

LESSON -15

BIBLE - In India

Reference : 1 Thess. 2 : 1-16

Memory verse : Colo. 3 : 16

Objective: To know how we got the Bible in our Indian Languages. It is our privilege to have Bible in our own language. It is God's gift to us by His abundant grace. We must be excited to study and tell others about it.

Introduction: It is believed that the Apostle Thomas came to India in the 1st century and established Churches in Kerala and elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Christians in India never had a Bible in their own language until 200 Years back. Today, the Bible is available in almost all Indian languages. How has this happened? We must know that there were several man of God who sacrificed their very lives for the translation and publishing of the Bible into Indian languages. Lets study about them.

WILLIAM CAREY :

William Carey was an English Missionary who took a key role in translating the Bible into Indian Languages. Born in 1761 in Northamptonshire, England, he became an apprentice shoemaker in a shop. When he was quite young he was converted in 1779 through a fellow apprentice shoemaker and was baptised as a believer in 1783. After some local preaching Carey became a Pastor of a chapel, supporting himself through teaching and shoemaking. He deeply felt that it is the obligation of the Christians to preach the gospel to the heathens. In 1792 in a sermon at Nottingham he urged Christians, "to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God." With a true vision for the mission among the Heathens, Wiliam Carey and his family sailed to India and reached calcutta. In the ship itself he

studied Bengali. In Calcutta he was straitened by sickness, poverty, adverse climate, starvation etc., one after another. His five-year-old son died of illness. His wife became mentally sick. In spite of all this, he had always cherished the desire of translating the Bible into Indian languages. His first venture was to translate the New Testament into Bengali which he fulfilled in 1799. Some of his fellow workers who arrived from England at that time provided him with a printing press and other materials for printing Bengali Bible. William Carey printed and published the New Testament at first and then the entire Bible. Following that, he learned the other Indian languages namely Sanskrit, Marathi, Telugu, Kanares, Gujarathi and Hindi and began translating the Bible into these languages. In the meantime, he went back home and returned in 1813. In the latter 20 years he lived continuously in India and set his mind on translating the Bible into other languages together with other evangelistic activities. During this time his printing press was set on fire. Much of his translation work and the press was destroyed. Nevertheless, he was not disappointed, by the help from other countries, he restored the printing press and other works. Before William Carey's death, he could see his vision fulfilled the translation of Bible into more than 40 languages.

In India there are more than 264 languages. The Bible has been translated only into 124 languages partly or fully so far. What about other language groups? Who will give them the Bible?

THE TAMIL BIBLE : 1714

Long before the Bible was translated into Malayalam, Tamil Bible existed. The Tamil translation was performed by the Danish missionary Bertholomew Ziegen Balg in 1714.

THE MALAYALAM BIBLE : 1841

Before the arrival of the missionaries, the Keralites did not have Bible in their vernacular Malayalam. Some syriac Bibles either in full or in part were kept in certain places. The societies like the Church Missionary society, the Bassal Evangelical Mission and the German Evangelical Mission, have notably made their praiseworthy contribution to the task of translating and publishing the Malayalam Bible.

It was Claudius Buchanan, the C. M. S. Missionary who was the pioneer in this task. He got a Manuscript copy of the Syriac Bible from Angamali in 1800. Accorded by the Missionary, Timmappapilla translated

the four Gospels into Malayalam in 1811. Soon Dr. Buchanan got it printed in Bombay and published it in Kerala. This was the first Bible in Malayalam. In 1821 a printing press was established by C.M.S. in Kottayam. The next person who shouldered the task of translating Bible into Malayalam was Benjamin Baily who reached southern Kerala as the C. M. S. Missionary. In 1825 he published the Gospel according to Matthew, in Malayalam from Kottayam C.M.S. press. In 1829 the New Testament and in 1841 the Old Testament were published. Thus the full Bible was available in Malayalam by 1841. About the same period, another German Missionary named Herman Gundert reached Northern Kerala (Malabar). He learned Malayalam and made his translation into it. His New Testament was completed in 1854 and the Old Testament in 1885.

Later, the Bible Society in co-operation with various other Christian denomination selected a committee to revise the Malayalam Bible. Thus the Revised New Testament was published in 1889 and the full Bible in 1910. This Bible is commonly used even today. Another new Malayalam translation was published in 1979 by the Bible Society, but it is not commonly accepted.

THE BLIND'S BIBLE (BRAILLE BIBLE):

A Special Bible had been published for the blind people. It was devised by Braille the French inventor. In it letters are projected dots which the blind people can feel by hands and read. Such Bibles have been translated into more than fifty languages. This has been greatly helpful for the blind people to know the scriptural truths.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC TRANSLATIONS:

The authorised Bible of the Roman Catholic Church is Jeromes Bible known as the Latin Valgate which was translated into Latin in the 4th century. It has 45 books in the Old Testament (6 of them are not commonly accepted) and 27 books in the New Testament. The Roman Catholic Church as a policy would not encourage translation of the Bible into other languages. Later in 1943 the Pope Pius X11 made some relaxation in this policy. Some individuals in Kerala have made their Malayalam translations which were later authorised by the Catholic Church. Yet, the First Malayalam New Testament translated and Published officially under the supervision of the Catholic Bishops was in 1977.

OUR PART:

Our country India stands second in the world population. Population of India is nearing 100 Crores which means one out of every seven is an Indian. Of these, 58 crores are villagers. Only 21/2 percent is Christian. Of these, those with evangelical conviction are not even one percent. It is our duty to bring the Gospel home to the people of India of diverse religious and languages. Of the 264 Indian languages, the Bible must be translated still into 240 languages. How urgent is the need of mission work and propagation of scriptures in India! Are you ready to take up this responsibility on your shoulders? Go yourself or send somebody. Spend for the cause or be spent yourself.

EXERCISE - 15

Answer the following questions

1. Which Apostle came to India & When?
2. Who translated the Bible into several Indian languages?
3. What adversities did William Carey had to face in Calcutta?
4. Into which Indian language was the Bible translated first?
5. Into how many Indian languages was Bible Translated before William Careys Death.
6. How many languages are there in India? Into how many Indian languages has the Bible been translated so far?
7. Who translated the Bible into Tamil and When?
8. Describe briefly the history of the Malayalam Bible emphasizing services of Dr. Buchanan, Benjamin Baily and Herman Gundert.

