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**THE MISSIONARY WORLD.**

**ABORIGINAL CHRISTIANS.**

The Rev. W. J. Youngson, B.D., of the Church of Scotland Mission at Sialkot, writes: To enable your readers to estimate the influence that our aboriginal Christians will have on the general community, let me bring before them the following considerations.

First. There are many among the low-caste people who have fallen from the higher castes, and correspond to the "publicans and sinners" of our Lord's time. Mr. Ibbetson, in the Government Census Report of 1881, says, "It is probable that they are essentially of aboriginal origin; but there is little doubt that the aboriginal nucleus has received additions from other sources, of those who have gradually sunk in the scale of occupations, or have in any way been degraded to the lowest level." The great work going on in this district began with one who had been outcasted. With education and privileges corresponding to the faith they have adopted they will presently rise again in the social scale, and, as Christians, seek to evangelize all unbelievers, Hindoos, Mohammedans, Buddhists, or any other.

Second. The Aborigines are noways behind others in intellectual ability. The Government—all honor to it—has endeavoured to instruct the Sansees of this district, for which purpose schools were opened for them thirty years ago. Recognising the fact that a moral element ought to be introduced into the schools, the Government, represented by the District Board, entrusted them to us, and we at once brought in the only law that can give life, the only effective power for good, the Gospel. The highest classes in these five schools read two languages, Hindustani and Persian, besides studying arithmetic and geography, and last year five boys passed the Government examination. They are now under special instruction, showing ability of the highest order, and will doubtless some day enter the crowd of men who are of the so-called learned professions, when the fact of their being Sansees by birth will either be ignored or altogether forgotten.

The Chuhras and Maigs, of whom so many have lately embraced Christianity, are higher in the social scale than the Sansees, the former of the two being divided in the Panjab into sixteen great tribes, the "stronghold of the latter being the sub-montane portion of Sialkot lying between the Ravi and Chanab" (vide Census Report, 1881). They all show a desire for education, and in the village schools which have been opened for Christian children, the encouragement afforded and the hopes excited by their ability and capacity for learning are sufficient to secure missionaries of final success in furnishing a weapon whereby to destroy the idolatry and beathen superstition of the higher castes.

Third. We have only to look at the position the aboriginal people occupy to be convinced that, as Christians, they must exercise an influence on Hindoos and Mohammedans. They are not gathered into communities apart from others, but they are to be found in every village, and form an integral part of the village, having special work and special privileges in it. In Sialkot district, for instance, in some villages there may be ten families, in some fifty, in some a hundred. Now, suppose Christian truth and the power of the Gospel change the mode of life and manner of fifty families or 250 persons in a village, and their name is no longer Chuhras and Maigs, but Christians, and, moreover, suppose they now become, instead of passive slaves, with no caste, aggressive proselytisers among the Hindoos and Mohammedans of their village, having the religion of the rulers of the land,—is it possible to conceive the fact that they will not affect the whole community? Think then what the result will be when Christians are in every village, and Christianity appears as a leavening power all over the land. The Aborigines are at present the servants of the Hindoos and Mohammedans, the ploughers of their land, and the bards that recite the deeds of their forefathers.

Fourth.—Many Christians have come to the Punjab from the North-West Provinces to take part in the work that is going on here. Some are well-educated, some are not, but all of them that lead respectable lives are respected here. Who are they? I do not know, and will never inquire. They are Christians; that is sufficient. If I were to inquire, how-

ever, I should certainly find, as sometimes one is found ill-natured enough to suggest, that they cannot boast of noble birth. Let our Christian brethren from the low castes here go to another province, and they would be received by Hindus and Mohammedans of the highest castes as Christians. When their children, through education and the power of Christianity, take their places in the world as respectable citizens, all the distinctions of today will have disappeared.

Fifth.—The term "low caste" seems to be united to suggest low stature, flat nose, skulking gait, mean actions, and bad manners, but this is an entire misapprehension. These people have a splendid physique. Not long ago an article appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, in which the virtues of the Chuhras were extolled. They were described as hardy, faithful, and patient; serving in the meanest offices; waiting on us in peace, and following our fortunes in war; tending the sick and helping to bury the dead; enduring in marches the utmost extremities of hunger and thirst, and ready, themselves in difficulty to assist others. "A dearth of this caste," said the writer of the article, "would mean a social revolution in India. The breaking up of this caste means the dissolution of the whole caste system; for as long as other castes find this one to keep things sweet and clean, so long will the other castes hold together. The dissolution of the Chuhra caste is the greatest lever by which the missionary can look forward to break asunder the whole system; and any close observer of things in India can see for himself that Chuhras are on the decrease. They turn bearers, cooks, and servants of other kinds; so that the race is getting almost extinct in comparison with other castes." Then, after speaking of their patience, industry, and cheerfulness, "Surely there is room for our zealous-minded missionaries amongst these people. And yet perhaps it is well that the missionary is not abroad."

Sixth. Experience shows us that the Hindoos and Mohammedans are much more ready to admit them to social privileges than we give them credit for. I have seen Europeans create a feeling of dislike and separation, suggested by their own fears, when they intended to do the opposite. In some schools, for instance, they have been careful to separate the two classes when, if the natives had been allowed to settle the matter for themselves, the higher castes would not have been so conservative.

Lately, in order to test the good feeling which I have found prevailing in the villages, I sent four Christian boys, three of them having been originally Chuhras and one a Maig, to our large main school in the city. On my arrival at the school about an hour after, I found them sitting on a bench outside, apparently undecided as to whether they should venture in or not. A Hindoo master came up to me and asked me what my pleasure was regarding them. I told him to admit them, taking the usual fees. He at once led them to the room occupied by the 3rd class, and they were formally admitted into the class, and (God be praised, passed the day without hearing a murmur. Ten years ago that was impossible—but with God all things are possible.

In Landawala the Hindoos helped the Christians, taking their part against the Mohammedans. In Daska, where at first they were so bitter against the aboriginal Christian boys, trying to hound them from the town, they now allow them to sit in their shops, and the last day I was there Hindoo and Christian boys walked along the road arm in arm!

In your issue of December 1888 "a Fellow of the University of Bombay" expressed himself thus.—"Be it remembered that you may convert the fifty millions of the simple Aborigines of India to a man, and yet never touch the fringe of the great religious sects of India—the Hindoos and the Mohammedans." He called the converting of Brahmins and Mohammedans a "far greater work." He wrote unadvisedly. Is not 1 Cor. i. xxi, enough to show the character of the first converts, by means of whom the Gospel prevailed? "The whole history of the expansion of the Church is a progressive victory of the ignorant over the learned, the lowly over the lofty, until the emperor himself laid down his crown before the cross of Christ."

Let it never be forgotten that our aborigines are not situated on the hills, divided from the plains by ranges of lofty mountains, but scattered all over the plains, occupying portions of