



Advent of Salvation Army in India

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KEYWORDS

India under the British rule in 19th century was growing in many fields, though the government took initiative interest to uplift the downtrodden people there was still failure Mr. Frederick St. George De Lautour Tucker brought 'The Light of Love' Christ to the untouchables in India. The coming of the Salvation Army brought life and light to the destitute of India.

India is the oldest Missionary field of the Salvation Army. Frederick St. George De Lautour Tucker of the Indian Civil Services, read a copy of the War Cry became Salvationist and as Major Tucker (later Commissioner Booth Tucker) took the Indian name of Fakir Singh and commenced the Salvation Army work in Bombay on 19th September 1882. He came to Bombay along with three officers. Among the three, one was a woman. Her name was St. Mary Thomson. At first there was opposition from the public and the government side. But after a few months the government concluded the confrontation by making an agreement with the Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army history in India started with Frederick Tucker popularly known as Booth Tucker. Booth Tucker a man with a heart of compassion for the poor relinquished his Prince like life for the sake of the poor Indians considered as out castes.

Frederick Tucker

While Lord Wellesley was the Governor-General of India. Mr. Henry Saint George worked as Accountant-General India. His five children served in Indian public services. When Henry George was in Banaras in 1858, The Indian mutiny started. At the time Frederick was five years old. He was born on 21st March 1853 at Mongeer in Bengal in North East India, where his father William Thoruchill Tucker was Deputy Commissioner. Frederick started his school life in a private school run by Mr. Blend in England. In 1866 his college life started with Chelton Ham College and continued upto 1873. In 1874 he appeared for I.C.S. examination. He chose law as his special subject. As a matter of fact his first appointment in the Salvation Army was legal advisor. While he was 21 years old he was appointed as Deputy Commissioner in Amristar, then to Simla and finally at Tharmasala. In 1875 the American evangelist Moody and Sankuy returned for a second time campaign Britain. By this time the spiritual longing of Tucker became so vivid. He made decisions for god in Moody's enquiry room. After that during his holiday he went to Sandawan, a holiday center. There he met Miss. Louisa Mary Bode and her sister conducting a campaign among the soldiers. Frederick Tucker fell in love with Lousia Bode and they got married. Their marriage took place in Amristar. Tucker's family objected his marriage because the bride was 18 years older than the groom.

Tucker being a Christian had the zeal to take the gospel to the poor and the untouchables of India. While working as a Deputy Commissioner he used his leisure time to preach in the street. The British government objected the activity of Tucker and asked him to stop his street preaching but Tucker argued

the government that he is using his won time only. Because of this there was misunderstanding between the government and Tucker.

In this time one of the front line daily magazine made news about the Salvation Army. When Tucker read that news he wanted to know no more about the organization. So he sent a donation to the founder. For that he promptly received back a receipt and a copy of the War Cry, the official magazine of the Army December 1880. The article about prophet Nathan made impression in the mind of Tucker. So he wants to join with the Salvation Army. For that purpose he went to England on leave for six months. When he told his idea of joining with the Salvation Army, his father became furious and told him if Tucker will join in the Salvation Army he cannot claim a single penny from his wealth. The multimillionaire left all his property and became a pauper for the sake of Christ and joined the Salvation Army.

In London, Frederic met William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army and told him that he wanted to join the Salvation Army on knowing Frederick as a wealthy and highly qualified gentleman. William Booth told him to know the other side of the people of Salvation Army and come back for four month. After his

arrival in England and interview with William Booth, Tucker studied the Salvation Army. When his leave had all but expired Tucker again called on the General and told him that he was of the same mind in regard to becoming an officer. The General was still dubious as to whether a person from Tuckers sphere would be suitable for Salvation Army officership. He advised him that if he resigned from the Indian Civil Service on his own initiative he would accept him. So Tucker resigned. In the month of a August 1881 with the rank of major. Tucker was appointed to headquarters where he served in the legal and candidates departments while at the same time discussing the cost of starting and maintaining Salvation Army operations in India.

Tucker held strongly that the approach to Indians should be from the Indian standpoint and that it was no part of the business of a Missionary to Europeanize Orientals. Further more that for Missionaries to live in a native style would largely solve the financial problem. To complete his education Tucker was given the over site for a few weeks of the Camber Well Corps. Captain Henry Bullard and Lieutenant Arthur Norman and Mary Thompson were selected to go with Tucker to India. Entry of the Salvation Army upon the Missionary field, excited great interest and large enthusiastic crowds gathered for the farewell meetings of the pioneers. At Saint James Hall London on 17th July 1882 Catherine Booth presented the Army flag to the party.

A month later major and Mrs. Tucker Captain Bullard Lieutenant Norman and Mary Thompson and sister Jennings sailed

as fore castle passengers. On the small P & O Linership Ancona Sister Jennings became sick when the ship was passing through the Mediterranean. So the ship was stopped at Port Said in the Suez canal and Jennings and Mrs. Tucker returned to London in another ship. The four remaining passengers landed at Bombay on 19.9.1882 to start the activities of the Army in this sub continent. Frederick Tucker called India as the most wonderful Missionary field in the world and he had known about the Missionary work from childhood where many other Missions came and went without anyone knowing anything about them.

Army in India

To the astonishment of the pioneers a large force of police awaited them. Mr. William Gladwin in Bombay welcomed this party and took them to Apollopandar and helped them to start the Army. The very next day opposition to the Army camp in the size of policemen. The Commissioner of Police did not allow the Salvationists to hold meetings or processions. But the pioneers marched with their flag. So they were arrested and put it into jail. Next day, Parsi Magistrate dismissed them with a caution. A second arrest was followed with a fine. But when a distinct was made the police officer who was Superintendent himself bought the goods and returned them to the Army people.

A series of prosecutions followed. The first resulted in the discharged of the accused after a masterly defence made by Tucker. Based on the Queens proclamation that all in authority should not only abstain from interference with religious belief and worship and impartial protection of the law. Tuckers argument led to the establishment of the rights for which he condentent. When the Salvation Army were persecuted Mr. Babukeshap Chandrasen, Leader of the Brahma Samaj wrote a letter to Tucker and supported him in his effort. Mr. Babu signed his letter as, "Yours ever for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven in India". The Indian Mirror published from Calcutta made a challenge to the Salvation Army as follows, "If the Salvation Army can prove that Christianity is really the religion of the poor that it can doff lavender cloured preaches and Christies paternt helmet to put on the mendicints, ochre garb, that it can dance, shout and march with the ordinary poor human from the mill, the mine and the workshop.

If the Salvation Army can prove that it will have done enough service toWards the future evangelization of India. Once Tucker was put into custody for one month after his release a final prosecution took place. In this juncture the government made

an agreement with Tucker that he should not go in procession in the streets of Muslims. These agreements brought an end to the persecutions of the Salvationists in India. While Booth Tucker was in the jail for one month (1883 March 8 - 8th April 1883) he was given a number 331. After this there was no hindrance from the government side.

The adoption of Indian food, dress, names and customs gave pioneers ready access to the people especially in the villages. In addition to purely evangelistic work various social agencies were inaugurated for the amelioration of distresses from famine, food and epidemic. Education facilities such as elementary, secondary and industrial schools cottage industries and settlements were provided for the depressed classes. Medical work originated at Nagercoil in 1893 when Harry Andrews set up a dispensary at the head quarters there. The medical work has grown and expanded from this work among the then criminal tribes began in 1908 at government invitation.

Since Tucker knew Hindi and some other Indian languages it was easy for him to work. He worked among the poor villagers, the out castes and backWard class people. Thousands of men and women became Salvationists. In order to help the poor various social programmes were also carried out. Cottage industries and village schools were started to help the poor.

In 1894 two boarding schools for the education of the children of officers of the Army were established. These have since been affiliated with two small orphanages opened for the accommodation of some thirty six children received by the Army from the famine districts of Central India in 1896. In addition to the above fifty vernacular and one English primary school have been opened in needy village centers with an attendance about twelve hundred and fifty children.

The Salvation Army maintained seven General hospitals, two leprasy hospitals and four dispensaries. One disabled children home, twenty two boys' homes, sixteen girls' homes. Five schools and hostels for the blind, one school and hostel for the deaf, twenty six schools and colleges, 129 elementary schools, five homes for elder, four red shield guest houses, three free feeding centers, three Vocation Training Centers for the handicapped, four Day Care Centers, two students and working men's hostels, three motherless babies home six students and working women's hostels, two eye programme hospitals, six community health centers, five HIV / AIDS centers, five salvage centers, five tailoring centers and seven Vocational Training Centers in India for the welfare of people.

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