

COMMUNICATING CHRIST THROUGH HINDU RELIGION

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FOREWORD

The title of the book **“Communicating Christ Through Hindu Religion”** goes with a question to Christian community whether this is possible. This book and many other Research Scholars who searched the Indian (Hindu) scriptures shall say ‘yes’. The history along with the spiritual growth of this great country India started from the day of the arrival of St. Thomas to this country in 49 A.D.

Authentic evangelism sees people through the eyes of Jesus. Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the awesomely holy God unconditionally loved humanity, even in its sinful state. He reached out to those who were labeled as “sinners” by the society and marginalized by the political and religious power structures of his time.

How do we see the “other”? In Athens (Acts 17:16-34), while Paul was deeply disturbed and pained at the idolatry of the city, he did not fail to love them, nor did he speak derogatively about them. Rather, he could find something positive even in that (“You are so religious that you have an altar even to the unknown God”) so that he could connect with his audience. He did not dilute the gospel nor did he hide the fact that they must abandon their idolatry and turn to the Living God, but he did so with love and respect.

Authentic evangelism is possible only when we understand the socio-cultural and religious context of the receptor and communicate meaningfully the gospel with them. Sadhu Sunder Singh gave a succinct description of what contextualization in the Indian context is. He said, “It is giving the water of life in Indian Cup.” There are atleast 4693 cups within India that need the water of life.

Paul in Athens, engaged his audience by employing their own poets and philosophers’ sayings to clarify his message, and highlighting a component of their worship ritual (altar of the unknown God) as a redemptive analogy, and also by using the historical styles that were in line with the Greek tradition. An interesting study in contextual communication of the gospel can be done by analyzing Paul’s philosophically inclined Greeks in Athens (Acts 17:16-34).

The call for contextualization reverberates even within the corporate world. In her highly influential *We Are Like That Only*, Indian author Rama Bijapurkar claims that many of the multinational companies who entered post-liberalization India failed because they did not contextualize their strategies according to the Indian situation.

In Athens, Paul was able to connect with his audience and communicate contextually because he was a good observer and learner, as he “walked around and looked carefully at their objects of worship” (Acts 17:23). King Solomon, known for his wisdom was also an avid learner (Proverbs 24:30-34), as he writes; “I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw” (24:32).

But the missionary work started with St. Thomas in India and being continued right at the moment has contributed enormously for humanizing and elevating the people of ‘Hindustan’. We may conclude that “A virgin soil is now for the first time being ploughed... and in process of time we may reasonably expect to reap a rich crop of intellectual and moral results, Christianized Indians” and Christian India. Yes, a secular India that espouses and lives the Christ’s gospel of love and peace and equality and justice.

From Narsanror Institute of Leadership Training formerly National Institute of Leadership Training yet another compact hand book affirms how Christian doctrines are embedded in the Hindu Religion.

I join with my colleagues in NILT in praising the Lord Jesus, for bringing this small book to throw light on reaching the Hindu Brothers of this spiritual great country and group India, under “One Flock One Shepherd”.

G.J. Pandithurai

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INTRODUCTION

It was India Missions Association which had organized the 'Bhandu Seva Conference' at Nagpur between February 21 - 24, 2013, is responsible for having chosen the topic 'Communicating Christ through Indian Religion' as the participants to this conference were from various Missionary organizations who are toiling night and day to reach out to the Hindus, i.e. our 'bhandus' so that they shall taste the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ and shall see the wonderful 'light of the world'.

I felt it would be of great help to the resource persons and the participants of this conference if they know about the historical background with which the popular Hindu Religion got developed in the Indian soil after the advent of Apostle Thomas. The Christian Missionaries, though not all, still believe that Hindu religion was developed through very many factors of the Aryan Vedas, Brahmanas, Sastras and their methods of worship and beliefs. They also think that Hindu religion was followed and practiced by our people of India for over a period of several thousands of years before Christ. This is not true because it lacks historical evidences.

The name Hinduism was coined only in 1794 AD by Sir William Jones. Contrary to the fact that Hinduism is the other name for Hindutwa, a way of life, that every human being is not socially equal by birth whereas Hindu Religion is propagating the humane love and spirituality which got developed after assimilating the universal love of God propagated by Apostle Thomas right from 49 AD in Taxila in north and from 52 AD to 72 AD in the south, ie, in Tamil Nadu.

Unless the missionaries understand this historical background the love of Christ Jesus cannot be meaningfully served to the 'bhandus' of our great nation. We don't preach Christianity so that they would be converted to the Christian religion. We don't demolish their culture and integration of India. But we do want to preach the

Communicating Christ Through Hindu Religion

love of Jesus Christ and his salvation so that our people shall be liberated from the clutches of sin, casteism, slavery to the bad habits of black magic and all sorts of Satanic powers and one day we will achieve 'one nation one people' as was envisaged by Thirumoolar :

'Onrae Kulam, Oruvanae Devan'

The second topic 'Doctrine of Avatar and Vyuha' is included in this book to have an understanding about how any human being or any cult-worship could be deified as an avatar. The very meaning of the word avatar is the process of coming down, that is, coming down from heaven and not going up ; avatar is not the process of making any mortal being as the supreme God. This vyuha has paved the way for idolotary which had streghened a section of the people as the priestly class and the rest as the lower strata of the society or untouchables. Words may not be suffice to express my gratitude to Narsanror Institute of Leadership Training Formerly National Institute of Leadership Training and to my colleagues in NILT who are instrumental in bring out this book. May God bless India with his power of salvation.

(NILT)

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CONTENT

| | Page |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Early Thomas Christianity in India | 9 |
| 2. Evangelizing the Hindus / Indians | 25 |
| 3. Doctrine of Avatar and Vyuha | 31 |