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**Reading Romans from an Asian Perspective**

***How Can We Practice an Asian Reading of Romans in the Pulpit, Evangelism and Missions?***

**Topic:** Contextualization

**Subject:** How can we effectively communicate the gospel so it is understood rather than misunderstood?

**Complement:** Use the language of the listeners.

**Purpose:** The listeners will look for the best way to illustrate the gospel in the language of the listeners

# I. Sanskrit scholar Pandita Ramabai (1858-1920) fought against social injustice against the Dalits.

## She married a man of low caste at age 22 and was widowed at age 24 when her husband died of cholera.

## She became a Christian in England, being baptized into the Anglican Church.

## She rescued many children and was commemorated in a 1989 stamp.

## She translated the Bible into Marati from Hebrew and Greek (she knew 7 languages).

## She fought against gender bias against women, pointing out that in the Hindu writings, women were depicted as worse than demons and unworthy of salvation unless they worshipped their husbands, even if they were criminals. Even if she makes it to their version of heaven, she would be among thousands of sex slaves of her husband. She saw in Luke’s gospel how kind Jesus was to women, and learned that God created men and women in his image.

## She fought against India’s discrimination against women in several practices:

### Female infanticide: Hindu’s suffocate girls at birth as they are deemed a liability.

### Temple “daisies” (prostitutes): This was considered better than infanticide.

### Forced Marriage to Older Men: Some because the 7th or 8th wife of a wealthy man.

### Sati: Those who refused to jump into the pyre were rejected or secretly killed.

# II. As a Christian, she also corrected Bible translation errors.

## She chose non-Arian names. The shorter, darker Tamils were subservient to the taller, lighter Sikhs with Arian names. She changed and transliterated YHWH to Yehovah, as well as changed Hindu names

## *Ahash*, instead of *swarg*, for “heavens” since *swarg* was a place of sensual pleasure only for men.

## *Putra* (son) in Matthew 1:1 would indicate a state only for sons, so she used the general name for “son” that can also apply to women. Five ladies in this geneaology had bad character, so Tamar was no longer translated “sexual duty” (Gen. 38). She translated the words with the word for forced prostitution of women who were powerless but violated by a powerful person.

## Rahab used to be translated vashye, a common prostitute who chose to be one. She retranslated it *kasbin*, a temple prostitute forced into it by the high caste Brahmin.

## Ruth, a “married Moabite woman,” was retranslated to a “foreigner who was forced into sex.” She looked to Boaz with wonder, amazed that he would respect her (Ruth 2:19). Boaz then took Ruth and she became his wife (Ruth 4:19), meaning to marry with honor instead of being forcefully taken as a wife.

## Bathsheba was called Uriah’s wife, but David received a son “by the wife of Uriah” (Matt. 1:6). Ramabai retranslated this as “violently took her as a wife” because she was one who belonged to another.

### Women didn’t take baths on their roofs, so Ramabai changed “bathing” to a cleansing right among the Hindu people where extremely pretty girls were forced to ritually bath topless in front of wealthy men who raped them and sent them back.

### David also later took her as his wife when she was menstrually clean (2 Sam. 11:4). “Go and wash your feet,” which David said to Uriah, literally means to wash ones’ private parts.

### David displeased the Lord (2 Sam. 11:27b) is translated “utterly evil” so that Bathsheba is the violated and elevated one, while David is the powerful one who abused his authority.

## Mary’s husband Joseph (Matt. 1:19) is retranslated “young man” (*pati* of Mary) so that we don’t misunderstand him being absent later as having died, when this was not in the text.

# III. Paul also became like those he sought to reach.

## We shouldn’t expect unbelievers to become like believers to trust Christ.

## Rather, we must be willing to change for the sake of the gospel.

### “I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them. Even so, I have been bold enough to write about some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder” (Romans 15:14-15).

### Paul sought to boldly proclaim the gospel in a relevant way.

# Conclusion

### Use the language of the listeners (MI).

### With such a low view of women in India, how could Indira Gandhi become PM? In India, outside of the home, women can have any profession; however, inside the home, they are doormats.

### Howard Hendricks once visited the FBI Counterfeit Agency. He noticed the employees only studied the real money rather than the counterfeit, so he asked the supervisor the reason. “The counterfeit always changes,” the supervisor said, “So we teach our people to be so familiar with the real thing that they will immediately recognize the counterfeit currency.” We should do the same with our understanding Scripture—be so familiar with the Bible that we immediately recognize heresy.

### Should Christians practice yoga? Yoga in India has two types. Exercise yoga has no gestures towards Shiva, whereas religious yoga has many such gestures.

### Cultural practices will change: bowing in prayer, kneeling in prayer, closing eyes in prayer, standing while singing, sitting cross-legged, etc.