

THE INDIRECT EFFECTS  
OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

# THE INDIRECT EFFECTS OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

BEING THE SIR PEREGRINE MAITLAND PRIZE  
ESSAY IN CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY, 1927

BY  
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## PREFACE

THIS essay was submitted in competition for the Sir Peregrine Maitland Prize of 1927 in the University of Cambridge. It was awarded the prize, and since the award the examiners have very kindly given me permission, while retaining the original form of the essay in all essentials, to make slight alterations mostly of arrangement. For this permission I am grateful.

*The first part of the essay deals with the indirect effect of Christian thought and ideals on Hindu thought and ideals. The second part is a collection of five short essays dealing with various important aspects of Christian Mission work in India, and endeavours to show how this work has itself raised and created important problems worthy of consideration by all interested in the problem of Christian Missions in "foreign" lands. In this section there is a little repetition which I fear is inevitable.*

The candidate for the prize is required to state the extent of his obligations to others for his material. I have lived in India for some years and have been able to pick up points here and there in the course of my own work and in contact with Christian missionaries. Indian journals and newspapers have

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helped me considerably, and I have quoted freely from them. I think I have marked all my quotations. Otherwise the work is entirely my own. For some of the statements made there can be no references, and no authority can be quoted. They are impressions, and as such may be disputed by others of longer residence in India or of greater ability to discern the signs of the times.

I regret not being able to give the references for one or two of my quotations, due to the fact that I am separated from my papers.

I do not wish to appear to be under-estimating the value of the work of the Christian Missionaries in India. On the contrary I have a high appreciation of Christian Mission work in India, and know something of its difficulties. I know a little, too, of the fine characters of most of the men and women, Indian and foreign, who are engaged in it.

It is a belief that many of the difficulties and problems are of our own making, and are capable of removal and solution, that prompts me to offer this contribution in the hope that it will help us to see His Will more clearly.

I am indebted to my friend the Rev. P. L. Hedley, M A., B D, for seeing the book through the Press, and for the preparation of the Index.

R. S. W.

23rd May, 1928

## PART I

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

IN considering the question of the indirect effects of Christian Missions in India the difficulty at once appears of differentiating between the effects of Christian Missions and the effects of Western civilization. Many things which we shall notice in the course of this essay will divide themselves under these two heads—they are the indirect effects of contact with the West and in only a few cases are they influences flowing directly from the activity of Christian Missions. We can plead to be allowed to consider such influences because our Western civilization is a Christian civilization—at least nominally—and 200,000 Westerners cannot be resident in a country such as India without their civilization having indirect influences. And if that civilization is an amalgam of Hebrew, Greek and Roman elements, it has also received a definitely Christian bias. If then what is here put down as the indirect influences of Christian Missions in India can also be put down to the indirect influences of Western civilization—perhaps it will not be regarded as a serious error.

It has also to be remembered that the Government of India for some time now has been a

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foreign Government, the British Government. The ruling race has been Christian, and although they have declared for themselves a policy of religious neutrality, their Christian influence has been considerable.

Nor are the Christian influences in the land confined to the Missions. Indeed it is quite impossible, to separate and assess the indirect effect of Christian Missions in India apart from the indirect effect of Christianity in India—and the latter may flow quite outside the missionary movement. But the important point is the diffusion and indirect effects of Christian ideas in India, whether these be imported by Missionaries or other Westerners, or were introduced by Indians themselves after a sojourn in the West.

There are two aspects of Christianity represented in India to-day : that represented by the New Testament, and that represented by the so called Christian men and women; and the latter has had a far greater influence than the former. The Christianity of the Christ in the Gospels has not had a very great influence in India, but the Christianity of European culture has had a great influence. The latter is represented not so much by the Christian Missionaries as by the large number of Westerners in other walks of life. Of the Western Christians dwelling in India, Missionaries represent only some three per cent. of the whole community,

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and some of the social reforms accomplished in the last century owe more to the influence of Government servants, planters and business men than to that of the Christian Missionaries.

A further point to be noted here is that Christian Missions in India, at least for the later period, have always been Missions of the Western branch of the Church. The Eastern Church so far as I know has now no Missions in India. The Syrian Church of South India, especially on the Malabar Coast, has a long history, going back, some contend, to the Apostle St. Thomas himself. But while Apostolic foundation seems to be at least doubtful, it is an ancient branch of the Church. More probably that Church is the product of early Missionary propaganda on the part of the Nestorian Church in Persia, but that Missionary enterprise ceased at a remote date and certainly was not active within this present millennium. The product of that effort is the Syrian Church of Mylapore and the Malabar Coast, which was not itself an active evangelizing agency. It had so far forgotten its Master's call that early in the last century the Church Missionary Society sent special helpers and Missionaries to the Malabar Syrian Church in an attempt to rejuvenate it. The special effort ended in dispute and quarrels, so that the help was withdrawn and the Church Missionary Society itself set out on independent Christian Mission work almost alongside

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the Syrian Church; but its influence on the Syrian Church has been profound. That Church is now a much more active Christian body and more conscious of its responsibilities to the non-Christian population by which it is surrounded; so that the effort has been successful, though indirectly so. This branch of the Eastern Church has been practically without influence till our own days, and therefore I hold to my statement that we shall have to consider only the Christian missionary activity of the Western branch of the Church.

To assess or state the indirect influences of Christian Mission work is far from easy. First we must ask what is the intention of Christian Missions in this country. If we are to consider only the present-day Mission policy, we shall see very few indirect influences, for it is a broad policy, willing to engage in religious teaching, study of religion, education, secular as well as religious, medical work and social service. It is a broad programme and it would contend that the fact that others are emulating it in serving the people is not an indirect effect but direct. The founding of, say, the Servants of India Society it would contend was a direct effect of the influence of Christian Missions. But I will take it that we are to consider such a movement as an indirect effect and not a direct effect. If we could take the programme of Christian Missions to be that of St. Francis Xavier,

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who merely demanded of his converts ability to repeat certain Christian formulæ, then we could have great scope for the development of our subject—but in our day we can no longer do this.

Mentioning this reminds us that the indirect effects have been of a twofold nature. By engaging in this activity the indirect influences have re-acted on the very Christianity that we preach, so that there are indirect effects here as well as on the people and country round about.

As Dr. Gore says, "The religion which actually won Europe and is called Christianity owed almost as much to the Greek as to the Jew; and if India is to call itself Christian, its Christianity will, again, owe as much to India as to the Europe which evangelized it." This is true, and this reflex action on Missions themselves and on Christianity is perhaps the most important indirect effect of Christian Missions in India. At first this was not seen by our predecessors—indeed it is an attitude of only this century and this generation, but it is very widely accepted at our time of day.

Then perhaps the best way to lay out our material will be to survey all the larger fields of missionary activity, and by examining them individually extricate their indirect effects. This involves a survey of the whole of the Christian Missionary activity in India and a discussion of its problems; but we must face it, for only thus shall we be able



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to see how the indirect effects have influenced the Missions themselves. And I choose to do this the more readily, for I consider this to be a more valuable task than the alternative of examining in detail India's social conditions and trying to see there the indirect effects of Christian Mission influence. In this latter field we have to consider the important movements for the abolition of widow burning, for widow re-marriage, for female education, for the removal of untouchability, the literary renaissance, the raising of the age of consent and many other similar social movements. But I do not think that all these elevating movements can be put down to indirect effects of Christian Missions. In fact I am sure that they cannot. The influences are much more complex than that. The first influences may be Christian, but the Christian influences in the land are not confined to Christian Missions, and in my opinion it would be wrong to give the credit for these movements solely to Christian Missions. The foreign Christian population of India is quite considerable apart from Missions. The Government is that of a Christian power. Government officials, a large part of the Army, the commercial class, the planting community are in large part British, and it is their combined influence that has brought these movements to life.

The influences which have brought this about are Western and perhaps the most potent has been

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the earnest efforts of the Government to rule impartially for the good of the people. Thus to treat all races, religions and castes as equal and to give to every one strict justice has been an object lesson of the utmost power. Add to this all that Government has done for the sick, the famine-stricken, the orphans and the lepers, the ignorant and the down-trodden, and you have here the source from which much influence has flowed.

I, therefore, do not discuss these large social movements in detail, but in all humility consider that it is a more useful task to endeavour to examine the re-action on the Missions themselves which has been created by Christian Missionary activity in India. Their work has raised problems which were not foreseen and perhaps the time has come to halt and ask "*Quo vadis ?*" Nearly all the British Missionary Societies and most of the Continental and American Societies are finding that their financial support is not growing at a rate that will enable them to keep pace with their obligations on the field. In fact, I doubt if it is growing at all. I do not know a single Society that has a surplus on its budget. All that I know have fairly considerable accumulated deficits. This being so, perhaps the following discussion will enable us all to see more clearly what is the aim of Christian Missions in India and how best to attain that aim.

## CHAPTER II

### SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

HAD never a single convert been made the work of the Christian Missions in India could not be set down as a failure. The Christian influence is a subtle thing, like the wind blowing where it listeth, and no man knoweth the place thereof; and in India certainly it has permeated the country. Its source, however, has not only been direct from the Christian Missions as such, but has also been from the large British and Western non-missionary community resident in India and at least nominally Christian, and from the example of a Government also nominally Christian. In some respects the influence of the non-missionary Christian community and the Government has been the more potent. Not that the Government has ever taken sides religiously and preferred Christian institutions before those of other religions or of no religion; neither has it aided directly in the promulgation of Christian ideas. It has not directly fostered the Christian Church nor specially cared for its Christian subjects. But it has administered the country on a basis of righteousness, which is natural to man as man. It has administered justice as unto men who are all equally members of the

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state with equal rights as men. In the administration of law, it has maintained caste rights and caste privileges, but has never allowed the rights of caste to violate the person of man. It has exercised the principles of universal benevolence and righteousness common to all men, and its influence has been hostile to the baser elements in the Hindu cultus. The government had to prohibit sati, female infanticide, self-immolation at festivals and other such practices in which Hinduism had entrenched itself, but its prohibition was based on humanitarian grounds and not on religious grounds. The Government administers Hindu law to its Hindu subjects and Mohammedan law to its Mohammedan subjects, but in the administration of that law it deals out impartially—justice; and that has been a great object lesson to the Indians.

Often the influence of the non-missionary Western community, of the Government and of the missionaries has combined to effect some reform, as it did in the abolition of Sati, but it is extremely difficult if not impossible to separate them and to say that this is an indirect effect of the Christian Missions in India and that an indirect influence of the Western community. The influence cannot be thus analysed and separated. It is one influence—the influence of Christianity in India, or perhaps not even thus geographically located, but of Christianity in the world.

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The influence has shown itself in two ways—  
(a) social reform movements, (b) modifications of  
ultimate doctrines. Taking them in this order  
we can proceed.

The "Indian Social Reformer" often states  
"organized social service work in India can be  
said to date only from the advent of Christian  
Missionaries." It is certain that the manifold  
philanthropic and social activities of the Christian  
Missions not only on behalf of the Christian  
community, but on behalf of the depressed every-  
where in the land have roused the other religious  
communities to a sense of their responsibility for  
the poorer brethren with whom they live. The  
founding of the "Servants of India Society" is  
itself one of the indirect effects of Christian Missions  
in India. Not that we can say that the Indian  
religions had no sense of responsibility for the  
lower classes or the poorer classes—but it can be  
said justly that it needed contact with the Christian  
Missions and particularly with the Protestant  
Christian Missions before this philanthropic sense  
was awakened, and undoubtedly the finest work of  
this nature has been done among the depressed  
classes and the outcastes.

A very large proportion of the Christian com-  
munity in India has been recruited from the out-  
castes. ~~These people~~ are Hindus—at least now

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they are usually classed as such, but the very fact that they are thus included in the community is an indirect effect of Christian Missions in India. They were not always so classed. They are below the caste level and their touch pollutes a caste man; more, in some cases even their approach beyond a specified distance pollutes. They are obliged to live in separate quarters or in little villages of their own called "cheries"—usually they are some little distance away from the caste village. They are denied the use of the public conveniences of the village, such as the well from which to draw water—they are not allowed to pass along the caste street nor even to enter the caste villages. Sometimes in going to a strange village whose exact location I have not known, I have been met by an "outcaste Christian" who was to conduct me from the main road to the village. Whenever the path went through a Brahmin street this fellow Christian and brother in the Lord would not dare to follow it, but leaving the track would run round the village by way of the paddy fields and meet me at the other end of the village. • Even though a Christian he dare not go through the Brahmin street. Had he done so, he would have been beaten by the caste people. Another example of St. Paul's dictum—"all things are lawful but all things are not expedient." In some parts of India the outcaste must not approach a caste man nearer

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than a specified number of paces, and if the two meet on a public road the outcaste must retreat to the fields on the side of the road and maintain pollution distance till the caste man passes.

There are many temples in India which are maintained out of common funds. In some cases the expense involved in maintenance is met by the State. These temples are closed against a large section of the Hindu population on the ground that they are untouchable; and although the roads round a temple are also maintained at public expense, very often the untouchables are not allowed to use them.

As the Census Report of 1901 (Vol. I, pp. 41-2) says :

“ These people have little to lose by forsaking the creed of their forefathers. As long as they remain Hindus they are daily and hourly made to feel that they are of commoner clay than their neighbours. Any attempts which they may make to educate themselves or their children are actively discouraged by the classes above them; caste restrictions prevent them from quitting the toilsome, uncertain and undignified means of subsistence to which custom had condemned them, and taking to a handicraft or trade: they are snubbed and repressed on all public occasions; are refused admission even to the temples of their gods; and can hope for no more helpful partner of their joys and sorrows

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than the unkempt and unhandy maiden of the paracheri with her primitive notion of comfort and cleanliness."

The outcaste is usually quite illiterate, for while Government regulations allow them to attend the Government schools, public opinion usually does not. I have myself seen outcaste children who wished to learn, obliged to sit on the verandah of the school and listen to the teacher through a door or a window. And these people number sixty millions in India. Christian Missions paid their attentions to this class and found it a most fruitful field to cultivate. Large numbers came over to Christianity, and when Christians, no longer did they, in theory, pollute and no longer were they untouchable. They gained a higher social status—at least in theory if not in practice—and they always had available the help of an influential Christian Western Missionary, if it was required, to aid in establishing their new position. This landslide to Christianity raised serious questions for Hinduism and led to a searching of the Scriptures, and it was found that the supposed untouchables were really not untouchable except by custom. They were not legally untouchable. Then arose quite a strong and powerful movement within Hinduism for the abolition of untouchability and of the leaders of this movement Mahatma Gandhi is the finest figure. Much progress has been



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made in the cause, and the barrier shows signs of weakening if not of falling completely. Government is more anxious to see the spirit of its educational regulations carried out and untouchables and caste children educated at the same schools—as I have seen them myself. Roads have been opened to the untouchables and they have won the right of entry into certain temples hitherto closed to them.

An Indian writer (Mr. R. P. Singh) thus deals with untouchability :

“Another very vexed and difficult question is that of untouchability. Untouchability varies in different degrees in different localities, and it is prevalent in different ways among different sections of the Hindus. In some cases it has assumed such ugly and ignominious forms that the community has obtained a bad name for ill-treating a section of its own people with cruelty and iniquity of a most objectionable nature. Every Indian knows its lamentable story. It would, therefore, be idle to enumerate the different types of untouchability openly practised within the fold of the Hindu community. Some of these forms of untouchability are commonly familiar, but there are several extreme and peculiar types prevalent in the south of the peninsula, about which many people of the north will be surprised to learn. The commonest form is when the untouchable caste cannot touch or be touched on by the other so-called high castes

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of the Hindus. The untouchable thus leads the segregated life of an outcaste. In another form it spreads over the entire orthodox Hindu community in matters of food and drink. This system of untouchability exists among even the high castes themselves without causing any feelings of insult or casting any stigma of inferiority. It is a peculiar institution within the pale of Hinduism, existing without justification and devoid of all dictates of reasonableness and humanity. These restrictions frequently cause great hardship and inconvenience. The principles upon which the system was originally based have altogether been forgotten and vanished.

“Misconceptions abound in this matter of untouchability as abundantly as in many other social and political problems that obtain in this country. No one wants any person to become unclean or to take unclean food or drink foul water, but simply to do what is barely just and proper. Abolishing untouchability does not mean that every man should dine with another person in the same dish without any regard to cleanliness, or social intercourse; but not to touch a human being or to smell pollution in a slight, harmless, accidental touch with another human being is an emphatic denial of God who is the Creator of all. The solution is an easy one, and requires simply a clear understanding of the case, the sacrificing of one's long-standing prejudices and exercising of a little

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determination in effecting the reform. Otherwise, the untouchable becomes a Christian or a Moham-medan in a minute, and then poses as a peer or superior of the most proud Hindu ; and in that case the latter feels absolutely no hesitation in embracing him with open arms. Can ignorance and blindness go further ? ”<sup>1</sup>

Here is the paragraph under the heading of “Untouchability” from the “Indian Social Reformer” report of the 1926 All-India Social Conference :

“The amelioration of the condition of the untouchables is progressing fast, and caste Hindu prejudice is slowly dying out. Reports are received from several places in Northern India of tanks and wells being freely thrown open to the untouchables by caste Hindus. The difficulties in the way of the admission of children of untouchables to schools are being gradually minimized. Especially is this the case with Madras and Bombay. The Madras Council recently passed a Bill to amend the Local Boards Act of 1920, with a view to removing some of the social disabilities under which the Adi-Dravidas are suffering in the matter of the use of roads and markets. The awakening among Adi-Dravidas in Madras is largely due to the efforts of Mr. Veerian, who represented them in the last Council. Among the various Conferences that

<sup>1</sup> The Indian Social Reformer.

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were held may be mentioned the Anti-Untouchability Conference at Amraoti, the Fifth Audi-Andhra Conference, the All-India Depressed Classes Leaders' Conference, and the Madras Adi-Dravida Conference. Some of the States have also been following a sympathetic policy towards the untouchables. The Mysore University Senate resolved recently to exempt students belonging to the depressed classes from payment of examination fees for a further period of five years. The Cochin Government have ordered that stipends should be granted to pupils of the depressed classes and also that those who are fit should be appointed as teachers. The Dalit Udhar Sabha, Delhi, has prepared a scheme for a model village for the housing of the depressed classes in Delhi. It is a pity that Swami Shraddhanand, who did so much for the untouchables and who started the *Liberator* specially to campaign against the curse of untouchability, should not have been spared long to carry on his great work. It is reported from Hyderabad (Deccan) that the depressed classes of the place have done away with the evil custom of drinking, and that many have taken to vegetarian diet, while some have given up animal sacrifices."

The 1927 session of the Indian National Social Conference meeting at Madras passed the following resolution about untouchability :

" This Conference views with grave apprehension

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the continuation of the practice of untouchability in India, and exhorts Hindus of all classes to remove all restrictions imposed upon the so-called 'untouchables' in the matter of admission to schools, colleges and hostels, use of public roads, wells, tanks and choultries, and entry into places of worship, and thus bring about a greater solidarity in Hindu Society ; and it pledges its full support to these classes for every proper effort by them to get rid of these evils. This Conference is further of opinion that Government grant should not be made and affiliation refused to the educational institutions which exclude children on the ground of race or religion or colour."

It is my opinion that this whole consideration of the question of untouchability has been raised by the large number of untouchables who have joined the Christian Church. The indirect effect has been that Hinduism has had more carefully to demarcate its boundaries, the untouchables have been admitted as Hindus, the impossibility and injustice of a continuance of their disabilities has been realized, and the Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men has been given a new emphasis. Doctor A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar at this same conference said: "God has made everyone equal, and the image of God rests in everyone's heart. Therefore there was no question of doubt that this inhuman system of un-

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touchability was incompatible with human ingenuity."

This movement against untouchability is not to be confused with any movement for the removal of caste divisions. It often is so confused, but my own opinion is that caste is now as firmly held by the majority of Hindus as ever it was.

• "This Conference is emphatically of opinion that the caste system is the greatest obstacle in the way of national unity, and that national solidarity cannot be achieved unless the caste system is abolished root and branch. This Conference accordingly resolves to carry on a vigorous propaganda throughout the country to awaken the intelligentsia as well as the masses to the iniquities of the caste system with a view to its abolition."

This resolution was adopted at the 1927 Indian National Social Conference, and while I do not attach great importance to it, nor expect much to be done about it, it certainly notes a distinct advance on anything previously recorded by this Conference on the same subject.

Wherever it has gone, one of the most conspicuous achievements of Christianity has been the raising of the status of the women of the community. It is needless to stress here the general position of women in India. Certainly it is improving, but there is yet much room for further improvement. Within its own fold Christianity has done much

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for women. Take education alone. Of the total female population of India 21 per thousand are literate. Of the Indian Christian female population 210 per thousand are literate. Of the larger communities in India it is the most literate. This activity within the Church has reacted outside, and now most important social movements include in their programme the amelioration of the lot of Indian women. Thinking Hindus are paying attention to the problem, and women's questions are much to the fore at the present day.

In 1829 Lord Bentinck prohibited within the British provinces the practice of Sati. Up to that time when a man died his widow was allowed to mount the funeral pyre and be burned along with his body. Those who did not thus mount the pyre had henceforth to live a life of the severest asceticism. By the beginning of last century this widow-burning had reached huge proportions and several thousands mounted the pyre every year. In the south it was particularly alarming when a king died, for then all his wives mounted the pyre and were burnt to death. The movement for the prohibition of this practice was strongly supported by the Serampore Missionaries, some Calcutta Western merchants and some enlightened Hindus, including Ram Mohan Ray. An excellent example of the indirect effects of Christian Missions in India.

Widows then and now are called upon to lead

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a life of drudgery. In most parts of India after the death of their husband, their head is shaved, they are forbidden to wear any jewellery, and their cloth must be of one colour—in the case of Brahmin widows usually white. They live with their mother-in-law and act the part of a Cinderella in the house. Before 1856 it was not legal for them to re-marry, but in that year the Government of India passed an Act legalizing such re-marriages. Yet till quite lately this Act has not been made much use of. The Social Reform Movement has made this one of its main aims and has done a great deal to commend re-marriage in all parts of the country. Marriage bureaux have been established and widows' homes provided, and in consequence a certain number of such marriages now take place yearly in all ranks of Indian society. The movement has done much to alleviate the hard lot of the Indian widow and to lighten her burden of suffering. The provision of widows' homes is surely a direct imitation of the similar Christian Mission organization.

The women of India on the whole are purdah. From very early times the ladies of royal harems in India lived in seclusion, and wealthy families copied the royal household in this. The Mohammedan invasion of the twelfth century made the custom more widespread. The Mohammedan conquerors kept their women shut up in the ladies' apartments, and the conquered Hindu followed



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the custom of his then social superiors. And in the turmoil which characterized Muslim rule for centuries Hindu women were safer if shut up and guarded. Thus the Zartana system grew up, and all high-caste Hindus living in Mohammedan provinces adopted the custom of the north. In some districts of India a high-caste woman to-day seldom leaves the seclusion of the Zenana, and if she does she is heavily veiled and moves in closed and blinded carriages. In the south, where Mohammedan rule did not last long or did not arise, the old freedom remains and the women of the lower castes live a very free life.

But Christian teaching and Western example have made a very serious impact on educated opinion in this matter. There has been a distinct change in this century, and in the Presidency cities it is no unusual sight to see Hindu gentlemen driving out with their wives and children in the evening or walking with them on the Marina at Madras or on the Esplanade at Bombay. The Indian National Social Conference of 1927 passed the following resolution on this subject :

“This Conference is emphatically of opinion that the system of purdah as it exists among the Hindus as well as Mohammedans is prejudicial to the healthy development of women and urges its discontinuance.”

The question of child-marriage is claiming the

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earnest and serious attention of all who have the welfare of India at heart. At all social conferences it is discussed and there is much progress to report. The Social Conference already quoted passed the following resolution :

“The Conference deems it essential for the healthy and free development of Indian manhood and womanhood that the minimum marriageable age of boys and girls should be raised to twenty-one and sixteen respectively; and it recommends that the monogamous principle with the right of divorce for suitable reasons may be introduced.”

I have little hesitation in saying that the ages here suggested are far in advance of public opinion in India, but they are something to aim at. At present, except among the Parsies and Christians, child-marriage is almost universal. Children are married before puberty is reached—a Hindu father who does not marry his daughter before the menses appear commits sin. Marriages when the contracting parties are both below the age of five years are not uncommon—and below ten frequent. There are widows in India below the age of five and they are not allowed to re-marry! There is a strong movement to raise the age of marriage; and adult marriages, though still the exception, are becoming pleasingly more frequent every year.

I cannot help thinking that the attention now paid in India to the amelioration of the lot of women

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by allowing widow re-marriage, raising the age of consent, uplifting the devadasis, preventing child-marriages, and abolishing the system of purdah, are all indirect results of the advent of Christianity into India. In this all Christians in India can rejoice and not least the Christian Missions.

Christian organizations, such as the Young Men's Christian Association, have been copied by the Young Men's Buddhist Association and the Young Men's Indian Association. The social work of the Christian Missions has stimulated the formation of missions to the Depressed Classes and the work of the Servants of India Society. The Co-operative movement has of late years done much for the advancement of the poorer people and the lifting of the yoke of poverty. In our own country this century has seen a change in emphasis on the part of the Christian gospel. The Christian Church has shown a renewed concern for the welfare of the people as a community, with the result that social service is much more prominent with us now than it ever was. We preach a "social gospel." No longer can a man be content with his own salvation and be regardless of the welfare of his brethren. The command to love our neighbour as ourselves has taken a new position in our Christian teaching in the West, and that with far-reaching consequences. As so often happens this movement

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in the West has had its counterpart in the East, and Hinduism to-day has a social consciousness it never had before. So it is with the awakening of India to a sense of her national consciousness. Christian Missions by the spread of education doubtless contributed to this, and so far it can be claimed as an indirect effect of Christian Missions. It seems to be part of a movement of the spirit of freedom which bloweth where it listeth and no man knoweth the place thereof. It has gone over Turkey, Egypt, India and China. Where it will end it is difficult to foretell. The new currents started by the great national movement of recent years have helped to bring social service into the forefront. India realizes that to attain national status and national rights she will need to be fit for it, and she turns to consider her own questions of poverty and the wrongs of her own society. Missions to the Depressed Classes, schools for outcaste children, widows' homes, industrial schools, women's rescue work, are all signs of a quickened social conscience. The methods adopted are largely copied from the organization of Christian Missions, and the social reform movement itself has arisen largely through contact with Christian ethics and Christian ideas, taken to the East by Westerners of a Christian persuasion of faith—be they Missionaries, Government servants, educationists, planters or business men.

## CHAPTER III

### INFLUENCE ON OTHER RELIGIONS

THE religion of India is Hinduism. Other religions are to be found—Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Parseeism, Jainism and Christianity. But fundamentally the religion of India is Hinduism. Buddhism was native to India, but practically has been driven out of the plains to the hill country near Thibet, Burma and Ceylon. Mohammedanism is an imported religion, but in numbers is next to Hinduism. Parseeism is imported. Jainism is a branch of Hinduism. Christianity is an imported religion. But withal Hinduism still embraces nearly 75 per cent. of the people of India. About 20 per cent. are Mohammedan, and the remaining 5 per cent. are Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Parsees or of other faiths.

Of the influence of Christianity on its neighbouring religions in India—Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Parseeism, Buddhism—it is difficult to write. To do so accurately and effectively would require a much greater knowledge of these ancient faiths than I possess and much greater ability than I can claim. Yet that there should be an influence is very obvious. Buddhism influenced Hinduism as did also Mohammedanism at a later date. So

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also has Christianity. No two great religions can live side by side without influencing each the other. Christianity has been a great purger of the ancient faiths. Coming in all its purity, in its light men have seen light. Christian ethics have been accepted as the norm to which other systems of ethics must approximate. The disgusting superstitions and idolatrous elements of Hinduism have been thrust into the background, and the more elevating tenets put into the foreground. Hinduism is now ashamed of its vulgarity and its obscene practices. The nautch girls, without whose dancing in days gone by no big function in India was complete, now keep in the background. A century ago these women were much more in the public eye than they are to-day. "The presence of these women at the temple services and in the great processions leads to a great deal of vice among young Hindus, and their introduction into the homes of the people on festive occasions has done endless harm."<sup>1</sup> Missionaries have protested in the name of morality and decency against the whole system, and some of the social reformers have also joined in these protests, till now the appearances of these girls are much less frequent than they were. Public opinion on this subject is not yet strong enough to justify the government in abolishing the whole system of devadasis, but certainly it is moving in

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p 410.

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that direction, and the better minds in Hinduism are ashamed at its continuance. The Christian teaching that God is Spirit and that they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth has been largely accepted. Animal and vegetarian sacrifices to the deity, ceremonial bathing, pilgrimages, and self-torture have been abandoned by some sects of reforming Hindus, and where they have not been given up educated men are becoming just a little ashamed of them.

The Protestant Christian contention that sacred books can be of no value unless they are understandable by the people has led all the reforming movements, the Jain, Sikh, Parsee, Mohammedan and Hindu, to produce translations of the sacred books which they use, and to write all fresh books in the vernaculars of the people.

The contact with Christianity has produced a revival in the study of the ancient Hindu literature. The contact has raised such numerous and important problems that some authority is needed, and men are more and more turning to the ancient books and the ancient laws for light on the new problems.

Wherever there is a highly-organized religious creed Christianity fails to make conversions on any large scale. When brought face to face with Judaism and Mohammedanism it has been almost powerless. Among Hindus its success in gaining converts is almost entirely restricted to the

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less highly organized sects—the outcastes and lower castes. The higher castes have not responded in any marked numbers to the call of Christianity.

The presence of an active Missionary religion alongside Hinduism has had the effect of consolidating the Hindus themselves. Hinduism in contact with ideas of rule, organized purpose and moral law is organizing itself and delimiting its frontiers, but in so doing it is losing some of its strength, which lay in its adaptability. We have already seen how Hinduism has had to face the question of deciding what is a Hindu, and how its frontiers have had to be marked. Fortunately for it, so far, it has not been called upon to produce a creed.<sup>1</sup> I say fortunately for Hinduism, for it is very doubtful if it could produce a creed. As the Greek gods died when they were systematized, so would the Hindu gods. While Hinduism is inarticulate as a system of belief and incoherent as a faith, the apparent danger of anarchy has been averted by its fully organised and articulated social system. Caste carries on the burden of the whole system. But time will wear out this latter, based

<sup>1</sup> Sir Sivaswami Aiyar, in the *Indian Social Reformer*, of 14th April, 1928, writes —

“ We have all a more or less vague idea of what Hinduism is, but it would baffle the ingenuity of the learned to lay down a comprehensive and at the same time sharp and logical definition of Hinduism. It is the accommodating capacity of Hinduism that has enabled it in the past to absorb many communities and many religious beliefs, and to resist the shocks of collision with alien and hostile races and religions ”



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as it is on prejudice and privilege. Will both the cultus and the religion go together? The educated Hindu does not believe in his religion, yet he does outwardly practise it; while the Christian believes in his religion, but does not outwardly observe it.<sup>1</sup>

A Bengali, writing in the *Hindustan Review*, says of Christianity: "It has given us Christ and taught us noble moral and spiritual lessons which we have discovered anew in our own scriptures and thereby satisfied our self-love and made them our very own. It has awakened a new spirit of enquiry in the drooping Hindu mind. It has made Hinduism conscious of its greatness. It has held up to view the baneful effects of certain soul-degrading customs which used to prevail and prevail still in Hindu society. In short it has quickened it with a new life the full fruition of which is not yet."<sup>2</sup>

Mohammedanism has influenced Hinduism and Hinduism has influenced Mohammedanism. Their customs have become peculiarly intermingled. "At some of the Mohammedan ceremonies cloths are distributed in Hindu manner and sandal paste is used. The marriage ceremonies, instead of keeping to the simple form prescribed by the Quoran, have been greatly elaborated and even made to include processions. A necklet of black beads which is formally put round the neck like the Hindu tali

<sup>1</sup> See "Action and Reaction of Christianity and Hinduism in India," by Macnicol, *Hibbert Journal*, vi

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Macnicol, *Hibbert Journal*, Vol vi, p. 73.

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has also come into use, and the women wear bracelets which are broken when they become widows. The religious customs of Hindu and Mohammedan have also become curiously blended in several instances. Hindus take a leading part in the celebration of Mohurran in Madras city. Passages of the Quoran are sometimes chanted at Hindu festivals. Though the Quoran discourages astrology, lower class Mussalmans will consult panchangam Brahmans about the chance of success of their enterprises. Some of the Brahmans thus consulted will send half of the fee so obtained to the Mussalman Mosque at Nagore near Negapatam and will even offer sugar and flowers at that shrine though they endeavour to excuse this act by saying that the saint to whom it is consecrated was originally a Brahman. Mussalman women of the lower classes break coco-nuts at Hindu temples in fulfilment of vows. Strangest of all, there is a Hindu temple at a village called Urasyur, two miles from Srirangam, which is sacred to a goddess called Tulukka Nachian—or the Mussalman body, who is said to be the wife of the Hindu god Ranganatha at Srirangam. ”<sup>1</sup>

I quote the following from the National Christian Council Review for February, 1926 : “ Six thousand Mohammedans of Nadia accepted Christianity. They accepted Christianity and almost in the twinkling of an eye became Hindu in habits of

<sup>1</sup> Census of India Report, 1901 Vol xv Part I. pp 133-4.

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life and thought. They are at present not differentiable from the fourteen thousand Hindu Namasudra Christians of Lower and Eastern Bengal. The Christians of Nadia have given up beef-eating (as a regular habit), their Arabic names and their Mohammedan dress, and have generally adopted the Hindu-Bengali manner of life. Most of them belong to the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. They burn incense, have flowers and candles in their churches, they thoroughly enjoy abundance of vernacular music, both vocal and instrumental, sankirtans with khols karthals (drums and cymbals) and stringed instruments, the method and spirit of which are purely Vaishnava Hindu. . . . The fact is that the Indian Mussalman convert, in spite of all the rigid and insistent requirements of Islam, still preserves a Hindu soul which has not been crushed altogether. Even the Moguls and Pathans living side by side with Hindus for centuries have been inwardly imbibing Hindu ideals and sentiments to a considerable degree. But the vast majority of Indian Mussalmans are not foreigners, but true-born sons of the soil."

It is thus with Hinduism and Mohammedanism. So also has Christianity influenced Hinduism. The most important result of this contact is that men have come to see more and more clearly that some system of Monotheism is the only creed

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possible for reasonable men. The great majority of Hindus have a firm belief in one God—supreme—and this also involves an idea of a single and in some respects personal God. The ordinary oath of the Law Courts is : “ I will speak the truth believing Parameshwar to be present and watching me.” This Monotheistic idea is not inconsistent with the old Vedas, but it lay hidden there and only now is developing, due to contact with Islam as well as with Christianity. Some credit for this development must be given to Islam, for that religion above all else stands for a strict Monotheistic faith.

Hinduism perhaps had never lost the sense of the underlying unity of the universe—certainly it was never troubled with the dualism which periodically crops up in our Western systems of thought. But if it had not quite lost it there was a danger that a system of gods many and lords many was growing up. The emphasis was put on the many manifestations instead of on the underlying unity. Now it is changed, and I doubt whether we are any longer justified in singing :

The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone.

He no longer does so—if he ever did—really. He is Monotheistic. The Samaj movements have grasped this fact and used it greatly. This fact and the success that they have had has greatly helped Christian missions. They have prepared

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men's minds for Monotheism and accustomed them to Theistic language. The Samaj in many cases has been the forerunner preparing the way for Christianity; and membership of a Samaj has been but a half-way resting-house in the movement towards Christianity. I treat of the Samaj movements a little later.

Following a revival of definite Monotheism there has come a general but qualified acceptance of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God with its corollary that all men are brethren. It is from this doctrine that the Reform movements draw their strength. In the sight of the old interpretation of the Hindu gods all men were not equal. It has needed the presence of Christianity to establish the doctrine of the equality of man, and much good has flowed forth from this source.

There is a great tendency to ascribe personality to the spirit behind all things and to unify the Hindu Pantheon. I think it is Professor Gilbert Murray who points out that when the Greek gods were brought together it was fatal to them. It may come thus in India. I am aware that this idea of the personal spirit behind all things is nothing new to Hinduism, which has some very noble religious conceptions in the Vedas, but I am also aware of the practices and beliefs of the villagers, which often are very far from being high and lofty.

The Saiva and Vishnava sects of Hinduism

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claim the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man as Hindu doctrines, and yet hold hard by the Hindu doctrine of the essential inferiority of women and the caste system with all its inequalities and its harsh treatment of outcastes. Vishnava Hinduism has a Trinity closely corresponding to that of the Christian religion, the Supreme Being, His incarnation and His sakti or energizing power. The nature of this Supreme Being is what determines the quality of the religion. The Fatherhood of God contains the love of God, and this has deeply influenced most of the reforming movements in India. Increased emphasis has been laid on Bhakti.

As religion reaches a certain stage of Monotheism Bhakti must appear. What we are to understand by Bhakti depends upon the nature of the Divine Being. The more concrete and human the Supreme Being may be, then the more active will Bhakti be. It will appear as love if the deity worshipped is a god of love ; it will appear as fear if the object worshipped is a god of gloomy terror. Christian influence has somewhat changed the nature of the Divine Being of the Hindu worship, and also the nature of Bhakti, till some Christian evangelists would translate Bhakti by the word "love," and they speak of Christian Bhakti. Others translate it in the sense of faith. Both are possible, but I should think doubtful; for the trans-

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lation depends on the nature of the deity; and if you translate as love you may thus be presupposing that which is not really present. "Devotion" might be a better term by which to translate Bhakti, for it is a non-committal word, and the meaning then would depend entirely upon the object of the devotion; as the Divine Being is given or represented under the most definite form, and is conceived with attributes the most personal, so the Bhakti will change. "The ignorant think that salvation and love are different—none see that they are one. If all men knew that salvation and love were one they would live towards each other in peace, regarding love as salvation itself."

It is in thus modifying the Hindu conception of God that one of the most far-reaching indirect effects of Christian Missions in India will be found.

Take Krishna. It needs neither much nor wide acquaintance with Hinduism to realise how closely he resembles Jesus. His birth story has obvious similarity. Before he is born his mother runs away from his father and he is born in a cowshed surrounded by oxen and sheep and cowherds. We now see pictures of the mother sleeping peacefully and holding the suckling child to her bosom with herdsmen and maidens round about her, an ox and an ass at her side and the redemption-bringing star in the heavens. The picture might well be that of the Madonna. Yet originally the Krishna

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incarnation of Vishna was as a war-god, a warrior god, a hero ; it was his nature to slay giants and dragons—he was the god of the tribe. But there came a change, and now Krishna is a pastoral and idyllic deity—an infant who grows to be a boy and a youth and is throughout a god of love. When the change took place we do not know, except that it was after the fifth century. Krishna now has the same kind of attraction for the Hindu that Jesus has for the Christian. Jesus occupies almost the same place in our thoughts as Krishna in the mind of the Hindu.

While the doctrine has been thus modified the worship also has undergone change, principally by absorbing the congregational elements of Christian worship. Hinduism had nothing resembling our weekly services of worship in which the whole of the congregation takes a part. The ordinary Hindu can take no part in the pujas by which the gods are approached. Worship is confined to vicarious offerings and mantrams uttered by the priest. The latter is sole celebrant and the worshipper stands apart. During the last half-century there has grown up and multiplied a religious institution called Hari Sabhas. These are now common in the towns and villages of Bengal and are a potent influence in reviving and invigorating the faith of the people. They are Vishnava in conception—their object being spiritual develop-



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ment by means of Bhakti or devotion to Krishna or Hari. It is recognized that "inan," or salvation by knowledge, is an abstruse subject, the object of which is beyond the capacity of the ordinary man. Bhakti is, therefore, adapted as the easiest and surest means of salvation. The Sabhas assemble once a week either in a building erected as their meeting-place or at the house of one of the members. "A pundit is engaged to read and explain the text of the Srimat Bhagbat and other Puranas, while a Kirtan party is engaged for chanting the name of Hari and singing songs about the life of Krishna and Gauranga."<sup>1</sup> One result of this is that the common priest is beginning to supplant the family priest.

The Hari Sabha marks the introduction of a new leaven into Hinduism. The festivals are kept and puja offered, but these are supplemented by regular religious and moral lectures. The meeting-house not being a temple, all may gather there and join in the devotional exercises. Worship is in fact congregational—and this is an idea quite alien to Brahmanism. The conception of a Divine personality is brought home to the people by sacred books and by the devotional songs of praise.

Further developments of this congregational element will fall to be noticed when we come to deal with the establishment of the various Samajes.

Hinduism is not a missionary religion, and is not

<sup>1</sup> Census of India Report, 1911, Vol. V., Part I., p. 238.

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supposed to engage in any proselytizing work. For a considerable time the only way to become a Hindu was to be born one, but contact with Christianity has modified this aspect. Hinduism has had to consider the position of those who voluntarily or under compulsion had thrown off the yoke of Hinduism and embraced a faith based on a totally different set of doctrines. A modern movement called Shuddhi has grown up, or perhaps been forced upon them. It is a Sanscrit word meaning purification. In religious terminology it is now applied (1) to conversions to Hinduism of persons belonging to foreign religions, (2) to re-conversion of those who have recently or at a remote period adopted one of the foreign religions and (3) to reclamations—i.e., raising the status of the so-called depressed classes.

“ This modern movement is due to the fear that Hindu society will disintegrate under the foreign onslaught if no effort is made and no provision established for the re-instatement of converts or the elevation of the depressed classes. It is not a movement to bring people by degrees under the influence of Hinduism; but it is actual and definite conversion. There is a Shuddhi Sabha which consists largely of members of the Arya Samaj, and their efforts are directed more particularly towards the raising of the status of the depressed classes; but re-conversions of recent converts from Hinduism to

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Islam or to Christianity are not rare. Such re-converts are gradually absorbed by the Hindu community without much ceremony beyond the necessary purification ceremony. The orthodox Hindu as a rule assumes the attitude of toleration towards the purified or reclaimed people, and allows them to step into the Hindu fold without any protest. The conservatives of the old school have protested on occasion, but usually in the end have accepted the new situation."

Christianity is oldest and strongest in the south, and especially in the south-west—Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. To the depressed peoples Christianity offers a new life and a new hope. They have accepted the offer and this has raised new problems for Hinduism, which by force of circumstances has almost been driven to change from a non-missionary religion to a missionary religion. And the missionary movement in modern Hinduism also is strongest in the south. The persons raised in status or converted are admitted to terms of equality in matters of inter-dining by the members of the Arya Samaj and by the majority of the educated Hindus. The attitude of the mass of the Hindu community is one of doubtful indifference, mixed with some regret that to preserve themselves such a step should be necessary. Hinduism cannot yet be classed as a definitely missionary religion, but the old exclusiveness is breaking down.

## CHAPTER IV

### SAMAJ MOVEMENTS

WE come now to recount the founding and the growth of three of the more important Samaj movements. Of all the religious movements in India of the nineteenth century the most important and most influential was the founding of the Brahma Samaj.

The founder was Ram Mohan Ray (1772-1833). In a letter to a friend he says, "My view of Christianity is that in representing all mankind as the children of one eternal father it enjoins them to love one another without making any distinction of country, caste, colour or creed." It is said that one day, being shown a picture of Jesus Christ, he remarked that the painter had represented Him falsely, for he had given Him a European countenance, forgetting that Jesus Christ was an Oriental, and that in keeping with the Eastern origin of Christianity the Christian scriptures glow throughout with rich oriental colouring. On another occasion he said: "The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and better adapted for the use of rational

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beings than any other which have come to my knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

Coming of a deeply religious family, he early gave his study to religions and came under the influence of the group of Christian missionaries at Serampore. In 1828 he founded the Brahma Samaj; and the Trust Deed of the building dedicated to the use of the Society contains the following interesting provisions :

"The building was intended to be a place of public meeting for all sorts and descriptions of people, without distinction, who shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the eternal, unsearchable, and immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the universe, but not under and by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular being or beings by any man or set of men whatsoever; and that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said messuages, building, land, tenements, hereditament and premises; and that no sacrifice, offering, or oblation of any kind or thing shall ever be permitted therein; and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said messuage, etc.,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by J. N Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p 32.

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be deprived of life for religious purposes or food, and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary by any accident for the preservation of life), feasting or rioting be permitted therein; and that in conducting the said worship or adoration no object animate or inanimate that has been, is or shall hereafter become or be recognized as an object of worship by any man or set of men shall be reviled or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching or in hymns or other modes of worship that may be delivered or used in the said message or building ; and that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymns be delivered, made, or used in such worship, but such as have a tendency to the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the universe as to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue, and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

The movement thus begun has split into various sects and parties, but into the history of this we are not called upon to enter here as they do not concern our subject.

The creed of the Samaj includes, *inter alia*, the following :

The book of nature and intuition supplies the basis of religious faith.

They accept with pleasure and respect the truth contained in all books of religion.

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They believe in the existence of one Supreme God—a God endowed with a distinct personality, moral attributes worthy of His nature, and an intelligence befitting the Governor of the universe; and they worship Him alone. They do not believe in any of His incarnations.

They believe in the immortality and progressive state of the soul, and declare that there is a state of conscious existence succeeding life in this world and supplementary to it as regards the action of the universal moral government.

They believe that repentance is the only way to salvation. They do not recognize any other mode of reconciliation to the offended but loving father.

They pray for spiritual welfare and believe in the efficacy of such prayer.

They believe in the Providential welfare of the Divine Father.

They avow that love towards Him and the performance of the works which He loves constitute His worship.

They recognize the necessity for public worship, but do not believe that communion with the Father depends upon it. They believe that they can adore and worship Him at any time and place.

They do not believe in pilgrimages, rites or ceremonies.

They say “ Govern and regulate your feelings, discharge your duties to God and to man, and you

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will gain everlasting happiness ; purify your heart, cultivate devotional feelings, and you will see Him who is unseen."

The Christian elements in this statement of faith are so obvious that they need hardly be pointed out. It is made a cause for complaint by some Indian writers that "preachers and writers in the Brahma Samaj show a better appreciation of and interest in the Christian than the Hindu scriptures." The Fatherhood of God is predominant, and the last statement in the creed is almost a paraphrase of "the pure in heart shall see God."

There is no distinction of caste among the Brahmas. They declare that we are all children of one God and therefore must consider ourselves as brothers and sisters. They hold that God rewards virtue and punishes sin, but that His punishments are remedial and not eternal. Ram Mohan did not believe in transmigration of the soul, was against polygamy and early marriage, and in favour of the remarriage of Hindu widows. The ethics of the Brahma Samaj are Christian.

The Samaj holds weekly services for worship in which Scripture is read, sermons are preached, hymns are sung and prayer is made. This weekly congregational worship now first introduced into Hinduism was obviously inspired by Christianity.

The Christian Church is itself indebted to the movement, for it has prepared the Hindu mind for serious



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and definite Monotheism, and it has drawn many whose ultimate resting place has been Christianity.

The movement has never drawn large numbers to itself. It is not more than 7,000 strong. But owing to the social standing, literary ability and philanthropic zeal of its members it has exerted an influence in India out of all proportion to its actual numbers. Much of its teaching has been absorbed by the popular religion and its Theism has had its influence on the faith of the people till the position of the Brahma Samaj no longer appears as exalted as it once did. People now feel that they can reform Hinduism from within. The Brahma Samaj started as a Protestant movement in Hinduism, and as such it has fulfilled its purpose. Its social programme has been appropriated by Social Reformers and nationalists. Its religious programme, in part at least, has been caught up by Hindu reformers like Swami Vivekananda, and presented in the form of what he often spoke of as "dynamic Hinduism."

In 1867 the Prarthana Samaj was founded in Bombay. It is a Theistic Society whose Theism rests largely on Hindu thought, though practically they have given up the inspiration of the Vedas and the doctrine of transmigration. They are Theists and opposed to idolatry. They draw their inspiration very largely from the Hindu scriptures,

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and use the hymns of the Maratha poet saints in their services. Social reform holds the first place in their programme—the abolition of caste, the introduction of widow remarriage, the encouragement of female education and the abolition of child-marriage. Their creed defines God as the creator of the universe; eternal, spiritual, infinite, almighty, merciful, all-holy, and the Saviour of sinners. Love and reverence for Him, an exclusive faith in Him, praying and singing to Him spiritually with these feelings, and doing the things pleasing to Him, constitute His true worship. God does not incarnate Himself, and there is no one book which has been directly revealed by God or is wholly infallible. All men are His children, therefore they should behave towards each other as brethren without distinction. This is pleasing to God and constitutes man's duty. To worship and pray to images and other created objects is not a true mode of divine adoration.

This Samaj has never had the influence of the Brahma Samaj, but it has done noble service in organizing the Social Reform movement; and, while not directly connected with the Samaj, the Depressed Classes' Mission has drawn its leaders and much of its support from among the members of the Prarthana Samaj. So is the Christian attitude and the Christian teaching of the brotherhood of man spreading; and the truth of Christ, as shown

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in loving service of the downtrodden, is expressing itself in such movements.

The Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 and has expanded rapidly in the Punjab and the United Provinces. It is a Theistic Society, rejecting Pantheism and some of the doctrines included therein, such as illusion and absorption. It rejects idolatry and holds to a doctrine of the eternal identity of the soul. It holds a belief in prayer and congregational worship. But its greatest work has been in social reform, in fostering education and temperance, opposing child-marriage, and in opposing (with certain reservations) caste divisions. It is a social and political movement rather than religious. It has no priesthood, and has a somewhat Puritan form of worship except that the use of incense is permitted.

The primary object of the Samaj is to do good to the world by improving the physical, spiritual and social conditions of mankind. It demands that all men be treated with love, justice, and due regard to their merits. It works in the educational field in order that ignorance be dispelled and knowledge be diffused. It holds that no one ought to be content with his own good alone, but everyone ought to regard his prosperity as included in that of others.

The emphasis which the Samaj lays on education

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is certainly culled from the experience of Christian Missions, and it is doing a great deal for education.

The Samaj has nearly half a million adherents, and its members subscribe generously to its funds. It has done great social work, but it is doubtful whether religiously it has a great future before it.

These Samaj movements are to Hinduism what Liberal Judaism is to Judaism and Unitarianism is to Christianity. All are reforming movements attempting to dispense with any and all mediaries between God and man—be it the Torah, an Incarnation, or a body of sacred writing. But none of these movements can hope for ultimate success, for above all things man needs some bridge over the chasm which separates the finite from the Infinite.

The Christian conception of religion as bearing fruit in conduct and in the ideal character directed to service of others, has had great influence in India. India is accepting this ideal and is trying to transform its religion into a sanction of conduct and the interpretation of conduct as loving service. Out of this have grown great social movements like the work of Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission with its schools, orphanages, industrial schools, widows' homes and railway station help. To some extent the idea of release has been superseded by the idea of help.

But a problem arises in that many accept the

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Christian ethic and attempt to graft it on to the Hindu religion, and this is impossible. In India the modification of the ethic has been realized at a greater pace than the modification of the religion. In the gospel story the ethic is never divorced from the religion, but in India in modern times it has been so divorced. The acceptance of the Christian ethic as being the highest is quite general among the educated classes. It finds its place in all programmes of social reform. It is accepted by many as the standard rule of conduct. The question arises, can the Christian ethic support itself apart from the Christian religion with which it is bound, and out of which historically it has expressed itself? It is doubtful whether it can do so. Men who are Hindu in religion cannot be Christian in practice.

I have before me two addresses on this subject, one by Dr. H. Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, and one by Lord Hugh Cecil. Both emphatically agree on this point. The Bishop of Durham, in closing his address, says, "You will, of course, notice that I am making throughout the whole of my sermon the assumption of the text, namely, that there is no substitute for Christ's religion. Effective moral training is, to my mind, inconceivable apart from religious teaching. In none other is there salvation." Lord Hugh Cecil is even more emphatic, and what he says is so *apropos* that I quote at length. In his address, given in

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St. Martin's Church, London, on February 19th, 1926, he says, "There is a certain conception, which it is really hardly an exaggeration to call a virtuous paganism, set up in place of the Christian religion. I saw an interesting article, written by a distinguished headmaster of a public school, which purported to be the creed of a public schoolman. It was a certain standard of conduct, of honour, truthfulness, manly keenness of living, and the like, such as might be and has been practised by virtuous pagans, though paganism seldom succeeded in producing the type of character it aimed at. The philosopher Seneca might have given such teaching ; perhaps he did give it. That is not Christian religious education at all—merely to teach people to be honourable, to 'play the game,' to be clean living in the broad sense of avoiding anything disgusting and hateful. That sort of mediocre standard of conduct is by no means what the Christian professes. The great virtues of faith, hope and charity, even in the matter of conduct, are of the very essence of our religion, and beyond conduct we know that, as a matter of fact, the pagan conception of virtue breaks down. Ancient Rome and Greece, whatever their theoretic standards of conduct, soon failed to attain to them, and the result was as bad from the point of view of morals, and as utterly destructive, for they died of moral decay. We cannot be satisfied with

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that. We must have initiation into the membership of our religion. Nothing that does not train people to be and feel themselves to be members of the body of Christ is worth our having."

The educational activity of the Christian Missions is one factor that has led to this wide diffusion of the Christian ethic. In elementary schools, high schools and colleges for both girls and boys, the Christian message has been proclaimed at the appointed hour. I fear that often this Christian gospel has degenerated into a moral discourse. Yet, with Christian educational institutions occupying the high place which they do occupy, many of the best minds in India have been trained there. They have come under the Christian influence, but it has been largely a moral influence and not a religious influence.

The question arises—now that the ethic is broadly accepted, will it mean that the religion for which it stands will be accepted also? Historically, has ever a people come to the religion by way of the ethic? In India will it come this way or on the contrary will men turn round and tell us that the ethic is an impossible one and leave it in disappointment and disgust? We who profess and call ourselves Christian find the ethic sufficiently difficult even when we have the support and the strength which we derive from the Christian religion. Deprived of this strength and without this help how much more difficult the life must be! Is it not quite impossible?

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Men who believe in karma and in transmigration feel that caste is wrong and that the treatment of the outcaste has been cruel and harsh. They acknowledge that the abhorred untouchables are brothers, and first acknowledging this they then proceed more slowly and reluctantly to receive them as such. But if the doctrines of karma and of transmigration are to be taken seriously, it is very doubtful whether a man should attempt to interfere with the natural working of these doctrines. If the outcaste is such because of his sins in this life or in past lives, and if God is of such a nature as to decree this kind of repayment for transgression, should one interfere? If the depressed classes are to be a concern for the caste people and their status raised and hardships alleviated, it would seem that the doctrines of karma and of transmigration must be modified. If these doctrines are held there seems to be no *raison d'être* for social work, and if social work appeals to the conscience and demands to be done, then these doctrines must be modified; and to do this will also involve modification of the doctrines of sin, punishment, and the soul, and even the doctrine of God. Indeed the only doctrine that will bear the weight of all this splendid social effort is the Christian doctrine that God is the Father of all mankind and a God of love; that all men are brethren and the care of one is the care of all; that morality can be summed up in the one word "brotherliness."



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Transmigration and Karma declare that each individual passes through many lives and deaths, and also that a man's place in society is an infallible index of the stage of soul-progress that he has reached; that the suffering he bears is a retribution for past sins; that a woman is born such because of former sins, and widows are widowed because of the same reason. Since the exact amount of suffering and misery which an individual is to enjoy is fixed by his Karma, as also is the amount of happiness he is to enjoy, it is quite useless to seek to ameliorate the lot of the individual or tribe. Caste fits such a society admirably, for social grades are divinely proportioned to human deservings. This all involves a doctrine of God who stands apart from Karma and is actionless.

It would seem to be quite impossible that social service should be conceived at all when such a belief is held, for in trying to raise the depressed is it not defeating the exactly proportioned working of Karma? The two things are incompatible, and it would almost seem that if social service is to prosper then the doctrine of God and of His means of working must be modified. It is interesting as well as informative to notice that the parties most zealous for and most prominent in social reform have so modified their beliefs in God and in Karma, the Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Arya Samaj.

## CHAPTER V

### INDIAN CHRISTIAN PROBLEMS

THE substance of Christianity must be expressed in an Indian form. Dr. Heiler lays great emphasis on this, and I cannot do better than translate from his book, *Sadhu Sundar Singh*.<sup>1</sup> He says : " To a lasting conquest of the spiritual world (Geisteswelt) of India is needed, not only the simple Gospel preaching in word and life (though this always must remain the foremost and the most important), but also a gigantic theological work, which connects the fulness of the Christian revelation with the religious and philosophical property of India, as the Alexandrines and the Cappodocians, Augustine and Thomas of Animo have connected it with Greek and Latin Philosophy. This theological synthesis is even more important for India, but at the same time also more difficult, than for the West, because the religious and philosophical treasures of India are much older and richer than those of Greece. Without this theological synthesis, it will never be possible for Christianity to be the same for India, as it once became for the Greek-Roman world. Indian Christianity cannot do without such a theological leader. Such a man has up till

<sup>1</sup> Since published in an English translation

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now not been given to India. But it is of the greatest importance that there is already among Indian Christians a demand for such a work to be done, and that groping attempts have already been made."

As an Indian says, "Our fathers are not, though we do not disclaim them, Athanasius and Augustine, Luther and Wesley, Chrysostom and Calvin, but Byasa and Vasishta, Kabir and Kamban, Manicavasagar and Markandeyan. Holy Writ says, 'we have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us, Lord, what thou didst do in their days.' Shall it be said that the same Lord is not with us, their children, now in these days?"<sup>1</sup>

Most people would admit the existence of a difference between the Christianity of the New Testament and that of, say, England to-day. Even within the covers of the New Testament there are differences—the Gospels differ from the Epistles—even the Gospels themselves present different aspects of the life of our Lord. The Marcan figure differs from the Johannine—at least in emphasis. Then the Pauline message is different from that in, say, the Johannine Epistles, and both from that of the Epistle of James. These differences are so marked that we have come to speak of a Pauline type of Christianity and a Johannine type. As Christianity went out into the world it took to itself national, racial and cul-

<sup>1</sup> *National Missionary Intelligencer*, April, 1926, p. 80.

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tural modes of expression, and without these it has existed nowhere. There were then the Judaistic type of Christianity and the Hellenic type existing in the ancient world alongside each other. As it moves into the Roman world it takes on a slightly different complexion, and as it gets further west other differences appear. It would appear that the central message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is capable of different expressions, and each people or culture to whom or to which it is presented develops the core in its own way. It is like the same seed grown in different soils in different climates—the resulting tree is fundamentally the same tree, but it has differences. So the English character, the English history, the English culture have influenced Christianity in that land and produced something beautiful and noble, yet with many features not fundamental to Christianity itself. Now if Christianity is to succeed in an environment so totally different as is India it must be expected to express itself in slightly other form—and it must be allowed to do this. Up to the present I complain that this has not been allowed; and a Christian convert of say one of the great Anglican Missionary Societies has had to go through exactly the same confession of faith as his brother in England, and the Church services in both countries have been kept identical, as far as that was possible.

I take it that the four important elements in the

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Oriental religious consciousness are (i) The contemplative life, (ii) The sense of the presence of the Unseen, (iii) Aspiration towards ultimate Being, (iv) Reverence for sanctions of the past. Merely to enumerate them is itself to draw attention to the difference. The contemplative life esteems thought to be above action—the West reverses the valuation. The sense of the presence of the Unseen goes with a belief that matter is unreal and is an evil to be got rid of, if the soul is to realize itself. Out of this grow ideas of renunciation and of asceticism. Their idea of a religious worker or rather a religious man is the wandering Sanyasi, who is celibate, who owns nothing in this world, and who throws himself on the charity of others.

One bogey that has been tracking Indian Christianity for the last two centuries has been the fear of idolatry. We allow figures of Jesus Christ and His apostles in stained glass windows and sometimes, though less often, in pictures—all in two dimensions; but when it is suggested to put up a figure in three dimensions we are warned of idolatry, and it is forbidden in some of the Reformed branches of the Church. Idolatry is not universal in Hinduism. Many think of the incense, candles, conches, paintings, music, sculpture, flowers and leaves used in worship as being signs or forms of idolatry, but are they so? Hinduism uses a great many of these aids to worship, as does also the Christian

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Church in some of its branches. Recall all the ritualistic wealth of the Syrian Church in South India, and the colours and magnificent forms of Roman and Greek Catholic worship. Even the Anglican Church allows some of these things. Is music "auditory" idolatry, and are paintings "visual" idolatry? An orthodox Mohammedan would say they were; an orthodox Christian probably deny it. The Indian mind is alert enough to distinguish here the form from the essence—the aid from the object of worship—as we all can. And further, if Christians are allowed and even encouraged to form images of Christ in their own minds, why not have them in three-dimensional space? An Indian pastor once told me that when he prayed he could nearly always visualize Jesus standing at his side. If this was a good Christian attitude, I see little difference between this and a figure in stone of the Master as He is traditionally featured.

But does Indian in this connection mean only Hindu? About one-fourth of the population are Mohammedans, and we cannot neglect them. At the same time it is to be remembered that Hinduism is the faith of India, and has been influencing the life and thought of the people for generations. It has given her people a certain peculiar religious characteristic and attitude which

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no one coming to India can escape or neglect. As we have already pointed out, even such an uncompromising monotheistic religion as Islam has in India been influenced by Hindu thought, as in turn Hindu thought has been influenced by Islam.

Then what are the more important features of the Indian religious atmosphere which Christianity ought to encourage ?

Toleration—religious toleration is needed. Unfortunately, with some 160 different Christian denominations and sects working in India at the present time this is an aspect needing emphasis. Of these numerous denominations it is the smaller and more modern ones that require to learn this lesson. There are some few that go about the country with wandering commissions feeling that they and they alone own the seal which is to frank the passports for heaven. They cause much annoyance to their brethren and set up independent and exclusive churches. India has a great sense that truth is many-sided, and that no one religion or sect can claim to have apprehended the whole truth. This accounts for the fact that there has been little or no religious persecution in India as compared with Western countries. The recent Hindu-Muslim quarrels are not religious persecution, they are communal quarrels.

The Christian Church should encourage intercourse with its neighbours be they Hindu or

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**Mohammedan.** Why should not a good, saintly Hindu guru occasionally be invited to speak in a Christian church? In the West, we have Jewish rabbis speaking to Christian congregations. And in questions of social reform should we not join forces with our brethren, be they of any creed or no creed, so long as they are inspired with a social consciousness and like ideals for society as ourselves?

It is a question, and an interesting one, to discuss—What influence will Hinduism have on Christianity in India? Time alone can give the answer, but certain features are worth recording, and certain possibilities are worth stating.

The absence of first-rate Christian theological schools in India has been a serious handicap in the expression of Christianity in this country. India has many religious terms and phrases of deep meaning and ancient heritage, which could contribute much to a fuller presentation of our faith to Indians. Indian Christianity needs a terminology of its own which will at once appeal to the Indian heart and at the same time retain its own peculiar characteristics. In this terminology it will retain many of the ancient Indian religious words, and it will throw out many of the pagan Greek terms, which have come to us by way of the creeds. It will be careful to guard against any possible misunderstandings by adopting and baptizing into the



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Christian faith not all the Hindu philosophical terms, yet it can accept some with advantage.

One result is sure—the Indian will agree with St. Paul that the seen is temporal and the unseen is eternal. There will be an emphasis on the eternal and an ignoring of the temporal. The reality behind all phenomena will be stressed—and not its appearances. In the development of Indian Christianity this stressing of the reality behind all phenomena, the supreme value of the eternal, would be a good corrective against the “materialistic utilitarian standards of the West.” The Indian better than the Westerner can understand the text, “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” In the West I fear many men would sell their souls at a low price!

The idea of the immanence of God as understood and developed in Indian religious thought is already beginning to influence Western philosophy. Christian thinkers who essay to re-interpret in Indian categories of thought the verities of the Christian experience cannot afford to neglect this truth and its historical development in India.

The Indian would provide a good corrective against the tendency to Deism in the West. “The Kingdom of God is within you” is a text easily understood by him. He sees God everywhere and has a longing for universal harmony. This will give a sensitive regard for all life, and while holding up the superiority of man will tend to

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bridge the enormous gulf which the West has created between man and the lower creation—even to plants.<sup>1</sup> A new feeling of the unity of all life will then arise and a new sense of community in the world. All this would bring back to us the sense of the immanence of God as well as His transcendence.

It is surely doubtful whether the Indian bows down to idols of wood and stone as some of our hymns tell us. The Indian mind is quite capable of drawing the difference here. A friend of mine who is a Commissioner in Assam was once touring in the hill country in the north of that territory. One day he met a savage hillman appropriately garbed for a savage—dressed largely in leaves. Round his waist were suspended a number of pieces of wood carved in semi-human form. My friend, wishing to be cordial, and to start a conversation, said to him, "Be these your gods?" To this the savage indignantly replied, "How can these be images of God? Has any man seen God at any time?" I am assured that this tribe had had no contact with Westerners or with Christianity.

Then, too, there is a very strong suspicion in some Indian minds that Christianity works by a system of rewards and punishments which are not exactly proportional to the deeds. Now Hinduism also works with rewards and punishments in its

<sup>1</sup> Consider the work of Sir Jagadis Bose. Only an Indian could do that.

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doctrine of Karma, but here the "punishment fits the crime." They tell us that for a short measure of goodness—the good deeds in this life—Christianity offers a disproportionate reward—eternal bliss. And for a relatively short measure of evil in this life it offers a disproportionate penalty—eternal punishment. Doubtless this argument is based on a theology which is passing out of fashion in the West, but it is still all too common in India. It is not very closely allied to the Gospel story, nor is it very easily reconciled with a God of love. And so far they are right in pointing out this danger. But Christianity should correct this, and the Indian mind will help us to do so.

The doctrines of the "Incarnation" and the "Atonement" badly need re-statement for India. They are central to the Christian message—but after all are they firmly held or clearly understood in the West? Considering the amount of literature that is poured out annually on these subjects in the West one suspects that they still form a good debating ground. India may approach these doctrines starting from the widespread oriental belief in Karma. That evil must of necessity be expiated, that demerit cannot be expiated by merit alone apart from divine grace, and that a man cannot escape the consequences of his sin—these are points in Karma which might profitably be used as a starting point in an effort at an interpretation

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of the Atonement which would be understood by India.

I am not forgetting Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo?"

The widely prevalent belief in Ahimsa, not as mere non-violence, but as a positive concept of active love, capable of infinite suffering for the good of others, is another element which may be utilized for understanding and interpreting the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ.

"It is consonant with the spirit of the Gospel that Western missionary methods should divest themselves of that bitterness and antipathy towards the spiritual heritage of a land which is truly the mother of religions. It is not, however, by an academic appreciation of the beauty and the grandeur of the great religious epics of India, nor in a negative toleration of the tenets of the *Bhagavatgeeta*, nor yet in a supercilious attitude of patronage and sufferance towards Buddhism or Islam, that the Indian Christian *Bhakta* will enter into what St. Paul designates 'the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God—according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Eph. iii. 9-11).

"This is the Quest of the Bharath Christya Sevak Samaj. It commences with a recognition of the inclusion of this great land and its peoples in this eternal purpose of God. We admit the individualistic character of Christian faith and

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experience. Dare we deny it to the race? The curtailment of God's eternal purpose for man in Christ is the expression of human selfishness and arrogance, and man thereby stultifies the Eternal. Christ came to fulfil the Law. It is for the Indian Christian to discover in Christ the fulfilment of the Law of God as known to India. He must be the Wise Man of the East, who shall re-discover on the spiritual firmament of Hindustan the star of the nativity of Jesus, Who is the King of the Indian peoples. He must re-learn the spiritual terminology of his race in order to make the declaration of his homage to his King clear and unequivocal to his own people.

"The failure of the present missionary challenge to the soul of India compels us to the conclusion that there must be something fundamentally wrong in our presentation and interpretation of the appeal of Christ to Indian humanity; and the conviction grows on me, that not until the Indian Christian *Bhakta* discovers in the scriptures of his own land the Old Testament of his faith shall he realize the full meaning of Jesus in his own soul-life and that of his countrymen. Towards this end must earnest men engage themselves in the study of the Truth as God revealed it to His Indian sons and for the fulfilment of which this land has yearned and waited through the ages and still waits and hungers and thirsts. It is necessary also that all our actions

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should conform to our aim, and the outward indications of our desire will naturally find expression in our modes of worship and devotion. For he who seeks *Siddhi* must regulate his *Sadhana*. It cannot be denied that the present mode of Christian worship is a foreign graft which has been fruitful in alienating the Indian Christian community from their brethren. Homeward must the Indian Christian worshipper wend his way, and in his secret devotion and public worship exercise that *Bhakti* which will influence his inner spiritual attitude."<sup>1</sup>

"Give India the cotton she needs and let her spin with it the *sarees* to suit her fancies, and not force on her your narrow skirts and tight corsets of the Western World. Give India the pure gold and let her with it make a crown to fit her head."<sup>2</sup>

I beg leave to print entire and without comment the following article contributed to *The National Missionary Intelligencer*,<sup>3</sup> for March, 1926 :

### THE HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE IN HINDU TEMPLES.

By Paul S. Kadambavanam.

"My revered Father was a pious Hindu. He taught me no religion in the sense we teach Bible to our children, but his piety and religious and

<sup>1</sup> *National Missionary Intelligencer*, February, 1926, pp 32-3.

<sup>2</sup> *National Missionary Intelligencer*, January, 1926, p 9

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to the Editor for according me permission

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domestic life in general moulded my religious life in the early days of my life. As a man who never heard of Jesus Christ he died 25 years ago, and still in some respects he is my ideal and I try to follow him.

“He would never have his dinner without worshipping God Siva in the temple every night. Nothing as far as I know (except serious illness) could prevent him from going to the temple daily. If he could not go and worship Siva in the temple one night he would forgo his dinner. When I was young I used to follow him to the temple sometimes.

“In every Hindu temple daily there is an evening service, தீப ஆராதனை by name (colloquially called தீவாராதனை), which is usually held between 6 and 8 p.m. During this service the chief stone idol (மூலஸ்தானம் as it is called) is dressed with jewels, gold plates, silks and flowers, and hundreds of devotees assemble there to have a glimpse of Siva during the service. The big drums are beaten, musical instruments are played, cornets are blown, the big bell is rung and sacred verses from the Vedas are sung like Choral services of the Christian Churches. Towards the close of the service *Prasadam* (solid eatables offered to the Deity) and *Theertham* (the Holy Water) are freely distributed to the devotees. The worshippers receive a pinch or a small quantity of prasadam and eat it with due respect. Then follows the distribution of the Holy Water. As