

Briefings

The entrance of thy words giveth light (Ps. 119:130)

December 2009

Amazing Grace

by Sashanka Ranjan Saha

We tend to think that the BI translation ministry only begins to impact a person's life once God's Word has been printed in that person's language. Sashanka, however, was eternally influenced by BI in another manner. He remains a faithful and valuable worker in the Bibles International India Society office.

On July 9, 1972, I was born into a Hindu family. As a baby I was ill for six months, and the doctors could not cure me. But somehow I recovered, and my whole family believed that it was the miraculous power of their gods that healed me. As a boy when I heard the story, I believed as they did.

My parents are followers of Ramkrishna Paramhansa (incarnation of god), and they went to the temple, the Remkrihna Mission Sevahram, every Sunday and during every festival. I went as well, and for more than ten years I worshipped the idols of gods and goddesses.

In 1995, I was appointed as a computer operator working for *Dainik Jugasankha*, a daily Bengali newspaper. The company gave me preliminary computer training, and I also got training in computer software. I worked at the *Dainik Jugasankha* at night, but in the day I worked in another printing press. As I was going to work one day, I met one of the former news editors of *Jugasankha*. He handed me a visiting card and said, "Go there, you'll get a better job." The very next day I approached Rev. Gobin Singh, the coordinator for Bibles International India Society, for a job. By the end of 1997, I was hired to type the Manipuri Bible in the Bengali script. On my first day I had to type the Gospel of John, and I mistakenly thought that it was written by a man who was still living. Later I realized that John was one of Jesus' disciples.

Every morning Rev. Gobin gave a devotional before we started to work, and the living Word of God spoke to my

heart. One day I asked for a Bible, and Rev. Gobin gave me a New Testament. I started reading it, and many verses rang true. After continually hearing God's Word, I knew that I was a sinner, and I felt sorry for things I had done. However, I struggled because if I accepted Jesus as my Savior, I would be persecuted. I was confused and afraid.

Finally, all my fears and struggles ceased, and on July 8, 1998, with Rev. Gobin at my side, I accepted Jesus as my personal savior. All the struggles and anxieties disappeared, and I received the real joy and peace in my heart that only God can give.



BIIS office staff. Sashanka is on the far right, next to BIIS Director Fame Singh.

The next day Rev. Gobin introduced me to Rev. Promode Malakar, the pastor of Silchar Baptist Church. He also counseled me and helped me grow spiritually. On August 9th I was baptized.

As the days went by, I had to tell my parents that I believed in Jesus, but they didn't believe me. When they realized, however, that I was no longer worshipping their gods and goddesses, they began to persecute me.

I took Rev. Malakar and Dr. Peter Malakar (former deacon of SBC) to visit my parents. They welcomed the men warmly,

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The Perspicuity of Scripture as Applied to Bible Translation – Part 2 *All Things Being Accounted for ...*

The doctrine of perspicuity or clarity of Scripture can be stated this way: *All things being accounted for, the Scriptures are understandable.* The question is, however, what should be accounted for?

Luther grappled with the idea and admitted in *The Bondage of the Will* that the Scriptures were both clear and unclear. He, like many other reformers, attempted to balance the statements in the Scriptures themselves that tended to support the understandability of the Scriptures on the one hand and their difficulty on the other. Most significant among the passages that state the difficulty of the Scriptures is Peter's declaration that in Paul's epistles there "are some things hard to be understood" (II Peter 3:16). The experience of reading and studying the Scriptures also proves that not all things in the Scriptures are readily understandable.

Seizing upon that statement and upon similar rationales, the religious establishment at the time of Luther declared that the Scriptures were inherently unclear and, hence, withheld them from the laity for fear that the lay people would misunderstand them. Granted, there "are some things hard to be understood" in the Scriptures, and they should be accounted for. They are, in essence, the type of difficulties Bible translators encounter. By virtue of the nature of the translation process, they are, for the most part, passed on to the readers of the translations.

Among such categories of difficulties, the following may be cited: (1) **linguistic complexities** inherent in transferring meaning from the now-dead languages in which the Scriptures were originally penned into today's living languages; (2) difficulty in detecting **particular twists** in the writing styles of certain biblical authors, as the puns and word plays in 2 Corinthians; (3) **literary genres** and structures that are now defunct and that can be mistakenly taken for a different genre of literature in use in a given culture today, as is the case for the book of Ecclesiastes; (4) grammatical constructions that can be so **abbreviated** that it becomes difficult to detect which of many possible options would be the right meaning, as in the books of Proverbs and Job; (5) complex, **historical inferences** in the text not available to the present-day reader of the passage; (6) **geographical references** and assertions unfamiliar to us today; (7) **cultural practices** that are different from the culture of the translator or reader; (8) **names of people, things, places, events, and concepts** that may carry meaning and

for which the meaning or description may not be provided; (9) **theological discussions** that presume a prior, verbal conversation between the author and the primary recipients, as in 1 Corinthians, etc.

Difficulties, those are! Yet, they are not outside the realm of what would be expected from reading any ancient text cross-culturally. Peter acknowledged that there "are some things hard to be understood" in Paul's epistles but not that they were so esoteric that they were *impossible* to be understood. When the basic text-specific information is provided, the modern-day reader will effectively grasp the meaning of the biblical text.

That said, the Bible states that the natural man, the person who is only a human being, unsaved and not indwelt by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 3:16b), though he or she may understand grammatical and dictionary-level meaning of the Bible, may not grasp the spiritual concepts or spiritual significance of that very text because such a comprehension is "spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 1:14). That is why the gospel "is hid to them that are lost" (2 Corinthians 4:3) and why Jesus could speak a parable that would both enlighten the believer and simultaneously confuse the unbeliever (Matthew 13:10-17).

The perspicuity of Scripture does NOT indicate that the Bible is all in all easy to understand, or that it is void of the difficulties that are associated with ancient texts or with literature that develops uncommon concepts, or that it is equally understandable by everybody regardless of their degree of intellect or education, or that every part is of the same level of understanding, or that any meaning that is acceptable in one's eye is good enough for him or her. The natural, literary difficulties of the text and the spiritual prerequisite to the reader must be accounted for.

Because of difficulties in the Scriptures, they must be studied, meditated on, and searched (John 5:39; Proverbs 2:2-6). Along with the Holy Spirit, God has given as a gift to the Church pastors and teachers and, yes ... Bible translators! Bible translators must preserve the intention of God and transfer all the legitimate components of meaning from the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic biblical text into the languages of today. Preservation, not innovation, is our task! And it is a difficult one because of so much that must be accounted for. Nevertheless, because the Bible is also clear, translating it is possible. We will pick up with that thought in our next column.

No Lucky

by Becky Kerr

“Father, I don’t know how to interact with the lost here in this country whose government forbids evangelization. My skin color, my religion, and my very presence are all suspect here. How I would love to interact with even one person during my two-week stay.” Such was the prayer of my heart as I accompanied my husband and other BI staff members on a trip to a restricted-access country in Asia.

The next day I was approached in the market by a young girl. “Buy postcard?” she asked in her broken English. She had been taught to look sad and forlorn as she conducted her business, and she was doing a good job of it. My heart went out to her as I replied, “I would like to buy postcards but not today.” Perhaps this approach would allow me to see her again.



Sure enough, the next day she, almost out of nowhere, appeared beside us on the street. “Buy postcard? No lucky. Buy postcard,” she said in her most pitiful voice. “Not yet,” I replied, and then I asked her name. “Shalymo,” she answered. “How old are you?” “12.” And she was gone. Each day she found us, and each day I learned more about her. She was such a beautiful girl, and I longed for her to know that God loved her; that there was no luck (bad or good) involved.

“Shalymo,” I asked one day, “why don’t you smile?” “No lucky,” she replied. I told her that she could be happy even

if she didn’t make a sale; that Someone loved her and cared for her. It was the closest I dared come to sharing Christ with her without jeopardizing her safety.

When I could put her off no longer, I bought Shalymo’s postcards and in my heart said good-bye to a girl who had come to mean so much to me in such a short time. She actually smiled that day, and her lit-up face was a beautiful parting gift. The next day, however, she was back — with a sister and a friend, all three of whom were smiling! This time there was no transaction to be made, just a friendship to be nurtured, and I thanked God for letting me share His love with her.

A few weeks after we returned to the States, the very streets where we had walked with Shalymo were hit by a deadly hurricane. She

would be in the middle of that devastation. Was she safe? Will she be one who hears of Christ as a result of increased mission work done by her own countrymen? Will she one day read the Bible that Bibles International is translating into the language she speaks, and will she learn once and for all that it’s not about luck but about love?

As you celebrate Christmas this year, think of Shalymo and the millions like her whose hearts could be changed if their ears could hear the truth. Your prayers on their behalf and your gift to Bibles International could be the difference in their lives between superstition and security, between luck and love.



Annual Seminar

To the left is pictured the group that gathered for the annual consultants seminar in Grand Rapids in August. Led by BI Chief Language Consultant Dr. Troy Manning, this year’s theme was “Equipped for Excellence.” Veteran consultants, trainees, and prospective consultants alike contributed during the six-day session. It is this group of people that spreads out around the world to check each of BI’s translation projects verse by verse. Their job is an eternally important one, and this week of coming together as a group for instruction and fellowship is extremely beneficial.

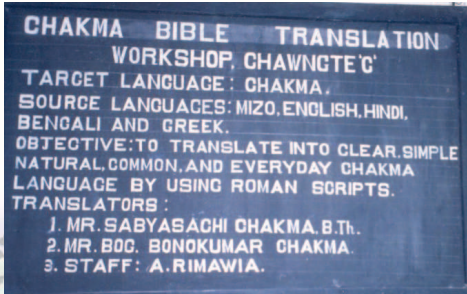
PROJECTS UPDATE

INDIA

Chakma

(Report from National Consultant Angam Rongmei)

Presently I am working with the Chakma translator doing a word check. We covet your prayers. The translator has been discouraged because of several factors: he has been working under a heavy load. He was teaching 6 subjects, which is now reduced to four in a mission high school. He is staying on the school campus in a small apartment where he has not place even to set up a desktop computer to work for translation.



But now we have provided a laptop for him. He needs a lot of encouragement and prayer support. Please pray that this workshop will bring changes to move a rather slow-going project forward more quickly. A trial edition is in the making.

Chiru

(Report from National Consultant Angam Rongmei)

“I am overjoyed to inform you that Rev. Peter Chiru has done his job of proofreading the formatted Chiru New Testament and sent the last correction list to Mr. Don Block (Editorial Coordinator at Bibles International) yesterday. I have not found anyone who is so industrious in doing his job and so humble in spirit like Rev. Peter. I have asked him to scan through the add-ons (concordance, glossary and maps) for the next two or three days, and when that is done, we hope everything will be complete and the finished product should be ready to go to printer. Thank you so very much on behalf of Chiru people for your contributions, helps, advice, and for everything above which prayers stand tall and high. May God be glorified, Him and Him alone.”

GHANA

Dagaari

(Report from Norene Russ)

“I’ve graduated [after two hip surgeries] from a walker to a cane. I still rely on prescription pain relievers to sleep and move about. The pain is manageable, but when I get tired, it causes me to then ‘give it up’ and go take a nap! Pray that both these new hips, my legs, bones and muscles will heal properly and that I would once again be able to walk freely with no pain! As we look at a possible return date, we continue to find God faithful. He keeps telling us to ‘Keep going,’ and we follow. His grace is truly beyond our comprehension. We’ll keep in touch and let you know how things go! Again, thank you for your prayers and your encouragement!”

NOTE: Roger and Norene Russ have diligently worked with the nationals on the translation of the Dagaari New Testament for many years. The work is moving well toward completion. The Russes had to return to the States earlier this year for Norene’s two hip replacements, one in July and one in August. The project is greatly slowed until they are able to return to the field.

Waalii

(Report from BMM Missionary Nancy Ball)

“The **timing** of God’s demonstrations of power and love is synchronized to accomplish His purpose and bring glory to His Name. It is only when an experience is finished that we can look back and see the influences that brought together the whole. God is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Nothing surprises Him.

I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul will make its boast in the Lord.

The humble will see it and rejoice.

O magnify the Lord with me.

And let us exalt His Name together. Psalm 34:1-3

Two days after my letter went out to announce the date of the Waalii Bible inauguration, we were informed that the shipment of the Waalii Bibles to Ghana has been delayed. This extends our time of anticipation and rejoicing. It can in no way dampen our spirits. Although we may think of this delay as an attempt of Satan to hinder the arrival of God’s written Word in the Waalii language, our faith is firm in the knowledge that our Almighty God is totally in control. His will shall be done!

The committee decided to wait until the Bibles arrive in Wa, and then we will set the date of the celebration. In the meantime, we will enjoy our Bibles. I still think we will line the streets with a parade of jubilation on the day the truck carrying the shipment rolls into town.



This Ghanaian congregation eagerly anticipates replacing their New Testaments with complete Bibles soon.

We accept this delay as from our great God who has everything under His control. We will wait on Him, we will bless the Lord **at all times** and his praise shall **continually** be on our lips.

As we daily enjoy the application of His Word to our lives, let us remember those who are without the presence of His written Word in their homes and in their hands.”

Measuring Words in a Cup

The Zobyia committee and I recently conducted a linguistic review of their Zotung New Testament in Myanmar. Using the computer checklist generated by my husband Birch, we discovered there were nearly 5,000 words that occurred only one time in their New Testament. Since there are under 2,000 words appearing only once in the Greek New Testament, we knew we had a problem.

We began the labor-intensive project with words that began with *a*. While working on the *i*s, we came to the word *innkheit*. I knew “inn” meant “house” and “kheit” meant “one” but I was puzzled as to why “one” was attached to “house.” As I talked with the men I discovered several complicating factors.

First, they have words like “anyone,” “someone” and “something” (literally, one of some unnamed thing). In English if you separate any of these compound words into their two root words, they lose their meaning, and it is the same in Zotung. Second, Zotung nouns, like English nouns, don’t like to hang out by themselves. They want an article like “the” or “a/an” to keep them company, what linguists call a “determiner.” In Zotung, however, they just use “one” (“kheit”) as their article; so most non-name nouns have “kheit” after them. It seemed rather simple until the following conversation ensued:

Zotung: “When we just write ‘inn kheit’ (house one) it is clear. But when we say ‘inn innkheit’ we think maybe it should be joined. What do you say? Sometimes it is nicer to say ‘inn innkheit’ (house house one).”

Me: “O-o-o-h.” (I say this a lot. The trick is to drag it out and say it in a somewhat knowing tone of voice. It keeps me from interrupting them while letting them know I really want them to keep going and tell me more.)

Zotung: “Yes, like mountain, ‘mua’; it sounds nicer to say ‘mua muakheit’ (mountain mountain one).”

It quickly became apparent that often the whole noun didn’t have to be duplicated, just the last syllable. This creates many forms that will never be put in a dictionary but in the sentences are absolutely necessary. (Hang in there. We haven’t come to the fun part yet!) In our search through the New Testament for nouns with “one,” we came to the verse

about Jesus sending out the disciples, and I noticed that the word for “disciple” isn’t repeated. So with some fear and trepidation I asked them about it.

Zotung: “Oh, for any people it is just ‘lu’.”

Me: “What about animals?”

Zotung: “What kind of animals?” (When you get this kind of answer you begin to get nervous, because it means there are a whole lot of factors you haven’t yet considered.)

Me: “How would it be different for different kinds of animals?”

Zotung: “For four-footed animals we would use ‘sa’ but for fish we would just repeat ‘ngaw.’ ‘Sa’ is just for beasts, four-footed animals – oh, and months of the year.”

Me: “And months of the year?” (This is the point when I’m trying not to sound incredulous, pretending to have seen this kind of thing dozens of times before.) “Why do you have ‘pia’ here after the widow’s mite but ‘kia’ here after denarius?”

Zotung: “Because a mite is flat. Flat things that you count, like coins, need ‘pia.’ ‘Kia’ is for money that is bills, money worth a dollar or more. How much is a denarius?”

We checked with our translation consultants, determined that a denarius would be worth more than a dollar, and made the necessary changes. Then we came to the word ‘talent,’ and THIS was when things began to get really fun and interesting in a scary, mind-twisting kind of way.

Me: “After ‘talent’ you do not use ‘pia’ or ‘kia.’ You have ‘kaw.’ Why is that?”

Zotung: “‘Kaw’ is for things that are measured in a cup, like wheat or flour. How do you measure talents?”

Me: (thinking, not speaking) Hmm, good question. I have no idea. How *do* you measure talents?

We called the translation consultants back. They hadn’t gone far. They were still trying to find any monetary values we had missed. We determined that talents were actually a weight of gold or silver.

Zotung: “Oh, then this is wrong. This is only for things you measure in a cup. If it is measured by weight we would need ‘khing.’”

(Continued on page 7)

God's Work

by Laura Spitzer

This past summer I had the privilege of interning at Bibles International to gain more writing experience.

My days were filled with writing, editing, and a few meetings as I helped with Briefings, brochures, planning for the Harvest Dinner, and more. I was also working part-time to pay for college.

The first day at BI, I was surprised at how quickly everyone accepted me and made me feel at home. I was given my own office, a computer, and a tour of the building. That day I learned what BI did and how the office functioned. I also took note of the ongoing Scrabble game, not something you see in most offices. But a word game would make sense for people whose task involves words.



My favorite part of the BI day was the devotional time. We took a break from our work and focused on God and His work (plus we got a snack ☺). Working part time in a grocery store as a cake decorator, I enjoyed interning at a place where God has the preeminence.

Though I am currently a senior commercial writing major at Pensacola Christian College, I still don't know what God has for me after I graduate. I do know that He will lead me to the right place, just as He led me to intern at Bibles International this past summer.

"Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isaiah 48:17).

(continued from page 1)

but when Rev. Malakar started preaching, they did not want to listen, and it grew worse when he told my parents about my faith. It was like a storm.

Day by day the persecution grew worse as several Hindu organizations threatened my life. My parents told me to leave my job or leave their house, but when I decided to leave the house, they wouldn't let me.

The persecution got so bad that I started struggling and was about to give up my faith. I told Rev. Gobin and Rev. Malakar, and they counseled and prayed for me. Two verses I found helped me to stand firm in the Lord: "God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect" (2 Sam 22:33) and "But he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matt 24:13).

My life was full of ups and downs. I refused to obey any Hindu culture after my dad died, and I got married the

Christian way. God never left me or forsook me, though I failed many times.

Several weeks after I got married, I got smallpox. The Hindus believe that it is a curse from the goddess Sitala. During my illness I began listening to my parents and obeying them as if I was going to be healed by their faith. It was the darkest hour of my life. Rev. Malakar came to visit me, but my parents turned him away and insulted him. Through it all my wife, Mrs. Milita Mitra, strengthened my faith in Jesus. Since then my wife and I have left my home and parents for Christ's sake.

Just think of the moment that the man handed me the visiting card and directed me to Bibles International India Society. I could never imagine how my life would be if I hadn't become a son of God. I thank God for sending me the right person in the right time and for Rev. Gobin and Rev. Malakar for showing me the right path.

Have you considered Bibles International in your Estate Plan?

To designate Bibles International as a recipient either of a specific asset, amount, or percentage in your will or trust, the following wording is needed: "To: Baptist Mid-Missions, Cleveland, Ohio, designated for its Bibles International ministry."



Briefings is the triannual newsletter of Bibles International, the Bible Society of Baptist Mid-Missions.

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(Continued from page 5)

Me: “So things measured by weight use ‘khing’ even though you are not referring specifically to their weight at the time?”

Zotung: “Yes.”

Me: “And the same with ‘kaw’? Anytime you refer to something like flour or wheat that you would sell by volume, even if you are not talking about its size or volume? Just ‘Give me the flour so I can make some bread’ would use ‘kaw’?”

Zotung: “Yes, food, any food; flour, wheat, grain – oh, and words”

Me: “‘Words!’ The Zotung measure *words* in a cup?” (That got a good laugh from everyone.)

Zotung: “Yes, (big smile) we measure words like rice!”

The process continues, and we’ll no doubt find a few more interesting markers before we’re finished. But every time I check a verse and see ‘bya kawkheit,’ I picture words being measured in a cup. No doubt the teachings of James on the power of words and the tongue are beautiful to read for the Zobyas. It must make a lot of sense to them, too, since they already know the volume of their words.

Dr. Connie Champeon
Literacy Coordinator



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Prayer Requests

For God’s direction in the lives of missions majors at Northland International University who took block courses from BI staff in September and October. Perhaps some will be led into translation work.

That God will provide for Nate and Nancy Frost as they raise their support. They have had some medical and financial difficulties recently.

For the eight BI projects in Chad. Decreased personnel and other challenges have caused hardship for this field. Pray that God’s strength will be made perfect in weakness.

For BI staff working in Asia for extended periods of time: Ross and Cathy Hodsdon, Birch and Connie Champeon and their twin boys, and many short-termers who will be coming and going as they are able. Pray that much is accomplished in both literacy and translation.

For good health during the winter months.

Thanks

For the blessed night of fellowship with BI friends, family and staff at the annual Harvest Dinner. On the day of the banquet, 80 volunteers helped in various ways. Local businesses and individuals (including BI staff) underwrote nearly the total cost of the banquet, and over \$41,000 was raised for the Creole Old Testament.

That the Waalii Bible and Falam Chin NT have been printed and shipped and the Chiru NT has been sent for printing, all of them completely funded.

For all the safe miles of travel for BI staff around the world

That two of BI’s consultants in training are currently on short-term overseas trips with BI staff.

That Tenek New Testament Translators Fernando and Christy Angeles were in the Grand Rapids office recently to work with a consultant.

The BI Staff would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year. As we begin 2010, may we “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power” (Colossians 1:10, 11a)

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