



e-ISSN: 2319-8753 | p-ISSN: 2347-6710

IJIRSET

International Journal of Innovative Research in
SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

Volume 12, Issue 1, January 2023

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.118

9940 572 462

6381 907 438

ijirset@gmail.com

www.ijirset.com

The Advent of Christianity: A Brief History of the Catholic, Baptist, and Presbyterian Churches of Tripura

Alampik Debbarma

M.A in History, Tripura University (A Central University), UGC NET, SLET Qualified, India

ABSTRACT: With 2.8 billion adherents, Christianity is the world's largest religion. Along with Judaism and Islam, it is considered one of the three Abrahamic or monotheistic religions of the world. The term "Christian" is derived from the Greek word Christos, which refers to the Hebrew Messiah ("anointed one"). Christians, "followers of Christ," became the name of a group in 1st-century Israel that followed the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. This paper will explore the arrival of Christianity in Tripura. It will include a brief history of how Christianity began, the major groups that comprise Christianity in Tripura, and the various important Christian aspects. It will also explore how various groups administer their missions. Church activities are also mentioned therein. The development of Christianity in Tripura had a denominational structure and was closely related to organizational endeavors. From the Portuguese descendants who worked for the King of Tripura, a small number of Christians were present in Tripura in the 17th century. From 1939 to 1940, Christianity only began to spread among the indigenous people. The origins of the missions, which included Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches, were from America, Wales, New Zealand, etc. In order to teach and introduce Christianity, missionaries started working in several places in Tripura. Additionally, an effort is made to research the arrival of various missions. Concerning the introduction of Christianity to Tripura, very little has been published. In truth, academics haven't shown much interest in this topic. This work also makes an effort to assess the contributions made by the Missionary Society in the areas of literature, rural reconstruction, medical care, and health care. In fact, this study provides a thorough explanation of Christianity in Tripura, providing information about how the religion came to be practiced there.

KEYWORDS: Christianity, Tripura, Mission, Missionaries, Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Church

I. INTRODUCTION

One of India's seven northeastern sister states is Tripura. It is actually the third-smallest state in India, with a total area of 10,486 square kilometers. On its north, west, and south, Bangladesh encircles the state. The capital of this state is Agartala. The princely state of Tripura was ruled by the Tripuri or Manikya dynasty before joining Indian dominion on October 15, 1949. Tripura is the only place in history where 185 rulers reigned concurrently under independent authority. On October 15, 1949, Regent Kanchan Prava Devi, the widow of the late Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur Debbarma of Tripura, signed the Merger Agreement with Indian Union. Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur Debbarma was an underage prince at the time. It became a part of independent India in 1949. Since the country's inclusion into the state, ethnic discord and friction between the indigenous people and the refugees from East Pakistan and Bangladesh have occasionally resulted in violence. On the other hand, establishing a separate administrative organization and several other measures have brought about some tranquility. The state's indigenous population has been a major conduit for the spread of Christianity in Tripura. There are many tribes that live here, and certain tribes frequently control an entire region or even a sub-district. Investigating how and when different tribes have drifted away. From their original religion over time is both fascinating and enlightening. Tripura's rulers invited some of those living Portuguese in Chittagong to join the royal army. Many of them were compensated with land settlements for their service as gunners and riflemen. Tripura king employed a group of Portuguese mercenaries in his army at Chittagong and Noakhali. They eventually settled in Rangamati (later renamed Udaipur), Tripura's former capital. They were relocated to Mariamnagar after Maharaja Krishna Manikya relocated his capital to Agartala in 1760. Portuguese mercenaries, who were skilled with weapons, carried a great deal of tactical military knowledge with them. Although many of these settlers gradually began farming, they could not keep the land that had been provided to them. Catholic missionary started to settle in Mariamnagar. The Tripura Baptist Christian Union was founded as a consequence of the tireless work and enormous sacrifice of missionaries from New Zealand and the local churches in Tripura. It all

transpired as described above. His Highness, the Maharaja of Independent Tripura, granted permission for the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society to reside and conduct business in Tripura at the beginning of November 1938. A small gathering of Christians was called to order at Laxmilunga Tea Estate, and the gathering unanimously approved the formation of the Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU). As early as 1976, in Tripura, a parachurch mission called Thlarau Bo Zawngtute (The Seekers of the Lost Souls) collaborated with the Presbyterian Church to build the church on the tenth anniversary of its founding. Final approval for the founding of the Presbyterian Church of Tripura within Tripura State came from the Mizoram Presbyterian Synod annual conference in 1985. On July 20, 1986, Synod Moderator Rev. Robawiha led the opening service for the Presbyterian Church of Tripura at Noangang Church. The Tripura Presbyterian Church Synod was officially inaugurated on March 24, 2019, at Noangang, Tripura.

II. ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AGARTALA

II.1. Brief History of Catholic Church in Tripura:

According to historian Dr. David Syiemlieh, the first reference to the Christians of Mariamnagar in Agartala was made by Fr. Ignatius Gomes, a Jesuit priest, when he visited them in 1683. According to Dr. Syiemlieh, about 200 years later, Fr. P. Barbe, CSC, the pastor of Chittagong, visited Tripura in 1843 and would have come here to minister to the Catholic community. Fr. Louis Augustine Verite and Fr. Beboit Adolphe Mercier, pioneering missionaries of the Holy Cross, visited Agartala in 1856 and administered the sacraments to the Christians of Mariamnagar Village. However, it was not until 1937 that priests began to live permanently at Mariamnagar. In Tripura, the first permanent Catholic church was dedicated in 1952 after the construction of the first parish at Mariamnagar in 1939. Due to its proximity, the Archdiocese of Dhaka continued to serve the spiritual requirements of the Catholics in Tripura up until the establishment of a new ecclesiastical unit, the Prefecture of Haflong, in 1952, when Msgr. George Breen, CSC, was named the Prefect Apostolic. The Most Rev. Denzil D'Souza was appointed the first Bishop of Silchar in 1969, the year the prefecture was elevated to the status of a diocese. At the time, the diocese included the states of Mizoram and Tripura as well as the two Cachar districts in Assam. Up to that point, aside from the Portuguese descendants in Mariamnagar and Kashipur, the majority of Catholics came from the indigenous communities. Along with promoting cooperative fisheries, orchards, and improved farming systems in indigenous areas that were formerly dependent on shifting cultivation, the Catholic Jana Sangha (credit cooperative society) was founded in 1948. It was this organization that provided social services and helped to reclaim many of the poor, alienated indigenous lands through mortgage systems. In order to serve the sporadic Catholic families in the state's northern region, a second parish was founded in Kumarghat in 1969. Priests and the Church were able to be more accessible to the populace thanks to the establishment of a second parish at Kumarghat. With the opening of the second parish at Kumarghat, the communities that had previously only received sacraments once a year began to receive them more frequently. The Most Reverend Denzil D'Souza was appointed as the first bishop of the Silchar Diocese. The year 1996 marked a pivotal turning point in the history of the Catholic Church in Tripura. Out of the former Silchar Diocese, which now encompasses the entire state of Tripura, the Diocese of Agartala was established. In May 1996, Rt. Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, DD, was consecrated as its first bishop. The event sparked a great deal of joy and vigour among the Tripura Catholic believers. The year 2021 is the Silver Jubilee Year of the Agartala Diocese.

II.2. Educational and Social Service:

In 1948, Mariamnagar Catholic School, the first Catholic institution offering instruction in Bengali, opened its doors. Indigenous boys and girls from far-off villages began attending Mariamnagar schools after a boarding house or hostel for boys and girls was built alongside the school. The indigenous groups of Tripura used this as the catalyst for their transformation. With a handful from East Bengal, the Holy Cross missionaries in Tripura were primarily Americans and later French Canadians. The South Indian Holy Cross Fathers began travelling to Tripura starting in 1965. These pioneers firmly established the Catholic faith and the presence of the Holy Cross in Tripura, and the Congregation continues to expand and invest in Tripura in the fields of education, social service, parish ministry, family apostolate, and spiritual deepening. Tripura's first women's religious congregation, the Little Flowers of Bethany (Bethany Sisters), arrived in the state in 1968 A.D. The Bethany Sisters greatly aided the growth of the church in Tripura by collaborating with the Holy Cross Fathers in social services and schools. The opening of Holy Cross School, an English-language school in the town of Agartala. This opened a new chapter in the Church's educational outreach program, allowing it to reach out to non-Christians in the center of the community while also giving indigenous boys and girls the chance to start their education in the English language.

III. TRIPURA BAPTIST CHRISTIAN UNION

III.1. Brief History Baptist Church in Tripura:

The Tripura Baptist Christian Union was founded as a consequence of the tireless work and enormous sacrifice of missionaries from New Zealand and the local churches in Tripura. This is the sequence of events. Early in November 1938, His Highness, the Maharaja of Independent Tripura, granted the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society permission to reside and conduct business in Tripura. A gathering of a few Christians was called right away at Laxmilunga Tea Estate, and the assembly unanimously approved the formation of "Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU) After then, the missionaries purchased property in A.D.Nagar, where the current headquarters of TBCU are located. The TBCU once more established the Tripura Christian Welfare Society in 1940 to further rural reconstruction and economic advancement, mostly among Indigenous people, in remote rural Tripura. As their tenure in Tripura was limited, missionaries employed by the TBCU began leaving the state beginning in 1971. By 1972, most of them had departed the state. The TBCU is presently solely run by locals after the locals took over the organization's leadership in 1965. The TBCU runs with the locals in the leadership as a non-profit earning organisation to realise its goals. It is self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing. The Tripura Baptist Christian Union currently consists of seventeen organisations spread out across Tripura State. In total, there are close to 850 local congregations. The TBCU runs community initiatives including schools and dispensaries and employs a large number of pastors and evangelists. It has been collaborating with the Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM) in Mizoram as well as the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) since the early 1980s. Numerous employees from the BCM and the ECM are employed in Tripura as missionaries and evangelists/teachers in a variety of TBCU churches and schools. TBCU held grand celebrations for its Golden and Diamond Jubilees in 1988 and 1998, respectively.

It has the following affiliated associations:

1. Sadar North Baptist Association (SNBA)
2. Central Baptist Association (CBA)
3. Kok Baptist Association (KOKBA)
4. Udaipur Baptist Association (UBA)
5. Salgra Baptist Association (SBA)
6. Kailashahar Baptist Christian Association (KBCA)
7. Jampui Sakhan Baptist Association (JSBA)
8. Tripura Baptist A'chik Krima
9. Yarwng Baptist Christian Association (YBCA)
10. Saisawm Sazai Baptist Association (SSBA)
11. Dharmanagar-Longai Baptist Association (DLBA)
12. Yapri Baptist Association (YBA)
13. Kamalpur Baptist Association (KBA)
14. Songang Baptist Christian Association (SBCA)
15. Dergang Baptist Association (DBA)
16. Jampui Longai Baptist Association (JLBA)
17. Hachwk Haphar Baptist Association(HHBA)

Every year a meeting of the Council Members of the TBCU is organized at one of the Churches within the union.

III.2. Educational and Social Services:

In several regions of Tripura, the TBCU operates schools through its member associations. St. Paul's School is managed by TBCU with the aid of a Committee. It was one of Tripura's earliest schools with an English medium. The school is attended by a large number of kids from all around Tripura as well as the town of Agartala. The school is currently associated with ICSE and ISC and offers instruction up to class XII (Twelve) standards. To provide training in the Christian Faith (Scriptures) to people involved in ministry, TBCU also operates a theological educational institution called the Tripura Academy of Integrated Christian Studies (TAICS) in the Mission Compound, A.D.Nagar, Agartala, Tripura. It offers graduate degrees (B.Th). TBCU has been active in translating the Bible and New Testament into various Tripura local languages in collaboration with the Bible Society of India. In the past, TBCU participated in a program called Rural Reconstruction. Some of the TBCU's member associations are now implementing community development programs in tribal communities around Tripura. A full-fledged Community Development Department is now being established by TBCU. The TBCU's involvement in poor people's upliftment initiatives while also promoting the gospel is one of its primary goals. Arundhuti Nagar in Agartala, West Tripura is home to the headquarters of the Tripura Baptist Christian Union.

Name of school that is run by Tripura Baptist Christian Union and affiliated association.

1. Yakhili Academy
2. Tipprah Academy
3. Salka Academy
4. Pohor Academy
5. Saisawm Sazai Baptist Association (SSBA)
6. St. James Higher Secondary School
7. Nazareth English School
8. St. Thomas English Medium School
9. Pohor English Medium School

IV. TRIPURA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SYNOD

IV.1. Brief History Of Presbyterian Church in Tripura:

The history of the Presbyterian Church in Tripura dates back to the early 1900s when Christian migrants from Mizoram (most likely members of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church) arrived in Tripura. There are two different accounts of how Christianity first spread to Tripura. The first account claims that Mizo Sailo Chief Dokhuma immigrated to Tripura in 1905 and brought 130 families with him. According to the second source, Mr. Hrangvunga and his 200 followers, including 70 Christian members, arrived in Tripura's Jampui Hills in 1912 and made their home in the Phuldungsei village. Those 70 immigrant Christians who were mentioned in the two accounts most likely came from the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (MPC). However, it is said that in these neighboring areas, Christian migrants had already arrived by 1911. As a result, 1911 could be considered the year that the Gospel Message first arrived in Tripura. As time passed, Christianity expanded throughout Tripura. It is said that the introduction of Christianity to Tripura began with those Mizoram Christians. The founding ceremony of the Presbyterian Church of Tripura (PCT) took place at Twisa Gonda Church on Christmas Day, 1975. The inaugural Presbytery Conference took place at Twisa Gonda Church from May 14–16, 1976. The Presbytery Office at Noangang was established in the meantime. The office's management was under the supervision of a Presbytery Moderator and one Accountant. As a result, PCT established the Executive, Sunday School, Education, and Nomination Committees. Another noteworthy fact is that the Presbyterian Church of Tripura (PCT) was founded in 1976 with the support of the Tripura government. At first, there were 776 people attending the church. As early as 1976, the Presbyterian Church was already being formed in Tripura in collaboration with a parachurch mission called Thlarau Bo Zawngtute (The Seekers of the Lost Souls). During the tenth year since its founding. In 1985, the annual conference of the Mizoram Presbyterian Synod eventually approved the founding of the Presbyterian Church of Tripura within Tripura State. The Synod Executive Committee assigned Senior Pastor Rev. Thangdela, whose office was located in Noangang, to oversee the entire Presbyterian Church of Tripura in June 1986. Rev. S. Lalmuana and Rev. Lalchunlura were both sent to the Tuidu and Gontachhora Pastorates at the same time. On July 20, 1986, Synod Moderator Rev. Robawiha conducted the inaugural service for the Presbyterian Church of Tripura at Noangang Church.

IV.2. Educational and Social Services:

There are several middle and high schools at Tripura Presbyterian Church Mission Field, including:

1. Bethlehem English School (Noangang Village)
2. Calvary High School in Tuidu Village
3. Maranatha English School, located in Ambassa Town
4. Elpis English School, Pecharthal Village
5. Charisma English School (Karbook Village)
6. Hermon School for English (Burburia)

Many educated professionals, government officials, pastors, educators, and other occupations have come out of mission schools.

Craft Center: Under the Tripura Presbyterian Mission Field, there are four craft centers. These craft centers may be found in Tuingoi, Karbook, Tuidu, and Pecharthal. The number of students enrolled in these craft centers changes over time. Usually, no more than 40 students are chosen to undergo training in tailoring techniques. After a complete year of instruction, the students graduate with a certificate and a sewing machine for their future careers. Many people have improved their tailoring abilities and gained employment. Within the field, Tripura Presbyterian also has medical centers. These medical facilities can be found in Noangang, Tuidu, Ambassa, Tuingoi, Kameswar, Seisimdung, Ganganagar, Kalachhara, Burburia, Pecharthal, and Ruprai. The Presbyterian Church of Tripura also publishes Bible and Gospel tracts, Sunday School and Wednesday Night Lessons, hymnal books, and other literature.



V. CONCLUSION

It is vitally important that the church continues to develop in every area of its life and service as it acquires years of existence. Our people are unquestionably grateful to Christianity and the western world for the many revolutionary contributions they provided to our land and people, and they will always be grateful for them. The sociocultural and educational features of Tripura's indigenous population have changed significantly as a result of Christianity. The church also wields significant moral authority over the people, as evidenced by the way it frames concepts of good and evil. A family that is seen to be closely associated with the church and its activities is much more respected than those who show little interest. However, in order for us to fully develop and flourish as a people, we must also use the knowledge and insight that God has given us, be able to identify, and be prepared to face, the reality of the detrimental effects that it has on both our people and our society as a whole.

REFERENCES

- [1] Debbarma, Suren, A look Into Tripura, (Calcutta: Debanandan Dam, 1995)
- [2] Syiemlieh, D.R. Christianity in Tripura: A Brief History (2006)
- [3] C. Becker, History of the Catholic Missions in North East India: 1890-1915 (Shillong: Kerma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1980)
- [4] J. Puthenpurakal, Impact of Christianity on North East India (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1996)
- [5] F. S. Downs, History of Christianity in India Vol. 5 (Bangalore: CHAI, 1992)
- [6] Debbarma, S. (1996). Origin and Growth of Christianity in Tripura: With Special Reference to the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society, 1938-1988. Indus Publishing Company
- [7] Borok Baptist Convention, Rangchak Mukumu, 2010
- [8] Jain, Sandhya (2010). Evangelical intrusions: [Tripura, a case study]. New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- [9] Chongmunrai, Rev. Tripura Presbyterian Kohhran Chanchin, Noagang: Tripura Presbyterian Standing Committee, 2003.
- [10] Lalngaihawma, Rev. Presbyterian in Tripura, Aizawl: Isaak-a Hmar, 2012.
- [11] Zoramawia, C. Rev. Tripura Rama Presbyterian Kohhran Chanchin (1911-2012), Agartala: Lalrampari Kawlani, 2013.
- [12] A Brief Report on Tripura Mission Field Formation and Its Ministry by Rev. Sairengpuia Sailo, PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, Vol. XXVII No. 3 July-September, 2021
- [13] <http://www.tripura.org.in/>
- [14] <https://www.necarf.org/>
- [15] <https://www.agartaladiocese.org/>
- [16] <https://www.christiantbcu.org>
- [17] <http://www.tranzsend.org.nz/index.php/world-reach/773-2013-07-31-21-09-11>
- [18] <http://pcishillong.org/>
- [19] <https://www.mizoram-synod.org/>
- [20] https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Tripura



INNO SPACE
SJIF Scientific Journal Impact Factor
Impact Factor: 8.118



ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

 **9940 572 462**  **6381 907 438**  **ijirset@gmail.com**



www.ijirset.com

Scan to save the contact details