/08/2016.

that: there is crowd because people are attracted by the powerful word of God. The Same Jesus is present among us today, and outer sign of his presence are healing and miracles taking place in lives of the people. The Consecrated elements of Holy Communion are not only kept as symbol rather it is real invisible presence of Jesus Christ, at Matridham. The covered mass elements are kept at Prayer house but exposed at a certain time, to acknowledge the real presence of Christ that increases the faith of believers. The Holy Communion is given only to the Baptized, previously sweet was distributed to the the nonbaptized but now it is stopped as double standard of mass creates confusion. Stephen said the above concepts increase the faith of believers that there is power in the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The people who are healed give their witness on the stage, a line is as well sung that I give witness as Christ is living today and because Him I am healed.<sup>273</sup>

**7.2.6. Prayer Centres:** prayer is the back bone of Christian faith. Three prayer centres are established at Matridham one is called *Darshan Bhavan* House of Vision this is found at the entrance side where all the people can go and pray. The second is called *Kutia* Hut Prayer centre, there a person from 6 am to 6 pm. prays continuously with fasting. The third is called *Vardan* Gifts prayer centre situated close to the stage there a person is engaged in prayer from 9 am to 6 pm. Father Anil Dev says these prayer centres are the backbone of healing and miracles at Matridham. The people loved Jesus Christ, today this crowd loves me and even they can die for me. The Matridham does not condemn any one or any religion.<sup>274</sup> This is a proof that they love Jesus Christ from the bottom of their heart with strong faith therefore they are healed, miracles take place and they have a zeal to hear and remain in the living word of God Jesus Christ.

### **7.3. The Benedictine Ashram – Kurissumala – Kerala**

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<sup>273</sup> Interview at Matridham with Stephen, dated 13/08/2016.

<sup>274</sup> Interview at Matridham with Anil Dev, dated 13/08/2016. Audio - visual series: 90 talks are available in book form. Bio monthly magazine *Prabhu ne Kaha* is sold @ Rupees 10/- per copy to the participants. The word of God is preached on different Television channels and on internet you tube, face book page, complaints and suggestions to [prabhunekaha@gmail.com](mailto:prabhunekaha@gmail.com)



**7.3.1. Introduction:** This centre is known as Kurisumala. Francis Acharya was the head and architect of Ashram. This ashram is located at the boarder of Idukki – Kottiyam at Vagamon. It is situated at the heart of the Sahya Mountains, which run parallel to India's south west coast. This Ashram is based on Indian spiritual tradition. The Acharya makes selction of the persons to be ordained as minister who is expected to depart form house and family for ever but families can visit them at the ashram. It has different centres in other parts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, some members of ashram join Mother Teresa's centres to help in leprosy colonies and mentally handicapped in monastic order.<sup>275</sup>

**7.3.2. Spiritual Experince:** There is a divine experience offered to visitors through contemplation and communion. A day is divided almost equally in hours for prayer, study, work and rest. Prayer starts at 4.00 a.m. in the morning. Satsang is common in the evening. This is an occasion for a monk or guest to join more freely in bhajans and spiritual songs. The traditional Upasana meditation, reflection, and contemplative patterns are also used. *Om, Lokah Samastha, Sukhino Bhavantu*, is pronounced (Om, May the entire world be happy!).<sup>276</sup> The prayer and meditation helps a person to feel the presence of God in silence, and to obtain peace of mind, and work together for the welfare of society.

**7.3.3. Cultural Idntity:** The Ashram has adopted Indian liturgy, using Indigenous Symbols in liturgical celebrations approved by the liturgical Consilium of Rome; practicing Twelve Points of Indigenous liturgical Symbols at Ashram as follows: *The Posture*: during Mass, both Priest and faithful may adapt sitting on the floor or standing, footwear is removed at entrance. Genuflections or *Kneelingdown* is replaced by profound bow with the *anjali hasta*. A *Panchanga (Sastang) Pranam* both Priests and faithful follow it as a part of the penitential rite, and at the conclusion of the anaphora. *Kissing of objects* adapted to local custom, that is touching the object with one's fingers or palm of hand, bringing the hands to one's eye's or head. The kiss of peace could be given by the exchange of the *anjali hasta* or the placing of the hands of the giver between the hands of the recipient. *Incense* could be made more use of in liturgical services; receptacle could be the simple incense bowl with

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<sup>275</sup> Paul Puthanangady, *The Church in India*, Bangalore: Yesu Krist Jayanti, 2000, 96-98.

<sup>276</sup> <http://www.vagamon.com/kurisumala/kurisumala.htm>, accessed on 16/09/2014.

handle. The corporal could be replaced by atray (*thali or thamboola thattu*, under the oil lamp a big plate is Kept upon), of fitting material. The vestments could be simplified to a *single tunic* – type chasuble with a *stole* (*angavastra* Shawl) that could replace the traditional vestments of the Roman rite. *Oil Lamps* could be used instead of candles. The preparatory rite of the *Mass* may include: presentation of gifts, the celebrant could be welcomed in an Indian way for example with a single *arati*, washing of hands and lighting of the Lamp. The *greetings denote Peace* among the faithful for mutual reconciliation. *Architecture of Church building* may be adopted of Indian style. During Church Service Indian form of worship such as *Art of flower, incense and lightening* and Indian musical instruments are adopted.<sup>277</sup> These cultural strategies are good in creating Indian spiritual environment that helps the devotees to feel at home culturally for the mood of devotion and helpful to contextualize the gospel in an Indian context.

#### **SECTION D: EVALUATION, CRITIQUE AND ANALYSIS**

The distinct features of Indian context shows that one cannot be separated from the cultural and religious values of the context for theologizing the Gospel. The Christian worship, Prayer, fasting, healing, celebrations, baptism, holy communion, evangelical methods, musical instruments, singing songs are the means not of demonstration, rather they are avenues for dialogue between God and human beings. Therefore a Christian is expected to live a life of Christ to serve others by preaching, teaching, healing the people. As a true believer of Christ one is to be actively involved in transformation of the society. Love of God is not lesser than love of human beings, rather love to man comes first, that leads one to the divine love. The command love your neighbour is the best contemplation of worship and prayer for a Christian. The early Church tradition was faithful as a praying community; they were not praying or worshipping only for themselves, their needs were also the needs of others. They had regular hours of prayer (Acts 1:14). Praying and worshipping together enabling them to experience fellowship and solidarity and to move forward for the application of the gospel in different contexts. Jesus himself

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<sup>277</sup> Paul Puthanangady, *The Church in India*, Bangalore: Yesu Krist Jayanti, 2000, 96-98.

prayed and taught Lord's Prayer; gave importance to meditation and prayer, and moved from place to place like an Indian *Sadhu* (Sage) and *Sanyasi* (acetic). Jesus preached about the kingdom of God. Therefore, the Indian worship pattern and prayer can become the basis of unity in India as Indian Churches to pray for the state, country and national leaders, for the welfare of sick, poor, needy for implitation of the gospel in a context.

The approaches of missionaries, Indian evangelists, and pastors that is helpful to envisage method of gospel preaching. Therefore there is a challenge to demythologize and theologize the strategy of the Church to equip with the latest science and technology, for more crops fulfilling the physical and spiritual need of hungry thorough 'Gospel' interpretations that may lead the context to establish peace, justice and equality in local context usign bhajans, folk songs, drama, dance, music, worship, sermon and books according to the need of the local context. Today one cannot simply blame past missionaries for their wrong strategies of preaching the 'Gospel' of Christ but in today's context the local minister of the gospel must be aware of modern technical Christ that changes the life of the people through proper application of the Gospel model along with other modern technics of development for transformation of the society. The principle of the 'Crusade Gospel' in has to change to the 'Crucified mind' to live for others as Christ carried out His ministry for others that did not aim at conversion rather aimed for the transformation in the lives of the people for true salvation in Christ that opens the gate way for transformation of every one in the context.

The tribal theology has a contextual space with their own cultural values in Indian states. However, both Dalit and tribal are the indigenous people of India. Dalit theology is an experience of dalits who suffered inhuman behavior of pain, injustice, oppression, unclothing even killing them as untouchable. Dalit theology relates all these pains and pathos to the sufferings of Christ on the cross who suffered for dalits for their liberation. However, still dalit Christians are struggling to get equal rights in the society. The tribal's are as well treated in the same manner in the society as uneducated, uncultured and poor. The colonial power and Christian missions discarded both tribal and dalit's traditional religion, culture and ritualistic practices, folk songs and stories, these were treated as against Christian faith the

tribal and dalit converts were separated from their home community; for instance the first sign of conversion was cutting of man's hair like modern man, and change of clothes for both the genders. The Dalit and Tribal were located in the mission compound with mission disciplines without proper agenda for their transformation. Therefore, Church still requires following the teachings of Jesus Christ to first of all feed the hungry then apply the Gospel of kingdom of God. The Church to be free from dalit caste and tribal racial, ethenic distinctions, theology has an important role to play in changing the poor self-image, low self-esteem of dalits –tribal that is yet to be set free from ideological slavery; one should believe that they are not born untouchables or poor tribal because of the past *karma* of the previous life but theology must give an identity to them with equality and justice. The contextual theologies ought to motivate the people to work for a vision of change in the structure of the Church and society so that peace of God, 'shalom,' may prevail in the society for equality.

Today, Indian theologies seek equality and justice for human identity such as dalit, tribal, female or any other down trodden theology that all human beings must be treated as human. However for transformation methodological issues ought to be discussed and implemented according to context and need of the people. The indigenous centres are doing marvelous job for the transformation of the people. Sam Higginbottom's Gospel and Plough model was an exception in adopting technology method for transformation of the society. The missionaries in Madhya Pradesh Lutheran Church also established Agricultural centres, brass, carpet industries, health centres and so on. The missionaries and Indian theologies proved to be rooted into the ground situations of the people in their daily living, struggle, pathos, sufferings, rituals, customs, folk stories, dance and songs of the context. The Brahminical theological era tried to support untouchability; interpreted the Bible to maintain their own comfort zone of the authoritative social order of the caste system therefore there is a need to bring changes at every level by theologizing the practical Gospel of Christ.

Today, religious sphere has different models for bringing a change in religious worship for example; Benedictine Ashram – Kurissumala – Kerala,

Matridham Ashram – Varanasi, and Yesu Darbar – Allahabad are indigenous worship centres where people from accepted into the worship without discrimination of geographical area, caste color and creed. The people come to worship centres without any hesitation but most of the people are interested in physical healing. However by faith and hearing the powerful word of God, people come to understand the teachings of Christianity. The people at Yesu Darbar are baptized on every Saturday but Matridham is not eager to baptize the people but faith in Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation but the regular believers could be baptized in due course of time. The Matridham does not distribute Holy Communion elements to non - baptized but Yesu Darbar gives holy elements to every one on every Saturday-Sabbath day, every one who believes in sacrifice and saving act of Jesus Christ. There are Catholic Indigenous Centres but Yesu Darbar is an exception of protestant Church worship and this is challenging model for other Churches to bring a change in strategy of Indian Christian worship, in Yesu Darbar clergy, evangelist and volunteers are expected to be in pajama kurta or in cassocks, mix up Western and Eastern dressing sense in worship. At other centres the cross is the main symbol of Christian identity where as in Yesu Darbar apart from Cross, the mercy chair of Jesus is parallel to altar is symbolic of God's Grace. However, the similar color of chairs are arranged for the Bishop and mercy chair of Yesu Darbar but other color chairs are arranged for fathers but in Matridham there is no chair on the stage even for the main priest he comes in yellow cassock. The Yesu Darbar Choir sings songs from the stage but Matridham choir is arranged down to the stage at right hand side. The testimonies of Matridham are not conducted by any person, people come in queue give their introduction and tell testimony but in between a line is sung "Jesus is alive therefore I have come to give testimony." "Today Jesus is living therefore we have come to tell, Halliluya, My Jesus is living today, Haliluja." But in Yesu Darbar maintains a queue, people are interrogated by a person to tell their name, village and then they tell their testimony. There is no singing but interrogator also instructs the congregation to clap for the testimony. However, both centres publish testimonies in their magazines. There is another important ministry takes place of Yesu Darbar of feeding the hungry from Friday to Sunday but Matridham distributes loaf on every second Saturday of the month it is called *prasada*.

However, these centres use both Indian and western musical instruments but mostly Indian Bhajans are sung, people are not given chance to sing on the stage of matridham, only father and sister lead from the stage and choir co-operates but in Yesu Darbar a choir leads in singing however other groups and individuals are given chance to sing from the stage. The marriage of Yesu Darbar is an indigenous ceremony. The researcher told father Anil Dev about marriage couple take seven rounds of the Cross with seven vows. He replied we have not reached to that scale but truly speaking they have their own village marriages, go and bless them or they come to Matridham for receiving blessings. However Matridham encourages them to go for registred marriage. This is similar to Yesu Darbar where mostly people come for blessings after their marriage, people also come for dedication and naming of the children. However, these centres of Indigenous worship are marvelous in style of worship and Christ centred preaching of Gospel without diluting its true meaning that has brought tremendous transformation in the lives of the people.

The present Contextual theologies raised voices into right direction for human life situations of farmers and labroures. Now the social organizations and people of India are uniting together for transformation of the society through women's organizations, dalit, tribal and other forums. There is also growing awareness of education and literature; a Christian is expected to weep and participate in the pathos and sufferings of the people in villages and towns, as one who follows Jesus Christ bears His marks on the body; understands sufferings and pathos of others for equality, justice and transformation, not only of the soul but also in all fields of life in working conditions as laboureres and of the person in life given situations for Thy kingdom.

### Chapter – III

#### Towards a Gondwana Theology

##### **Introduction:**

***Origin of Gondwana land:*** at one point in time due to Continental Drift, Tasmania was joined onto mainland Australia. For hundreds of millions of years, all the land of Earth was joined together as one large landmass, or supercontinent. Scientists called this supercontinent Pangaea (meaning ‘all lands’ in Greek). However, about 200 million years ago, Pangaea began to break apart and the pieces drifted away from one another. Pangaea broke into two pieces, one in the north and one in the south. Scientists called the two new continents Laurasia (the continent in the North), and Gondwanaland (the continent in the south). These two large land masses continued to break apart into even smaller continents, and about 140 million years ago Gondwanaland began to separate into what we know today as Antarctica, South America, Africa, India, parts of South East Asia and Australia. Gondwanaland had a variable climate, depending on which part of the continent people were, during glacial times (‘ice ages’) Gondwanaland would have looked like Antarctica is today, however, during warmer times, it would have looked like a rainforest in Northern Queensland. The first ever tree ferns and coniferous trees appeared in Gondwanaland. While better known dinosaurs like Stegosaurus, Triceratops, and Tyrannosaurus inhabited the northern continents, Gondwanaland was home to its own unique dinosaurs that evolved from a common ancestor from Pangaea. During the Triassic and Jurassic periods (when Pangaea existed) there was not much difference between dinosaurs from the north and the south. However, during the Cretaceous period, as Gondwanaland broke free and drifted away from Laurasia, and then in turn began breaking into the smaller continents that exist today, the dinosaurs on each individual continent evolved into distinct types very different from their northern cousins as climates and environments changed.<sup>278</sup>

Gondwana contextual theology is an evolving theology emerging from *Adivasi* Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, commonly known as *mool* – *Adivasi* the aboriginal inhabitant of India. The Gondwana history is the story of Central

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<sup>278</sup> <http://www.palaeos.com/Earth/Geography/Gondwana.htm>, accessed dated 25/05/2018

Provinces of India that has moved up and down its plateau and plains, fortress and other mountains during the past. The Gondwana made a history in the brilliant fashion which Rajasthan, and many other regions of India, did. Its earlier history is more that of one of the child races of the world. The fact, however, that it has got its own stories of romance and pathos, and that well of four or more centuries it had its four kingdoms, ruled over by its own Gond rulers, makes all that we possess of its history worthy of being more widely known than it is at present. The Gondwana of old seems to have stood quite apart from the main life and civilization of India.<sup>279</sup> The Gonds speak Gondi and live fairly enough in isolation from the caste dominant system of Indian history. Gondi folk stories contain valuable characteristics of Lingo, a liberator of Gond community, who was born by the power of God. He is the founder of Gond society. The Gonds in olden days were wandering people but later on settled for agricultural work but still their financial and social condition is poor. Gonds are scattered in different states of India but this study is confined to geographical area of tribal adivasi Gonds of Dori village who live in Betul district of old 'Central Provinces', today known as Madhya Pradesh. The aim of the study is to focus on contextual issues such as; socio- religious- culture, ritualistic and anthropological behavior of the people who carry with them their traditional folk stories, songs, music, dance, worship, rituals and day to day practices of the society. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh did not only preach the Gospel but purchased agricultural farms for training the people in different district places such as at Seja—there was missionary Neelson, at Chhindwara - Danielsson, and at Bagthari – Andersson and Gustav Persson. In Betul district at Shahapur-Beguit, at Kondhar – Boyner, and at Shahdol-National Missionary Society later on that was handed over to the Lutheran Church. According to previous chapter the Gospel and the Plow contextual model was applied at Allahabad, the similar approaches existed in other parts of India such as in context of Madhya Pradesh at Dori village in Betul district. A missionary lady was appointed at Dori to promote Christian ministry. However, mission work at Dori was confined for several years to Hirdya Singh's single family who was converted to Christianity in Dori village.

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<sup>279</sup> Eyre Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, Sir Issac Pitman & Sons, New York and Melbourne, 1916, vii, 1.



Hirdaya lived at Shahapur and Dori in Betul district as an evangelist for thirty years, he established a congregation at Shahpur. Hirdya generously donated a plot for the construction of mission bungalow plus a plot for constructing a chapel at Dori; but mission work could not be upgraded for development of the village. Therefore, until today Gonds of Dori live in the same poor critical conditions even after a century. However action oriented theology is still relevant for Gospel application in Gondwana context so that the visions of missionaries may come true for the transformation of the Dori village and society at large. The Gondwana theology needs to take a paradigm shift for transformation of the people in local context to deal with socio- religious- cultural-ritualistic -anthropological context of the people who carry with them their traditional folk stories, songs, music, dance worship patterns and certain practices of the society, but Gospel of Christ must be conveyed in a way that the true meaning of gospel is not diluted but the need of the people may be fulfilled as per situations for the transformation in the local context. It is defined by the theologians like Robert J. Schreiter who appropriately said that:

*“Contextual theology is to speak not of universal, permanent and unchanging theologies, but ... Local Theology changes according to the given context.”<sup>280</sup>*

It is obvious that contextual theology begins with interdisciplinary study of anthropological context of the people for their liberation. Thus, there cannot be a ‘Fixed Theological Interpretation’. Rather; theology keeps on changing according to the situation of the context that motivates the people for their total liberation. The above definitions speak with clarity that doing theology happens when initially it begins with interdisciplinary study of socio- religious- cultural - ritualistic and anthropological behavior of the people for their liberation. Thus, primary task of doing local theology is to reflect upon a total person of his physical, mental and spiritual status. The action oriented plans may fit into the context of Gonds in bringing transformation to the people in all aspects of life as the modern agricultural technology changes the economic conditions and status in society while gospel brings inner changes in spiritual life of a person through a proper articulation of any

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<sup>280</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 2-5.

method. Therefore, it is essential to know the context of Gondwana that may lead to understand Gonds traditional life style, folk stories, songs, music, dance, worship, rituals and other important elements for constructing local Gondwana theology.

**1. The Gondwana Context:** Gonds are indigenous people of India when Aryans invaded India. Gonds fled into hilly forest area. Those who lived at the bank of river Sindhu Aryans mispronounced the river and the people at bank of river as Hindu, captured, made them slaves, forced them to carry out duties of cleaning everything dirty and called them untouchables; later on they were called Dalits. However, these tribal and dalits are the original indigenous people of India. Geographically tribal Gonds live in different parts of India such as Orissa, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.<sup>281</sup> The Gonds manage to speak local languages where ever they have sttlled like Tamil, Kannada, Hindi, Marathi and Telegu. The main focused area of this research is Betul district situated in the hilly range of Satpura Mountains in the very centre of India in Madhya Pradesh it was called Gondwana by Moghul emperors. The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of the State of Madhya Pradesh is 12,233,474 as per 2001 census, and according to census of 2001 the tribal population of Betul district is 5, 49,907.<sup>282</sup> The Gond Kings ruled in four kingdoms was called central provinces of Gondwana. Clement F. Moss a medical doctor of Padhar Hospital; an English missionary and Pastor for fourty years in Madhya Pradesh Lutheran Church; mentioned that: important forts still exist since 14<sup>th</sup> century such as of Khelara (Betul district), Deogarh (in Chhindwara district), and Garaha (twenty one kilometers from Jabalpur.) Also Mandla and Chanda existed in the central provinces of India, until the late 1853.<sup>283</sup> Betul is a district head quarter in Madhya Pradesh, on the Bhopal–Nagpur highway; Where Asia's biggest wood depot is situated. Its population, according to the 2011 census, is 157, 5247 (2.2% of Madhya Pradesh).<sup>284</sup> From about the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries these dynasties disappear and there is a blank till the 14<sup>th</sup> century or later, when Gond kingdoms are found

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<sup>281</sup><http://www.everyculture.com/wc/GermanytoJamaica/Gonds.html#ixzz31CJ7ElRe>, accessed on 05/04/2014.

<sup>282</sup>[censusindia.gov.in/Tables\\_Published/SCST/dh\\_st\\_madhya\\_pradesh.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_madhya_pradesh.pdf), accessed on 14/04/2016.

<sup>283</sup> Clement F. Moss, *An Introduction to the Grammar of Gondi Language*, As Spoken in Betul and Adjoining Districts in Madhya Pradesh, India, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh, Swedish Evangelical Society, Stolkholm, 1981, 8-9.

<sup>284</sup>[http://ignca.nic.in/tribal\\_art\\_intro\\_gonds\\_koiture.htm](http://ignca.nic.in/tribal_art_intro_gonds_koiture.htm), accessed on 05/04/2014.

established at Kharla in Betul, At Deogarh in Chhindwara, at Garha Mandla including Jabalpure, and at Chanda 14 miles from Bhandak, and almost half of the Gonds speak a Dravidian dialect.<sup>285</sup>

Agrawal confirmed that *Gond kings* ruled from 400 to 1564, he wrote a long list of 63 kings, it is authenticated by writers like Mathal Shri Rupnath, Sleeman and Pundit Ganeshdatt Pathak. The Gondwana kingdom sustained for fourteen hundred years.<sup>286</sup> This kingdom appears to be feudalistic, generous, wealthy, organized and peaceful. Abulfazal mentioned about Mahoba of Chadel's kingdom that king Shali Vahan's financial position was weak. So he gave his daughter in marriage to Dalpati Sahi in 1540, who was the eldest son of Gond king Sangram Sahi. Dalpat could rule the kingdom only for seven years because of his sudden death. He left behind him a three years old son; Veer Narayan, and queen Durgawati.<sup>287</sup> Durgawati looked after several villages, and her kingdom flourished to great heights. The Gazatier of Mandla page 29 appreciated Durgawati that she deserved to be numbered among great women of the world. And "It was legendary that if Durgawati came to know of a tiger terrorizing a village, she would neither have food nor water until the tiger was shot dead by her arrow or gun."<sup>288</sup> Durgawati lived a prestigious life, when Akbar invaded her kingdom, at war she rode on a horse but was unable to cross flooded Narai Nala (a narrow river). She decided to commit suicide on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1564.<sup>289</sup> It was better for her to die with glory than to live with ignominy.<sup>290</sup> After Durgawati's death some of the independent kings of Gondwana continued to rule upto Eighteenth Century but thereafter Maratha kingdom began to invade and plunder their country so Gonds and their kings were driven out from fortresses into the surrounding jungles. Thereafter Gonds were compelled to indulge in killing, robbery and raiding the villages,<sup>291</sup> for survival. This kingdom was drawn in an old map that shows

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<sup>285</sup> Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma of Eastern Mandla*, Published by New Literature Publishing Company, 12 Bake House Lane, Fort, Bombay, 12-13.

<sup>286</sup> Agrawal, *Gond Raja*, 7, 111- 112.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, 51, 53.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*, 66-67.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*, 51-53, 56-57, 66.

<sup>291</sup> Moss, Grammer of Gondi, 8-9.

Gonds are the inhabitant of the central provinces of India it is now called Madhya Pradesh.

*Village Administration:* the Gond community goes for a traditional Village administrative Panchayat in which head of families become members. The Panchayat's head is called *Mukhia* elder. He takes decision unanimously with the support of the elders. Now-days, modern Gram Panchayat, Thana, Police, and courts have developed among the Gonds. *The educational literacy* rate of Gondwana state has been very low due to the fact that Gonds live in interior villages, they did not have schools, literature, and writing skills, therefore Gondi songs, folk stories, rituals and traditions are orally communicated to next generations, nevertheless Gonds who can read and write varies from just over 25 percent in Maharashtra to less than 15 percent in Madhya Pradesh. The number of female droppers in Madhya Pradesh is about 4 percent.<sup>292</sup> A very few books are prepared in Gondi language except some for the lower classes for school children.

Therefore they are forced to learn Hindi in local village schools. *Gonds at Leisure:* during their free time at home in the circle of their families, chatting, smoking a pipe or doing some odd jobs around the house. Occasionally they go and visit a neighbor, smoke and gossip until it time to go to bed. The missionaries preserved their folk songs and dances within the bounds of moderation.<sup>293</sup>

**2. Culture:** Gonds neither had writing skills nor any literature but they are rich in their oral cultural traditions, using other means to communicate on walls, pillars and doors through craft and paintings. The Symbols express their faithfulness to great God, loyalty to the Nation; Social and religious behavior of the people.

*2.1. The Lion:* has always been an important symbol of Gondwana that narrates different folk stories of lion and till today a Gond clan is named after *wagh* or lion to which researcher belongs. The great king Ashoka of India had a seal of Lion's impression. Indian currency has an impression of a Lion. This explains lion is most powerful animal that can defeat other animals or evil spirits on earth. According to

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<sup>292</sup><http://www.everyculture.com/wc-Germany-to-Jamaica/Gonds.html#ixzz31CKcT1Dd>, accessed on 19/05/2014.

<sup>293</sup> Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma of Eastern Mandla*, Published by New Literature Publishing Company, 12 Bake House Lane, Fort, Bombay, 557.

Himmat Singh, the Lion symbol is the image of powerful God, who is omnipotent. It also denotes the victory of Gonds over other kingdoms”.<sup>294</sup> Chandra Prabhakar Singh told an interesting story of Hirdaya Singh that his grand father was from *Waghmare ueke* clan and at his death a lion followed the procession silently and then went back to forest of Baretha. The *Lion* symbol was used by the great King Asoka pillars are still standing in the northern India, the pillar of Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh is most famous. The Ashok stambh (pillar) of Sarnath has four lions seated back to back adopted as the national emblem of India. These lion represent power, courage, confidence and pride. The stamps, buildings and currency of independent India bear the mark of lion.

2.2. *Currency*: of Gondwana shows that Gond used silver and gold coins in the business market; an inscribe is a proof of Gold coin of A.D. 1570 that is a remarkable discovery of Gondwana kingdom which is preserved in a museum of Kolkota. On one side of the coin a lion has raised his paw; on the other side the name of Sangrama Sahi is written in Devanagiri and in Telugu. It shows there was connection in between Gonds and Telugu speaking people. Possibly Sangram Sahi did not forget his nativity, or simply on other hand the coin smith was possibly a Telugu as gold coin is inscribed in Telugu. The gold and silver coins are the proof of long term reign of fourteen hundred years of Gondwana kingdom and their prosperity was not confined to a particular area but their kingdom was established probably upto South India. The history of Gondwana reveals that this kingdom was prosperous, well established for 1400 years; ruled by 63 kings in central province of India.<sup>295</sup> However, it is apparently clear from the above studies that for doing contextual theology one needs to understand the socio- religious culture, rituals and anthropological context of the people who carry with them their Traditional worship patterns and practices of the society that is helpful in preparing a platform for constructing local tribal theology.

2.3. *Names*: The name of Gond's clan is based on totem like plants, trees, birds; Saras Crane and animals; Lion trototise and mongoose. For example, Premchand Singh used to claim the meaning of clan Parte is 'ant'. It is one of the nineteen kinds

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<sup>294</sup>Himmat. Conversation dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>295</sup>Julisson, *The Gonds*, 47-48.

of different ants. There is a clan called *Kurma* means goat clan. A Gond clan is called *Tekam* named after teak tree, because their ancestors had kept his god in a teak tree so they cannot hurt or use teak's wood, branches or leaves.<sup>296</sup> Therefore Gonds never kill their totem but salute their grouped animals, birds or any other totem fixed for their clan. The name of a child is generally given by family members, the name could have special meaning, for example: If a child is born on Monday, could be named as *Somti* or *Somlal*, on Tuesday *Mangal* Singh or *Mangli*, on Wednesday *Budh* Singh or *Budhia* and so on.<sup>297</sup> Hirdaya Singh of Dori was from *Waghmare Uekae Pardhan* Gond clan. He was an Evangelist in Swedish Mission Gondwana Church.<sup>298</sup> He lived in Shahapur for thirty years; died on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1948,<sup>299</sup> at Dori village, he belonged to *bagh* means lion's family after his death, the body was taken by a bullock cart from Dori village to Shahapur graveyard, through Baretha forest; there a lion followed the procession and finally returned back to forest.<sup>300</sup> It is astonishing to note a relationship between the human beings and animals that animals have the feelings of love and communication of harmony for their care taker tribe.

2.4. *Totem*: is a social order of clan that tribe refrains from eating the bird, animal, tree or any other thing to which they belong. A Totem could be a thing living, natural or artificial that could be an animal, bird or a person that represents a clan of same blood, relatives who do not inter-marry with each other.<sup>301</sup> The totemism generally exists with the cult of the dead person's spirit and god<sup>302</sup> they assist them in need.

2.5. *Tattooing*: was done probably to protect tribe members from enemies and recognize who belongs to their tribe. Ratan Singh Parte s/o Tabal Singh Parte in June, 2014, confirmed this thought at Dori village. The tattooing is done on the leg, hands and on face for butification at Dori and in surrounding villages.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, 22-23, 31

<sup>297</sup> Ratan, interview dated 29/06/ 2014.

<sup>298</sup> E. Raman, Short History of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh: Sagar., 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1948, 69.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, 68, 70.

<sup>300</sup> Chandra Prabahkar Singh(84), Conversation with a Gond Pastor dated, 26/10/2015.

<sup>301</sup> Nelsson Singh, Padhar Hospital, District Betul, M.P., conversation dated 02-07-2014.

<sup>302</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 21-22.

<sup>303</sup> Ratan, interview dated 29/06/ 2014.

2.6. *Taboo*: there is a custom of taboo a forbidden thing; it could be in terms of eating, drinking or of any other use, it is prohibited or restricted. There are two types of cultural taboo exist among Gonds these are: *One* is permanent that could be related to head priest or Spirit of dead person of the tribe. *Second* is temporary related to woman's menustartion, or virul communicable diseases.<sup>304</sup> There are different kinds of taboo existing among Gonds for example *BaghmareUecke* clan is originated from lion; the taboo resists them to kill a lion. Gond families similarly belong to different animals or trees to which they cannot cut, kill or eat but respectfully take care of that particular totem. There is a *Taboo for the Field* in which both men and women cover their heads in respect of soil while working in the field, but after sowing they sleep separately, women sleep at home because during sowing it is prohibited, till the new tender crops sprout, otherwise the quarrels of couples may hurt the corn that can destroy or delay the harvest.<sup>305</sup>

Therefore Gond's follow certain rules of their tribe such as covering the head in the field to which researcher himself witnessed in Premchand Singh's family. When Gond begin sowing they fill the seed in a bowl, then reverently touch the plough, forehead, and the mouths of the bullocks with it, then begin the sowing. The village priest sacrifices sprinkles the blood on the grain, after that offers five chickens, a coconut and liquor. After that meal is prepared and sacrificial meat is served with rice and pulse. The owner and the family partake in the meal; the village priest also gets his share. Later the grain is winnowed and placed in a heap on the threshing floor. Then a lamp (diya) is lighted in front of grain, the next day the grain is filled into the bags and carried to home. The new grain is filled into the bins and then a burning light is placed on the bin.<sup>306</sup> There are differnt rituals for sowing the seed for example it may start by pouring a little oil on dung with fire, addressing to God by breaking a coconut and distributing it with jiggery to the people present, conch shell is blown for prayer of plentiful agricultural product in the field. They offer coconut, cocks or goats to God. The broken coconut is distributed to harvesters. Gonds believe that everything comes from God. He is the source of

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<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>305</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 140-141.

<sup>306</sup> Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma*, 500.

everything, including human life. Bhumka is a mediator between god and man; so he is invited for rituals.<sup>307</sup>

2.7. *Food:* The tribal mostly depend on forest for hunting and fishing to natural resources for their food habits. The *mahua* tree flowers and its *Gulli* fruits used for oil, *mahua* is collected, dried up and sold in the market. The Gonds use these flowers for making wine that is filtered by heating up in a clay pot on fire at river side. *Mahua* is either boiled or cooked both are preferred for the first two meals of the day. The dry cereal is eaten at night. Gonds make puri fat cookies but most of the Gonds like meat. However, a Gond must abstain from the flesh of animals of totems. Gonds cultivate tobacco for smoking. *Mahua* tree is prohibited to cut down or to use as fuel.<sup>308</sup> A Gond may kill a cow deliberately because he wants to eat beef but Gond is made an outcaste for killing a horse, dog or cat.<sup>309</sup> Therefore what ever they eat comes from forest including non veg however they respect their totem and do not eat them.

2.8. *Rich art traditions and Utensils:* One can observe the rich art traditions of Gonds such as pottery, basket, floor painting, drawings of men and birds on the walls. The houses are traditionally constructed by bamboo, filled with mud and straw, cow dung is spread over the floor, coated with soft white clay. There is generally only one room in a Gond's house – at the right side of the door one can find several clay receptacles for the storage of grain. The Gonds use two kinds of grinding mills, one of stone which is used for hard grains and other is made of clay or wood for grinding soft grains. The husking of the grain is done by Jata made of clay but pounded by pestle then it is cleaned by winnowing scoop. The Gonds use different kind of hand made baskets of bamboo. Usually the food is cooked in earthen pots. The vessel in which the water is fetched is almost of burnt clay. The aboriginals use the wooden cylindrical vessel made of solid block wood and made of iron called *Pai* are used for measurement. The Gonds sleep on the floor or use *Khat* consist of rectangular frame on four rather short legs, string knitted home made bed. The Gonds have two or three types of axes. They also use iron tools, most among

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<sup>307</sup> Himmat, interview dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>308</sup> Ratan, interview dated 29/06/ 2014.

<sup>309</sup> Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma*, 220.



them is the plough share, and iron is pointed simply two feet long. The bow and arrows are not seen but bullock carts are used for transport at Dori village.<sup>310</sup>

2.9. *Dance and music*: Gond dances are called *Saila*, *Rina* and *Dadariya*; The *Karma* dance is a group dance, usually two groups face each other, women at one side and men at other side. The drummer stand between the two lines, one group starts singing the other group replies; one person is leading, the other singing the refrain or repeating the line sung by the leader. The drummer turns each time to the group which is singing. They use instruments like the *timki*, and *nagada*. There is another instrument called *Mandra* made of clay, its top is tied with leather that produces a melodious sound; flutes could be of different size from five inches to three feet in length.<sup>311</sup>

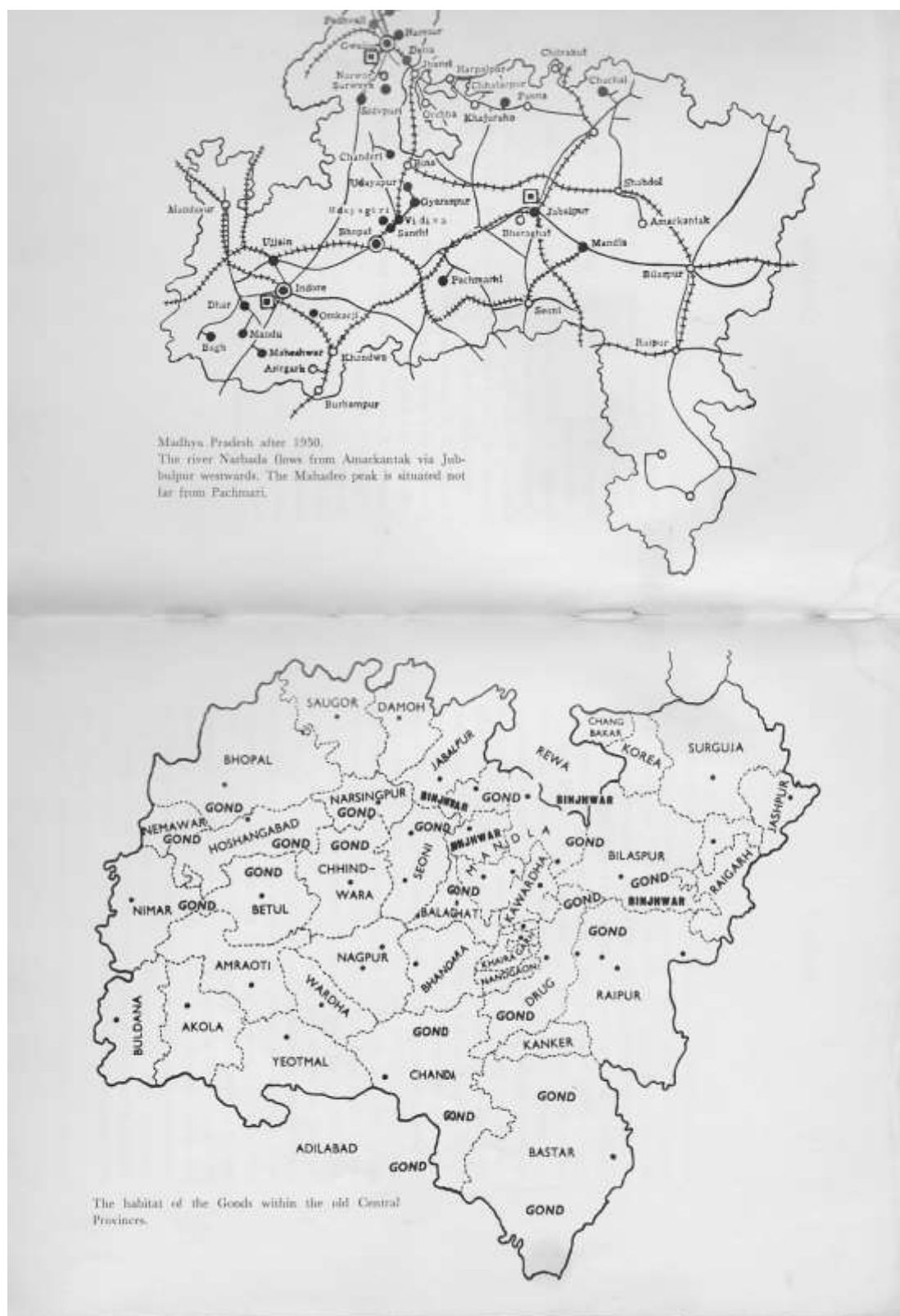
Researcher has observed very closely the gondwana *tradition* of Betul district that is still visible in forest village area. The aboriginal tribe of Gondwana generally male wear loincloth called *languti*. It is drawn in between the legs. They wrap a sheet of cloth around their chest but many have started to wear shirts. Gond women wear in fashion of the Maratha women. The strip of the cloth is wrapped around the body, they wear mill – woven clothes of different dark colours. The villages still carry on the traditional dresses, dance, music, festivals and cultural identity in context of Gondwana. Man wears *dhoti*, at top small *Bandi* or *Kurta*, a *gamcha* towel on shoulder, *pagdhi* turban on head. The ladies wear bangles, arm and leg rings, loose *Saya-Polka* (blouse), series of attractive dark red, green, blue or other colours, which express their happiness and joy.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*, 12-13.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid*, 551-561.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid*, 52-55.



Map taken from Julisson, *The Gonds*, 6-7.

2.10. *Marriage*: A girl picks up knowledge of menstruation, sex and married life from older girls and women. No special rites are performed on the occasion of first menstruation.<sup>313</sup> The first step for marriage is Engagement called “*Sagai*, takes place before marriage.”<sup>314</sup> At marriage both the parties exchange gifts according to their financial conditions. *Haldi* turmeric powder is applied before marriage; this powder is also applied on new born baby’s cord, and at a funeral to purify the body. The marriage is solemnized by a *Bhumka* or priest. A branch of Mahua flowers symbolize a girl and *Gulli* fruit of Mahua a boy.<sup>315</sup> A day before marriage *Marawa* tent is erected in the house of both, they make the occasion joyful by singing songs and dancing. The songs are sung while *Haldi* is applied to bride or bridegroom for purification.<sup>316</sup> The marriage ceremony is simplicity itself. A platform of cow dung cakes is built, on which a blanket is spread. On this young couple stand and exchange vows. The bridegroom puts an iron ring on one of the bride’s fingers, and the ceremony comes to an end.<sup>317</sup> The traditional marriage rite still exist among Gonds but now it is changed to modern kind of financial currency, clothes and other things but forced dowry is not visible among them; the marriage takes place with consent of both families.

a) *Capture*: Gond marriage practices are told by Chandra Prabhakar Singh that if one found a girl alone in the market, at riverside or elsewhere. He would come with his friends and carry the girl from her village. The boy was to be punished by arranging feast. Now, this type of capture marriage is reduced as prohibited by the government and now it is an offence to capture a girl for marriage.

b) *Lamjana*: Another type of wedding is mentioned by Chandra Prabhakar Singh that *Lamjana* is popular among Gonds that was practiced until 1970’s, as mentioned of Jacob’s marriage in the Bible, working for a period in inlaws field for marriage.<sup>318</sup> This is also confirmed Eyre Chatterton who was the Bishop of Nagpur that in certain cases where bridegroom is too poor to pay the price which is demanded by the father

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<sup>313</sup> *Ibid*, 251.

<sup>314</sup> Gulab Singh Navdhe, s/o Madan Singh Navdhe, village Amagohan, Tehsil Goradongri, district Betul, M.P. Interview dated 30/06/2014.

<sup>315</sup> Ratan, Conversation dated: 29/06/ 2014.

<sup>316</sup> Batto w/o Bhuta Tumram, village Dori, Tehsil Ghoradongri, District Betul, M.P. Conversation dated 01-07-2014.

<sup>317</sup> Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, 132.

<sup>318</sup> Chandra Prabhakar Singh, interview dated 20/04/2018.

for his daughter, the bridegroom is allowed to serve, like the patriarch Jacob for his wife. This service sometimes lasts for several years.<sup>319</sup> However, Gonds make the occasion joyful by singing songs and dancing. A song is sung as follows addressing to the bridegroom:

*“You will take with you the bride, to your house which is built in the sugarcane field; the bride who is in full make up, red dot on forehead, ear rings in nose, bangles in hand and feet. Eat delicious food, drink, eat orange and sleep well.”*<sup>320</sup>

After marriage a song is generally sung for the father of bride that: Father lost his daughter and gave her for marriage due to greediness of daru (wine).<sup>321</sup> The feast is arranged for the people, who like wine can join. After marriage *Bhagat* Priest is invited to blow a *Shankh* (a conch) for purification of the house.<sup>322</sup> In the Family history life of Gonds; married daughters did not inherit the property of father; the aged parents are looked after by sons who inherit the property of their father. Agricultural work is carried out by both husband and wife. The women collect firewood for cooking and selling it in the market. Gonds do not use dry cow dung for fuel as they find it impure for cooking. But they spread dry dung as manure in the fields. Gonds go for hunting and fishing, using nets. They also use rods, casting lines and hooks for hunting the animals. The Cages are made of bamboo such as dandar, bisar and chorea for catching the fish and birds.

2.11.: The *festivals* are celebrated by Gonds most of them are due to influence of Hinduism; for example: *Nagpanchami* snake festival is an impact of neighbour's faith. Many Indians worship snake. The Science and Discovery channel on television gave an interesting note of it that modern scientific research has discovered that head of a snake can survive for two hours after being cut off, maintaining the capacity of biting.<sup>323</sup> Yet another example is of Chef Peng Fen in South China is there, who was cooking a snake at his wife's birthday; he was bitten up by a

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<sup>319</sup> Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, 132.

<sup>320</sup> Ku. Aruna, Ku. Anjana, Ku. Jyoti, village Dori, Tehsil Ghoradongri, District Betul, M.P. Conversation dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>321</sup> Agrawal, *Gond Raja*, 185.

<sup>322</sup> Himmat Singh Dhurve, S/o Gore Lal, Phoolkali w/o Himmat, Ittula, village Dori, Tehsil Ghoradongri, District Betul, M.P. Conversation dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>323</sup> Televison, *Discovery channel*, 2-3 pm. dated 31/08/2014.

beheaded snake; and died.<sup>324</sup> Also, According to Anita Gopesh, Professor of Zoology at Allahabad University, If milk is drunk by a Snake it will get infection in intestines and die.<sup>325</sup> In fact; there is no Gond tribe named after snake. If a Gond looks at snake; will treat it as an enemy and kill.<sup>326</sup>

2.12. *Fuenral*: Gonds have a tradition that after deaths ritualistic practices are followed which still exist among Gonds. The dead body is tied up by rope with two bamboos, carried over to the river bank for bathing. Oil, and Haldi (turmeric powder) and Gulab Jal (Rose water) are applied and body is garland by flowers, dressed up in new clothes- preferably white.<sup>327</sup> The dead person's feet are kept towards riverside in a grave of one meter deep with his belongings such as walking stick, smoking pipe, tabacoo or other things.<sup>328</sup> So that, the body will remain at peace. After the death of a person Gonds arrange community feast so that the dead's spirit may rest at peace. Generally a woman wears silver or metal bangles, but at husband's death she wears glass Chudhi (bangle) breaking glass Chudi is a sign of a widow expressing her sorrows.<sup>329</sup> Dhan (rice straw), *Kodo* grain, salt; a holy leaf of Palsa tree and a coin are also put in the grave so that spirit may eat it. The intension is to delay the decay; and insect may not damage body. On third day, edible things are kept on the grave, water is poured from clay pot so that the mouth of dead person may open called '*Yeerbatti*', and meaning is that the spirit of the dead may have openings to meet Padhapan or great God.<sup>330</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> day, a feast is organized for Panchyat and village community. If feast is not arranged the spirit of the dead person may roam around the village, if the feast is served, the dead's spirit is liberated to meet God. Some graveyards are found in jungles but others bury their family members in their own *badi* garden, nobody is allowed to eat anything from the time of death till the funeral is over. After the funeral Gonds bathe in the river, put on clean clothes and go back to their houses. Gonds believe that restless spirits of

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<sup>324</sup> Amar Ujala, Allahabad, dated 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014, 14.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, 02/08/2014, 7.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid, 146, 157, 178.

<sup>327</sup> Madan Singh Navdhe and Garab Singh Navdhe, village Amagohan, Tehsil Goradongri, district Betul, M.P. Interview dated 03/07/2014. Interview

<sup>328</sup> Gulab, Interview dated 30/06/2014.

<sup>329</sup> Batto, Interview dated 01-07-2014.

<sup>330</sup> Himmat Singh Dhurve, S/o Gore Lal, Phoolkali w/o Himmat, Ittula, village Dori, Tehsil Ghoradongri, District Betul, M.P. Interview dated 29-06-2014.

departed ancestors lurking in the forests, around their villages therefore, Gonds worship forefathers' spirits for their protection, this type of view show that they believe in eschatology of the souls.<sup>331</sup> In some cases the Gonds bury their dead, and in somecases, where Hindu influence is strong, they burn them. The burial ground or burning place is generally to the east of the village. It is a strange and pathetic fact that the spirits of the dead are generally more as objects of the fear than as objects of love and veneration. Especially are those dreaded who have died violent and unnatural deaths. The spirit of women who has died in child birth or of the man who has been slain by the wild beast, are often regarded as specially malignant and dangerous.<sup>332</sup>

**3. Status of Women:** Researcher has observed as per tradtion of Gondwana community there is a high respect for women, they do not discriminate girls and boys; both are equally welcomed. Gond women are more at liberty than Hindu community; women have the rights of property same asmen. Widow marriage is widely accepted; generally they try to find out a widower or otherwise look for an unmarried person. When Premchand's, wife Sosan died at Dori, he had married a widow woman. A Gond follows the rules of monogamy, but bigamy and tri-gamy is permitted in case of widower, widows and barrenness, or in case of a divorced woman it is allowed to re-marry. The women are free to act and decide as they think; often they are stronger or more influential than their husbands in the village, the free and open behaviour of Gond women is often surprising in Indian society.

**4. The People of God:** The Gonds believe that they are the people of God created by God from the soil therefore they call themselves as *Koitur* the people of the earth:  
**4.1. Wondering People of God:** They have a long history of wondering here and there from river to river, stream to stream and palce to place like. This very fact of Tribal Gonds cannot be denied as Chandra Prabhakar Singh has rightly stated in his biography *Ek Adivasi Pastor ke Atamkatha* (A Tribal Pastor's Biography) that my grandfather, Mohan Singh spoke Gondi language. Mohan was In-charge of horse trainers in Gondwana kingdom of Durgawati. Horses were very prized in those days

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<sup>331</sup> Madan Singh Navdhe, Interview dated 03/07/2014.

<sup>332</sup> Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, 133-134.

for travelling after the defeat of Durgawati; Gonds became wondering people, moving to different places, settled in hilly forest area at river sides. Mohan Singh had a son Hirdaya Singh, they moved to several places, finally settled at Shahpur in the district of Betul Madhya Pradesh. Hirdaya came in contact with missionaries and was baptized along with his family. He converted many Gonds, established Shahapur congregation, and constructed his own house over there. He finally moved across the river to Dori, where his son Premchand, grand son Chandra Prabhakar and grand daughter Bhaga lived. Hirdaya's son Premchand was tall, healthy qualified male nurse who was appointed to work in the Mission hospital at Checholi in Betul district, but later on he preferred to be a business man and settled at Dori village God abundantly blessed him in everything, but in the beginning he struggled a lot. He had an Agricultural land at the bank of river, where he planted a mango and lemon garden. There was no well for irrigation; water was carried from river in two tin boxes, balanced with bamboo on his shoulder for watering the lemon plants. He was a hard working man of agriculture, toiling with joy and happiness, instructing people how to plough and irrigate, how to increase the productivity of the land, and sharing his medicinal knowledge of English and Herbal medicines. He was a single Christian man with his family at Dori but never ran away from his village. He used to read the Bible without glass at the age of seventy five. Previously, he lived immoral life of looting as a gang leader of Gonds for the survival of Gonds.<sup>333</sup> Therefore, according to above description Mohan Singh was grand father of Premchand. He served in state of Budelkhand during the time of queen Durgawati but due to invaders later on moved to Madhya Pradesh with his son Hirdaya Singh. Hirdaya was converted to Christianity, his son Premchand resided at Dori, there he was persecuted by villagers because of his faith in Christ but slowly he converted others to the love of Christ due to a big change in his own life after converting to Christianity. The God provided them land at river side; where Prem Chand's father Hirdya had generously donated a land to the Church through a missionary lady Martha Sarner. Chandra Prabhakar Singh is the grand son of Hirdya: Miss Martha Sarner was well versed in Gondi. She was step daughter (accepted daughter) of

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<sup>333</sup>Chandra PrabhakarSingh, *Ek Adivasi Pastor ke Atamkatha*, Padhar, Betul, 2011, 10, and conversation with him dated 26-10-2015.

Hirdaya babu. She inherited from him some acres of land where she built a house and chapel,<sup>334</sup> that still exist opposite to Premchand's house. A missionary Martha Sarner served for several years in Dori village at her old age after retirement gave her small scooter to Chandra Prabhakar Singh by which he used to travel for evangelism and to conduct prayer meetings at Dori and different places. This tribe believes that Gond and earth are created by God, they have folk stories of its foundation; Arvind Victor Choudhary of Padhar Madhya Pradesh stated that:

*"You cannot take out the concept of 12 ½ tribe that is deeply rooted in the minds of Gonds."*<sup>335</sup>

The Gonds do not follow caste system yet they retain the concept of twelve and half tribe.<sup>336</sup> A question could be asked who the half tribe is. One of the answers about half tribe is eunuch among Gonds. The Gonds claim that they are divided into 12 ½ *gotras* (clans). The same number always mentioned by Premchand Singh at Dori. The number of tribes of Israel was twelve, so also the number of tribes in India is twelve. The twelve and half tribe denotes that the Gonds are inclusive on the matters of recognition of eunuch in the creation of God, where as Israelites were exclusive on the matters of separate identity of eunuch's clan as they had only twelve tribes, though there is a mention of eunuch in the bible. Gonds believe that both man and woman are made out of dust or clay. At tribe level Gonds are divided into two groups; called *Rajgonds* means rulers and *Dhulgonds* are called as ordinary people:

a) *Rajgonds*: The Gond kings who married outside their tribe with the daughters of other kings called themselves as rulers or *Rajgonds* of Gondwana state, for this one of the examples is given of Gond king Dalpat who had married Durgawati a Hindu lady.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> Arvind Victor Choudhary, Patha Nadi, Post Padhar, district Betul, M.P. Conversation dated 01-07-2014.

<sup>336</sup> Himmat, Interview dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>337</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 43,47-49.



b) *Dhulgonds*: the ordinary people feel proud to be called *Koitur* means people of earth, dust or soil. The word *Bhumka* carries the similar meaning. The root word *Bhu* for priest means *Bhumi* or earth that denotes that priest is the man of earth who is the mediator in between the human beings and God therefore as *Bhumka* he performs all the religious rituals on earth. *Dhulgonds* did not marry out side of Gond community;<sup>338</sup> they maintained purity of their heredity. It is obvious that Gonds agricultural, social and religious rituals are valuable which give deeper insights for constructing Gondwana tribal theology. Therefore it is appropriate here to begin with their cultural context, concepts and beliefs that is still alive and flourishing in the jungles of the Satpura Hills.

## 5. Festivals

a) *Nawa festival*: when the maize is ready for harvesting towards the end of September or at the beginning of October. Some celebrate it early some a few days later. The official village priest goes to the field collects a bundle of paddy that he offers to field god. On the day of the feast head of the family goes to the field plucks green handful of paddy which has ears. The Gond takes it to the *Saj* tree, he offers to god paddy with clarified butter and incense then he offers similar offering at home. The Gonds drink liquor take part in Nawa Khana dinner, the eating of the new fruits, and other garden products takes place before Nawa feast pumpkins and grain crops may be prepared after the Nawa feast.<sup>339</sup> After harvesting Gonds neither store new rice / grains nor use it until the promised meal is offered to god this traditional worship is called Nawa festival,<sup>340</sup> No one is permitted to eat grains until first it is offered to God through the Navpooja.<sup>341</sup> This expresses the co-operative system, unity and feelings of collectiveness taking care of each other. After harvesting, Gonds take part in community meal together. The term *Bhumka* is connected to *Bhumi* Earth. It denotes 'Womb of Earth' from which crop comes out for feeding the

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<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>339</sup> Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma*, 489-490.

<sup>340</sup> Juliusson, *The Gonds*, 158.

<sup>341</sup> Himmat, Interview dated 29-06-2014.

people. Therefore it is a duty of every one to approach Mother Earth *Dharti Mata* for thanks giving and reverence to God, through a *Bhumka* Priest.<sup>342</sup>

*b) Hari-Jiroti:* most of Gond festivals are related to Earth, forest and to human life, this was told by Himmat Singh Dhurve that Jiroti festival is also called Hari-Jiroti. It is the festival of celebrating green environment with rituals in which newly sprouted small plants of rice, wheat or other grains are exchanged, people extend best wishes to each other for greenery and plentiful crops in season, this agricultural traditional festival is celebrated with joy and happiness.<sup>343</sup> Jiroti festival is connected to the living and the dead; Gonds believe if Spirit of ancestor is pleased will bless activities of agricultural work but nowadays offering of coconut is more common as it resembles to human skull.<sup>344</sup>

*c). Pola:* it is a celebration for a break of agricultural work in the month of September, during which Gond boys roam on two long bamboos in the village. This festival is celebrated in honouring to god so that he may take care of families, households, animals and crops with the highest crops. The animals are decorated by different colors, clothes and horns are painted in *pola* festival, this is the festival of joy, happiness and rest for a while for every one earth, animals, and Gonds.<sup>345</sup>

## 6. Doing Theology in Context

There are folk stories for a Gondwana Theological discourse, there are scholars and other gonds who have written or orally expressed almost similar stories mentioned as under:

**6.1. The Understanding God:** Gonds believe in a Supreme Being who sustains the whole universe; He is superior to nature and human beings. According to Chandra Prabhakar Singh in divine hierarchy Highest is Badhadeva, and below him the small family gods are worshiped in different numbers his father Premchand had six small wooden images to which he had kept in memory of forefathers belief.<sup>346</sup> Gonds

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<sup>342</sup> Bhumka, Interview dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>343</sup> Himmat, Interview dated 29-06-2014

<sup>344</sup> Juliusson, *The Gonds*, 17-18.

<sup>345</sup> Himmat, Interview dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>346</sup> Chandra Prabhakar Singh, Interview dated 28/12/2016

address their prayer to God through the spirits of forefathers, the concept of foundation of the Gonds community is mentioned in folk stories established by Lingo Himself who was born by the power of supreme God thus Gonds believe that they are the people of God. *Bhaisasur* is a god who protects the agricultural field; *Muthawapen* is a spirit that protects the village. Gond believes in forefather's spirits in a set of numbers such as of four, six or seven, up to twelve. They believe in *Badhadev*, the great God. *Annant dev* eternal God is greatest of all gods.<sup>347</sup> Gonds hold the concept of *Kul dewata*, family deity, *Gram dewata* village deity and *Dehwar Dewata* boundary deity.<sup>348</sup> It is obvious that Gonds worship a number of gods and spirits, addressing their prayers to eternal God so they are protected from any kind of danger and evil spirits. Therefore the concept among Gonds is that God is Omnipotent, invisible. In Ratan Singh's field for breaking coconut to *Bhaisasur* there is no idol image. One can find only small rough stones and bricks kept just in a square on the ground for breaking the coconut under a tree. Therefore, it is obvious that Gonds are not idol worshippers but they offer cock, coconut or liquor to God, at *Penkhala*, the *Bhumka* priest performs rituals for the forgiveness of sins, protection of field, village and the people. Who God is? This question was asked to Ratan Singh Parte; to which he replied that Gonds believe in a Supreme Being who sustains the whole universe; He is superior to nature and human beings. However, Gonds address God through the spirits of forefathers, Ratan Singh Parte mentioned said: *Bhaisasur* god protects the agricultural field; *Muthawapen* is a spirit that protects the village. Gonds believe in forefather's spirits in a set of numbers such as of four, six or seven, up to twelve. They believe in Mahadev but will there is Badhadev, a great God. Annantdev, the Eternal God – greatest of all gods.<sup>349</sup> Nelsson Singh of Padhar informed, "Gonds hold concepts of *Kul dewata* (family deity), *Gram dewata* (village deity) and *Dehwar Dewata* (boundary deity) among gods; *Bagh dev* (lion god) is a powerful spirit of the Baghmare Ueke tribe."<sup>350</sup> It is obvious that Gonds worship a number of gods and spirits, addressing their prayers to eternal God so they are protected from any kind of danger and evil spirits. Therefore,

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<sup>347</sup> Ratan, Interview dated 29/06/ 2014.

<sup>348</sup> Nelsson, Interview dated 02-07-2014.

<sup>349</sup> Ratan, Interview dated 29/06/ 2014

<sup>350</sup> Nelsson, Interview dated 02-07-2014

the concept among Gonds is that God is omnipotent, invisible, *Anantdeva* or Supreme God; He can reveal his power by any means.

**6.2. Religious View:** The God Mahadev performs an act of penance which lasts for twelve months; from the boil in his own hand sixteen daughters are born. He was bitterly disappointed. As daughters are regarded by no means a blessing so he threw them into the water but water dried up from which sixteen kinds of earth with different color of soils was produced. At the second penance of God twelve threshing – floors Gondi gods were born, these are the ancestors of Gond race.<sup>351</sup> God fasted for twelve years, he never took a bath nor once did he drink water. In consequences he became very dirty. In the beginning of thirteen year God rubbed his armpits and his chest and much dirt came off. He began to turn it between thumb and forefinger. In this manner, he formed the figures of two human beings. After some time God saw them lying on the floor of his house. He cut his little finger, extracted some blood from the wound and soaked the figures in it. Then he cut the nail of his little finger which is full of life spirit (Jiw) and blew the life – spirit into the male figure which he had made of the dirt of his body. Then he urged him to get up, after getting up jiw asked him where my wife is? God replied she is lying there, and told him how to bring her to life. The male approached to the female figure lying on the ground and breathed into her face and said get up, get up and nudged her in the side and she became one soul and one body. The Gonds were asked to conduct themselves as whatever comes across them they must need kill and eat.<sup>352</sup>

### **6.3. Eco- Theology**

The Gonds believe that God has gifted them the earth freely therefore they are care the care taker of the earth but they used to burn a particular area of the forest for agricultural work. They were originally a wandering tribe of primitive habits it is confirmed by the fact that their language appears to include no indigenous word *Kua* for ‘a well’. This is one of the most common of all things which keep up the life of any people of rural India. The Gonds must have been wandering from river to river,

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<sup>351</sup> Eyre Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, Sir Issac Pitman & Sons, New York and Melbourne, 1916, 154-156.

<sup>352</sup> Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma*, 114-115.

stream to stream with shifting agricultural common method of farming. One specific kind of shifting cultivation among them was slash-and-burn agriculture. Gonds have concepts not to give pain by tearing the soil thus they spread seed over soil to grow. The district forest officer of Chhindwara reported this concept that Gonds set fires in summer to let the forest burn for several months until rain comes. Gonds preferred to burn the forest as per report about 95 kilometers of land trees, bushes and grass were under flames in 1964. The burning of forest consisted of the controlled use of fire in places. Trees were cut down and all existing vegetation was burned off. In slash-and-burn, farmers used tools to slash down trees and tall vegetation, and then burn the vegetation on the ground. They practiced to apply a layer of ash from the fire settling on the ground that contributed to the soil's fertility, so the ash became valuable manure that gave the richest yields.<sup>353</sup> The Gonds honor the trees for example there is a wedding ceremony for a mango tree, when yields its first fruit, Gond regard the tree as child of its owner, since he or of his planted, mango tree is like the owner's daughter and it is considered improper that the tree should give its before its marriage is celebrated. The tree's wedding therefore, must be performed before its owner tastes its fruits. Generally the priest is invited to perform the ceremony, after the rituals it is concluded with the feast.<sup>354</sup>

Later on when Gonds settled down for agricultural work their farming too improved. The Gond kings took interest in productivity of their agricultural fields. As per Gonds history there was a Gond king Hirdya Sahi; he had developed agricultural land with modern technical methods with the help of experts of country for better cultivation during his reign therefore Agrawal has mentioned it as a golden period. King Hirdya Sahi, (1634-1678) had great love for agricultural development in Gondwana kingdom. He well understood the urgent need of more productivity from the fields. According to inscription in Garaha Mandla at Ramnagar, in Madhya Pradesh his kingdom since 1668 was a golden period. Mughal invaders demanded King Hirdya Sahi to pay a heavy tax of Rupees Twelve Lakhs per year that he could not pay. Mughal king asked him to develop his Gondwana state by agricultural revolution. He invited agricultural skilled: to *Rathor* experts of growing wheat and

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<sup>353</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 140.

<sup>354</sup> Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma*, 504-507.

*Kurmi* who were experts of growing rice,<sup>355</sup> Sahi made use for valuable resources, wealth of forests, and converted certain places for agriculture. After Two Hundred years of Hirdya Sahi, a British Captain Ward appreciated his Agricultural productivity. Hirdya Sahi knew the value of irrigation, thus he established the Ganga Sagar dam near Garha, which still exists with a mango garden famous until today in Mandla Madhya Pradesh.<sup>356</sup> Indian Agricultural production is to be carried out as stewards of Earth for the welfare of Gonds.

Gonds believe; never to break the Earth because they are the image of earth called *Koitur* means the people of the earth, soil or dust, they worship earth as it is concrete and energetic; source of their birth and survival. Therefore Gonds never prefer to create an image of Earth as she is concrete and firm with productivity. Bhumka makes an offering of pig or hen entrusting seed to mother earth for production. The blood is sprinkled in the field so that it will produce a rich and good crop. However, nowadays, Gonds offer coconut as its shape is of skull that is offered for a good harvest.<sup>357</sup> Gonds depend on rain for irrigation of the agricultural fields but too much or too little rain can spoil the cultivation therefore for more agricultural productivity traditionally they honour the Earth; pray to their forefather's spirits to receive God's blessings, there is a traditional festival called *Jiroti*, in which they pray to ancestors' spirits: To protect the agricultural fields for plentiful of crops for that they offer coconut, hens or even wine for liberation from any kind of evil spirits, Gonds seem to live in a faithful sacral amity with the Earth and what grows on it.<sup>358</sup>

Men and women keep their heads covered as a sign of devotion and reverence to mother earth. The word Bhumka, (Priest) is derived from the word *Bhumi*. It means 'Belonging to Mother Earth'. At the time of birth the placenta is buried, later on umbilical cord is buried at the same spot in a hole in the house and it is filled with the soil.<sup>359</sup> Gonds understand that dust of Earth is powerful for healing; therefore

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<sup>355</sup> Agrawal, *Gond Raja*, 84-85, 87-88.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid*, 84-85, 88-89.

<sup>357</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 142, 197.

<sup>358</sup> Bride, Are agricultural missions out of date, 1606-1607.

<sup>359</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 176-177.

they clean cooking utensils with wet soil. The dust is applied on the head in times of war and troubles to get encouragements, courage and strength through close contact of Earth. Gonds believe that dust has power even in cleansing the sins of the people, therefore they sprinkle dust during the ceremony at Penkhala; the dust is put upon the dead, so that the spirit of the dead may have openings to meet God.<sup>360</sup> Gonds believe that they are *Koitur* the people of the soil thus they respect earth; since their birth to death, a man is surrounded by the Earth; comes out from earth, eats the crops, drinks water from the earth, and after death goes back to dust. God is omnipotent.<sup>361</sup> God is the prime mover of earth, and because of His power earth revolve; and is productive therefore a *folk song* is sung that everyting of earth belongs to God; thus serving earth is a service to God:

“*Deval ka danda, Dharti, Mutva Dev, Kond ro Deval ko danda,*  
*Mutva devan ko danda, Dharti Matal Ki Sewa Dev Sewa.*”<sup>362</sup>

The meaning is that Earth is a part of God; it is like a stick in His hand. Earth revolves according to His wish, God alone protects the village. However in connection to this the questions are asked; who's this earthis? Whose stick is revolving this earth? Everything belongs to God alone.

#### 6.4. Christology

**a) Birth of Lingo:** No account of the Gonds would be complete without the name of Lingo; it is a sort of Epic recited by Gond Pradhans.<sup>363</sup> C. G. Chenevix Trench was a Deputy Collector of Betul district. He wrote “*Grammer of the Gondi language*” in 1916.<sup>364</sup> In Trench's version Lingo is called Raj Linga this account mainly deals with the birth of Linga, and his arrangements for the wedding of his Gondian bretheran. This version seems to be more original that Raj Linga lived and reigned in heaven and Raja Bhoj reigned on earth. The name of his queen was Talko, they had six sons. Talko was

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<sup>360</sup> Himmat Singh Dhurve, S/o Gore Lal, Phoolkali w/o Himmat, Ittula, village Dori, Tehshil Ghoradongri, District Betul, M.P. Interview dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>361</sup> Bride, Are agricultural missions out of date, 1606-1607.

<sup>362</sup> Dhanne Lal Parte, village Amagohan, Tehsil Goradongri, district Betul, M.P. Interview dated 29/06/2014.

<sup>363</sup> Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, 151.

<sup>364</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 79-80.

one day sitting at the bathing place, where five girls were helping her in bathing, at the same time in heaven Raj Linga was pondering in which body he was to be incarnated, the folk story narrates it as follows: If I enter the body of a cow I shall have to graze in the jungle, if I become an ant I must eat leaves, If I become a Fakir I shall have to sit in front of the houses, and that I do not like. I want to be incarnated as 'son of man' (like Jesus Christ). The human beings will be close and play with me. Thinking thus, he took up his abode in queen Talko at the bathing place and her pregnancies proceed soon. After nine months and nine days Raj Linga said from the venter (stomach) of Talko: Show me the way through which I am to be born. She answered: Son in the same way as the whole world. Raj Linga answered: If I come that way you will say you have pissed me out. Talk. If I come through your mouth you will say you have spat me out. If through my nose, you will say you have blown me out, if through the eyes, and then you will say you have shed a tear, if through the ear, you will say you have picked me out like a lump of wax. The queen lost patience and said, come out however you like. She had hardly said so when he came through her crown. The queen fainted immediately. She had no strength. Raj Linga said: "Stand up, my mother. I have been born out from you, queen said: A damned Raj Linga has been born to me from above. According to the above story Raj Linga did not prefer to be born in the form of an animal, ant or beggar, but decided to be born as a 'Man' so he could serve and liberate his Gond people.<sup>365</sup>

According to Chatterton version, in *The Story of Gondwana*, the opening of Epic narrates that there stood a flower tree called Dati, by the decree of God from one of the flowers of this tree was to spring one 'without father and mother' who was to be the teacher and civilizer of the Gonds, and eventually their deliverer from Mahadeva's cruel imprisonment, His name is Lingo. Lingo is spoken of as sinless being. Lingo was a perfect man; water may have stained, but he had no stain whatever. Then he said one of the flowers shall conceive. In the morning when the clouds resounded with thunder, the flower opened, burst and Lingo was born, and he sprang, and fell into the heap of turmeric, by God's doing there was a fig tree on which was honey. The honey burst and small drop fell into his mouth, the juice

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<sup>365</sup> Julisson *The Gonds*, 91-92.



continued to fall and his mouth began to suck. When Lingo began to grow Lingo arose with haste and sat in a cradle swinging. Lingo's childhood and youth were spent Pan like in absolute solitude. He set out on a journey which led him to Kachikopa 'The Iron Valley' – Red Hills' hills of Satpuras. Here he sees for the first time his fellow men, who turn out to be the four Gonds. The four Gond brothers asked him who are you; Lingo replied I am saint Lingo. They received Lingo at their house as own brother.<sup>366</sup>

**b) Divinity:** folk story of Hislop tells that Lingo was filled with divine power at river as follows: In the morning Lingo rose, and went to the river, took a bath and put on a lion cloth (dhoti). On his forehead he made the holy sign. He asked the bards to call the drummers, and then he folded his hands and said: 'Hail to Pharsi pen. Then Pharsi pen entered Lingo's body and played with him there Lingo was possessed by the divinity.'<sup>367</sup> When Lingo was grown up, one day in the morning he rose up, went to the river, took bath and put on a loin's cloth, asked the drummer to beat drums; there he was possessed by the divine power.

**c) Sin:** If a person among Gonds commits sin he stands in the river water up to his neck, *Bhumka* performs ceremony as follows: The *Bhumka* priest cuts a lemon and leaves it in the water. The ceremony continues with *Sindur* (red powdered rice) and other things. It is a ritual for the purification and forgiveness of sins, after which he can rejoin the community. Gonds also offer dry fruits, salt, *tendu* (a kind of fruit and coconut,)<sup>368</sup>

Therefore the forgiveness of sins is important ceremony for them as one can join back the community with all social and religious rights; however particular person is expected to live an acceptable moral life. Gonds believe that turning away from sin is a new life called *Naya Janam* or New Birth. This is treated as beginning of spiritual life that the sinner after repentance and by dipping into the water the person will live a holy life. This ceremony is done in the river for purification at *penkhala* a place of worship where the ritual of *Naya Janam* new birth takes place as follows: The Chairman of panchat says to the transgressor: you have committed a

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<sup>366</sup> Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, 161-191

<sup>367</sup> *Julission, The Gonds*, 87.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 17-18.

crime, you have to appear before the Penkhala with a goat, a cock and money. Pradhan buries the sinner in the sand at the river bank; his helpers make a hut of dried leaves, put the convict inside and set fire to it. When he comes out with hair and clothes burning they dip him quickly in the river cleansing ceremonies performed in the three elements of earth, fire and water. In all other cases brought before the Penkhala only the purifying with water is essential. The Pradhan pours water on the head of the person, the ceremony in both forms called 'Naya Janam' new birth.<sup>369</sup>

**d) Persecution of Lingo:** According to *Shamrao Hival Lingo is called Pardhan* who had six elder brothers; they did not consider Lingo as their own brother they neither allowed him to eat at home nor to take family name. The story is narrated that Lingo's six elder brothers said; we were born in the house, so we have the family name, but this boy was born outside, so they named him Paradhan - *Par* means other, *Dhan* means the field of rice. These six brothers decided that the brother who is born in rice field shall neither live nor eat with them in their house; they gave him only half of his share.<sup>370</sup> Chatterton version says Lingo joined Gond brothers for their favourite past time game of hunting. The hunt is for an animal 'without a liver' which needless to say, was never found. Lingo with four brothers went for hunting but did not find deer, Lingo climbed on a tree and deer were visible, later on Lingo shot deer but Gonds did not know how to obtain fire by means of flint. Lingo tried to teach them but they could not learn it so finally Lingo said I will discharge an arrow, go to that direction and you will find fire. The arrow dropped close to the fire of an old giant man's door he had seven daughters. The youngest brother went in search of arrow and for stealing fire from the old man, he wanted to catch him to eat his flesh but younger brother escaped and reached back to his brothers told the story. Lingo decided to go, on the way he crossed a river with a bamboo and made guitar of it with his two hairs the old man was attracted by the tune. On his way Lingo had shot sixteen deer. He asked the old man to provide him fire and eat deer flesh as much as possible. The Lingo wanted to return but the daughters said we shall go with you and they accompanied him. The

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<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

<sup>370</sup> *Julisson*, 14-15.

brothers asked him to take one of them the best sister to be his wife but Lingo refused and said they are like my mother, they will serve me and wash my clothes but I cannot marry as I am a holy saint. The Gond brothers went for hunting but Lingo slept in the swing. The seven sisters wanted to seduce him for sex but he continued to sleep. The Gond brothers returned from hunting the wives reported them that Lingo tried to rape them. The Gonds said today we will go to hunt Lingo, they said good Lingo is sitting under a Char tree, the four Gonds shot him with their arrows, took out his eyes, then began to play at marbles with the two eyes, and their game lasted for an hour.<sup>371</sup>

*Precious Blood of Prince:* The different incidents took place in Lingo's life which denotes him a savior of the Gonds community. The prince was ready to pour his blood, he died but God raised him from dead finally he was ascended to heaven. Some of the important events of folk stories are mentioned in different versions as follows:

There is a folk story of a Holy Prince who poured his blood for fabrication of symbols; he died on a Saj tree for the protection of his Holiness. This is similar to Christ who shed his blood on the wooden Cross that is seen as Christ was hung on a tree from ecological theological perspective. The folk story of Holy prince of pouring the blood for symbols is mentioned as follows: There was a king who had four sons. They were powerful and by men power they could take anything from anybody, by force three sons got married but the youngest son could not get any girl and he remained a bachelor. The king thought, 'Let me make some rules and regulations for the bachelors of my kingdom.' The king called a blacksmith, ordered him to make small symbols of iron for the bachelors. The king asked his youngest son to go and bring the symbols. Prince, on the way heard a heavenly voice asking him to offer his blood so that blacksmith would be successful in making symbols. Prince as a Holy bachelor cut his finger offered blood at blacksmith's fabrication work that enabled him to make symbols. The youngest prince came back and saw his eldest brother's wife cooking curry in a clay pot stirring it with a spoon; over boiling, curry was not control and she blew over it. Thus Holy prince refused to eat spitted curry, as a holy person. He left the house and sat in the hole of *Saj* tree,

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<sup>371</sup> Chatterton, *Story of Gonds*, 161- 193.

where he died. Therefore *Saj* trees and its leaves are valuable for Gonds, they put the leaves on the mouths of deads so that unholy things may not enter into the mouth. Also, when Gonds go for harvesting grains, rice and pulses they fix branches of *Saj* leaf in the field; *Saj* branch is a sign of happiness, holiness and good luck, so it is also kept close to marriage ceremony place<sup>372</sup>.

**e) Spirituality:** according to Chenevix Trench episode the Gond brothers went away on business, left their wives with Raj Linga and they blamed innocent Lingo as follows: The women became jealous because Raj Linga was talking and joking with the village girls only, and not with them. They agreed to sleep together with Raj Linga on night each. The first night the eldest wife forced Raj Linga to lie with her, but Raj Linga fell asleep and slept the whole night but he did not say a filthy word and did not touch any of them with a finger. The sisters got hold of a cat and tried to keep it. But the cat got angry and started scratching, so the women became swollen, got fever and had to go to bed. The brothers returned from their business and no body came to meet them. The women blamed their younger brother. The brothers took Raj Linga from the village girls and burnt him in the grain bin on a large fire in the courtyard. The brothers decided to perform the funeral rites. Then they went to fetch the grain bin. But Raj Linga talked to them from the bin: "What are you looking for, brothers? Had I sinned I would have burnt. I did not commit any sin. The brothers repented and said: "Had he sinned he would have burnt. The culprits are the women." The six brothers took Raj Linga home, put him on a mat, smeared his body with oil and haldi and washed him, gave him new clothes and embraced him. They gave him good food and he ate. The six brothers said: We cannot any longer keep these women. They pulled them round the village and beat them. Raj Linga said: Brothers, it was not right to kill the women for my sake. All seven lived afterwards without women; brother went for hunting got seven male sambhars. On the way met an old couple with seven daughters. The brothers took a round about way to their own houses and there the wedding was arranged in the house of the bridegrooms, as prescribed by the custom. They wanted to marry the seventh sister to Raj Linga. He

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<sup>372</sup> Ratan, Interview dated: 29/06/ 2014.

answered: Let her go where she is called. I am a holy man. I cannot stay here. So the six brothers became rajas in Singardip.<sup>373</sup>

**f) Restoration of Lingo's life:** Lingo the beloved of gods was dead but they knew not where his body is. In the courts of god no one could say anything about Lingo. The God became angry, arose, and with a portful of water washed his hands and feet, and from the substance of his body created a crow made it alive asked him to go in search of Lingo. The crow found him lying smashed and without eyes in the forest of Kachikopa, informed the God what he saw. The God became silent and said Lingo was born from a flower of the tree, God took the nectar and said to crow sprinkle it on the liver, belly, and head of the body. The crow reached and dropped nectar and Lingo's flesh became warm. The Lingo said I was fast asleep but crow replied him you were dead, your body was lying here; we came and restored you to life. Lingo saluted and asked where my Gonds are? Then he came to know that the Gonds are imprisoned close to a River, on the Dhawalagiri Mountain. Lingo then underwent a severe penance for twelve months. Then Mahadeva asked him do not make any mention of Gonds, but for any kingdom, or for any amount of money which you can enjoy. Mahadeva replied him Gonds are below the earth take them away but bring me the offerings of young ones of black bird Bindo, the magical bird lived by the sea shore. Lingo had to struggle a lot with a sea – serpent, called Bhour nag like a trunk of thick tree, Lingo shot the serpent and cut into seven pieces. However, Lingo brought young ones of Bindo bird, and then Mahadeva released the Gonds. Lingo reached to the cave, he lifted up the stone sixteen cubits, and laid it aside, and Gonds went to the bank of river and prepared their food. They crossed the river by mounting on tortoise therefore Gonds do not it as their totem. The gonds came to Lingo, and sat close to each other in rows and then talked with them regarding formation of Gond society.<sup>374</sup>

*Lingo the liberator of Gonds:* according to Hislop version Gonds after liberation on their way from Dhawalgiri under the guidance of Lingo encountered in a stream the Crocodile and a female turtle. The Crocodile led the Gonds for crossing of the river. Lingo sat alone on the turtle's back. The Crocodile swam first, and diving into the river

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<sup>373</sup> Julission, *The Gonds*, 92-97.

<sup>374</sup> Chatterton, *Story of Gonds*, 194-207.

and thus making the Gonds sink. The turtle exhorted Lingo to give the Gonds helping hand to reach the turtle's back. All were saved and reached the other side of river safely. Therefore; Trutle is a common name of clans among Gonds.<sup>375</sup>

*The Lingo taught Gonds the worship:* The image of Pharsa Pen was made of iron which is still worshipped by Gonds; the other images are made of stick or bamboo. In the morning Lingo arose and went to a river, bathed and wore a dhoti, applied the tika on his forehead, called two drummers, devoted to God, moved and jumped. Lingo then spoke the offerings are good in courts of god. Lingo made a place of worship called *Penkhalla*; this holy place is established close to *Saj Sal* tree. The holy places and way of worship were set as follows: At the command of Pharsi pen some places dedicated to the gods in the caves between the twelve mountains for example at Pachmari in Madhya Pradesh. These Penkhallas are made in forest and mountains and at different villages for the clans close to Sal tree.<sup>376</sup> In this regard researcher has observed that the people of Dori village never go to any high places or Pachmari for worship. *Sacrifices:* Lingo gave a detailed account of performing sacrifices in honor of God, how to offer Him sacrifices mentioned as follows: A five years old goat was brought its feet were washed; vermillion was put on his forehead and daru in the ears and made it to swing, divine power entered the body of the goat, shook it havily, moved its head and shook it ears so the whole body shivered. Two to four persons ran ahead, took the goat and threw it in front of the god. They opened the body and sprinkled forth the blood. They put the head before god, lifted the body and put aside. Then they took the one year old cock and slaughtered it. They played the sitar and beat drums. As per Lingo's instructions on the bronze plate they put boiled rice, liver and meat lighted two lamps and put the whole in front of the god. Thus they made their offering. Some laid rupees before the god as a gift. The heap of rupees was soon knee- high.<sup>377</sup> There is a folk story how human sacrifice-changed into goat sacrifice, is mentioned as follows: The Gonds caught a boy, brought him to the sacrificial place; slaughtered him. The head of the boy was laid in a lidded basket. The sodiers came in search of the Gonds; they hid behind different trees, took the names of

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<sup>375</sup> Julission, *The Gonds*, 86

<sup>376</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 87-88.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid*, *The Gonds*, 88.

the each tree behind which they hid. Soldiers lifted the lid from the basket but did not find the head of boy. Instead; they found the head of a goat in the basket.<sup>378</sup>

*Sacrificial Meal:* ceremony is also mentioned among Gonds to offer for the forgiveness of sins: The Sacrifice of a virgin calf is made for sin at Kuddupen (the place of sacrifice), generally done outside the village. The sacrificial animal is cooked, eaten and immediately the left over is buried so that the holy sacrifice is not dishonored.<sup>379</sup>

*Lingo's Ascension: after appointing of Head and Founding Gond society:* according to Research Institute Affairs in Chhindwara, the Pradhan are not accounted to as belonging to main groups of Gonds due to administrative reasons, Gonds spread everywhere, from place to place, mountain to mountain, valley to valley, and tree to tree. However for administrative purpose a *Pardhan* old man was made responsible to see religious duties are fulfilled or not, the word *Pardhan* comes from the word *Para* means others, and *dhan* means rice, complete meaning of *Pardhan* is as follows: The word *Pardhan* means a minister, sometimes the Prime Minister. A *Pardhan* can drive the word from *para* means others and *dhan* means rice, *pardhan* thus said to mean 'One who eats other people's rice' referring to the fact that *Pradhans* are the musicians, and also medicants of the Gonds. Lingo selected an old white haired man to become *Pardhan*, gave him land, wealth and clothes.<sup>380</sup> *Pardhan* is a leader, who looks after accomplishment of religious duties in the village, and he depends on receiving rice from others. According to Chatterton's folk story Lingo saw Hoary - haired old man and made him their *Pradhan*, all gave him different gifts. Then *Lingo divided the Gond tribes* into families of seven, six, five, and four therefore people worship seven, six, five and four gods. These sects influence their marriage seven god worshippers have to select a partner from one of the other classes. Lingo having accomplished his task with their totem then departed back to his gods<sup>381</sup> Hislop version says all the Gonds gathered around Lingo, who talked to them: 'Look here, Gonds, you do not know whom you shall call brother, father, and how to name your relatives. Lingo selected four groups. These were

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<sup>378</sup> *Ibid*, *The Gonds*, 126-127.

<sup>379</sup> Himmat, interview dated 29-06-2014.

<sup>380</sup> *Julisson*, 35, 88.

<sup>381</sup> Chatterton, *Story of Gonds*, 194-222.

given different names. Lingo gave authority to the wedding rites, which were entrusted to Pardhann then Lingo returned back to his gods.<sup>382</sup> Julisson narrated the folk story in his book *The Gonds*, and their religion that great God asked the question where Lingo was, he asked to bring a pot of water. He washed his own hands and feet, and from the dirt of his body he made a crow and sprinkled nectar it. The crow was ordered to search for Lingo in the jungle, in gorges and the mountains. Lingo was in terrible condition of death. The crow returned to the upper world. Kurtao Subal followed the crow with more nectar by which Lingo was restored to life. Lingo made seven persons to go one side. Six persons were sent other side. Five were to form a five family lineage. The four who were left to form a four family lineage, likewise formed the families then Lingo said: Look at me when I go to my gods; Lingo hid himself and went quickly to his gods, while all the Gonds cried aloud and shouted.<sup>383</sup>

**g) Pneumatology:** A triangle Flag was observed by researcher on the top of the tree in the agricultural field of Ratan Singh Parte under which was made a simple small platform for breaking the coconut; Ratan expressed his faith in invisible power of God as follow: The flag and worship place has nothing to do with idol worship but it is a place for offering prayers, said Ratan that he does prayer to God like this ‘Oh omnipotent Bhainsasur, whoever you are!’ protect my field. According to him Gonds do offer prayers to the spirits of forefathers so that God may protect their fields. Ratan Singh Parte shared experience of his own field that once field was affected by pests which were harmful to the plants. He bought pesticide for Rs.300/- from a seller who came to Dori village. It was a replica chemical by which pests were not killed. Ratan was upset but paid reverence to god Bhisasur by breaking a coconut. Praying to God whoever you are, if my field is protected, I shall honour you with more offerings. He saw the result after three days that no pests were found and he got a plentiful harvesting in that year from his field.<sup>384</sup> Ratan explained the

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<sup>382</sup> Julisson, *The Gonds*, 86.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86, 88-89.

<sup>384</sup> Ratan, Interview dated, 29/06/ 2014.



triangle flag can be related to Triune God of Christianity who protects the field in the form of Holy Spirit.<sup>385</sup>

Ratan Singh's worship place of breaking coconut for *Bhaisasur* has no image of idol worship. One can find only small rough stones and bricks kept just in a square close to the ground for breaking the coconut under a tree. Therefore, it is obvious that Gonds are not idol worshippers but they offer cock, coconut or liquor to invisible God, at *Penkhala*, *Bhumka* priest performs rituals for the forgiveness of sins, protection of field, village and the people, Gonds honor forefather's spirits for a good crop. They render them different kinds of offerings of grains or sacrificing a cock, but Gonds are not idol worshippers. They believe that the spirit of forefathers continues to live among them and if they pray to spirits it will protect and bless them. If asked what is life after death? For this Gonds do not have a clearcut understanding however when this question was asked to Ratan Singh Parte of Dori village; what you think of eternal life after death, he replied, if there is life after death it will be known only after death,<sup>386</sup> however gonds believe that spirit does exist in other world. They also trust that forefather's spirits punish or guard their communities. The Gond farmers honor forefather's spirits and pray for good crops. As Japanese and Chinese honor ancestor spirits but they are not idol worshippers, like wise Gonds honour spirits; render them different kinds of offerings of grains or sacrificing a cock, but Gonds are not idol worshippers. They believe and respect the spirit of forefathers continues to live and respond to their prayers for protection and blessings.

**h) Eschatology:** Gonds do believe in the present world but do not believe in cycle of rebirth.<sup>387</sup> So it is obvious that Gonds do not believe in cycle of rebirth on this earth. It means they also do not go with the understanding that one has to pass through the body of animals, birds or human body in order to get heaven. According to Ratan Singh Parte; only the future will tell us what it means? However, Gonds do not believe in another physical life on earth: If a question is asked what is life after

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<sup>385</sup> Ratan, Interview dated, 29/06/ 2014.

<sup>386</sup> Ratan, Interview, dated 29/06/ 2014.

<sup>387</sup> <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Germany-to-Jamaica/Gonds.html>, accessed on 10/05/2014.

death? For this Gonds do not have a clearcut answers however when this question was asked to Ratan Singh Parte of Dori village; what you and Gonds think of eternal life after death, he stated as follows: There is no heaven and hell. This is only to make fools of others as nobody knows what will happen after death. Even the scientists today cannot search for such a place as heaven or hell, therefore there is only one life, and the duty of every one is to do good to others, Gonds believe in the worship of forefather's, Spirits for protection from evil spirits. If there is a life after death it will be known only after death.<sup>388</sup> But they believe that spirits do exist in other world. They also trust that forefather's spirits punish or guard the Gond communities.

## 7. Ecclesia:

**7.1.Introduction:**The Evangelical National Missionary Society, Stockholm, Sweden had sent four missionaries to Madhya Pradesh India, they reached to Chhindwara district on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1877, out of these missionaries A.G Danielson served in India for 48 years till his death. They opted to run mission centres in Sagar, Narsinghpur, Chhindwara and Betul districts. The boarding houses were built during famine in 1896-97, to accommodate two hundred children in Sagar, and 300 in Chhindwara.<sup>389</sup> A seminary was established at Chhindwara. The mission was called 'Gondi Mission'.<sup>390</sup> Later on 'Swedish Mission' and today it is called 'Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh' in which 40% members are from Gond tribe.<sup>391</sup>

**7.2. Ekklesia in Context:** The Swedish Gondi Mission's constitution was accepted on 09/02/ 1923, in which a Gond Hirdaya Singh was a member from Shahapur congregation.<sup>392</sup> It was the first Synod held on 13/02/ 1923 at Chhindwara. It resolved that every member either foreigner or Indian, must contribute one month salary to the synod, in a time limit to 20 months, towards *self reliant* work of the

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<sup>388</sup> Ratan, Interview, dated 29/06/ 2014.

<sup>389</sup> Raman, *Short History*, 1-3.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>391</sup> Choudhary, Interview dated 01- 07-2014.

<sup>392</sup> Raman, *Short History*, 16-19.

Church work.<sup>393</sup> The Swedish missionaries took another decision that evil practice of *untouchability* will not be accepted in the Church. This was resolved in 1933 by Synod of the Swedish Lutheran Church:

*We Christians do not believe in untouchability and will not follow this practice in the Church, we will not become an hindrance for accepting anyone in the Church due to the fear of defamation or persecution.*<sup>394</sup>

It was a right decision of the Church, therefore until today equality prevails without caste and color discrimination in Lutheran Church of Madhya Pradesh.

**7.3. Morality:** The Pastors were asked to create spiritual awareness among the congregation members and do not watch even cinema as it spoils the Christian life, therefore, it was stated in the minutes of the Church that *Watching Cinema is Idol Worship*.<sup>395</sup> Thus, Spiritual revival meetings and conventions were started in different districts,<sup>396</sup> the missionaries tried to maintain spirituality and morality in their context through Church activities. The punishment for adultery was ex-communication from the church; the convict had to stand in the last row during Church service or to pay some fine and to apologize in the Church for a certain sin.

**7.4. Theology of Work:** The Swedish mission started various institutions in different places. The Padhar hospital was initially started at Chicholi where a Gond Premchand s/o of Hirdya Singh from Dori village worked as a male nurse. Later on hospital and schools were started at Khurai, Sagar, Chhindwara, Betul, Padhar, Junnordeo, Baikunthpur, and Shahdol. A *Nursery Home* was established at Junnordeo for illegal babies.<sup>397</sup> Women were trained to make rugs and to sew. The men were trained for carpet weaving, blacksmith and industrial training at Sagar. A land was purchased for agricultural training and advanced farming, the poultry, agriculture and animal husbandry work was started at Seja village in 300 acres of land, it was looked after missionary Nelsson and others of Chhindwara district.<sup>398</sup> A

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<sup>393</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>394</sup> Raman, *Short History*, 43.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid*, 21-22.

<sup>397</sup> <http://www.elcinmp.com/history.php>, accessed on 14/04/ 2014.

<sup>398</sup> Raman, *Short History*, 6, 13.

missionary Otto Andersson with his wife in Sagar district looked after agricultural development for 34 years at Bagthari village.<sup>399</sup> Miss. W. Wigert had opened Shahapur orphanage. She also carried out brass work at Shahapur in Betul district.<sup>400</sup> Hostel buildings were constructed for students of Higher Education in three districts of Chhindwara, Sagar and Betul. The *Blind Boarding School* is still runs at Padhar village in Betul district. Also; *Water Development Project* was established by Clement F. Moss at Betul; it had an automatic drilling machine from Chicago.<sup>401</sup> Missionary, Rinmen was awarded *Kesrai Hind* for social services he came to India in 1897; and worked at Chhindwara.<sup>402</sup>

**7.5. Language:** Gondi belongs to family of Dravidian group of South Indian languages of the States of Tamil and Telegu. The Gondi language is n differently in various contexts due to influence of local dialect where ever Gonds settled down. Chenevix Trench and Clement F. Moss had a keen interest and love for Gondi language therefore they had published its grammer. Later on in 21<sup>st</sup> century a Gond Pastor Chandra Prabhakar Singh wrote Gondi grammer and its vocabulary, Gondi Songs and liturgy which were published by the Padhar Evangelical Lutheran Church on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1997, republished by Singh in 2015. Chenevix Trench had made a remarkable staement regarding Gondi language spoken among gonds that: Hindi is a language of the Sanskrit group, and is therefore a completely foreign language to Gond...and they mispronounce it as bad as the average Englishman.<sup>403</sup> Gondi language is spoken in Orrissa, North-Eastern Chennai, Nizam's territories, Berar and the neighbouring parts of Central India. This Gondi language has a number of dialects and Gondi is still spoken by most, if not all.

**7.6. Bible:** Until the arrival of E. Chatterton in 1860, the work among Gonds was full vigour in Mandla district, towards end of Chatterton's period H.D. Williamson had prepared Hindi grammar and vocabulary. He translated the New Testament and

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<sup>399</sup>*Ibid*, 41.

<sup>400</sup>*Ibid*, 6-7, 9-10.

<sup>401</sup><http://www.elcinmp.com/history.php>, accessed on 14/04/ 2014.

<sup>402</sup>Raman, *Short History*, 66.

<sup>403</sup>Raman, *Short History*, 13.

numerous Bible stories into Gondi language in Mandla district.<sup>404</sup> The two Gospels were translated in Gondi language. *Mark* was translated in 1873 in Gondi of Chhindwara district,<sup>405</sup> and *St. John* was translated in 1948 in Gondi language of Betul.<sup>406</sup> Thereafter Matthew was translated in 1968 by Swedish missionaries with the help of Gonds. A film Jesus was dubbed in Gondi by Chandra Prabhakar Singh his wife Sheetal and team. Singh also translated into Gondi language five book series of *Mashi Sahitya Sanstha* in 70's at Bible Society Bangalore. Chandra Prabhakar Singh has made a great contribution for Gondi Bible, after the missionaries three gospels the rest of the New Testament was translated by Singh in ten year, that was edited by a committee of missionaries further Singh translated books of Proverbs and Psalms these all printed with the New Testament twice by the Bible Society of India. Now Singh has translated whole Old Testament, therefore the complete Bible will soon be printed.<sup>407</sup>

**7.7. Indigenous Songs:** Most of the liturgical songs are translated either from English or Swedish hymns into Hindi. However, some of the indigenous songs are added to the hymn book of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh like Bhajan, Vandana, Doha, and Choupai. The songs express life of Jesus and his parables in simple and meaningful words, as well as music, skits and drama are played for conveying the gospel message that can easily be understood by ordinary village people in their own *Kirtan* singing style of worship songs. However, apart from Church songs individuals did contribute for application of Gospel in their own singing styles.

**7.7.1. Chandra Prabhakar Singh (87):** a retired tribal Gond Pastor of evangelical Lutheran Church from Dori village lives in Padhar, Betul, Madhya Pradesh.<sup>408</sup> He had borrowed a copy of *Kalyug Katha* which was printed in 1904. It was banned by religious gurus as it contained critical thoughts against Hinduism. Singh's strategy

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<sup>404</sup> Chatterton, *The Story of Gondwana*, 144.

<sup>405</sup> Raman, *Short History*, 13.

<sup>406</sup> [http://books.google.co.in/books/about/The\\_Gospel\\_according\\_to\\_St\\_John\\_in\\_Gondi.html?id=bPG8GwAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.co.in/books/about/The_Gospel_according_to_St_John_in_Gondi.html?id=bPG8GwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y). accessed on 20/04/2014)

<sup>407</sup> Chandra Prabhakar Singh, Interview dated 03<sup>rd</sup> November 2015.

<sup>408</sup> Chandra Prabhakar Singh, *An Autobiography of a Pastor in Tribal perspective*, Allahabad, 2011, 15-16.

of presenting the gospel is like an Indian Hindu priest who sings Sanskrit *slokas* with interpretations, a few are mentioned here to examine the method of contextualization of the Gospel and how these songs are relevant in Indian Gondwana villages: *False Teachers*: Sages put ashes on body; beg through out the day finally reach to wrong places. They dip into the water of Ganges, Gomati and Narmada; call others to bring sweets, milk and butter for the forgiveness of the sins of their forefathers. *False Witness*: Village council (Panchyat) does not show fear to the Lord, accepts false witnesses just for the sake of feast *Puri sabji*, such people will go to hell. *Corruption*: Shop keeper weighs less; does not fear Lord, runs his business in lying; gold smith and others use corrupt weighs, false currency and by all these evil practices they become rich. *Offerings*: Brahmins call sweepers as untouchables but openly ask them to bring offerings. Touch untouchable's money without hesitation, go house to house ten times to eat; asking for the gift of a cow.

Chandra Prabhakar Singh preaches the Gospel by singing, narrating stories from the Bible in Gondi language with Indian musical instruments. He says Gonds understand neighbour's religion more than Christianity but do not follow blindly idol worship. They watch neighbouring priests demand money in the name of religion; they are corrupt, take high interest on loan, looting the people. Gonds appreciate singh's style of Gospel preaching. Singh has been a successful Pastor and Evangelist of Lutheran Church in the surrounding villages of Betul, most of the people know him personally.

7.7.2. *Ratan Singh Parte (81)* is from Dori village, he was converted to Christianity. He alone was a trained teacher from Dori village worked in government schools but he was never posted in his own village Dori. He was converted to Christianity at Padhar during a conversation he started to sing passages from the Bible from the bibles such as; Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), but the chorus was same: '*where ever we go into the world, we will speak the word of God*'. and sing His attributes Ratan sang as follows: '*Remain salty; be light of the world you will continue to twinkle; You light will continue to shine on earth and in heaven*'.

Ratan Singh Parte said; the Gospel must not be applied with duplicacy. It is to be preached as it is. Any duplicate thing does not survive for a longer time. The

word of God is eternal therefore it must have its own existence in and through the life of the people. The people must practice Faith into Action. Ratan said if you include the name of other deities with the name of Holy God it is completely wrong. As Exodus 23:10 says: “Make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.” Otherwise the Bible becomes impure, that will not have impact on the people because duplicacy has no acceptance in the long run. Therefore, the originality of Gospel Truth in singing and preaching must be maintained. Ratan said if religion is syncretized it becomes a dustbin of waste material.<sup>409</sup> However, Christians live in pluralistic society and cannot neglect people of other faiths. They need to follow the method of St. Paul as he applied in his Contextual Research went to Athens, to a city which was full of idols. He visited Jews and Gentiles, examined the objects of worship found alter with an inscription “To the Unknown God” (Acts 17:23), but Paul did not condemn the local gods; gave his key note address on the hill of the god Aries. It became his masterpiece Contextual Research. It was a pluralistic strategic methodological approach.<sup>410</sup> Same strategy was adopted by Sam Higginbottom in his missionary services as an agriculturalist. He did not condemn the local methods of Agriculture. Rather, he added modern agricultural techniques to local methods of cultivation.

St. Paul and Higginbottom applied a methodology for the application of gospel according to their own context. Therefore, Church in Gondwana is expected not to be confined into the four walls of the mission compound. Rather it must have the broader perspective of Contextual Research that is to re-historicize the Gondi Swedish Mission, to de-mythologize the Gondwana culture and to re-theologize methodological approaches for the application of the Gospel among Gonds. The early traditional Christian approach of winning the souls alone cannot bring transformation in the society. The conversion changes faith but partial transformation is not a Biblical idea. It should lead to complete transformation of a person. The best Gospel method is to fulfill the need of Gonds through certain projects, putting Faith of Christian Gospel into Action which may bring a

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<sup>409</sup> Ratan, Interview, dated 03/07/ 2014.

<sup>410</sup> Victor Choudhari, *The Church in your House*, n.d, e-mail: greettheeklesia@gmail.com, 228.

transformation in the society. Otherwise living for me, family and my Church to grow in number alone; remains an impure, duplicate Gospel. Therefore, Faith and Action must move together in practice of 'Gospel and Plough'. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh is working among Gonds for over a century since 1877 with all possible strength, finances and strategies appointing several evangelists trained from Bible School. The Church sent evangelists for *Dhawa Saptha* attacking week that was the method to contextualize the Gospel, the method was to stay in a tent in village, cooking food, going to the surrounding villages for gospel preaching. But very few accepted Christianity therefore for the results Church still needs to re-examine its strategy of relevant 'Gospel and Plow' for re-contextualization of the Gospel in context of Gondwanathat bears rich history, potentiality of local cup, concepts, festival and folk stories for application of Gospel and plough for transformation of Gonds in context of Madhya Pradesh. The anthropological model may look for a hidden Christ in the culture but Gospel and Plough may look for the wholistic welfare of the entire community in the context.



## CONCLUSION

Asian contextual theologies emphasized on social, political and economical issues of oppressed, exploited people who are deprived from necessary basic needs and even from human rights. The Asian theology takes initiative for liberation of such oppressed people from their pathos and sufferings. Therefore; theologian like Charles Avilain of Philippines raised his voice for oppressed peasants and for liberation. He said that the church must carry on liberation of farmers captured land, support justice to the humanity and reject idolatry of property. No one is owner of land but stewards of God who has given natural resources.

Another theologian Kazoh Kitamori's in his book *Theology of the pain of God* talks about the defeat in war and surrender of Japan in 1945 gave rise to the old system constituted by imperialism, nationalism, and the divinity to worship emperor in Shinto beliefs. Japanese theology has acquired a historical consciousness of the need for an 'exodus' from 'Germanic Captivity'. The theology of pain of God, according to him, does not regard that pain is existing in God as substance. But it underlines 'the mediatory and intercessory love of God' in relating to humanity. *Kitamori rejects the ontological divine being that does not suffer pain*. Human pain and divine pain are analogically understood, as they share something in common and in pain, it is a mystic unity of the divine and human.<sup>411</sup> The Korean *Minjung* oppressed crowd initiated a *labour movement* when thousands of young workers were in miserable conditions of late working hours and low wages. *Minjung* theologian Suh Nam Dong insisted on reinterpretation of the Bible in the context of the *common people's struggle* to survive and fight for liberation of all kind such as political, social and economic justice. *Minjung* theologians *emphasized* about the critical conditions of farmers and their liberation. There in Thailand, *Kosuke Koyama* articulated a 'rice- root' *theology 'from below'*. He talked about buffaloes rolling in the mud that requires better green postures, leakage in roof requires repair. It reminded him of village environment that *how to preach the Gospel to the farmers in simple sentences*, this is how he started his contextual theology. The theologians

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<sup>411</sup> Kitamori, Kazoh, *Theology of the Pain of God*, Virginia: John Knox Press 1965, 45.

have applied different methods for contextualization of the gospel as per need of the context. C.S. Song a Taiwanese thinker he wrote on China. He developed his 'story theology' to make sense of experiences of men, women and children which are embodied in narrative form.<sup>412</sup> Song wrote a book *Tell Us Our Names*. He raises a serious question why should local name be changed at baptism as local name has a meaning but biblical or English name has no meaning in the context. Song 'wrote a folk story named *Mirror*' that reflects various images of God as social, political and cultural conditions of China.<sup>413</sup> Song in his Folk Story of *Tears of Lady Meng*: talks about a wicked king Ch'in Shih Huang-ti- who sacrificed Meng's husband Wan and buried him in the wall. Meng' jumped into the river. The king ordered his soldiers to cut up her body into little pieces. When they did it little pieces changed into little silver fish. This reminds to the story of Hebrews laboured and toiled and liberation from slavery. Song identifies it with politics of Jesus as truth politics and his ethics of love. People are as powerless as lady Meng but to remember that powerless can transform to powerful through the power of tears.<sup>414</sup>

A variety of contextual theologies emerged in twentieth century such as tribal and dalit and feminist theology derived from the reinterpretation of the gospel through the experience of suffering of indigenous people of India. Tribal Theology emphasized for doing justice to the land. The land is most important for tribal as it sustains, nourishes and gives them identity. The search for liberation without land is not possible rather it leads to slavery. The land is essential because tribals have earth centered traditions for example the Gonds people call themselves as people of the earth.

The Gondwana contextual theology is an evolving theology emerging from *Adivasi* Gonds of Madhya Pradesh. They speak Gondi and live fairly enough in isolation from the caste dominant system of Indian history. Gondi folk stories contain valuable characteristics of Lingo, a liberator of Gond community, who was born by the power of God. He is the founder of Gond society. The Gonds in olden

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<sup>412</sup> C. S. Song, *Tell Us Our Names*, Indore: Sat prakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1985, 3-26.

<sup>413</sup> C. S. Song, *Tell Us*, ix-x.

<sup>414</sup> Stephen T. Chan, *Narrative, Story and Storytelling: A Study of C.S. Song's Theology of Story*, Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 12, No.1, April 1998, 36-38.

days were wandering but later on settled for agricultural work but still their financial and social conditions is poor. The Gondwana theology envisages at this juncture for the transformation of gond farmers and labourers, as farmers require better agricultural technologies that is capable to feed the hungry and serve the nation for bringing up the transformation in the life of Indians. Therefore, it is equally applicable to the context of gondwana so that gonds may come out from the lack of basic needs to better economic and social conditions through modern technologies. The Gonds believe that power of God is present in productivity of the land thus they never make an image of earth. The agricultural development, education and development plans of government and non governmental organizations would bring certain changes in their community life because Gonds strongly believe in power of supreme God who moves his divine stick according to His desire for the continuity of the earth. The Gonds are proud to be called as *Koitur* that they are born out of earth and they love to serve the earth as farmers. Gonds believe in serving the mother land as it gives them everything. Gonds pronounce a word '*Sewa*' in greeting each other that if a Gond serves the earth, he serves to his fellow Gond and together they serve almighty supreme God, and it is a real service to God. The development activities of Gondwana cup is to be served with a taste and flavor of local context with the purity of the Gospel into its own flavor. The Gond's life is significant to be born from soil, live for soil and die in soil for glorification to God; and transformation of Gond's community is possible through the soil's productivity and other related activities valuable in context of Gondwana.

The Christian theology does not end with baptism rather it looks for wholistic transformation of the person and it teaches how the people can earn their own living, not only to eat but decently clothed and educating children, training them as blacksmith, carpenter, or shoe – maker or farmers for their day to day living and earning. Therefore the aim of contextual theology is to equip and train every human being for the fullness of life. The meaning of Gospel has to be understood clearly that medical missions are the Gospel. Cleansing the lepers is the Gospel, as much as preaching is the Gospel. For example; at Cana wedding Jesus turned water into wine. He actually gave colour to that which had no colour, taste to the tasteless, sweetness to that lacking sweetness. Jesus comes to the colourless lives, brings

great changes into the lives of the people, gives a 'new birth' to bring a new creation on earth and it is not less than any other Christian ministry. The main object of the Gospel is to save mankind and help a person who through gospel and plough or any other activity appropriate in the context. According to Bible God alone is the giver of all good things; soil, life in the seed, the temperature, rain, sunshine, preparing ground, growing of seed, harvesting and storing for man's every day need. This is why man subdues the earth with its fire, chemical, physical, biological, economical and spiritual ventures. And we are co-workers together with God to subdue the earth. The Church is most important factor in the world today to bring in the Kingdom of God on earth for which Jesus Christ said 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set them at liberty who are in need.' Is this; was Jesus ideal standard for His work, can ours be less? If Christians are not doing it, the Christianity has certainly lost its saltiness. Therefore gospel must serve the people without any discrimination of caste, color, gender and religion. Most of the Asian theologies have looked at religious theological interpretations in the past but now it has diverted towards welfare of the people in wholistic sense. It is appropriate, valuable and relevant to carry on gospel of love for Tribal Gondwana context of Betul in Madhya Pradesh and to a larger scale of Indian society for the transformation of the people, for God's glory.

### **Evaluation, Critique and Analysis**

It is an effort to do the Evaluation, Critique and Analysis *from a Christian Perspective*: The Chapter on Gonds speaks of folk stories which are mostly conveyed orally from one generation to the next, rare books are written by the scholars that might be used for biblical, theological and Christological interpretations. The folk stories express Gonds life and their beliefs, specifically of Lingo or Linga who is considered by Gonds as their savior and founder of the Gond's community. The Lingo can be seen from biblical perspective as follows:

*a)Lingo was born in the paddy field* however Jesus was born in a manger in a cattle's cave at Bethlehem. It is obvious that the ministry of Jesus Christ was not limited to a particular context but extended outside of his home that is why he roamed in the villages, towns and among the people. Lingo's roamed in different places, Gonds brothers took him for hunting, Lingo was rejected, persecuted by his Gond brothers and they threw him into the fire but he was not burnt. It is similar to the story of Daniel who was thrown into the fire with his friends but they were alive even in the fire (Daniel 3:19-25). So also Lingo was alive in the fire, it is very close to Christian sufferings quoted in the Bible and happened in the past history of Christianity that people were burnt and even in present context Graham and his two sons were burnt in a motor car but the growth of Christianity is never stopped.

*b)Raj Lina was born in king's family* and became liberator of Gonds, Mosess was adopted in king's family but became the liberator of Israelites but Jesus took birth in a poor family. However in this folk story Talko mother of Lingo declared that he was born by God's power, This is very close to the Biblical declaration regarding birth of Jesus as there heavenly voice was heard: "Joseph son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife for which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). The birth of Lingo happens at bathing place that is significant as the holiness is defined with symbol of water that is descended upon Moses, Naman the leper, Christ and Lingo in the river water.

*c)Animals talk in human language* is similar to Biblical Genesis account of creation where animals and human beings communicate to each other. For example Satan was in the form of serpent talking to Eve in the Garden of Eden. In the Gond folk story Crocodile talked to Lingo for the liberation of Gonds.

*d)Lingo played role of a liberator like Moses* as mentioned in the book of Exodus who led Israelites through the ocean. Similarly Lingo sat alone on the turtle's back in the river but Gonds sank. Then turtle exhorted Lingo to give the Gonds helping hand to reach the turtle's back. All were saved and reached safely the other side of river bank. The folk story is similar to Israelites who were in captivity of Egypt; God delivered them through crossing the Red Sea. Similarly, Lingo liberated gonds from the

captivity and they also crossed the river but Israelites crossed on dry land but Lingo and Gonds sailed on Crocodile.

*e)Lingo faced temptations* though Lingo faced temptations but he over came all and did not commit any sin. As a human being he was tempted but as a divine he over came all. The women tempted him but he did not touch them even with a finger. Lingo got offer to marry but he preferred to remain bachelor as a holy man, it is similar to Jesus Christ who remained bachelor through out of his life. The Lingo served as a holy minister to the people is close to Christological understanding to maintain holiness in the ministry to serve as a mediator in between God and His people. The Biblical idea focuses that “For even the son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45), also Lingo served and liberated his people but his own brothers killed him.

*f)Ritual of purification in river water* seems to be closer to Christian understanding of baptism as Jesus himself took baptism at Jordan river and was filled by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:9-10). The Gonds come to the river for a ritual of forgiveness of sins and expected to live a holy life in future is similar to the call of John the Baptist for the forgiveness of sins. The Gonds ritual is of fire that is lit with a small tent of wooden sticks over the head but soon quenched with the water when fire reaches to hair.

*g)Holy Mark on Forehead:* at river; Lingo on his forehead made the holy sign, similarly Jews used to keep the great commandments: “you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (Deutonomy 6:8). It means before performing his activities Lingo worshipped God and he was annointed by God’s divine power. This is similar to Baptism of Christ in Jordan River when “Jesus had been baptized, heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him” (Luke 3: 21-22). The Gonds have a similar concept of baptism, filling up with the power of God, for which Gonds practice certain rituals for forgiveness of sins at river that is close to Biblical teachings of Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. It is appropriate to interpret baptismal ceremony among the Gonds from Christian perspective for the forgiveness of sins. According to Chandra Prabhakar Singh generally the Pardhan pours water on the

head of the person. According to Bible the people came to John the baptist “Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River” (Mathew 3:6). However, the Church never acknowledged the rich potential of water Baptism and ritual that existed among the Gond community. Regarding baptisma researcher asked a question to Ratan Singh Parte, a converted Christian from Gond tribe, “What is Baptism for you as a Gond?” to which he replied as follows: Baptism is the way, truth and life in Jesus Christ who said to His disciple that without me no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, Baptism is the ‘blessing’ of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for entering into new life because there is no other Guru or god who is resurrected from the dead, Jesus is a source for eternal life without him no one can enter into the kingdom of God.<sup>415</sup> This pouring of water on Gonds head is similar to the great commissions of Jesus Christ a mandate to his disciples that: “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthews 28: 19). This is called Naya Janam, New Birth similarly mentioned in the Bible to Nicodemus that “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). *Repentance for sin* is a ceremony among Gonds and after this ritual they are expected to remain holy. Similarly, Baptism of John the Baptist was proclaimed for the Kingdom of God “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near, Confessing their sins, they were Baptized by him in the Jordan River” (Mathew 3:2,6). Therefore Gond’s rituals carry on the concept of Christian doctrines.

*h)The paying respect to ancestor’s spirit* is found among gonds. The similar proof of respect for spirit did exist among Israelites recorded in the Bible that: “Yahweh is the God of Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob...will bring you into the Land which he swore to your forefathers.” (Deutronomy 6:10). And the New Testament also says: “The Gospel was preached to those who are dead” (I Peter 4: 6). God declares that “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh”. (Acts 2:17) These Biblical references denote the relationship of Spirits to the living beings contineous, it means the body dies, not the Spirit. These concepts of Gonds express theological and Christological understanding. It clearly mentions to Lingo and Christ as liberator of the society.

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<sup>415</sup> Ratan, Interview dated 29/06/2014

*i)Lingo Founder of Gond Society and Rituals:* Lingo divided Gonds into different clans, gave them Law he received from the great God. It is similar to Ten Commandments given to Moses at Mount Sinai, for Israelites (Exodus 20: 1-17). Lingo led them for settlement, social order of marriage, and also taught them how to worship God.

*j)The holy places of worship:* At the command of Pharsi pen God some places are dedicated to the gods in the caves between the twelve mountains for example at Pachmari in Madhya Pradesh. The above statement explains that people go to worship god in caves and mountains but Bible has an opposite statement: “Our father worshipped on this mountain but say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Jesus said to her, woman believe me; the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the father” (John 4: 20-21). But in this regard researcher has observed that the Gonds of Dori village never goes to any high places or Pachmari for worship.

*k)Sacrifice* in the Old Testament’s description of sacrificial lamb and procedure of offering sacrifices is mentioned in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The sacrifice and the community meal are important among the Gonds for fellowship and honoring to God. Himmat Singh Dhurve explained that sacrifice is made generally out side the village for removal of diseases, forgiveness of sins and for the growth of fruitful crops in the field but after the sacrificial meal the left over is buried in the ground. The similar sacrifice was practiced in Old Testament that “Any meat of the sacrifice left over was burnt”. (Leviticus 7: 16-17), it is symbol for maintaining holiness and honoring God.

l)There is folk story of *human sacrifice* but when soldiers made enquiry, lifted the lid from the basket but did not find the head of Brahmin boy. Instead; they found the head of a goat in the basket. This folk story has a deeper meaning that among the Gonds human sacrifice was not allowed therefore soldiers came in search of it but did not find even the head a boy. The Bible says ‘Do not kill.’ This folk story is close to the Biblical story of Abraham who was about to sacrifice his son: “He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as burnt offering instead of his son” (Genesis 22: 13), but finally God showed him a lamb for sacrifice.



m) There is a folk story of a *bachelor prince* cutting his finger and shedding his blood for fabrication of symbols differs to the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ the holy Lamb of God. Bible says “Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1: 29). But folk story differs in shedding of blood by prince for fabrication of symbols that enabled the fabricator to make symbols, Christianity as well has a symbol of cross but salvation is possible only through Jesus Christ. The above story explains that Lingo was innocent from all worldly desires, there were temptations before him as son of man but as son of God he disciplined his holiness. Lingo was young could fall into sin but he was able to overcome temptations. Christ died on the Cross. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, cursed is every one who is hung on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). He died to establish a way of righteousness. However, Holy Lingo had died in a depression on Saj green tree from that time onwards Gond tribe honour Saj trees as Holy. For example: the Ecological thinkers’ portrait crucifixion of Jesus on the green tree trying to exhort that Jesus Christ is not only the savior of the human beings but also of eco system. The Gonds assume that god resides on Saj tree therefore saj tree is holy its leaves are the sign of protection, plentiful harvesting, happiness and good luck at the time of marriage and death also its leaves are used.

n) *Resurrection of Lingo*: According to the folk story Lingo was killed by his Gond brothers but God through a crow resurrected Lingo with his powerful nectar. This is very close to Biblical concept of Christ’s resurrection: “This Jesus God raised him up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32). Knowingly or unknowingly this concept of resurrection exists among Gonds. Before Lingo’s ascension he made seven persons to go aside for the formation of seven families. The groups of Six, Five, Four Gonds were asked to make different families but Bible teaches all are one through Jesus Christ and become the children of God. Lingo’s folk story explains that everything happens with him in divine nature by the power of God; at his birth queen declared that she gave birth to a child who is born from above. Lingo lived a holy life; liberated Gonds. He died as a holy person on the Saj tree, he comes back to life and then his ascension takes place to his God. It is similar to Jesus, before going to heaven told his disciples: “I go to the Father.” (John 14:12). Lingo’s folk story

can be related to Jesus Christ, as he said to his disciples before his departure: “Let not your hearts be troubled...I go and prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-3)...“While he blessed them, he departed from them and was carried up into heaven.”(Luke 24: 51). Therefore, a Gond does carry the innocent image of Lingo in day to day life. It shows that Christ is hidden in Gondwana culture that reveals Christological concepts. The people from outside attacked, misguided, and misbehaved but they are very humble in their response. Many a times they were cheated by the business people who did not pay them the appropriate price for selling the forest valuable products. However, according to Christianity every human being is called to be liberated by God for a new life like Israelite from slavery to freedom from old context to the new context of transformed life.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

**A. Contextual Findings:** The Asian Contextual theologies pay attention to the liberation of poor, farmer, labors, dalit and tribals from their sufferings. Most of the theologies deal from religious perspective but since 1970 there has been paradigm shift from traditional religious doctrines to the people’s movement, as research focuses on Gondwana theology therefore its findings are mentioned as follows:

1. The land settlement of 1868 has deprived many gonds from their land property.<sup>416</sup>
2. Under the Gond kings the way of Gond’s living was not much disturbed but now the property of tribal groups is divided in well defined districts. The government agents have rights to drive them from the field.<sup>417</sup>
3. The money lenders were able to take Gond’s land; he was unable to pay their debts. Moneylenders grinded them to beggary. And more and more land passed into the hands of the moneylenders.<sup>418</sup>
4. Ignorance of gonds oppressed them as follows:
  - i. A Gond of former Rewa state wanted to bring some grain to his son who was living in Mandla district. He was ignorant that law forbade export of grain from Rewa. He

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<sup>416</sup> Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma*, 567.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid*, 568.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid*, 572

- was caught by the police to stand whole night at police station until he promised to pay Rupees one hundred to police. He sold his ear gold rings and other jewels obtained a loan of hundred rupees. When he paid money to the police and then he was released.
- ii. In another village, a person died of snake bite, his father in law made a report to the police. The police officer accused him of murder and arrested him. The police demanded Rupees 700/- for his release. The police officer reduced his demand gradually to Rupees 400/-. In end prisoner agreed to pay that sum for release. He had to sell a field, his bullocks, and all the jewels of his women folk in order to pay the amount then he was released.
  - iii. Another man inherited some money and a field from relative but other person claimed for it, reported the matter to the police. The head constable came and demanded for Rs. 600/- from the heir on the spot. The man had to sell his best field and jewels for the release otherwise he would have put into jail.<sup>419</sup>
5. Gonds had been accustomed to meet their diet from jungle fruits and roots this freedom is greatly restricted by government laws; there are no free hunts in the forest. The forest produce fruits, flowers, gum, bamboo, shoots and other things but they are the property of contractor who bought them at an auction from the forest department.<sup>420</sup>
  6. The tribal Welfare department has largely failed to gain the good will of the tribal leaders and the willing co-operation of the tribal population for their upliftment schemes.<sup>421</sup>
  7. The commissioner for Scheduled Caste in his report lists additional reasons for the poor results of the welfare work planned and carried out by the government:
    - i. There is lack of coordination between the tribal welfare department and other departments working in tribal areas. This often results in duplication of work.
    - ii. Many projects are taken up and the planners are too impatient to wait for the results which mature slowly.

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<sup>419</sup> *Ibid*, 578-579.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*, 591.

- iii. There is too frequent change of projects and policy so the officers and workers loose their confidence, and the simple tribals get confused and demoralised.
  - iv. The list of priorities not drawn as per need of the areas and funds available.
  - v. The tribal welfare plans are frequently made at too high level.
  - vi. The state government head quarters with the local officers therefore the plans are made but local conditions vary. The projects which suit in one area may not fit in other areas.<sup>422</sup>
8. The Social welfare work of Church is at large misinformed and alarmed with negative thoughts to Indian government and the Hindu population by certain groups of people as they fail to exploit tribal in particular contexts. Another reason for the strong disapproval of the Christian welfare work among the tribals is successful conversion. The Hindu population at large is frequently alarmed by the reports of mass conversions in tribal areas.<sup>423</sup>

### **B. Positive achievements/ Findings**

- i. The modern civilization has saved Gonds from diseases by vaccination and inoculation. Also it has given them school education.<sup>424</sup>
- ii. After Independence, the Indian constitution on January 26, 1950 has adopted the policy to promote tribals into the national life in India. A Tribal Welfare Department was instituted and launched in 1951, the five years plans were made and still continue as Tribal Development Blocks, money is allocated for educational facilities, clean drinking water, cattle breeding, Polutary farming, medical aid and communication.<sup>425</sup>
- iii. Comparatively the government more effective work is being done apparently by non-official agencies such as Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh Mandal, Banwasi Seva and Ramakrishna mission.

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<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*, 591-592.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*, 593-594.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid*, 584.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid*, 287- 589.

The *Sangh Parivar* has set up a plethora of organizations that focus on tribal areas. Some of the prominent ones are: Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Ekal Vidyalaya, Sewa Bharati, Vivekananda Kendra, Bharat Kalyan Pratishthan and Friends of Tribal Society. The Primary focus is on Hinduizing Tribals as necessary for National integration and using its influence in adivasi areas to secure electoral gains.<sup>426</sup> The Adivasi communities have been weakened through imposed religious divisions. Sangh Parivar has arrogated its authority to control the lives of the adivasis and is engaged in a massive drive to ‘bring back’ the tribals into the fold of Hinduism—using everything from vicious attacks under the name of protecting Hinduism to setting up organizations that purport to work for tribal welfare and education. All of the above organizations are active in the tribal areas and all have received the funding. The funded institutions work in their attempts to “bring back” adivasis into Hindu fold.

- iv. The welfare work carried out by Christians among tribal communities is more successful and impressive. They have opened many schools, orphanages, hospital, dispensaries and leper asylums, helped tribals to take better deal from the landlords, contractors, moneylenders and government officials.<sup>427</sup>

### C. Findings of Gondwana Contextual Folk Story

- i. There is much to charm one in this world story of Gondwana folk stories. There is sympathy with the jungle, its appreciation of the beauty of nature, and the quite humour of those who take part in its little dreams, all make it particularly attractive.
- ii. Those who know the Gonds and most Indian aborigines well know their child-like sense of humour, and love of a joke, and how they differ from people of other local faiths.

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<sup>426</sup><http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/adivasi-vs-vanvasi-the-hinduization-of-tribals-in-india/217974/> accessed on 03/10/2016.

<sup>427</sup> Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhuma*, 567.

- iii. There is a deeper side also to the story of Lingo which no one can fail to appreciate; the story invites the Gonds to think that they owed their simple civilization to be being of a higher order than themselves.
- iv. The Lingo story too for the claims for the emancipator a wonderfully noble character, as a perfect man water may be stained but no stain had Lingo.
- v. Lingo's rejection of temptations – is like that of patriarch Joseph.
- vi. Lingo's freedom from malice and guile, his readiness to forgive his murderers, to forget their ingratitude and injuries, and to complete his mission of the rescue of the Gond race, reminds one strangely of Him who came not to be ministered but to minister, and to give life a ransom for many.

Whether, Lingo's story came from the soul of the some forgotten bard, a soul naturally Christian. Whether it contains within it faint echoes of Christian teaching, which had crept in to India by unsuspected ways in days gone by, cannot be said but story is one of the many proofs that even among the earth's simplest Gonds noble and true and inspired ideas have some recognition and that, when the time comes for the fuller enlightenment of such simple people the Christian teacher will have soil not wholly barren and unprepared on which to build his lofty spiritual and ethical teachings of the Bible that God himself lived as Gond Lingo in Gondwana land and He is a Adivasi Gond God.

#### **D.Suggestions**

- i. The Gondwana contextual theology is to aim at acculturating the gospel to the classical cultural soil of the land, often results in simple folk stories, rituals and traditions as native culture is romanticized in the light of Christian faith. The valuable folk stories of Gonds may be interpreted biblically and theologically.
- ii. English medium school is the need of today's context but efforts must be made to preserve their Gondi language.
- iii. The Church was running incoming generating programs such as carpet, brass, carpentry, tailoring etc. for the people in the context again to be revived.
- iv. Congregations may be encouraged to use Gondwana musical instruments, songs and liturgy for contextual worship.

- v. To make awareness of human rights, and about government, projects, scholarships and employments through local schools and local administration.
- vi. There is a need of development programmes Inter- net facilities. Vocational Centers for guiding young people for education and training. There is a need of publication of literature and magazines for bringing awareness among the people.
- vii. Most of the Gonds are farmers, they highly respect the land but still they are poor, oppressed and exploited by outsiders. Therefore, gospel and plough or any appropriate model is important in context of Dori in Betul district of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh that Can be applied which is capable to bring the transformation in the life of Gonds who are still poor.
- viii. The transformation of Gond's community and social life is possible through more production in the Agricultural field, dairy, poultry, piggy and fishry that could be helpful in improving their financial conditions, proper education, the governmental and non governmental organizations and the Church together can help to bring transformation in the lives of the people.

It is a fact that a theologian can not create a theology in isolation from the community's therefore Gonds people theology is to be ground in Gondwana state experiences of the people within the faith of Christian traditions. The new developments can shape our sense of ecclesiology to maintain the desired openness and sensitivity to a local situation, the Church should find Christ into the situation rather than concentrating on bringing Christ into the situation. However, any approach to culture must be able to address the problem of social change, on other hand the cultural form be accepted as a vehicle that Christ is already present in Gondwana context and Christians are challenged to respond to their faith into action for the transformation of Gondwana society.

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