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SATHTHIYA VAARTHAI

IBT Founder (Late) Rev. Prof. S. Panneer Selvam

WORD OF TRUTH -
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JESUS' TEACHINGS ON TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES

What are traditions and customs? It is the transmission of customs and beliefs from generation to generation. What are the most common traditions and customs in India? From clothing perspective, women wear sarees or salwars and men wear kurtas or dhothis. Typical Indian food is rice or chappati with vegetarian or non-vegetarian dishes, and both dishes, use lot of spices in their cooking. Family unit is very strong in India, and it is still a very patriarchal society. Caste is a very prominent part of Indian society, people are born to a particular caste and they remain in it till they die. Even with all modernization and economic liberalization, it still has a great hold over large sections of the society today. From cultural standpoint most of India is still very passionate with the game of cricket.

Cricket has the ability to unite people all over the country. Cricket superstars can be an

idol for many young Indians. These are but a few traditions and practices of India, if we list them all, then that itself will fill more than a book.

Now let us look at the traditions of Indian Christians. Regarding food habits, they follow their respective regional food habits of India, same is true with dressing habits. Most Indian Christians attend church service every Sunday. In fact church and its activities form a main part of their life, because it includes most of their family friends and relatives. In the church service men sit on one side of the main aisle and women sit on the other side of the aisle. Generally, women cover their heads during service time. However, caste still forms an important part of an Indian Christian family. In fact marriages are generally arranged and based on caste. Even today in some parts of India, the girl's family must give dowry to bridegroom's family

for marriage. Even in modern days, for many, their closest friends circle is formed based on caste. However, there are many exceptions to it, particularly in the last few decades. Indian Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter by mixing western and local traditions. People usually wear new clothes for Christmas and Easter services, they greet each other with folded hands or a handshake. Indian Christians still give great importance to education and discipline.

Now let us look at what Jesus taught us about traditions, customs and practices. Jesus was born in a Jewish family and lived during the 1st century AD in Israel. In those days, Jewish people gave great importance to traditions, customs, and practices passed on by their ancestors. We read from scriptures that Jewish people attended synagogue regularly during that time. Men sit in front and women take the back seats. Women had to cover their heads and were not allowed to talk in the synagogue. But still, the Synagogue was a great place for people to meet and socialize. Sabbath was observed very religiously, nothing gets done on the Sabbath day. Everyone had to observe a day of rest. Torah, the Jewish scriptures, provides laws for many aspects of daily life. It details rules for diet, purity or cleanliness, socializing, attendance at religious services in the synagogue, circumcision of newborn boys and tithing, and the requirement that people give 10 percent of their income to religious leaders. Jesus grew up learning the Torah and was well-versed in its teachings.

In addition to all this, there were so many rules and regulations that controlled a Jewish person in those days.

Now we will look at certain instances of Jesus' interactions about traditions and customs:

- 1) Jesus turns water to wine at a wedding in Cana.
- 2) Jesus said that he came to fulfill the law and not to undo it.
- 3) Jesus talks to little children.
- 4) Jesus says - eating with unclean hands is OK.
- 5) Jesus heals on the Sabbath.
- 6) Jesus heals lepers and other people possessed with demons.
- 7) Jesus dines with Zacchaeus.
- 8) Jesus praises Mary and tells Martha there is something more important than cooking.
- 9) Jesus talks to marginalized women.

Together we will journey through these instances to study how Jesus dealt with traditions, customs and practices.

1) Jesus turns water to wine at a wedding in Cana:

Jesus attended a wedding party in Cana and at this wedding party, they ran out of wine (John Ch 2, vs 1-12). When the host approached Jesus for help, he could have said, if you had not planned well, then just give water to the guests. But he did not respond that way to the wedding host. Instead, he realized that this wedding function is a festive occasion, and according to Jewish tradition, they should serve wine to all the guests. He wanted to help the guests who wanted to honor that tradition. So Jesus

performed the miracle of turning water into wine. In this instance, we see that Jesus wanted to honor the tradition.

2) Jesus said that he came to fulfill the law and not to undo it:

During Jesus' time, practicing the law to the fullest detail was regarded as very important to a holy life by the scribes. The laws for daily living were laid down by Moses in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. It was very difficult for common people, to understand the law; it was Pharisees and Sadducees who studied the law and interpreted the law for the people. People's lives, traditions, and practices were intertwined by following the law.

To answer a question regarding which law was the most important, Jesus said "love your God with all your heart, all your strength and might (Matthew Ch 22, vs 34-40). And the second most important law is to love your neighbor as you love yourself." He mentioned that the whole law is contained in it. In this instance, we read that Jesus approved of the law and said that following the most important tenet of the law is good. Jesus did not go into the most intricate details of the law, but approved of the general message of the law which is relevant to good and holy living. So, by approving the important tenet of the law, Jesus did not want to shake the foundations of the law, traditions, customs and practices of the people. Jesus said he came to fulfill the law, not to undo it.

In the above mentioned instances, we see Jesus respecting certain aspects of the tradition. Now we will see some instances where Jesus did not follow the traditions, in fact, we see that he intentionally let people

know that those traditions are not good for them.

3) Jesus talks to little children:

In olden days Jewish community elderly men used to sit and talk. Women and children generally do not take part in that discussion. It is much like what we had in India for many centuries. So we can understand that tradition much better. Elders generally think that children do not know much, and it would be embarrassing for children to take part in 'adult's only' discussions. This is not a religious practice, but it was the tradition in those days to have only adult men in a discussion. The discussion might have been about religion, rulers or whatever issues of those days were (wars, invasions, general life style etc.) In that assembly, it is unthinkable to have little children in their midst.

In one such instance, Jesus let little children come to him. Matthew Ch 19 vs 13-15. Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them". What would people have thought about this? His own disciples prevented them from getting close to Jesus. He wanted to talk to them, Jesus thought that children are the most innocent beings. As people grow older, they develop prejudice, hatred, envy and all kinds of evil habits. He saw that little children with no prejudice and hatred in them, are more pleasant to talk to, and because of this, Jesus invited little children and blessed them.

Just imagine what message this would have sent to the leaders of that day! They might have thought that Jesus insulted them. Or they might have thought that Jesus belittled them. It was not the intention of Jesus to belittle well-respected religious leaders and elders during that time. Jesus admired the innocence and humility of little children, and he wanted the elders to see this and appreciate it. Jesus, in this instance, is clearly trying to break the tradition of having adult men only meeting, and this is a message that still resonates with us today.

4) Jesus said that eating with unclean hands is OK:

Jewish people in those days used to eat with their hands; in India even today, most of us eat with our hands. Since we eat with our hands, we wash our hands with soap and water and only then we sit down to eat. It is hygienic to wash our hands; otherwise, we could get infectious diseases and suffer from it. Jesus' disciples ate without washing their hands. This bothered the Pharisees who tried to follow all the rituals, rules and traditions. We read in Mark Ch 7 vs 5 "So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?" To this Jesus replied as stated in Mark Ch 7 vs 6 - 9. He replied, *"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules." You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions." And he continued, "You*

have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"

Washing hands before eating a meal is only for good hygiene and good health, but in this instance, we see that the Pharisees have made it look as if it is a cardinal rule which had to be followed. Otherwise, according to them, a person would become an unclean human being. This attitude bothered Christ very much. So to break that rigid rule, Jesus mentioned that it is okay to eat with unclean hands, saying, "what goes in does not matter." But what comes out of the heart and mouth is much more important.

In India, we also have endless list of customs and traditions, which can sometimes impede us. People don't want to cut nails after the sun is down, throw away garbage after dark, handle sewing needle at night time, or there should not be any auspicious occasion during the Tamil month of "Adi". There may have been reasons for all these customs and traditions, giving so much importance to it to stop work, makes no sense today. Even true believers in Christ, can at times go through ritual performances, without it truly meaning anything. However, rituals without the reality of faith is worthless. This is exactly what Jesus is trying to teach us.

5) Jesus heals on the Sabbath:

One of the most important laws handed to Jewish people by Moses was to observe Sabbath. The idea of Sabbath is for people to work hard for six days, and then rest on the seventh day. The human body needs rest, it cannot work continuously. If we work continuously, we will develop all kinds of

diseases like heart problem, blood pressure and diabetes. So it is indeed a great idea to take rest, for at least one day of the week.

But over the years since Moses handed down the Sabbath law, people stopped all kinds of work on the day of Sabbath. Even helping others, is considered as a violation of the law. People did not realize that it was a good law meant to be followed for good health. Instead, they took it literally and stopped all work, even helping others in need. Jesus saw this practice as a tradition and custom that is hurting those in need, so he spoke against it in Luke Ch 13 vs 10 -17.

One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness!" Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God! But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day. "There are six days of the week for working," he said to the crowd. "Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath." But the Lord replied, "You hypocrites! Each of you works on the Sabbath day! Don't you untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water? This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years. Isn't it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?" This shamed his enemies, but all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.

When I was young, some good friends of mine, would not study on Sundays, for the tests they had on the next day. They are very good people, but they have taken a good law and observed it very literally, which could prove to be detrimental. In hospitals in Israel today, people have invented robotic machines which will take care of sick people while most doctors and nurses observe Sabbath. This is an extreme overreaction to a law made with a good intention, handed down by Moses.

Jesus told us through this passage, that law is for man and man is not for law. Jesus gave a brilliant example to those religious leaders, by criticizing them, who laid this great burden on people. What we learn from Jesus' teaching here is that generally, we should take rest on Sundays, but if we have very important work, like preparing for examinations or other pressing work that cannot be postponed, then we can go ahead and finish it. Our good Christ is the Lord of Sabbath.

The real danger is replacing the true meaning of the word of God with traditions. Traditions can be very helpful, but they have a tendency of overshadowing basic Christian standards. You do not have to look very far to see the attitude of the teachers in our churches. So many traditions have evolved over the centuries, that many of them have become sacrosanct. This shows that we are more concerned with what people think, than following what Christ taught us.

Although Jesus was Jewish and had a great knowledge and deep respect for the traditions of his people, he did depart from those traditions from time to time, especially

when he saw them standing in the way of meeting people's needs. Jesus also rebuked the religious leaders of his day, when he saw their behavior as hypocritical and not consistent with the very traditions they forced the people to uphold.

6) Jesus heals lepers and other people possessed with demons:

Indian society is an extremely caste - ridden community. Caste forms a very important part of everyone's social life. Caste system is very layered - some people belong to high caste, most of the people belong to backward castes, and then rest of them are the untouchables called scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. The untouchable people used to do very menial jobs in India. For many centuries, when the scheduled caste people passed through the villages, the upper caste people would not even like their shadows to fall on them. Such was the prejudice towards the under-privileged people in India for many centuries.

The Israeli society also is a very class - oriented society. The nature of division is different in Israel compared to India. Lepers and people possessed with demons were some of the outcast people in Israel - they were not allowed to live inside the city. No one would touch them, let alone help them in their misery. This is not a law, but it was more a custom and practice that was followed.

Jesus had pity on such people. We read in Matthew Ch 8 vs 1 - 4 : *"When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy[a] came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.*

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Here we read that Jesus touched the leper and healed him. No one in those days would talk to lepers, let alone touch them. But here, Jesus is not afraid of touching them; he touched the leper and healed him. Jesus frequently associated with such people the general public considered unclean. According to the Jewish tradition, this included people with disabilities and certain medical conditions. These people often were viewed as having done something especially sinful, that caused God to punish them with their condition. But Jesus healed a leper, by just touching him.

What does it teach us? How are we supposed to behave in the world today? Do we treat certain people differently today? Although we believe in Christ, do we still follow our caste-orientations fanatically? How are we supposed to treat the people who are being treated as untouchables today? I do not want to address these. These are questions for each and every one of us to answer for ourselves and in turn, make ourselves more perfect in our union with Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

7) Jesus dines with Zacchaeus:

Tax collectors got money from people on behalf of the king or ruler. They used the money to improve the infrastructure and also for the benefit of the king. People everywhere, at all times hated the tax collectors. Because people believed that they were getting too much money, and they were also seen as very corrupt officials.

In Luke Ch 19 vs 1-10, we see Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. *"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

In this passage we read that Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus very warmly and said to him that he would like to stay at his home. People who were religious were stunned by Jesus' friendly question to Zaccheus. Even though Zacchaeus was a tax collector, and by his own admission, he had accumulated lot of wealth by corrupt means, Jesus saw his good and repentant heart and liked it very much. Another thing to note is Zacchaeus is a very short man.

Here we see Jesus breaking two customs, first is dining with corrupt officials, and the second is recognizing a very short

individual. Normally, we don't like corrupt officials, throughout our life we have criticized such officials whether in central or state governments. They were not our heroes. We have also looked down upon short people. Either because of appearance or because of their lack of confidence. It is practiced all over the world, and throughout history we see that short people have always been portrayed in a somewhat derogatory manner. For example, when Sunil Gavaskar opened the Indian innings in the 1970's, opposing team fast bowlers would look down on him. But once they saw his skill and batting abilities, their perception of Gavaskar changed.

Jesus seems to tell us to keep an open mind regarding corrupt officials. He asked us to give them a second chance. Jesus also told us with the example of Zacchaeus, that we should never ever look down upon people because of their appearance.

8) Jesus praises Mary and tells Martha, there is something more important than cooking:

In Israel, in the times of Jesus, women would make meticulous plans to welcome the guest. Women of the house would work hard to make the fellowship time, great.

When some important guests or relatives visit our house, the ladies in the house will get very busy. First they will tell everyone in the house to clean the house. Then they will make elaborate preparations to welcome them. For every meal that they stay at the house, they will fix a special menu that the guests would like. This is a tradition followed in India today and was most likely followed for many centuries.

If others in the house, particularly the men and kids, did not follow their lead, women would get upset, is it not? They would say that if we did not prepare a good meal and set the house right, it would be an insult to the guest who is visiting, that is a tradition that has been observed in many cultures and civilizations.

Jesus in Luke ch10 vs 38-42 addressed this issue. *As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Here, Martha was upset that Mary was not helping her with cooking. This is a very legitimate concern from Martha's perspective, because if Mary did not help her, then Martha had to prepare the meal for everyone. Martha had probably planned a nice dinner for the guests, she had to chop all the ingredients that go into a dish, cook the dish, then she had to set the table with plates, and other utensils. If Martha had to do all the work, she may not finish it in time for dinner. However Mary instead of helping Martha was sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to his teaching. Here Martha's concern and anger is justified.

Jesus understands that it is a tradition to welcome the guest and prepare a nice meal for them. He probably would have appreciated the nice meal prepared by Martha. But here, he tried to convey that when we have Christian fellowship, the importance should be on listening to the word of God and in communing with other brothers and sisters. Of course, the meal portion is important, but it should not supersede in precedence to having a good fellowship and communing with other brothers and sisters.

Sometimes when guests and relatives visit, we go around and asking them if they had the first course and second course and third course meal. Then we go around and clean the house while the guests are still sitting in the house. But often times, we forget that the most important part of that gathering is to have a good fellowship and communing with other brothers and sisters.

Here, we see that Jesus is gently trying to nudge Martha and tell her that the tradition of welcoming a guest is important, but it is much more important to listening to the Messiah.

9) Jesus talks to marginalized women:

In those days, in Jewish society men would not talk to women in public. More specifically, Jewish men would not talk to lower class Samaritan women in public. It is considered beneath their dignity to talk to a lower class women. This was not a law, but just a practice followed in those days.

Jewish women would go to the city well to draw water from the well in the morning. Everyone would go out during that time maybe for business or for shopping etc, but

Samaritan women would go to the well at noon time, when no one is around. The reason for that being that they were looked down upon or they were not given first preference. Or perhaps, they were not permitted to draw water when Jewish women go to the well. Or maybe, even the Samaritan women would have been so ashamed to face others. Whatever the reason was, Samaritan women were treated like second class citizens.

During such a time, Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman near the well at noon time (John Ch 4 vs 1-26). Jesus talked to her in personal terms, saying that her burden would be lifted by drinking the life-giving water that Jesus was about to offer. When Jesus' disciples saw this, they were very surprised to see him talking to a woman and that too, to a Samaritan woman. Here we see that Jesus was not worried about what people think about it, but rather is very concerned with under-privileged and marginalized people in the society. He wanted to touch them and lift them up. It was a practice in those days that well-respected men in the society, would not talk to women in public, much less to a marginalized Samaritan woman. Jesus came to break such ridiculous practices.

Then there was a woman, who was suffering from severe bleeding (Luke Ch 8, vs 43-48). No doctors were able to heal her. One day when Jesus was passing by, she came from behind to touch his cloak. In this ancient male-dominated society, women would not dare to come and touch a man's cloak in public, and that too, the cloak of Jesus, who was considered by most of the people to be a Rabbi in those days. But still, she had the

conviction of faith and confidence, to come and touch his cloak in public. Peter even got irritated and asked Jesus that in this crowded area, how will you know who touched his cloak. But Jesus persisted and asked, then the woman who suffered had the courage to come forward. Then Jesus said that she would be healed and asked her to go in peace. Again, women were not allowed to touch a man's cloak in public, still he recognized what the woman did out of faith, and wanted to break that tradition and practice of not touching a man in public.

A Canaanite woman came to Jesus and pleaded with him to heal her daughter, who had a demon in her(Matthew Ch 15 vs 21-28). Jesus for a while ignored her request, but she persisted. Even his disciples wanted to send her away. At this point, Jesus said that it is not right to give the children's food to dogs. The Canaanite woman responded that even the dogs eat what falls from the master's table. She meant that being a Canaanite woman she is not worthy, even to eat what falls from the master's table. Her status was lower compared to even the dogs. She humbled herself even more in front of the crowd, and showed them how Jewish people treat Canaanite women. Jesus melted at this point and said woman, your faith has healed your daughter. Initially Jesus was hesitant to talk to her, either accepting the fact that a Jewish Rabbi should not talk to a Canaanite woman and that too, in front of other important Jewish dignitaries. In this instance, we see that Jesus took the crowd along for a while, before breaking that practice of not talking to a Canaanite woman in public.

Concluding Thoughts:

In all the above interactions, we saw that when marginalized or dehumanized people had it tough because of customs, practices and traditions, Jesus intervened and broke that custom, practice and tradition. He truly reduced the burden that the under-privileged people were carrying. In some other cases, the customs and traditions were an irritant for people to go through during their normal daily life. Jesus intervened and broke those traditions that were an irritant in their lives. Every group is identified by their customs and traditions, and Jesus did not want to destroy the identity and all the traditions of the Jewish people. Rather, he cherished them as he identified himself with the Jewish people.

Tradition, on the other hand, evolves. It is established by habit or custom, and it will vary in its character, from place to place, and from time to time. Tradition is not intrinsically evil, since it operates in the realm of expediency and human judgment. It is

condemned, however, when it is thrust into the role of "law," and bound as such.

There are two digressive directions in the "law - tradition" controversy. First, there is the tendency to reduce law to the status of tradition. Then there is the disposition that codifies tradition into law. Both approaches are wrong. I believe we are all called to think, wonder and ask questions.

Jesus' example of breaking bad or outdated customs, practices and traditions, should be an inspiration for us also in our lives. I don't want to list what the classification is for a bad custom and tradition. I will leave it to you to decide what is good and bad. You should ponder about it and stand with conviction, to break some of the bad customs, practices and traditions. That is what we are called upon to do as followers of Jesus Christ, the Risen Savior. Amen.

- Dr. John Arul Gunaraj

EDITORIAL

Dear readers in Christ,

Greetings to you in the Sweet Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Let us always praise the Lord for leading every one of us so far in our lives.

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" - Daniel 12:3.

Christ alone is our Divine wisdom and Divine strength. As He has Wisdom, God desires

that we too should be children having wisdom and righteousness in this world. We should not only walk in righteousness, but we should also turn many to righteousness through His true word.

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He created light in this earth which was in darkness. In the same way, God wants to enlighten the heart of the people from the darkness of sin. Let us humbly submit ourselves unto His hand, who is the True Light that lightens every man, and is the Sun of Righteousness.

When we ourselves get enlightened by His Light, and give light to the world by winning souls for Him, only then shall we be as lights in the sky and as stars that shall shine brightly for ever. Let us realise that it is our bounden duty to preach the Gospel and gain souls for the Glory of God. Let us light the word of God which is a Lamp, in the hearts of people of the world, who live in darkness and enable them to walk in the light.

Sister Sujana gave God's message on 13th August 2017 in the TELC Church at Peelamedu. Bro. John Sekar explained the IBT Ministries. Special offering were given by Church believers. On the same day Bro. S. Timothy gave God's message in the TELC Church at NGGO Colony. A Translation Pre-view course for newly selected translators was held at the IBT Training Centre from 14th to 18th August 2017. They were given preliminary training by senior translators of IBT. On 27th August 2017, New Testament in Toda language, was dedicated and released by Rt. Rev. Timothy Ravindar, Hon'ble Bishop of CSI Coimbatore Diocese, at CSI Holy Trinity Church, Ooty. Sister Poongili, Toda translator, received the first copy, Rev. Subramaniam, Senior Translation Adviser, BSI Bangalore, received the second copy, and Pastor Simpson received the third copy. On the same day, Bro. Simon shared God's message and Bro. John Sekar explained about IBT Ministries in the CSI Good Shepherd Church at Mettur. On 28th and 29th August 2017, 13 Translators of IBT from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka participated in the South India Translators' Review meeting held at IBT Centre. Rev. Subramaniam of BSI Bangalore conducted the meeting.

On 3rd September 2017, Bro. Vasu shared God's message and Bro. E. Ravi explained about

IBT Ministries in the CSI Church at Dhalawai Puram. On the same day, Bro. S. Timothy shared God's message in the Unity Prayer Assembly Church at Nallam Palayam, Kovai. On 10th September 2017, Bro. Simon explained about IBT Ministries in both the English services in the morning and evening, and gave testimony and God's message in the Hindi service, in the Union Chapel, a Baptist Church at Visakha Patnam in Andhra Pradesh. On 17th September 2017, Bro. Samuel Gnanadhas shared God's message and Bro. E. Ravi explained about IBT Ministries in the CSI Church at Thamma Nayakkan Patti. On the same day, Bro. Vasu shared God's message as well as explained about IBT Ministries in the STEC Church at Urapakkam, Chennai. On the same day Bro. S. Timothy gave God's message in CSI St. Paul's Church at Gobi, Bro. S. Rajasekaran gave God's message in another CSI Christ Church at Gobi and Bro. Christopher gave God's message in the CIGM Church at Allikuli. On 24th September 2017, Bro. S. Rajasekaran shared God's message and Bro. Regi Jellipara explained about IBT Ministries in the CSI Church at Trissur, Kerala. On the same day Bro. Simon gave God's message in the CSI Church at K.K. Nagar, Erode.

In the last Governing Council meeting held on 25th August 2017, Bro. M. John William was elected as President and Bro. D. Ravi was elected as Secretary; Sis. Navamani Sekar will continue as Treasurer. Please pray for them and also for getting suitable and proper Translators and Promotional Staff, as well as for the expansion of our IBT Ministries.

May the Lord bless us all!

Your Sister in Christ,
Mrs. Sudandiradevi Panneer Selvam

Release Function of New Testament in Toda Language



Rt. Rev. Timothy Ravindar, Bishop of CSI Coimbatore Diocese dedicates the New Testament of Toda language at, Holy Trinity Church Ooty, On 27.08.2017.



Bishop releases the 1st Copy, received by Toda Translator Sis. Poongili



The participants in the New Testament in Toda Language releasing day.



BSI Rev. Subramaniam participated in IBT South India Translators Review meeting.



Promotional Staff meeting held at IBT Centre, Kovai.



IBT Sr. Translator conducting Translation Preview course.

A MILESTONE IN THE TODA MINISTRY

The Dedication and Release of New Testament in Toda language on behalf of IBT, was celebrated as a grand festival at 4-00 p.m. on Sunday, the 27th August 2017, at CSI Holy Trinity Church, Ooty. The programme started with prayer by Rev. Victor Premkumar, Area Chairman, CSI, Nilgiris. Toda brothers and sisters sang songs in Toda language, and some Baduga sisters sang in Badaga language and glorified God. IBT President Bro. S. Timothy greeted and welcomed the distinguished guests and the gathering in his welcome address.

Rt. Rev. Timothy Ravindar, Hon'ble Bishop of CSI, Coimbatore Diocese, dedicated and released the New Testament in Toda language. Sister Poongili Sriraj, our translator in Toda language, received the first copy, Rev. Subramaniam, Senior Translation Advisor, Bible Society of India, Bangalore, received the second copy, and Pastor Simpson received the third copy.

Sister Poongili Sriraj shared her personal testimony. Rev. John Moses Samuel, Bishop Chaplain, prayed for IBT Ministries. In his congratulatory address, Rev. Subramaniam of BSI, dwelt at length about the similarity between the customary practices and culture of the Jewish people and the Todas. Then Sister Poongili Sriraj read out in Toda language, New Testament passage from John 1:1 to 10, and

every one present was greatly touched in their hearts, and rejoiced glorifying the name of God.

In his address, Hon'ble Bishop stressed on Matthew 28:19, 20. He laid emphasis and explained the words "Go you", and said winning of souls, is the greatest service, and Jesus has commanded us to undertake this task. Mainly on the basis of this Great Commission alone, many missionaries from the West, like William Carey and Zeagen Balg came to our country and saved souls. Rev. Victor Premkumar, in his congratulatory message, stated that Sister Catherine Link, a missionary from the West, came to the Nilgiris and ministered powerfully among the Toda community and saved many souls. In turn, the saved ones went to every 'mund' (village) and lead many Todas into Christ. Many are still living as witness to Christ. Rev. Stephen and Rev. Ramesh Babu also spoke and greeted on the occasion. Pastor Simpson spoke about the Holy Bible.

Towards the end, IBT Representative Bro. Christopher gave a vote of thanks. The meeting closed with Final prayer by Pastor Simpson and Benediction by Hon'ble Bishop. All IBT representatives from Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Nilgiris attended the meeting.

"And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:8).

Those who are holding IBT Hundis and desirous of giving their contribution may please inform IBT Office. We would like to collect the same through our Representatives or Promotional Staff.

FIELD NEWS

Translator : Bro. Sudhir Kumar
Mission Field : Pindira (U.P)
Language : Bhojpuri

Glory be to God! With the abundant grace of the Lord, I could carry on my translations and missionary work well. In Old Testament I could complete checking of the book of Numbers from Chapter 14:28 to Chapter 28:7. I preached Gospel in villages such as Ratanpur, Yadagtara, Belya, Sinduria, Kiratpur, Johirilla, Hibarampur, etc. and distributed 100 tracts and 10 copies of Gospel. I gave baptism to two women, Sister Shanthi Rani, age 46 from Gehatti and Sister Sushama Puri from Chamelware village. I prayed earnestly for Brothers Babulal Ram and Anil Kumar, and the Lord healed them from their sickness, They continue to attend worship services at our IBT Church at Pindira. Please pray for my ministries, translation work and for my family.

————— • —————
Translator : Bro. Samuel Santa
Mission Field : Upar Kanti (Odisha)
Language : Kuvi

Glory be to God! Translation done in the Old Testament book of Psalms, Chapters 37:1 to 69:8 were checked. As a part of my missionary work I met many people in the villages of Tentuliguda, Bangaruguda, Muganguda, Mondar Guda, Jhala Guda, Kanthi and gave tracts, preaching the Gospel. Brothers Lima, Abhi, Manguli, Raju, Sundar, Trinath, Topas Joy, listened eagerly. Please pray that these persons should grow in the Lord. Also please pray for my translation and missionary work.

Translator : Sister Anuradha
Mission Field : Aravangadu (Tamil Nadu)
Language : Badaga

The Lord gave me grace to carry out my translations work very well. I went to Bangalore and from 3rd to 7th July 2017, under the supervision of Rev. Subramaniam of BSI, could check Old Testament books of Daniel and Hosea. Preliminary checking of Chapters 1 to 19 in the book of Judges was also undertaken.

As a part of my missionary work, I visited Coonoor, Haragudsi Melur, Hosagatti, Ooty, Amaran thadu and Melur. I met 15 families, prayed for them and collected their contributions, I told the Gospel to Sisters Sivagami, Saradha, Sharmila and Sumithra. I also distributed 3 copies of Proverbs and 2 copies of Psalms translated in Badaga language. We have planned to complete translation and exegetical checking by BSI, by the end of December 2017 and accordingly we are carrying out corrections in the portions keyed in the Computer. Please pray for the early completion of our work.

————— • —————
Translator : Bro. Ayub Suna
Mission Field : Podhargaon (Odisha)
Language : Mirgan

Last month, by the grace of the Lord, I could carry out the translation and missionary work. Translation in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel Chapters 40 to 48 could be done. As part of missionary work, I visited Temra, Belputti, Kodabhada, Dosarabhada villages preaching the Gospel about our Creator. Missionaries from adjoining area Mali Attigan were called to our mission field. We took the decision that every

week, all will come together and visit a village preaching the Gospel, both house to house and in the open. I encouraged our missionaries who assembled at Koraput district to carry on their missionary work with greater zeal and advised them to distribute all the published books to people very soon. They were Ashish Swal Singh, Raju Hayal, Samuel Santa Sunil Kumar Chapadi, Tentuli Padia, and Narayan Puriya. The missionaries whom I met at Attigan mission field were Sampath Kumar, Lemon Chinchani, Ruban Antharu, Israel Edla, Meghnad Mirgan and Christdan Nambrasil. Please pray for my translation and missionary work and also for my family.

————— • —————
Missionary : Sister G. Subitha Sweedon
Mission Field : Bappen Palli (Odisha)

We are all doing well by the abundant Grace of the Lord. We thank you praying to God for our needs last month. The great Lord has answered many of our requests. Praise the Lord! Even though we haven't started preaching the Gospel among the people of the village, we are visiting many villages, trying to know them and their places. As soon as we mingle with the villagers, we will surely preach the Gospel to them.

Last month in a village named Kothakuda, when we wanted to talk to some boys who were

grazing the cattle, they ran away. We could understand that the villagers hesitate to speak to new and unknown persons. God has graciously enabled us to share the word of God among the children in our Home and to guide them properly. We are teaching the children in our Home many verses from the Holy Bible, besides coaching them lessons in English and Hindi. Please pray for our ministry and for the children in our Home.

————— • —————
Translator : Bro. Jayant Panigrahi
Mission Field : Bargar (Odisha)
Language : Sambalpuri

May the name of the Lord Jesus Christ be glorified! I am as a translator in Sambalpuri Language in the district of Bargar. It is indeed a pleasure and honour to get such an opportunity. Last month I undertook checking work of translation in the New Testament, Gospel of Luke Chapters 1 to 19. As there is no script for Sambalpuri language, books or literature connected with Bible is not available in this language. It is the Lord's will that He has chosen me to undertake translation of the Holy Bible in Sambalpuri language, Along with translation work, I also carried out missionary work visiting villages Chuhipali, Gobindpur and Bishipali, preaching the Gospel. Please pray for the speedy completion of my translation, key in and checking work.

NEW OFFICE BEARERS OF IBT

President	:	Bro. M. John William
Secretary	:	Bro D. Ravi
Treasurer	:	Sis. Navamani Sekar
Field Director	:	Bro. Samuel Gnanadhas
Tamil Nadu Co-ordinator	:	Bro. D. Vasu
Mission Co-ordinator	:	Bro. Simon

PRAY AND PRAISE

1. Praise the Lord for enabling us to give preliminary training to newly selected Translators between 14th to 18th August 2017 at IBT Centre. Pray that the trainees may make use of this training in their translation ministry.
2. Praise the Lord for the Dedication and Release of New Testament in Toda language on 27th August 2017. Please pray for the distribution of all the books to the people speaking that language.
3. Praise the Lord for the South India Translators Review Course held on 28th and 29th August 2017 at IBT Centre. Pray that the translators carry out their work in an efficient manner.
4. Checking work in Kuduk and Halbi languages was carried out between 5th to 14th September 2017 at Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh. Praise the Lord for the same. Pray for the release of New Testament in these two languages next year.
5. On 10th September 2017, Bro. Simon gave IBT's introduction in two English services and gave God's message in the Hindi Service of the Union Chapel (Baptist Church) at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The congregation and the church gave liberally and whole-heartedly for IBT. Praise the Lord for the same. We sincerely thank Pastor Rajesh Pakki, Associate Pastor Zephanaiah Peter and all the member of the Board of Management of Union Chapel Church.

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