

Chattogram Hill Tracts Under the Alleged Threat: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the plots of Christian missionaries and NGOs in Chattogram Hill Tracts. Some selected methods of NGOs are highlighted by mentioning international propaganda. The activities of Christian missionaries have been analysed since before the British colonial rule. The relationship of the missionaries with the British rulers is brought out in the light of the analysis. It reveals the deep conspiracy behind the evangelism of Christian missionaries and the human services of NGOs. The secret missions of intelligence agencies are highlighted. The Chittagong Hill Tracts-related nefarious scheme and propaganda have been exposed. The political step of the Christian mission is also brought to light. The conspiracies collaborating with some tribal groups and intelligence agencies are discussed. It also unveils the incitement of anti-Islamic movements among the Christian missionaries and NGOs among the tribal people of CHT.

Keywords: Shanti Bahini, Jumland, Christian missionaries, Chattogram Hill Tracts, Threat.

INTRODUCTION

Chattogram, the port city, is one of the important cities in Bangladesh. Islam came to light in this city with the advent of Arab traders. Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) consists of three districts; Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari. It is also known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This part of the country encircles one-tenth of the whole country. After the occupation of this region in 1860, the British named it the Chittagong Hill Tracts. During the establishment of Pakistan [1] in 1947, Chittagong Hill Tracts came under the domination of Pakistan. Most of the population follows Buddhism, and the rest follow Islam, Christianity, Crama, and Hinduism. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, CHT comprised the jurisdiction of Bangladesh.

Although the Portuguese were the first to step into Chattogram to expand trade around 1537, they failed to establish their business in this part of the British. They were allowed to settle and build a church in Bengal with the permission of the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1577 [2]. They started inviting traders and preachers from their country. Moreover, they took a step forward from their initial goal of doing commercial and missionary work. That was the start of missionary activities in Chattogram Hill Tracts. The missionaries were highly active in this region since the colonial period in the shape of trade, development, and NGOs.

Their primary purpose was to convert the Muslim population to Christianity to build a Christian nation in this East-Southern part of Bangladesh in the name of independence. Their other aim was to separate Chattogram Hill Tracts from Bangladesh through false propaganda. Although most of CHT's population was Buddhist a few decades ago, these indigenous people are being converted alarmingly to Christianity. Hundreds of NGOs from different parts of the world are working in CHT to improve the quality of life. These NGOs play a vital role in preaching Christianity and hatred among the tribal people. However, their ultimate goal is to build a Christian nation by deceiving the naive indigenous people of CHT. As a part of their propaganda, Muslims are highlighted as terrorists and radicalised to them.

The Bengali people are highlighted as their main enemy. Some dishonest journalists and columnists propagate an artificial crisis about the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the outside world by presenting false and fabricated information. Even some educated tribals from CHT also present the false messages of being the victims of persecution by the Bangladesh army to the United Nations and on other platforms.

Some so-called secular intellectuals are involved in these nefarious plots. They are in charge of various departments, including human rights organisations, and continue a relentless conspiracy against Bangladesh and Islamic sovereignty. Their only vision is to turn Bangladesh into a secular country. Although they call themselves secular, they are anti-Islamist. They create unrest in the country by trying to discredit the tribal armed terrorist groups of Chittagong Hill Tracts as freedom fighters.

Furthermore, very few intellectuals have attempted to visualise this. The process of creating religious conflict, hatred, and communal conflict between Christians and Muslims is going on skillfully and subtly. It is easy to create communal conflicts and riots by hurting petty interests. As a result, it made international media headlines and attracted the attention of Christians. Media coverage of fictional stories of persecution of Christian minorities is used to attract international aid and poor Muslims to Christianity. Minority organisations make conscious and slow progress toward creating a Christian-dominated state in Chittagong. For many years, efforts have been made to 'indigenise' Bangladesh's minor ethnic communities under the protection of foreign powers. In addition to the numerous NGOs engaging in this initiative, political parties, human rights organisations, and some academics fund them. When recognised as indigenous, small ethnic groups are efficiently protected by the United Nations.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study uses analytical and interview methods to understand the basic concept of the conspiracy by Christian missionaries from national and international platforms. The analysis asks for solid criticism and interpretation of contemporary politicians, scholars, intellectuals, and researchers in different fields. In the process of interviews, this study focuses on religious scholars, converts, and selected NGOs.

CHRISTIAN MISSION IN CHATTOGRAM

Political threat

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are essential for Bangladesh from a geo-strategic point of view. According to the outside world, the Chittagong Hill Tracts are extremely important regarding geopolitical interests. As a part, the economic superpower countries are constantly monitoring

this area. The Chakma community is the largest ethnic group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Most of them were followers of Buddhism, but from British colonial rule, they gradually started to be attracted to Christianity. There are many tactics applied by the missionaries to convert the tribals. The tribals are trapped with political, financial, and educational opportunities. The missionaries come to them as NGO workers, Donators, Doctors, Visitors, and Teachers. The political entrance of the East India Company in 1757 is thought of as the first successful stage of the Christian mission in Bengal. Moreover, this political influence played a role in facilitating Christian conversions.

Politics has a remarkable ability to change depending on the situation. Any offers of material benefits or threats of penalties or loss, whether by governments or individuals, can be classified as political influences [3]. According to a missionary expert, Most 'Christians' attitudes on using political techniques to propagate Christian faith among non-Christians have been slow and yet so comprehensive that we do not realise how far we have come from our predecessors' perspective". Although those who sent missionaries overseas were usually encouraged to stay away from politics [4], they used politics to make their jobs easy. Poisons were first used in Bengal politics in the 17th century under Siraj Ud Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal. Since that time, politics has been integrally linked to all Bengali movements, including religious conversion. They took a step forward from their initial business and missionary service goals. They sparked disputes and fights among Bengalis. They also stirred up hatred between Hindus and Muslims. The sovereign entity of the kingdom was destroyed in 1757 [5] when Christian merchants and missionaries offered the monarchy to power-hungry political merchants.

Moreover, the Battle of Plassey in 1757 paved the path for British colonial expansion in India. At the battle of Plassey at Murshidabad, the former traders trying to gain a political presence in the country found a chance when they defeated a much superior force of Siraj-Ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal. While the loss of Siraj-Ud-Daulah's soldiers is commonly attributed to Mir Jafar's treachery, a more crucial factor was at play. On June 23, 1757, almost everything went severely for Siraj-Ud-Daulah

Siraj-Ud-Daulah had amassed a force of 50,000 soldiers against 3000 British troops. He maintained an adequate military strength of 34,000 soldiers and horses, significantly surpassing the British capacity at Plassey, even though 16000 troops under Mir Jafar's command did not join the conflict. Siraj-Ud-Daulah had 57 pieces of heavy field artillery under his command, all of which were manned by highly trained French men. The British, on the other hand, possessed ten artillery pieces. Siraj Ud Daulah was nevertheless defeated, clearing the way for Bengal's and India's enmity. Clive lost 18 men, while the nawab's death toll was thought to be approximately 500 [6]. Mir Jafar took his post after his followers assassinated Siraj-Ud-Daula.

Clive, essentially in charge of Bengal, bolstered Mir Jafar's seeming power while keeping him in charge of the strings. The Battle of Plassey was crucial to the East India Company's victory over its French opponents and, in the long run, the establishment of British control in India. In 1760, the East India Company took charge [7] of Chittagong from Nawab Mir Kasem (1760-1764) of Bengal. A hundred years later, the British rulers of India gave rise to the independent existence of Chittagong Hill Tracts as their strategy of 'divide and rule.' Today's the Chittagong Hill Tracts has no separate administrative existence. In real terms, Chittagong Hill Tracts had no

independent existence before 1860. It was then part of the Chittagong district. Throughout history, the Chittagong Hill Tracts were within Bangladesh, with the ancient town of Harikela. In 1860, the Chittagong Hill Tracts were separated from Chittagong and made into a separate district. The British declared the hill region of Chittagong as a separate district to protect their imperial interests.

The study traces the political events that led to this catastrophic loss. After the Battle of Plassey, the British started assigning priests like William Carey and others who worked in Bengal. Consequently, The East-India Company came into power which later opened up missionary work to Bengal and other parts of the Indian subcontinent. That was the first political initiative to pave the way for colonialism and evangelisation of this subcontinent. When Britain gained control of India's destiny, the English people went through many political and social crises [8]. The number of missionary activities has expanded over the battle of Plassey. Those who sent missionaries overseas have often encouraged them to avoid political action.

However, the territory's unique status was abolished by a constitutional change in 1963 and designated as a "tribal area." During Ayub Khan's administration, a foundational democracy was introduced, allowing tribal people to participate in the national political process. At this time, the tribal employees were transferred outside the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The tribal-only police force was abolished, and the administrative system of the Chittagong Hill Tracts was brought under the control of the central administration. This ended the special status of the Chittagong Hill Tracts given by the British government. As a result, on June 18, 1965, an organisation named 'Parbatya Chatra Samiti' was born under the leadership of Manabendra Narayan Larma [9].

After the liberation war, Manabendra Narayan Larma met Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on February 15, 1972, and raised the four-point demand of the tribals. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not fulfil any of the four-point. Instead, he told them to become Bengali, and the Tribals became angry. As a result, Manabendra Narayan Larma led the formation of the Rangamati Communist Party on May 15, 1972. On May 16, the public organisation of the Communist Party, Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), was formed. However, the freedom to preach one's religion is viewed differently concerning Muslims. Muslim missionaries are often suspected of being terrorists. On the other hand, Christian missionaries had no obstacles.

However, the tremendous hardship of the agricultural people in Bengal caused them to move from this well-known concept and get fully involved in attempts to reform through government action. The freedom to preach one's religion is viewed differently concerning Muslims. Muslim missionaries are suspected of being terrorists. They are threatened with death and accused of spreading misinformation. The Christian missions were established between 1900 and 1947 and between 1947 and 1971. It is an eternal fact that the tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts were never permanent residents. Instead, they have come to the Chittagong Hill Tracts from different parts of Tibet, China, Myanmar, and India at different times. They have settled in this area from different countries at different times. Moreover, the constitution has not given anyone the authority to give the authority of any specific area. However, some disaffected NGO circles and Christian missionary groups have stepped up to establish and prove the tribal ethnic communities in Bangladesh as 'indigenous' of the country.

Although the propagation of Christianity was one of the colonial powers' agendas, just like the establishment of the East Indies Company, the most significant goal was economic and political exploitation. Although the British left the Indian subcontinent, their influence never left the Indian subcontinent, especially in Bengal. After the formation of Bangladesh, new missions were particularly effective because the Christian engagement in their battle for liberation influenced the government's attitude toward them. The Christian missionaries made a crucial political decision in this regard. As a result, the government of Bangladesh granted them the constitutional opportunity to preach Christianity over the country.

The tribals, predominantly pagan, are the primary targets of Christian missionaries. According to figures from 1992, over 30% of them had already converted to Christianity. They can be found in three areas of Bangladesh: Northern Bangladesh, which includes the districts of Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Bogra; Chattagram Hill Tracts; and North Mymensingh and Sylhet districts. The Chittagong Hill Tracts [10] constitute a vital part of Christian evangelising in Bangladesh. For evangelical efforts, the Hill Tracts are a primary emphasis. One of the main politics of the missionaries in CHT is to increase disputes among the Hindu-Muslim community. Moreover, they spread hatred and misinformation among the tribal community about Islam and Muslims. Of them is to present the Muslim community as fundamentalist and terrorist. The missionaries who spread Christianity do not face any obstacles or threats in CHT rather than in Islam. The Christian missions' long-term ambition is to turn the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which cover one-tenth of Bangladesh's land, into an independent "Christian State." They are funding tribal insurgents in this effort. Across the border, the so-called "Seven Sisters," Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh, have the most people in the mountainous area have converted to Christianity.

In the mountainous parts of Bangladesh next to these hilly areas, the number of Christians has expanded dramatically. Beautiful churches and missionary schools have sprung up in the hills. Recent regional, national and international developments suggest that the Chittagong Hill Tracts may gain "independence" one-day under UN auspices, like South Sudan and East Timor in Indonesia. Another independent country [11] can be formed in the heart of Bangladesh. Christian-dominated European donors and NGOs are moving forward, targeting the CHT. A map of Bangladesh was created by a foreign corporation [12], ignoring the Chittagong region. A few Indigenous people are working to establish an independent state called 'Jumland' [13] in the hilly region of this country. They also created the so-called Jumland flag, government structure, and logo. Besides, the hill districts of Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari, Chittagong, and Cox's Bazaar have been shown in different colours in the map published on Facebook. As the experiences of Sudan and East Timor show, after minorities begin to think of themselves as separate ethnic groups, they adopt a distinctive identity and create traditions distinct from the larger population of a country. Indian intelligence agencies started working on a 'simple' yet sinister plan to separate the Chittagong Hill Tracts from Bangladesh to counter Chinese pressure and Burmese influence.

By fostering a sense of individuality among the minorities, they are turned into the population of an imaginary state. Separate state consciousness is created among them. That will be evident from observing the ongoing situation in our hill country. Western powers sided with Indonesia's East Timor and South Sudan against Christian-dominated North Sudan for a separate state. In Bangladesh, Western powers are also encouraging hill tribes and Arakanese

Rohingyas to form a separate state with the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Cox's Bazar. The trend of spreading Christianity among the hill people through western influences and missionaries will be stronger if a Christian state is established in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Establishing independent tribal states in hill Bengal favours US interests. On the other hand, to teach China [14] as soon as possible, the small hill state of Bengal favours the interests of the western socialist countries. Hence the hill tribes who want to identify as tribals and the missionaries and NGOs are trying to establish their desired 'tribal state' in the region. In addition to accusing the country's security forces of repression, they have also appealed to the United Nations and the European Union Parliament to recognise the region as a "Jumland." The goal of converting Muslims to Christianity was also done through the offer of giving opportunities. Missions in metropolitan areas targeted educated individuals effectively. For those with unsuccessful attempts of conversion through mission education, other ways were used, resulting in them being secularised or de-Islamized. The missionaries get support from their work area's administration and political parties. Christian missionaries have been operating in the mountains for many years.

According to reports, whole communities of some of the world's poorest and most disadvantaged minorities have converted to Christianity. The newly converted tribal people curry sympathy from foreign countries by spreading misinformation about oppression, the lack of facilities and threats of death by Muslims. The missionaries sponsor the converts' children for higher education in foreign countries. Their goal is the establishment of a new Christian state in Bangladesh. The Chakma community in Tripura staged a movement there in 2021 with claims about the disappearance of the Chakmas and demanded the annexation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts to India, which in reality, was part of an international conspiracy.

The conspiracy to separate the Chittagong Hill Tracts from the mainland is ripe now. They are very focused on their mission to build a Christian country. However, peace returned to the region in exchange for the lives of hundreds of army officers and members. The armed cadres of JSS (Jana Samhati Samiti) and UPDF (United People's Democratic Front) have built illegal arms and drug stores in the Chittagong Hill Tracts due to the strategic removal of 238 army camps. They are successful in their step to remove these camps. This decision by the government has opened the door for self-armed terrorist groups to engage in drug trafficking, extortion, murder, torture, and looting.

The Bengali Muslims of the area are helpless due to the removal of the army camp. Moreover, the armed cadres of JSS and UPDF have become reckless with this opportunity. Also, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) is failing to perform its proper duties. Several separatist armed groups [15] from Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Myanmar have set up bases in the vulnerable hill districts of Bandarban, Khagrachari, and Rangamati districts to withdraw army camps. Due to the extortion of armed cadres of JSS and UPDF, Bengalis are not only being held hostage, but innocent Bengalis are also being killed one after another. Many Bengali families intend to leave the hills due to the closure of an army camp on the one hand and lack of cooperation from the local administration on the other. Although peace has returned to the hills due to the peace agreement concluded on December 2, 1997, now local and foreign conspirators, including armed hill groups, have occupied the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The conspirators support the Peace Forces with a massive amount of money and arms with the help of some NGOs. At the same time, they embarked on a mission to make the area a Christian-dominated area by evicting the Bengali and patriotic army from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. As part of the plot, a mysterious commission was formed by the country's alleged intellectuals named 'Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission.' On December 2, 1997, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) was formed to oversee the implementation of the peace agreement signed by the Chittagong Hill Tracts Political Organization with the government. Twelve people [16] from Bangladesh and other countries were made members of the conference of experts held on May 31 and June 1 2008, in Copenhagen, Denmark. Lord Eric Avebury, a member of the British House of Lords, Sultana Kamal Chakraborty, a former adviser to the caretaker government of Bangladesh, and Denmark's Ida Nikleisen co-chaired the commission.

This commission recommends the withdrawal of the army from the three hill districts, removal of immigrant Bengalis and resettlement of hill people there, transfer of power to hill chief local government according to the agreement, and confirmation of land ownership of hill people through Land Commission. The commission also recommended stopping the Bengalis from living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission has asked the Bengali settlers living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to stop all facilities, including rations, if they do not want to move to the plains voluntarily. These so-called intellectuals work as agents of foreign agendas by implementing these questionable agreements that threaten the country's sovereignty.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts suddenly became turbulent due to the Pahari-Bengali conflict. Nowadays, the conflict over the dense forests of the Chittagong Hill Tracts has also engulfed national politics. Shanti Bahini, or JSS, is spreading unrest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Most of the members of Shanti Bahini are from the Chakma community. They are diaspora in their own country. These people of Shanti Bahini called Bengalis 'outsiders' and 'settlers' in their own country, demanded their expulsion and subjected Bengalis to torture, oppression, terror, and murder.

Nevertheless, they came centuries ago from Tibet, Rosang, Arakan, Myanmar, or different regions of the Indian subcontinent or someplace further away. They are outsiders, immigrants, and foreigners, never natives or natives. They were bringing Indian Chakmas to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and trying to make the Chakma majority not only 'Jumland' but also separate Bangladesh from the Chittagong Hill Tracts and make independent 'Chakma Land.' These Chakma terrorists attempt to establish a reign of terror in the hills. Some NGOs play a role in misidentifying them as tribals to the outside world. Even these terrorists force various Muslim tribes to leave their homes by torturing and killing them.

THREAT THROUGH EDUCATION

Education is one of the keys to conversion for Christian missionaries in Bangladesh. The education system was an important tool to evangelise people during the pre-colonial age of the Indian subcontinent. With large imperial cultural imports across South Asia, education was crucial in which colonialism planted its seeds. Several prominent Christian development groups are actively involved in education projects in Bangladesh. Portuguese Captain Pedro Tavares came to the Mughal Emperor Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar in Fatehpur Sikri palace with a proposal to build a permanent port in Hooghly [17]. The Emperor permitted him to build the

port, authorised the missionaries to teach Christianity, and establish towns, churches, and educational institutions in Bengal. On January 9, 1606, Pope Paul led Augustine missionaries from Shripur to Dhaka, Narikul, Katrabu, and Andarkilla in Chittagong, introducing a golden phase of Christianity to Bengal. They erected churches and numerous educational institutions in those regions from 1612 to 1621. For example, in the 18th century, Christian missionary William Carey's mission in Serampore, West Bengal, laid the Bengal Renaissance groundwork.

He founded Serampore College [18] and spearheaded the introduction of contemporary European science-based education to Bengalis. To guarantee that students could acquire contemporary topics using traditional teaching-learning techniques, he supported local pathshala and linked them to Serampore College. In addition, a convent and the Jesuit College of St. Paul [19] were founded. In 1622, when Father Peter Gomes was appointed Rector of St. Paul College, the education mission began to grow. Dome Antonio de Rozario understood the importance of studying Bengali to evangelise people in Bengal, and in 1668 he published "Brahman-Roman Catholic Sambad [20]." Later on, after the Battle of Plassey, the British and Missionaries started working together. However, the missionaries were kept from politics and had enmity before the Battle of Plassey.

Portuguese missionaries adopted Bengali to promote Christianity by printing and translating the Gospel from the seventeenth through the mid-eighteenth centuries. Likewise, the Jesuit preceptors were the first to write books and periodicals to convert Bengal's indigenous people. The Portuguese Catholic missionaries have made significant contributions to the development of Bengali literature; for example, in 1735, Fr. Manuel da Assumpsao produced a Bengali book from Lisbon called "*Kripa Shastrer Orthobhed* [21].

Antonio Claudius also learned Bengali and published some little pamphlets on Christian doctrine in Bengali between 1712 and 1714." As a result, British missionary William Carey, founder of the English Baptist Missionary Society (1792), lifetime missionary to India, and educator whose mission at Shrirampur (Serampore) established the model for contemporary missionaries.

He has been designated as the "Father of Bengali Prose" for his grammar, dictionaries, and translations. With the entrance of William Carey in 1773, the Protestants began their missionary attack on Bangladesh's language and culture. The Baptist Missionary Society of England supported his missionary efforts. He dedicated his life to translating the Bible and other Christian works into Bengali. The labour of missionaries like William Carey and his colleagues, who were familiar with Indian culture and attempted to grasp Indian thought to translate the Bible, made the Bengali language and literature recognised and appreciated in Europe for the first time.

William Carey and his colleagues focused on developing Christian literature, publishing various dictionaries and grammars of Indian languages, translating the Bible into Bengali and other Indian languages, and establishing several schools nationwide. He authored *A Dictionary of Bengali Language* [22]. As a part of the educational revolution, Carey translated the Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese, and Sanskrit after being appointed to teach Bengali, Sanskrit, and Marathi at Fort William College [23] in 1801. Parts of it were also translated into 29 additional languages and dialects. He edited grammar in Bhotia with Marshman and

developed six more grammar in other languages. Carey and Marshman translated three volumes of the Hindu epic poem Ramayana and dictionaries in Bengali, Sanskrit, and Marathi. He also contributed to developing a Bengali typeface for the printing and publishing of newspapers and magazines.

The Christian missions have left an indelible mark on education in the Indian subcontinent. The missionaries published numerous newspapers intending to spread Christianity in Bengal, including the *Digdarshan* (1818), *Samachar Dorpan* (1818), *Gospel Magazine* (1819), *Christer Rajyo Briddhi* (1822), *Upodesh* (1847), *Satya Prodip* (1850), *Saptahik Sambad* (1858), and *Christian Mohila* (1881). These journals were significant in preaching and promoting Christianity in the region. William Carey founded India's first degree-granting university [24] as an English Christian missionary.

Through regional and national conferences, ecumenical organisations have significantly impacted Christian education in the 21st century. Between 1816 and 1818, Baptist missionary efforts impacted the education landscape of Bengal in fundamental ways, founding more than 100 primary schools [25] and Serampore College in undivided Bengal. These schools generally linked Sunday school curriculum with day schools affiliated with missions; instructors who taught Sunday school also taught at day schools. Churches focus on moral education and Christian character building and offer secular education as part of broader national education systems. In 1822, the first English woman, Miss Mary Ann Cooke, began working as a missionary. She was a pioneer in establishing girls' schools in Bengal.

From 1823 to 1833, Baptist missionaries created girls' schools in Burdwan, Bankura, Barisal, Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, and their various mission posts. Dissatisfied with the dismal performance of these institutions, the priests shifted their focus to residential schools. These schools were critical in converting lower-class individuals to Christianity. However, it is widely acknowledged that Christians made significant contributions to contemporary education in Bengal. For Christianity to grow in the twentieth century, the churches adopted several new strategies, described as a "revolution of preaching Christianity." The preceding ways of promoting Christianity were used in social welfare and development, educational, and medical organisations. After the war of independence, when the missionaries got legal permission to preach religion, they started their job with vigour.

According to Md. Saidul Islam, giving young women food and shelter is a part of the NGO strategies in Bangladesh. The missionaries start their task through social activities like financial, educational, and economic support, gradually taking steps to control social policy and bureaucracy. Education is one of the practical tools of Christian missionaries and NGOs in proselyting people. The naive tribals are offered accessible educational facilities to their Children. Several institutions were built to isolate students from their families; this seclusion imposed by residential institutions developed a sense of reliance upon these missions. They have established several schools and colleges in different parts of the country.

They have founded 67 schools [26] in the Garo tribe only. Even though they are successful with their plan to draw the attention of disadvantaged individuals as they often give stipends and housing, they have been very successful among the students in their mission schools. The NGOs were successful among women. Several groups work among Muslim women in the country. The

tribal girls are given scholarships to study in national and international universities. After their education, they are provided with suitable jobs to win their hearts.

Furthermore, Christian NGOs and missionaries distribute translated Bible and other booklets. During the liberation war and natural disasters like the cyclone of 1970, NGOs and missionaries came forward to help distressed people with relief and medical treatments. They took the opportunity to win people's hearts and earn their trust. To do this, they started building schools, colleges, and universities and provided scholarships for the people. They have also changed the primary curriculum for the educational system in CHT by adding some Christian-related subjects. In the post-liberation period, they established Bangladesh Catholic Education Board Trust (BCEBT) in 1986 [27]. They now conduct a range of education initiatives for underprivileged people, including church-based schools that provide services to marginalised people. Catholic schools, in particular, have a long history of providing high-quality education. Catholic schools are often regarded as some of the best in Bangladesh. According to 2008 research, Catholic school pupils passed the Secondary School Certificate test at 96%, compared to the national average of 70%.

The Association of Catholics maintains their identification as Bangladeshi educational instructors as they deliver the core curriculum. The purpose of all Christian organisations is to preserve and promote Christian teachings among Christians resulting in the development of Bangladesh's Christian community. The Christian community has contributed to Bangladesh's education system development. Children of diverse backgrounds attend Christian schools. Teachers handle religious diversity and issues of pluralism in the classroom, even though it is not a standard curriculum feature. Notre Dame College, Asian University for women, St Joseph Higher Secondary School, and St Gregory's High School are the country's most significant academic institutions. In their faith, a substantial ethnic minority of the country has been baptised.

The priests' agents have imposed their agenda. They have removed moral education courses from the curriculum, preventing this country from receiving moral education. On the other hand, the UN Department of Education [28] is in charge of reforming the country's educational curriculum.

Even more worrying is that non-Muslims are appointed to positions such as the Madrasah Education's Director-General. The secularists always uphold the secular educational system and fulfil the agendas of Christians in the name of educational development. Their primary target is to import the secular educational system while undermining the influence of Islam.

Religious threat

Bangladesh is one of the countries of inter-religious harmony in the world. The people of Bangladesh are generally religious. The people of this country have placed religion in their hearts and passions; they are very passionate about religion. Many circles are always active in achieving their interests by using this passion of theirs. Christianity has been the third most followed and the fastest-growing religion in Bangladesh for the last few years. Christianity is gaining ground in one of the Muslim-majority countries in South Asia, and the local preachers can even foresee a day when their country will finally become a Christian country [29].

Christianity is not new; Christianization has been going on in this area for almost 400 years [30], and the Christian community has been one of the fastest-growing religious communities, particularly in CHT, for the last few decades. However, Christianity has been practised here with the efforts of various missionaries. Bangladesh's Christian population is organised into two main branches: Catholic and Protestant. Despite minor changes in organisation and operations, their aim is nearly the same. Christianity was first introduced in this subcontinent by Apostle Thomas in 52 AD. At the beginning of the 16th century, Portuguese traders carried Christianity to present-day Bangladesh via the harbour city of Chattagram.

The Portuguese helped Sultan Giasuddin Mahmud Shah (Sultan of Gour) during Sher Khan's raid on Gour on April 6, 1538, and Sultan Giasuddin Mahmud Shah was delighted with them. Mughal emperor Akbar granted the Portuguese permission to establish permanent colonies and churches in Bengal in 1577. Simultaneously, the missionaries were granted authority to promote Christianity and establish Bengal villages, churches, and educational institutions. As a result, they were granted permission to reside and open customs houses at Satgaon (near modern Hooghly) in West Bengal (India) and Chittagong in Bangladesh in 1537. Their religious activity in Bengal began to flourish by planting Churches in different parts of the region. The Portuguese were the first Christians in Bengal.

Later, their descendants became the first indigenous Christians after intermarried with the native women. Then, there were the indigenous Hindus and Muslims who converted to Christianity. The earliest church in Bangladesh was constructed at Chandecan (Old Jessore) in 1599. The Bishop of Cochin realised Bengal was the ideal place for promoting Christianity. In 1576, he assigned two famous Jesuit Catholic religious missionaries to Bengal, Father Antony Vaz and Father Pedro Peter Dias. His second church in Bengal, known as "*St. John the Baptist Church*," was erected on June 24, 1600, in Chittagong by Jesuit Fathers Francisco Fernandez and Andre Boves with financial support from the King of Arakan.

The next hundred years are marked by extortion, pillage, and murderous conspiracies by Christian missionaries and merchants. They succeeded in their business and missionary goals. They incited disputes and confrontations among Bengalis. They incited Hindus and Muslims [31] to oppose one another. Due to evangelical enthusiasm, numerous missionaries came to India and decided to stay despite legal restrictions.

After the Battle of Plassey, the plot of missionary activities changed and gained new strength. The Baptist Missionary Society was the most significant to send missionaries to Bengal. The missionaries are dedicated to serving the religion. Many women and fathers were working on preaching Christianity among the heathens of Bengal. They have almost won the destitute's hearts through various tactics. They are achieving their objectives through the globalisation process.

They had already converted half of the tribal peoples [32] of the country. They planned meticulously to evangelise the Hindu and Muslim communities as well. After 1947 when British colonial rule ended, conversions to Christianity continued in East Pakistan (what became Bangladesh). It is important to note that the floodgates of conversions to Christianity opened after British rule, with the number of new Christians in East Pakistan from 1947 to 1970 exceeding the number of converts [33] during the colonial period. During this time,

missionaries and donors worked energetically without official support. The Pakistani government did not prevent access to churches.

The missionaries were very active conversions by taking advantage of the locals' hardships and disadvantaged circumstances. The neo-missionaries established their offices in disadvantaged areas such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and among ethnic minorities such as the Chakma, Marma, Bawm, Tripura, Garo, Hajong, and Coch of the Mymensingh region. There were some standard practices in the missionaries' efforts to evangelise. In their evangelical works in CHT among the indigenous people, for example, they usually start by settling in an area in the name of social work and develop good relations with the local people. Then they would help them on different occasions and build educational institutes.

They would then extend financial aid and provide animals to those in need. Most indigenous communities, excluding Bengalis who live in CHT areas, live below the poverty line. The missionaries take an opportunity to control the minds of their targets then. Sometimes, the missionaries collect funds abroad and invite religious people to visit those areas to make a strong impression on the communities.

The Christian missionaries control CHT with the help of different NGOs. For example, they might arrange seminars and symposiums and sponsor foreign visitors to spend time there. After building trust among the locals, the missionaries provided them with the Bibles translated into Bangla, in addition to other books, leaflets, and other materials on Christianity. In the final stage, they invite them to accept Christianity. The indigenous people would find it difficult to decline such invitations after all the assistance provided to them by the missionaries. If anyone refuses the invitation, they will be deprived of further support. Many are threatened and even killed by mountainous terrorists. It is like an unwritten constitution to preach Islam in CHT as the Muslim missionaries face many obstacles to providing *da'wah* to the indigenous people of CHT.

Christian missionaries spread misinformation and hatred among the tribal people about Islam and Muslim missionaries. The great agenda of these missionaries is to turn Bangladesh into a secular county and demolish Islam's influence. They would also promote anti-Islamic movements under the banner of the secular movement. They want to remove Islam as a state religion from the constitution.

CONCLUSION

There have been a lot of NGOs running their operations since the independence, but the number of them dramatically increased after the peace treaty on December 2, 1997. After the treaty, they got the momentum to preach Christianity. Basically, through the agreement executed on December 2, 1997, domestic and foreign conspirators got a license to move freely in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. They often spread hatred and enmity against the military among the tribals. They have been very successful in building animosity among the tribals and Bengalis. The missionaries intoxicate the tribals for communal war. The NGOs have been accused of engaging in various conspiracies, including loan programs for higher profits, conversion of tribals to Christianity, support for guerilla activities of full autonomy, incitement against the army, communal incitement, disinformation of human rights violations against tribals, and creation of political instability. Efforts are made to transform the Chittagong Hill Tracts into an

independent Christian state. The missionaries and NGOs work together to make this nefarious plot successful. They follow other avenues to reach their goal, including politics, education, and religious sectors. They use these sectors for conversion. Although the Bangladesh constitution gives everyone the right to preach his religion but conspiracy against the sovereignty of the country is a crime.

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