

THOMAS JONES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract: Rev. Thomas Jones' ideas and concepts are still important today in areas of study as broad as economics, politics, social issues, and justice. Continuing the theme of exploring fresh perspectives to put Thomas Jones's outlook, ideas, and concepts into practice, this paper investigates Thomas Jones's contributions to the field of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial spirit. The study makes the case that Thomas Jones possessed key entrepreneurial traits like risk-taking, confidence in oneself, innovation, creativity, self-reliance, and sustainability. The argument that Thomas Jones's ideas and life are a valuable resource for entrepreneurs, from which they can learn and strive, is the paper's conclusion.

Introduction

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Missionary Society sent Rev Thomas Jones-I, a missionary from Wales, the United Kingdom, to Sohra on June 22, 1841. He arrived in Meghalaya as a missionary to plant the gospel among the Khasis. His entry signalled the start of the Christian mission's new era. Given the existence of the mature and established Presbyterian Church of India in present times, it is evident that the Welsh Mission's mission was a success.

The prevalent situation in Sohra area at the time of his arrival, stay, and work can be understood on the basis of political, social, and economic situations:

Political, social and economic condition:

Saitsohpen was designated as the village's administrative centre, and the Sylhet Light Infantry has used it as a base of operations since 1829. The British Court at Saitsohpen is governed in two ways between 1835 and 1854: During these years, Mr. Frederick G. Lister served as the "Political Agent," the title given to the leader of the court. Harry English held the position of Assistant Political Agent, which was the rank below that of Political Agent, from 1835 to 1850. He was, incidentally, Frederick G. Lister's son-in-law. It was alleged that Harry English leveraged this familial connection for his own purposes and goals, reducing Frederick Lister to the status of a rubber stamp. He was a dishonest agent, and he resolved the majority of matters on his own without consulting the higher court of the Political Agent. Nigel Jenkins remarked to the Saitsohpen Court thus: "To the Khasis and European traders alike, the regime in the hills was rampantly corrupt and wildly out of control"¹. Harry English also abused his position of authority in the orange trade by founding his own business, English & Company. He coerced the Khasi traders into selling their wares to his company and gave them only one-third of the proceeds while keeping the other two-thirds for himself and his business. He even seized many of the locals' property parcels used for orange plantations. Those who refused to assist him were harshly punished and imprisoned². Saitsohpen became a haven for vice during this time³. Prostitution was prevalent, and foreign alcohol was widely accessible. At the time of Thomas Jones' arrival, the political climate had been adversely affecting many locals.

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At the time, the Khasi population in the Sohra region was economically sound. Since the beginning of time, the Khasi territory in general and the Sohra region, in particular, have been blessed by the Creator with abundant mineral resources like coal, limestone, and raw iron ores. These natural resources were how the indigenous people supported themselves. Blacksmith items including daos, hoes, spades, knives, hammers, chisels, spears, etc. were produced by them in small cottage industries⁴. The extraction and use of coal that was and is still abundant, were used for smelting. At trading hubs like Pandua, Chattak, and Sylhet, the majority of these goods were offered for sale to the plain people. The Khasi families earned their livelihood by extracting limestone from the mines, melting them into lime powder, then used it for plastering and white-washing of walls, and exporting the lime products to the plain areas.

Socially, before the coming of the British, the Khasis were primitive and uncivilized. It was learned that the Khasis were living in darkness and superstitious⁵. In one of his speeches delivered during the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Assembly's centennial celebrations held from March 27 to 30, 1941, Rai Bahadur Ropmay said, *One hundred years ago (i.e. 1840s), Khasi Hills was in deep darkness. The British began to learn about us the Khasi people 175 years now and the Khasis appeared to them only as fierce thugs called the savage, the robbers, the blood-thirsty and dangerous natives, and hot tempered savages... who continuously made attacks and killings in the plain areas... In terms of dress codes the poor ancient Khasis were like scantily clad birds... with dirty loin cloths alien to cleanliness. With regard to education, ancient Khasi swam in dark cloud covering the land. They had neither script nor schools of their own and considered reading book a taboo*⁶.

As a result, it is clear how difficult and chaotic it was for the new immigrant and servant of God to establish the foundation for his mission right away. Thomas Jones needed to have the time, clear thinking, and keen intellect necessary for adequate planning and strategy in order to make the mission acceptable, efficient, and successful. Thomas Jones had a fiery body, a keen mind, a strong conviction, and a divine vision. These are the characteristics that every pioneering work must have.

Risk-taking, self-confidence, Gaining trust and vision

The ability to take measured risks without losing sight of the objectives is one of an entrepreneur's most crucial traits. An entrepreneur's ability to do this is vital since without it, starting an entrepreneurial activity is nearly difficult owing to the fear of bad outcomes. Working and interacting with strangers and unfamiliar people carries significant risk. Thomas Jones needs rapport, trust, and kindness as a result. At that time, British rulers like Harry English and his men were mistreating the native populace. Therefore, it was only logical that Thomas Jones, a British national himself, would initially be viewed with skepticism and mistrust by the locals. But over time, Thomas Jones won their confidence and friendship not through haughtiness and a superiority complex, but through humility and genuine compassion for their suffering and exploitation by the ruling class. Language could either be a barrier or a means of strengthening a bond of friendship and communication with the local people. For Thomas Jones, the Khasi language should be a tool for the second option. He, therefore, worked hard to learn to speak and understand the Khasi language. He got two young men named Duwan Rai and u Jumkha who had some knowledge of the English language to teach him Khasi⁷. Within eight months, Thomas Jones could speak Khasi eloquently. Thomas Jones's knowledge of the Khasi language helped him to converse easily with the natives, understanding their thought, their story, and their life. And this is one aspect that entrepreneurs should be good at in order to achieve their goals.

Only when one is sure and convinced of one's own being—in one's own approach and processes—is it possible

for an entrepreneur to take calculated risks without losing sight of the end goals. An entrepreneur must have a high level of self-confidence since it supports his own commitments and reduces anxiety about unexpected consequences. Self-confidence has also grown in relevance in recent years due to the proliferation of start-ups and other new businesses that compete with one another.

Additionally, a lot of studies in the area of entrepreneurship psychology point to the idea that entrepreneurs draw to them what they want or believe in⁸. An independent business owner who takes calculated risks while maintaining focus on the big picture will eventually draw success and positivity. One person who exemplifies these entrepreneurial traits is Thomas Jones. His determination to base the entirety of the mission activity on doctrinal principles like truth, profound conviction, and divine vision is evidence of his faith in both his personal convictions and the application of such principles.

Innovation, creativity, and socio-economic empowerment

Innovation refers to a “new way of doing something” and includes “incremental, radical, and revolutionary changes in thinking, products, processes, or organizations”⁹. It is perhaps the most important skill that an entrepreneur needs to possess. In fact, the two of them-entrepreneurship and innovation are considered “two sides of the same coin”¹⁰. Since the beginning of time, learning to read and write has been the minimum necessity for humans. A tool for advancing development, enlightenment, and civilization is education. These advantages were attained by many countries and individuals thanks to education. But even in the late nineteenth century, the Khasis lacked a written language, a system of education, and their own literature for unclear reasons. Thomas Jones could have been horrified to read about the Khasis' predicament. He came to understand that providing them with education should come before sharing the good news of salvation via Jesus Christ. He views education as a need, a way to learn everything there is to know about life. Thomas Jones, therefore, undertook the difficult task of providing education to the indigenous inhabitants of the Khasi region. He eventually emerged as the founder and father of the Khasi alphabet. Until this day, the Khasis have honored and thanked Thomas Jones for this priceless gift, regardless of class or religious belief. To strengthen and make Sohra language as a dialect to read and write, Thomas Jones proposed to establish schools and prepared a suitable curriculum of studies for the pupils¹¹. He started with three schools, the first one in Mawsmat, the second one in Mawmluh, and the third one in Sohra¹².

Thomas Jones had a thorough, all-encompassing comprehension of the gospel of Christ's power. He recognized the holistic nature of the Christian message, emphasizing its importance for both the socio-economic and spiritual well-being of its people.

The Sohra area's residents were prosperous economically at the time of Thomas Jones' arrival, as was mentioned in the first part of this paper. They took advantage of the chance to harvest mineral resources including coal, iron ores, and lime stone, and engaged themselves in the blacksmith industry with the inhabitants of the southern plains. The people living further south of the Sohra area worked to cultivate oranges, betel nuts, pan leaves, and other agricultural items that they traded with the same people from the plain area.

However, the processes used to manufacture materials were largely manual and archaic. For the workers, it was time-consuming and stressful. Thomas Jones felt sorry for the native people who didn't know better than to use cutting-edge techniques to produce accessible natural resources. As a result, he offered himself as a volunteer to instruct and assist them in utilizing more modern and effective techniques. Thomas Jones

demonstrated the craft of sawing boards and timbers to the native people and instructed them in it for carpentry. He imparted the craft of chiselling and moulding sandstones to the locals so they could build walls for their homes and outer compounds. The bulk of the locals worked extracting limestone and trading it in raw form to the plain areas because limestone was and still is abundantly available in the Sohra area. They used wood in the traditional lime kilns to refine the raw limestone for local consumption. The ecology is directly impacted by the use of wood. Thomas Jones was greatly concerned about this effect. He made the initiative to address this issue with the locals. He also offered a superior suggestion: use coal instead of wood to refine limestone in the kiln. The native people adopted his advice, which not only helped to save the environment but also increased their financial rewards.

Social entrepreneurship is defined as “the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner”¹³. With concerns over sustainability, inequality, and social impact generally, many entrepreneurs have become more intensely interested in the social consequences of their economic activity. In particular, the rise of social awareness among entrepreneurs has led to many attempts to use entrepreneurship to create a more just and sustainable world. Making the appropriate decision and deciding which side of the fence to leap to when given the option to select is a test. There were two opposing sides in the Thomas Jones case. On the one hand, there were the oppressive British tyrants who exercised an iron fist on the native population. The native population, on the other hand, was severely repressed and exploited. Thomas Jones, a man with solely good intentions and care for the native people, had no patience for Harry English's wrongdoing. Harry English, who was depraved, nasty, and powerful, was challenged by him. Along with speaking out, he also took initiative and fought with passion for justice for the native people.

Conclusion

A successful entrepreneur should consider issues of social wellness and sustainability in addition to their own financial success and personal well-being. In this context, social entrepreneurship is a concept and a practice that has recently gained a lot of attention and is rapidly gaining popularity. During his lifetime, Thomas Jones was hailed for his ideas and visions, and his theories are regarded as being of utmost significance to social entrepreneurship.

No one can dispute the significance of entrepreneurship in the modern world, particularly for a state like Meghalaya with a large untapped human resource base. Using the energy and spirit of the Meghalayan population—especially the youth—in constructive works, will not only aid in the development of jobs but also bring about social fairness and quiet discontent, much as Thomas Jones had envisioned. This paper concludes with the claim that we should look within ourselves and at our immediate surroundings for inspiration on the practice of entrepreneurship and build the entrepreneurial spirit. Thus, Thomas Jones' life and ideas could thus serve as a hoard for entrepreneurial endeavors because they are filled with crucial lessons and advice on the subject, and they will always be relevant.

Endnotes

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