

YISU DAS: WITNESS OF A CONVERT: By Ravi Tiwari; Delhi: ISPCK. 2000.
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Reviewed by Roger E. Hedlund, Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, Chennai.
(Dr. Roger Hedlund was a professor at Serampore College and is the director of Myllapur Institute. He specialized in Missiology and has contributed much in establishing it as an academic discipline in Indian setting)

Yisu Das: Witness of a Convert might also have been subtitled, "The Struggles of A Convert." The book reveals the lifelong pain of a North Indian Brahmin convert to Jesus Christ who, in his spiritual journey, was rejected by family and alienated from his community.

The book is a compilation in several sections including autobiographical writings of Yisu Das Tiwari. Here we learn first-hand of his conversion from Vedic dharma to Christian faith. Later he described his conversion as a direct encounter experience. He had never had contact with Christians, but then he experienced a vision of Christ. "I became a Christian the day I saw Jesus Christ." The struggle begins: I, like many other converts, have found it difficult to adjust myself to the Christian community of which we have become members. The community has its defects and these can be easily pointed out.

But converts have to realize that largely the fault lies in the attitude of the converts. We need social education, which the religion of our ancestors has not given us. Hinduism has taught meditation, individual perfection, communion with the divine, but it has never emphasized the virtues of good citizenship, harmonious community living, the art of having fellowship with our friends and neighbours. Little wonder a convert alienates his fellow Christians... (p.8).

In another essay we learn of the convert's encounter with Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha. Gandhi exhorted the convert, "If you have become a Christian, be a good Christian." This Yisu Das determined to do, as a Christian Bhakta (devotee). In Yisu Das Tiwari we meet a thoroughly Indian Christian, one whose Christian discipleship is expressed in terms consistent with his Indian culture.

Yisu Das Tiwari was a scholar in Sanskrit, Greek and Hindi. He taught at Serampore College, Bishop's College (Calcutta), and North Indian Theological College (Bareilly), and translated the New Testament into classical Hindi. One of the valuable features of the present volume is its translation and reproduction of several Johannine studies. These include his Introduction to Jesus' Farewell Discourses and a Commentary on John 14:1-19, never before published.

The book includes a number of tributes by Hindu as well as Christian friends: G.D.Reynolds, Lila Samaddar, E.L. Wenger, Edward and Rosemary Williams, M.V. Abraham, K.D. Bhaskar, C. Arangadan, J.H. Anand, K.V. Mathew, K.P. Aleaz, Ladbhasuk Lyngdoh. But the greatest tribute is the biographical essay by his son,

Professor Dr. Ravi Tiwari, author and compiler of the book, who also provides an essay on the Theology of a Convert.

The book is a fitting tribute to a devoted North Indian follower of Jesus Christ who suffered much. In the present climate of uncertainty about conversion, the story of Yisu Das: Witness of a Convert is an important book, one that should be read by many including the critics of the Church and the opponents of conversion. Yisu Das' life was a witness. It could not be otherwise for a devotee. But, as the writer observes, this could never have happened if Yisu Das had remained a non-baptized believer or anonymous Christian. Therein lies the challenge for missiological debate in the present Asian context.